

HUMANISTS

Volume 15, Number 3

This newsletter is presented by the Humanists of Fort Worth (HoFW), Texas for its members.

Happy



Humanist

of FORT WORTH

March, 2014

The "Happy Humanist" symbol is presented by IHEU (International Humanist and Ethical Union).

IN THIS ISSUE

Page:

1. March meeting notice; HoFW meeting schedule and location; !Thanks!;
2. **AFFIRMATIONS OF HUMANISM**;
3. Officers, Board Members, Membership Categories;
4. Minutes of February meeting;
5. Treasurer's Report: February 2014
6. From the Chair: Sam Baker;
7. Territoriality: Austin Cline
8. Presentation for March;
9. **Know Your Bible? #17**; Commentary; Quotes;
10. **Church & STATE** : Blasphemy;
11. Humanist Book Club; *the* Book Nook;

NEXT MEETING

Wed. March 12, 2014 7:00 PM

SPEAKER: Gail Kilman

TOPIC: "The Making of the Women's Movement"

Details on page 8

The Humanists of Fort Worth (HoFW) meets on the second Wednesday of each month at 7:00 PM at the Westside Unitarian Universalist Building, 901 Page Ave.

"The figures are shocking. Three quarters of the American population literally believe in religious miracles. The numbers who believe in the devil, in resurrection, in God doing this and that—it's astonishing. These numbers aren't duplicated anywhere else in the industrial world. You'd have to maybe go to mosques in Iran or do a poll among old ladies in Sicily to get numbers like this. Yet this is the American population." NOAM CHOMSKY

From: *The Quotable Atheist* - By Jack Huberman (2007)

! Thanks !

Many 'thank-yous' to the members and friends who are assisting with the cleanup and rearrangement duties after our meetings. It is much appreciated.

If you are interested in lending a hand please see one of the Board Members.

! Thanks !



THE AFFIRMATIONS OF HUMANISM: A STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES



WE ARE COMMITTED to the application of reason and science to the understanding of the universe and to the solving of human problems.

WE DEPLORE efforts to denigrate human intelligence, to seek to explain the world in supernatural terms, and to look outside nature for salvation.

WE BELIEVE that scientific discovery and technology can contribute to the betterment of life.

WE BELIEVE in an open and pluralistic society and that democracy is the best guarantee of protecting human rights from authoritarian elites and repressive majorities.

WE ARE COMMITTED to the principle of separation of church and state.

WE CULTIVATE the arts of negotiation and compromise as a means of resolving differences and achieving mutual understanding.

WE ARE CONCERNED with securing justice and fairness in society and with eliminating discrimination and intolerance.

WE BELIEVE in supporting the disadvantaged and the handicapped so that they will be able to help themselves.

WE ATTEMPT to transcend divisive parochial loyalties based on race, religion, gender, nationality, creed, class, sexual orientation, or ethnicity and strive to work together for the common good of humanity.

WE WANT TO PROTECT and enhance the earth, to preserve it for future generations, and to avoid inflicting needless suffering on other species.

WE BELIEVE in enjoying life here and now and in developing our creative talents to their fullest.

WE BELIEVE in the cultivation of moral excellence.

WE RESPECT the right to privacy. Mature adults should be allowed to fulfill their aspirations, to express their sexual preferences, to exercise reproductive freedom, to have access to comprehensive and informed health-care, and to die with dignity.

WE BELIEVE in the common moral decencies: altruism, integrity, honesty, truthfulness, responsibility. Humanist ethics is amenable to critical, rational guidance. There are normative standards that we discover together. Moral principles are tested by their consequences.

WE ARE DEEPLY CONCERNED with the moral education of our children. We want to nourish reason and compassion.

WE ARE ENGAGED by the arts no less than by the sciences.

WE ARE CITIZENS of the universe and are excited by the discoveries still to be made in the cosmos.

WE ARE SKEPTICAL of untested claims to knowledge, and we are open to novel ideas and seek new departures in our thinking.

WE AFFIRM HUMANISM as a realistic alternative to theologies of despair and ideologies of violence and as a source of rich personal significance and genuine satisfaction in the service to others.

WE BELIEVE in optimism rather than pessimism, hope rather than despair, learning in the place of dogma, truth instead of ignorance, joy rather than guilt or sin, tolerance in the place of fear, love instead of hatred, compassion over selfishness, beauty instead of ugliness, and reason rather than blind faith or irrationality.

WE BELIEVE in the fullest realization of the best and noblest that we are capable of as human beings.

by PAUL KURTZ

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Vacant

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Newsletter Editor/ Past Chair : Don Ruhs

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MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES:

Single Member	\$25.00/yr.
Couple	\$40.00/yr
Patron	\$50.00/yr.
Student	\$10.00/yr.

Choose the category that best fits your needs.

See the Treasurer, Dolores Ruhs, or a member of the Board for an application.

Pay in cash or mail the application, with your check, to:

Dolores Ruhs, Treasurer-HoFW

1036 Hill Top Pass, Benbrook, TX 76126-3848

NOTE:

If you do not have access to the internet, the Newsletter may be mailed to you for an additional annual fee of \$12.00.

**HUMANISTS OF FORT WORTH
MONTHLY MEETING
FEBRUARY 12, 2014**

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm by Chair Sam Baker.

There were 24 persons present, including eight visitors and with two new members joining.

This month's speaker was Charles Lockhart, Professor of Political Science at Texas Christian University. His talk **How the American Electoral System Steals Citizen's Votes** gave an explanation of the unfairness inherent in our system of elections.

Does your Congressperson represent your views, or is he/she, a polar opposite of you on almost every issue? The latter is the case for many humanists, especially in states like Texas. Does your vote count?

He gave an analysis based on numbers and proportions of different types of voters, showing that often an actual majority of voters is often drowned out by way of (1) gerrymandering, and (2) the disproportionate influence that the ownership of capital gives to industrial and business interests in our political system, especially since the Supreme Court decision known as **Citizens United v Federal Election Commission**, was handed down in 2010.

There was a break for refreshments after the conclusion of the presentation.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

John Fisher

John Fisher, Secretary

**HUMANISTS OF FORT WORTH
TREASURER'S REPORT
FEBRUARY 12, 2014**

Report Date: 12 February 2014
 Beginning Balance: 8 January 2014 \$987.90

CREDITS:

Dues:	Date	Amount
Gail Kilman	Feb. 12, 2014	\$25.00
John Barnes	Feb. 12, 2014	25.00
Snack Donations	Feb. 12, 2014	8.10
TOTAL CREDITS		<u>\$58.10</u>

DEBITS	Ck. #	Date	Amount
Honorarium-Dr. Lockhart	488	2/12/14	\$25.00
Bobbi Lotven - Snacks	489	2/12/14	\$5.00
TOTAL DEBITS			<u>\$30.00</u>

TOTAL CREDITS +/- DEBITS \$28.10

ENDING BALANCE: Feb. 12, 2014 \$1,016.00

ATTEST: *Dolores M. Ruhs* Feb. 12, 2014
 Dolores M. Ruhs Treasurer
 Don Ruhs Assistant.

Copies:
 Chair: Sam Baker
 Vice Chair: (Vacant)
 Secy.: John Fisher
 Board: Dick Trice
 Board: Don Ruhs

From the . . .



. . . Sam Baker

WE NEED MORE SOCIAL ACTIVITIES: HELP PLAN ONE

In my view, one great failure of the HoFW has been our lack of activities besides our regular monthly meeting. For some of our members, one meeting a month is all they want, and that's fine, but one lecture-style meeting a month doesn't contribute much to the social cohesion of the group. Perhaps that's one reason we have the smallest atheist group in the Metroplex.

Kudos to Wanda Foster for planning and organizing our recent outing to Brewed on Magnolia Avenue. The food and drinks (with separate menus for the gourmet coffee and beer) were great, and all who attended had a good time. Let's continue doing this once a month, at Brewed or elsewhere.

Kudos also to Adam for organizing our Adopt-A-Street Clean Up on March 22nd in conjunction with the city-wide Cowtown Great American Clean Up. We'll have some fun and do some good at the same time.

Lastly, kudos to Morris Meador for organizing The Humanist Book Club which will have its first meeting on March 29th (see the announcement on Page 11).

If you would like to organize an HoFW activity, please do so! Email me and I will help you get the word out to all members. Let a hundred flowers blossom.

Sam

Territoriality: Peeing on It Doesn't Make it Yours. Staking Out Territory by Appropriating Cultural, Political Institutions.



By Austin Cline

Austin Cline has been actively involved in educating people about atheism, agnosticism, and secular humanism on the Internet for over 15 years; he was a Regional Director for the Council for Secular Humanism and a former Publicity Coordinator for the Campus Free-thought Alliance. Austin has also lectured on religion, religious violence, science, and skepticism.

Christians have claimed that Christmas, marriage, morality, and more are theirs to define and control. What unites these issues is an effort by conservative Christians to claim ownership over cultural or political institutions which should be open equally to all citizens. They don't want to be mere contributors to a larger whole, they want to be owners with a right to exclude others. This is basically an expression of tribalism and an attempt to exercise territoriality, not unlike what dogs do.

Property represents power, so the distribution of property in society determines the distribution of power in that society. When property is held by only a few, then power is also exercised by a few and this is antidemocratic no matter what the formal structure of the political system is. When the ownership of property is widespread, power is also spread throughout society. This is not just true about physical property like real estate, but also political and cultural institutions "property" is most fundamentally about being having the authority to control a thing and exclude others from using that thing.

When more people are admitted as equals to institutions like marriage (or, to put it another way, when more people are allowed to

claim "marriage" as their own), then cultural and political power is distributed more broadly through society. When institutions like marriage are limited to a privileged group, then that cultural and political power is restricted to them and concentrated in their hands as well. That's the point of concentrating property and wealth into fewer hands: limit the power to as few people as possible in order to create a more strictly defined social hierarchy where a few can make decisions for many.

It is not legitimate for Christians to try to stake out something like Christmas for themselves alone, it is not legitimate for conservative religious believers to stake out marriage as something which they have the sole authority to define, and it's not legitimate for religious theists to stake out a political party for their own personal use. Believers who try to appropriate cultural and political institutions for themselves are acting like a puppy marking the corners of its new yard: they are engaging in territoriality by excluding "undesirables" and even defining themselves by the fact that those "undesirables" are not included.

In the end, though, all they end up really doing is peeing all over everything.

PRESENTATION FOR OUR NEXT MEETING

***** MARCH 12, 2014, 7:00 PM *****

GAIL KILMAN
MEMBER, HOFW

Our own Gail Kilman will be tonight's speaker.

Her topic: "The Making of the Women's Movement," (particularly the role played by the HOFW). She will be talking about one of the most significant humanitarian advancements in our country's history sparked by Betty Friedan, author of "**The Feminine Mystique**," which kicked off the second great step toward women's rights in our country in 1963.

If you're not as familiar as you would like to be with the great women who came together in the small New York town of Seneca Falls in the 1840's to take the very first steps toward equality, or with Friedan's sparking of the second wave of American feminism through the founding of the **National Organization of Women (NOW)**, this is a great opportunity to do so.

Submitted by: Dick Trice

Know Your Bible? #17

Don Ruhs

All Bible quotes are taken from the King James Version (KJV).

From: Various sources, including the Holy Bible.

IF ONLY ANIMALS COULD SPEAK!

If only animals could speak what would they tell us? What language would they use? Would we understand what they're saying?

“Now the serpent was more subtil (subtle) than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman (Eve), Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?”

And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.

And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.”

Genesis 3:1-5

“And the ass said unto Balaam, Am not I thine ass, upon which thou hast ridden ever since I was thine unto this day? was I ever wont to do so unto thee? And he said, Nay.”

Numbers 22:30

Animals *can* talk! Secular scientists claim the final word to the interpretation of science is the Bible.

That settles it!

Commentary . . .

Don

In spite of the fact that animals can't literally *speak* to us, science has discovered that they are able to communicate with us. Some are able to alert us to certain sounds, odors, and noises we are unable to recognize. More recently, science has learned that particular odors from our breath can tell a dog that something is wrong in our bodies.

“When the missionaries arrived, the Africans had the land and the Missionaries had the Bible. They taught us how to pray with our eyes closed. When we opened them, they had the land and we had the bible.”

JOMO KENYATTA (1892-1978), first Prime Minister and President of independent Kenya. Was converted to Christianity at the age of 22

NOTE: The above quote and bio-information was taken from *The Quotable Atheist*.

“*American Atheists* has always encouraged the public to read both the Old and New Testaments from cover to cover. Many people become Atheists after reading the Bible” ELLEN JOHNSON

President of American Atheists (1995-2008)

From: *The Quotable Atheist*



Church

&

STATE



Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

The 1st Amendment to the Constitution of the United States—"The Establishment Clause."

AROUND THE  WORLD

From: *Americans United for the Separation of Church & State* February 2014, page 22

Blasphemy Laws a Problem Worldwide, Group Says

An organization based in Belgium has issued a report noting that people in many nations continue to run the risk of being imprisoned, fined or even executed for committing blasphemy.

Human Rights Without Frontiers (HRWF), a watchdog group based in Brussels, recently published its annual list of individuals imprisoned for religion-related offenses worldwide. The report listed violations of the right of conscience in 24 countries.

A special section of the report focused on prosecutions for blasphemy. Such efforts were documented in Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tanzania, Tunisia and Turkey.

Blasphemy laws often target atheists and people who do not belong to state-sanctioned religions. Several of the cases documented by HRWF concerned residents of hard-line Muslims nations who were accused of offending Islam. Many of the cases involved postings on Facebook that were deemed insulting to that faith.

From: *Americans United for the Separation of Church & State* March 2014, page 22

Nigerian Clergy Support Harsh New Anti-Gay Law

Nigeria's Same-Sex Marriage Prohibition Act, which bans gay marriage and imposes a 14-year jail sentence for entering a same-sex relationship, has received broad support from Christian and Muslim religious leaders.

Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan signed the measure into law in January. Religion News Service reported that several members of the clergy have publicly backed it.

"This is the right thing," said the Rev. Musa Sake, general secretary of the Christian Association of Nigeria. "We don't have to drift into a situation where we don't have moral values because someone is giving us money."

His statement was perceived as a pointed critique of Uganda, whose president has yet to approve the country's infamous Anti-Homosexuality Bill, likely because of pressure from international leaders.

Nigerian police have already used the law as a pretense to jail LGBT activists.

Some American critics of the Religious Right have charged that U.S.-based fundamentalist activists have stirred up hate and anti-gay sentiment in African countries.

Activists In Finland Demand End Of Official State Church

A coalition of freethinkers in Finland has launched a petition calling for the abolition of the country's state church.

Although the Finnish Constitution guarantees freedom of religious expression, it does not recognize the separation of church and state. Currently, it endows the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Orthodox Church of Finland with special legal privileges that are not enjoyed by other religious or non-religious groups. The faith bodies are identified as public corporations, which clears the way for them to have a role in public administration, reported the *Helsinki Times*.

The churches also have the legal right to levy taxes, which are then collected by the state, and parliament cannot change public holidays without their consent. Additionally, religion is taught in public schools, and non-religious and minority religious communities are not eligible to conduct legal marriage ceremonies.

The petition requires 50,000 signatures before it can be presented to parliament for consideration.

A NEW VENTURE FOR HOFW

THE HUMANIST BOOK CLUB

The HUMANIST BOOK CLUB will have its first meeting at Westside UU Church on March 29 at 4:00 PM. Please email me if you are interested in the club. I will email back a short paper we can discuss at the first meeting. Our other agenda item will be to decide which books to read for upcoming months.

A book will be chosen and the following month we will discuss it together. There are countless interesting and informative books from which to choose. The club will require that you obtain a copy of the particular book which may be found in a public or church library. Many are paperbacks and may possibly be able to be down-loaded to your Kindle, Nook Tablet, or similar device.

This can be an extremely informative and stimulating get-together for those of us interested in exploring Humanism and in defining your own views on this philosophy.

Location:

Westside Unitarian Universalist Church
901 Page Avenue
Fort Worth, TX

Morris Meador, Facilitator-HoFW Book Club

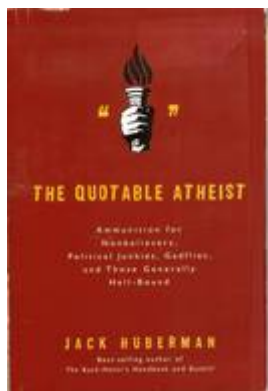
If you have questions, suggestions, or wish to sign up, please contact me at:

meadormorris1@gmail.com



the BOOK NOOK

This space is intended to focus attention on books, authors, subjects and articles that may be of interest to humanists, agnostics, atheists, and freethinkers.



THE QUOTABLE ATHEIST

By Jack Huberman

Ammunition for
Nonbelievers,
Political Junkies, Gadflies,
and Those Generally
Hell-Bound.

Nation Books 2006, 336 pages.

REVIEW (Source unknown)

Surprisingly, no book of quotations on God and religion by atheists and agnostics exists. Luckily, for the millions of American nonbelievers who have quietly stewed for years as the religious right made gains in politics and culture, the wait is over. Best-selling author Jack Huberman's zeitgeist sense has honed into the backlash building against religious fundamentalism and collected a veritable treasure trove of quotes by philosophers, scientists, poets, writers, artists, entertainers, and political figures. His colorful cast of atheists includes Karen Armstrong, Lance Armstrong, Jules Feiffer, Federico Fellini, H. L. Mencken, Ian McKellen, Isaac Singer, Jonathan Swift, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Virginia Woolf and the Marquis de Sade.

Jack Huberman lives in New York City and is the author of the bestselling *Bush Haters Handbook*, its sequel, *Bushit!*, and *101 People Who Are Really Screwing America*.