



The Secular Circular

Newsletter of the Humanist Society of Santa Barbara

www.SBHumanists.org

JANUARY 2025

Please join us in person or on Zoom for our January speaker presentation...

One Woman's Dream: Bring Hope to a Seemingly Hopeless Situation

Our Program: Deepa Willingham will educate us on the realities and dangers of human trafficking (growing fast in our own backyard!) and to the existence of extreme poverty. She will make the case of how we, as fellow citizens of Planet Earth, can address these issues by providing the gift of education, particularly to girls and women, changing the vagaries of one girl...one woman...one village at a time.

Our Speaker: Lompoc resident, Deepa Willingham is an internationally recognized humanitarian and Rotarian. She was born and educated in Calcutta, India and earned her graduate degrees in the U.S. Prior to her entrepreneurial endeavors in the energy sector, Deepa served as the Administrative Director of Ancillary Services in the hospital industry.



Humanitarian/Activist/Rotarian
Deepa Willingham

Over the past twenty-one years, a great deal of Deepa's time and personal resources have been dedicated to the founding and developing of the PACE Learning Centre (PLC) outside of Kolkata, India, to stop child trafficking through education of the girl child and empowerment of women. Her dedicated work at PLC, which she developed through an U.S. non-profit organization she founded - (PACE Universal – www.paceuniversal.org), is resulting in the creation of a sustainable village rehabilitation model by bringing literacy to children and adults; health care and dental care, clean water, sanitation, vocational training, banking/micro-lending to change the face of trafficking and poverty in that corner of the world. PLC is now poised for replication. It is Deepa's goal to set up more PLCs wherever the vagaries of child trafficking, the societal abuses against children and women, and the hopelessness permeating from extreme poverty, are rampant.

Among her many awards are being named a *Local Hero* by the Santa Barbara Independent; a recipient of *Making a Difference for Women* award from Soroptimist International (2006), a winner of *Special Congressional Recognition* from Representative Lois Capps (2006); being named a local *Angel* by Central Coast Magazine, a *Community Hero* by superintendent Bill Cirone (2009); winner of *Marigold Awards for Good* contest (2012), the winner of Santa Barbara's *Gutsy Gals You Inspire Me Award* (2013); *Women of Action* Honoree at the White House (2014), *Time Now – Global Amazing Indian* citation from the Times of India (2015), one of three *Inspiring Women of Action* at World Bank's celebration of International Women's Day in Washington DC (2016) and *Peace Hero* by United Nations Association - Santa Barbara/Tri-Counties Chapter (2018).

Saturday January 18, 3:00–4:30 pm Pacific.

In Person at Live Oak Unitarian Universalist Congregation, 820 North Fairview Ave., Goleta, CA

--OR--

On Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88193881833>

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Prisons To Partnerships Education & Action Conference Keynote Speakers

By Judy Flattery & Robert Bernstein

As reported last month, HSSB partnered with several other organizations to sponsor a full day Zoom conference on November 23, 2024, hosted by *Prisons to Partnerships* (P2P). HSSB President, Judy Flattery, led the team that selected the speakers for the conference. Here are summaries of the inspiring opening and closing keynote speakers.

David Cunningham: [*A Time for New Thinking, New Energy, and New Action.*](#)



The inspiring opening keynote speaker was David Cunningham. David welcomed the attendees and reminded us that a small group of people is often the catalyst which creates turning points in history, in how we live, and in the quality of our daily lives. Two examples he cited were the groups which created the Declaration of Independence, and the group that marched with Dr. King from Selma to Montgomery. David sees these examples as people who are “dedicated to a future of freedom, inspired by grace, selfless courage, and called by a ‘godly’ vision.” My atheist identity cringed-- a bit-- at the use of the terms ‘grace’ and ‘godly vision’; however my humanist identity embraced the intent behind the words.

David declared that the attendees at this Zoom conference were such a group of catalyst-people in the realm of what may be possible as a future displacing current models of incarceration, rehabilitation, and reform. He encouraged attendees to let their hearts be full of hope, joy, and love. He said he could sense a turning point

in the culture and could hear the rumblings of a new future in this realm of mass incarceration in the U.S.

He pointed out that the power to create a new future is a function of how much we are listened to. For example, Gandhi was slight of stature yet had extraordinary power because he was listened to by the whole world.

Our power comes from being listened to; not from brilliance, not from having human decency on our side. If no one is listening, we have no power. To be listened to, we must see everyone as partners regardless of who they are or what they’ve said or done in the past. Invite people from all walks of life to join for powerful and productive partnerships.

In the 1980s David was a director of the National Committee for Prevention of Child Abuse, working to start a national movement. They brought many groups together who had not come together before, e.g. parents who had or were at risk of abusing their children, medical professionals, legal professionals, social services, mayors and city councils, state and federal officials, media and even children who had been abused, so that something new could happen by being authentically engaged in a dialog around preventing child abuse.

David stated that now is the time for the work of Prisons to Partnerships and that there’s a world we want to create: a world where prison opens doors, not closes them; where we are all part of a community not separate; where neighbors and neighborhoods see the humanity in everyone and take them in vs. send them away; a time to invest more in opportunities vs. corrections; a time to speak with a voice of possibility, not a voice of complaint.

He said that although there is much that we *could* complain about, we must offer new solutions and stand for new possibilities. Our voice must be a voice of love. People don’t listen

to those they don't experience as being loved and respected by. "Think about it..."

Cunningham addressed the question of opposition and cynicism by saying that any opposition or cynicism we encounter only proves that our community exists. "Fear not. Back down not at all. And let's have our voice heard."

He proposed that we only have two real enemies: First is our own righteousness. Judging, condemning, and resenting will not build partnerships. He urged us to step outside the right/wrong dualities and move to what works/what doesn't work.

He implored us to honor the concerns of others as real concerns (e.g. administrators have administrative concerns, politicians have political concerns, businesspeople have business concerns, neighbors have neighborhood concerns, and we have our concerns). He stated that true partnerships address the concerns of everyone involved.

He commented on the emotion of anger and opined that anger comes from fear. He asked us to think of a time we were angry at a reckless driver: is it true that fear was present the moment before our anger arose? David said that the antidote for anger is compassion. "When another knows they are safe with us, their anger subsides."

[I recalled that in my own life, when I see a reckless driver weaving in and out of traffic then speeding ahead of me, after my initial fear/anger reaction, I imagine the driver is a surgeon rushing to the ER to save a child (or a vet racing to save a beloved pet). This trick counters my anger response and wishes the driver (and others he encounters) safe passage.]

Cunningham continued: To love we must learn compassion and learn to forgive. He clarified that forgiving is not condoning and is not

approving; but is giving up our resentment. "The word 'fore-give' is to choose to give my love as I did before anything happened." He urged us to choose a loving life rather than a resenting life. Note that this advice applies to all aspects of life, not just to dealing with other points of view regarding prison reform.

He also addressed the idea of 'acceptance'. He said that to love we must learn acceptance. "Acceptance is not saying it's ok when it's not ok, but having 'it' just be what it is and what it's not...period. If it's raining, I accept that it's raining —I don't say it's ok that it's raining, I don't say it's horrible that it's raining, just that it is raining... and I interact powerfully with that fact. That's acceptance."

"The partnerships we want to build—we may need to accept others, what they say and do, and accept our reactions to what they say and do... not making any of it right or wrong, just being with what it is. Period. Interact powerfully with what they are saying and doing. Period. Partnerships must be built on love, respect, compassion, and acceptance for one another."

Cunningham suggested that our second enemy is resignation. It is easy to be resigned, thinking that it's too messed up, too hard, too immutable, too terrifying. He reminded us that not too long ago, women were denied the right to vote, gay marriage was not legal, desegregation looked impossible. He quoted Maya Angelou, who said, "History, despite its wrenching pain, cannot be unlived, but if faced with courage, need not be lived again."

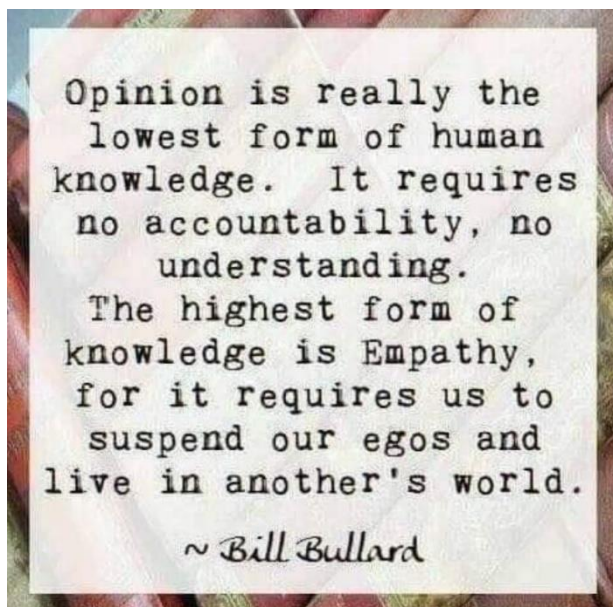
His point was that we have a painful history and present of incarceration. The future may only exist in our hearts and vision. It can be made real in the new partnerships we form with courage.

He reminded us that evidence of victory may not come for a while. "To stand for something is to say it's possible with no evidence. Don't be righteous; don't be resigned. Use this day to

come together to address all our concerns. Use our collective heart, experience, expertise, and resources, to stand for new partnerships that are actually our new society. Build the world of health, freedom, dignity, opportunity, and achievement that we envision. Neighborhoods that breed hope and opportunity for all. Listen, learn, and inspire each other. May history look back on this day and see it as a turning point in the way society lives and in the quality of all of our lives.”

This talk powerfully set the stage for the day.

David Cunningham began his career as a special education teacher, serving as a Director of the Connecticut Justice for Children Collaboration and the National Committee for Prevention of Child Abuse. He served as a senior leader at Landmark Worldwide, leading transformational programs for over 30 years, addressing authenticity, communication, acceptance, forgiveness, leadership, integrity, and love. David currently volunteers with the *Another Way to Go* program in Philadelphia. David’s new book and corresponding seminar series *Your Love Does Matter: A Pathway to New Consciousness and Expanding Your Love Footprint*, are both available for pre-release sale.



P2P Closing Keynote Speaker Tracy Hunt: [*Breaking Free, Second Chances For All*](#)

Tracy Hunt was the closing keynote speaker of the conference. She visited her first prison in 2019. She was always fascinated with prisons.

She watched the series, *Scared Straight*, as a kid and knew she never wanted to go to prison. They seemed so big and scary.

She grew up in Los Angeles during the 1960s: a time of racism, riots, war, assassinations, civil rights and social movements, and counter-culture. For Tracy, forced busing brought inner city kids to her school around 4th grade. Her mother did not like this and put her in the Bonner private school, which was all white.



Los Angeles school desegregation circa 1970



Tracy’s 6th grade class at Bonner, 1970

Nearly 20 years ago, Tracy made a commitment that by 2030 all people will be honored and recognized as family. She has seen some success over the past 20 years, and last summer she 'heard and answered the knock' and felt connected to her commitment and having it be alive and real in the world. She spoke of having participated in a Landmark program in 1995 where she was confronted by the disparity of opportunity between the races and wanted to do something about it; left with an ache in her heart and no concrete plan of what to do.

In 2017 she was invited to a 20-week L.A.P.D Community Police Academy. She learned police procedures and connected with cops, but she couldn't bridge the gap between cops and the accused.

Her life was forever altered by the movie [Skid Row Marathon](#) (Audience Choice Award Winner at the 2018 SBIFF, now available on Amazon Prime). She got involved with the Skid Row Running Club featured in the movie, whose members include people in recovery from drugs and alcohol, people who have experienced homelessness, formerly incarcerated people as well as judges, cops, lawyers, doctors, teachers, students, -- all kinds of people. She became a close friend of someone in the running club recently released from San Quentin who had spent 29 years in prison for murder. He then participated in the Landmark Forum, and is now married, has a nice home, and a good career as a supervisor at the Department of Water and Power.

Tracy ran a marathon with incarcerated men at San Quentin in 2019. After a couple of laps, she decided it



was more enjoyable to pass out water to the runners than to run the marathon!



This experience of spending time with these incarcerated men was a highlight of her life as they generously shared their lives with her.

At the end of the day she could go home, while they returned to their cells. The memory brought her to tears as she spoke. She never forgot about them. She didn't know how to fulfill her promise about all people being honored, respected, and recognized as family.

Last summer she was laid off at work and had more time to do what she wanted to do. She volunteered with the Compassion Prison Project (CPP), founded by another Landmark graduate, Fritz Horstman. Tracy's first visit to a prison with CPP made her "feel alive." She then volunteered in prisons on a regular basis and started reading about prison life and educating herself on the state of global incarceration.

The U.S. is 5% of the world population. Yet we have 25% of the world's population of prisoners, which is even more than China.

2023 was the 50th year of mass incarceration in the U.S. Born of the war on drugs and more, there has been a 500% growth of incarceration

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since 1973. The U.S. prison and jail population is 1.8 million, the size of Slovenia. In California, where Tracy lives, there are over 100,000 people living in prison. California prison population is greater than the population of Santa Monica!

Last year, Governor Newsom announced a plan to transform San Quentin to a center of rehabilitation, based on the Scandinavian model. This model, called the California Model, emphasizes healing, accountability, and forgiveness.

Tracy learned about ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences). She participates in the *Step Inside the Circle* exercise with the prison residents.

Here is a simplified list of the ten adverse childhood experiences on the assessment tool:

1. Physical abuse
2. Emotional abuse
3. Physical neglect
4. Emotional neglect
5. Sexual abuse
6. Mother treated violently
7. Substance abuse in household
8. Household mental illness
9. Household member incarcerated
10. Parental separation or divorce

Tracy then showed the [*Step Inside the Circle*](#) video. The leader asks about each of the ACEs. Participants and volunteers take a step inside the circle for each category of ACE they experienced as a child. Almost all incarcerated people took steps; many had 6, 8 or even all 10 ACEs. Similar results for the corrections officers. Tracy has none.

Higher ACE scores are correlated with higher incidence of disease, and social and emotional problems as an adult. People with 4 or more ACEs are 7 times more likely to go to prison and 12 times more likely to attempt suicide. Having 6 or more ACEs shortens one's life span by 20 years.

Many of the incarcerated participants were unaware of the impact of childhood trauma on their brain development and on how they perceive the world.

Receiving an ACE score can be transformative on the path to recovery; an opportunity to break the cycle of generational trauma. They often feel relieved and are able to forgive themselves and others. They are able to find a supportive community, even in prison, with others who have experienced similar trauma and outcomes.

Fritzi also asks the prison participants how many of them would be dead if they were not in prison. So many hands go up. In this sense, for many of the participants, prison saved their life. CPP does other exercises which support authentic human connection among the participants; Tracy and the participants are often moved to tears.

Tracy's Takeaways:

- I am open with and welcome those who previously evoked fear and disrespect.
- People in prison are human beings, just like us. They did something wrong, and they got caught.
- There are no bad people. There is trauma and there are impulsive actions.

Tracy asked what is the societal benefit of locking people up after they are rehabilitated.

Tracy declared that we need more hugs in prisons, and they should be turned into centers of transformation. She asked us to imagine a world with no prisons. What would it look like? Tracy encouraged conference attendees to act on the advice of Dr. Michael Golding, one of the earlier speakers, and volunteer in a prison. It really makes a difference.

During the informal after session, Monica Lopez asked Tracy how her 2030 plan will happen. Tracy said it is not a plan; it's a commitment that

gets her out of bed every day. Tracy feels she has had a privileged life and wants to help others.

Dr. Michael Golding then commented that whether one is politically left or right, we all want a system that works; one that is cheaper and better; a system where everyone wins. Norway has demonstrated cheaper and better. It is possible for us too.

My Memory of Meeting

President Jimmy Carter

by Marian Shapiro

On July 2, 2022, I got a very surprising phone call from a program designer at National Public Radio about something that happened 42 years prior when I was at the 1980 National League of Women Voters conference in Washington DC.

Chip Brantley with NPR in Alabama called to ask if I was the Marian Shapiro from Hays Kansas who had asked President Jimmy Carter what he was going to do about the Mariel Boat-lift of thousands of immigrants swarming into Miami from Cuba.

I said, "YES, that was me! How did you know it was me, and how did you find me in Santa Barbara?"

He said he had recently listened to a recording of my exchange with Carter and told me the importance of my question. He explained that it was the first time the media had gotten any clue to how Carter felt about the Cuban immigrants, and so there was a lot of media interest in his answer. It also aroused some opposition from those opposed to letting immigrants in. Mr. Brantley wanted to know how I had come up with that question, and how I felt about his answer.

I was very embarrassed to admit how I came to ask the question. The League audience had not known who the surprise speaker was going to be until shortly before President Carter arrived.

Once we knew it would be the President, we were told that he usually does not take

questions, but because he respects the League of Women Voters so much, he had agreed to take questions. They announced we could have 8 questioners, and asked who would like to ask a question. I knew if I waited, even a second, I would not be chosen, so I raised my hand immediately and was chosen.

And then I panicked, heart pounding, because I couldn't think of a good question to ask. No one from the Florida delegation had been chosen and they were desperate to get their question asked. They approached all 8 of us who had been chosen with pressure to ask about the boatloads of immigrants coming into Miami.

At first, I refused because I thought why would a delegate from Kansas ask about Miami? But when I couldn't think of a good question, I agreed to ask their question. Unfortunately, I had to tell Chip, it was not brilliance on my part, but just the opposite. With so few minutes to prepare, I couldn't come up with a question. But what happened next was unforgettable.

The set up: There were four microphones across the front of the auditorium, and a Secret Service agent squatted near each one. I was worried that the mic would pick up my pounding heart (very loud in my head) and I told the squatting agent that I was very nervous.

I was the sixth questioner, and so far, it had been very serious questions and answers with the President. Trembling, I began, "I'm Marian Shapiro from Hays, Kansas. The delegates from Florida have convinced me to ask you this question. And Mr. President, your aide here tells me I can stop shaking, because you're a really a nice guy."

The crowd broke into laughter. Then Carter said, "Well if you're nice to me, I can stop shaking too." A lot more laughter.

That exchange is what got on the national news that evening. Carter gave a very kind, compassionate response, saying we should welcome these refugees "with open hearts and open arms."

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When Chip asked me what I thought of his answer, I said that as the daughter of refugee parents and grandparents, I was delighted with his welcoming attitude. My family's lives were saved by the United States allowing them into our country. Many of our relatives had been killed in the Holocaust. Carter's welcoming, compassionate attitude is just the opposite of what we got from our previous presidency promoting walls, misogyny, homophobia, racism, family separation, and deportations.

I googled Chip Brantley and learned that he is the co-creator/co-host of the NPR podcast, *White Lies*. [Season 1, Episode 7](#) recounts the murder of a Unitarian minister, [James Reeb](#), who supported Blacks in Selma, Alabama in 1965. NONE of the KKK who killed the minister were found guilty by an all-white jury. His podcast was a 2020 Finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in Audio Reporting.



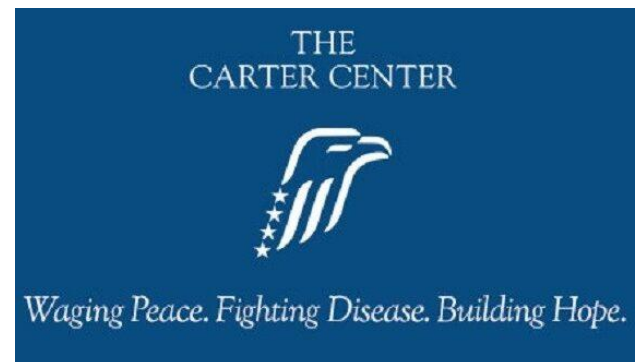
Season 2 of his podcast is about the Mariel Boat lift and what happened to thousands of dark-skinned Cuban immigrants, many of whom were detained in prison for over 10 years! They were treated very differently than the lighter skinned professional Cuban immigrants who had come earlier. Chip asked if he could interview me on the exchange with Carter, how I thought of the question, and how I felt about his answer.

We had a long zoom interview on July 6 for 80 minutes!!! I must say I still don't know why he wanted to know so much about me, I guess he was just hoping to find interesting bits of

information to make a good story, 42 years later!!



Chip didn't use any of our talk in [Season 2 of White Lies](#), his podcast about Cuban immigration. We were both left-wing liberals who appreciated Carter's views about humanity, and so we clearly enjoyed our talk together. Chip was also 'a really nice guy' and this time I wasn't scared.



Former Santa Barbara mayor, Helene Schneider, sent me the Chip Brantley recording in which President Carter answers the question I asked him. Helene said: "It includes a recording of his 'open hearts and open arms' answer. It's in the episode titled [The Boatlift](#) and the League of Women Voters meeting part starts at minute 44:00. What a story! And very timely to listen to today in light of the recent political focus related

to refugees and immigration policies. Thanks, Marian, for sharing your story - you made history!"

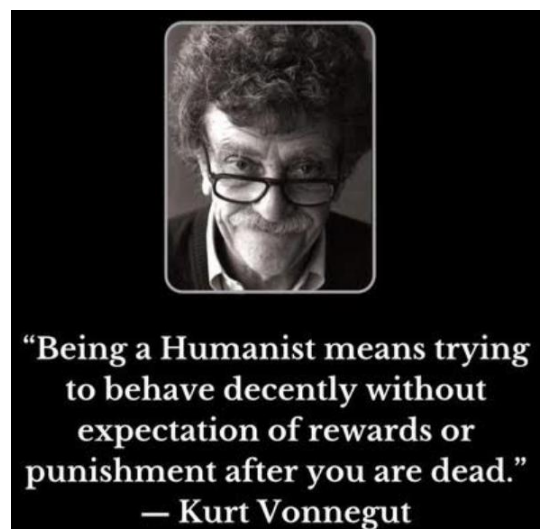
Solstice/Triskaidekaphobia Gathering

Photos By Robert Bernstein & Marian Shapiro

On Friday December 13, HSSB members and guests gathered at the Encina Royale Clubhouse to celebrate winter solstice and Friday the 13th. The event was organized by HSSB Board Member, Judy Fontana, with support from a couple of other helpful members. Food was plentiful and delicious. For entertainment, Judy asked ChatGPT to compose two humanist or pagan versions of *The Night Before Christmas*, which she shared with the attendees. Judy also provided homemade black cat cookies and other themed party favors. Thank you, Judy & team, for a lovely evening!



Fun, food, and humanist fellowship at HSSB get together at Encina Royale Clubhouse on December 13. Anticipating longer days and shorter nights following winter solstice.



Upcoming Events of Interest to Humanists

Submitted by Diane Krohn & Melanie Jacobsen

- January 5, 10 am - Janet Mocker - *"Tails" of Two Donkeys*: Find hope in the new year by reflecting on lessons from the pit with Winnie the Pooh and Live Oak member Janet Mocker. Live Oak Unitarian Universalist Congregation, Goleta
- January 12, 10 am - Rev. Jonathan Young - *Callings and Mentors*. Rising to challenges requires imagination and support. The film *Moana* (2016) will serve as a guide to finding allies and inner resources to make worthy contributions. This service features dancing from *Hula Anyone*. Live Oak Unitarian Universalist Congregation, Goleta
- January 14, 2025. Esther Perel: *The Future of Relationships, Love and Desire*. UCSB Arts & Lectures event. [Esther Perel](#)
- January 16, 23 and 30: Douglas Berger: *Further Reflection: Speak Up Humanists*. This is a 3-part course on Zoom, to learn how to write and speak clearly about humanism. [Speak Up Humanists](#)
- January 19: Glenn Branch: *Fear of a Round Planet*. Center for Inquiry West, Los Angeles. [Glenn Branch](#)
- January 25: Trae Crowder, the *Liberal Redneck*, at the Lobero Theater. [Trae Crowder](#)
- January 26, 10am. Sue Reinhart - Un-Known: Letting go of cultural names for the deity, helps us find profound connection with the sacred all around and within us. Live Oak Unitarian Universalist Congregation, Goleta
- February 12: Kristine McDivitt Tompkins: *Rewilding on a Continental Scale*. UCSB Arts & Lectures event. [Kristine McDivitt Tompkins](#)
- February 20: Jonathan Haidt: *The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness*. UCSB Arts & Lectures event. [Jonathan Haidt](#)

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To Join or Donate to HSSB: Annual Membership dues - \$36 for an individual, \$60 for a couple, \$100 for a Society Supporter, and \$300 (or more) for a Society Patron. Dues payments and other donations can be made via PayPal (Paypal.me/SBHumanists), check or credit card. Include your name and contact information when submitting payments. Make checks out to *Humanist Society of Santa Barbara* and mail to Mary Wilk, P.O. Box 30232, Santa Barbara, CA 93130. mwilk722@gmail.com. Dues, donations, & payments can be remitted via this PayPal QR code. At the PayPal site, select 'Send' then log into your PayPal account to complete the transaction. Watch our speaker videos on [YouTube](#). Subscribe to our [Meetup](#) page to be notified of upcoming events.

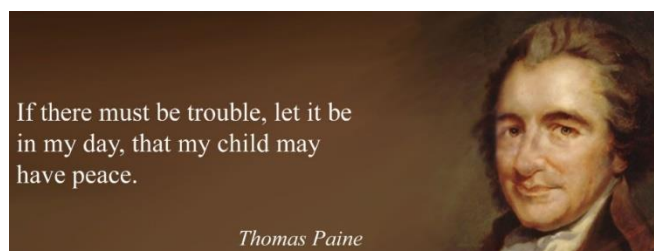
meetup



YouTube



- February 27: Baratunde Thurston: *Climate Justice and Environmental Stewardship*. UCSB Arts & Lectures event. [Baratunde Thurston](#)



Coming Up!
Freethinkers Day – January 29



Humanist Society of Santa Barbara
P.O. Box 30232
Santa Barbara, CA 93130

HSSB Calendar

Tuesday January 14. 5:00 pm. HSSB Board Meeting. Members always welcome to attend.

Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83592300667>.

Saturday January 18. 3:00 pm. Deepa Willingham. *One Woman's Dream: Bring Hope to a Seemingly Hopeless Situation* Hybrid Meeting held in-person at Live Oak Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Goleta and on-line. Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88193881833>.

Tuesday February 11. 5:00 pm. HSSB Board Meeting. Members always welcome to attend.

Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83592300667>.

Saturday February 15. 3:00 pm. Kevin Bolling, Exec. Dir. Secular Student Alliance. *Addressing Christian After School Program in Ojai by Offering The Satanic Temple's Humanistic After School Program*. Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88193881833>.

Tuesday March 11. 5:00 pm. HSSB Board Meeting. Members always welcome to attend.

Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83592300667>.

Saturday March 15. UCSB's Roger Freedman (ret.). *What's New with James Webb Space Telescope?* Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88193881833>.