

COWTOWN



HUMANIST

October

2009

The Humanists of Ft Worth meet on the 2nd Wednesday of each month at the Unitarian Universalist building 901 Page Ave at 7 PM



From the Chair

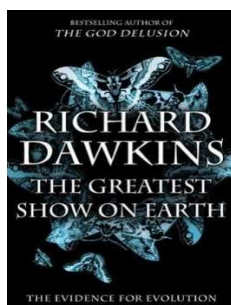
A funny thing happened on the way to the Forum. That's the last meeting of HOFW where few were expected because of the downpour and the President's message to Congress and the country. The funny part was the large number who came out, a sign of increasing interest in freethinking in Fort Worth. Instead of the planned program we listened attentively to Obama's speech and had a lively discussion with participation by everyone, including visitors.

The original subject will be the one for October, "Owners of the Public Mind---How the Media Has Determined U. S. History." The media, mainstream that is, has become almost exclusively owned by a powerful few who exercise incredible power, including the making of our history. One of the writers who will be discussed, Howard Zinn, had this to say, "...if you can control history, what people know about it, if you can decide what's in people's history and what's left out, you can order their thinking. You can order their values. You can in effect organize their *brains* by controlling their knowledge. The people who can do that, who can control the past, are the people who control the present."

If you have any interest in the serious crisis we're having in this country today don't miss this meeting. The presentation will be a controversial one and your input is important. The discussion will be free and open for argument. Come, get involved, and enjoy the company of good, thinking humanists.

Reminder: Richard Dawkins Book Tour

The Center for Inquiry is pleased to announce a series of upcoming events featuring **Richard Dawkins**, renowned scientist and public intellectual, discussing his new book *The Greatest Show on Earth: The Evidence for Evolution*.



HAPPY BLASPHEMY DAY!

Some governments and institutions-and even some individuals-want to keep certain topics off limits. This is especially true with religion. In many places, discussions and questions about religion are discouraged, even punished. But how can we come to our own conclusions about religion if we can't freely examine and discuss it?

“Preserving the right to uncensored expression is important not only because it is indispensable for an objective examination of truth claims—it is no accident that dictatorships uniformly suppress speech—but also because it has intrinsic value. Human dignity requires the freedom to express oneself as an individual.”

— Ronald A. Lindsay, CFI President and CEO

As part of its [Campaign for Free Expression](#) and to jump-start a dialogue about the importance of free speech, the [Center for Inquiry](#) is proud to sponsor [Blasphemy Day 2009](#). From serious discussions to irreverent comedy, events are happening all over! Check out the list below and join a celebration near you.

The only event in all of Texas

[CFI Austin](#)

[“Free Speech: Liberating What We Can Say”](#) – 7:00 PM, featuring two presentations.

- “Banning Books from Schools and Libraries 2009” with Tom Moran, Austin Public Library
- “What the First Amendment Says – and Doesn’t Say – About Censorship” with David A. Anderson, University of Texas Law SchoolBook People, 603 N. Lamar Blvd. at W 6th St., Austin



The following has nothing to do with humanism, but I thought you'd enjoy it anyway, Ed

Michael Moore makes friends in GOP-leaning town

AP - Wednesday, September 30, 2009 8:22:44 AM By JOHN FLESHER

Seated on a platform in a blocked-off street, the founder of the Traverse City Film Festival grinned as Mayor Michael Estes hailed him for boosting the local economy and cultural scene -- "with almost no government assistance!"

Who was that free-market champion? Michael Moore.

Yes, THAT Michael Moore. The Oscar-winning firebrand whose "Roger & Me" attacked General Motors, whose "Sicko" extolled government-run health care. His latest film, "Capitalism: A Love Story," which opens nationwide Friday, blames deregulation for the financial meltdown and shows Franklin D. Roosevelt advocating an expanded welfare state.



Yet here was Moore in his festival's fifth season, exchanging pleasantries with business and civic leaders in this largely Republican community, surrounded by fans offering hugs and handshakes.

"This guy is a great promoter, a great businessman. He's done so much for Traverse City, more than we can imagine," Estes said.

Moore, 55, is widely celebrated -- and reviled -- as a left-wing scourge of big business.

But in this resort town of 15,000 on Lake Michigan, a five-hour drive northwest of Detroit, his image is more complex. Since moving to the area six years ago, Moore has become a high-profile citizen and benefactor.

In addition to starting the festival -- which has attracted Hollywood figures such as Madonna, comedian Jeff Garlin and "Borat" director Larry Charles -- he helped restore a historic theater and brought his film production company to town.

All the while, he's befriended local residents with widely divergent beliefs.

"We share a desire to have our community thrive, improve the arts and culture, find ways to bring in more jobs," Moore said in an interview. "I really have more common ground with the Republicans in this area than the things we disagree on."

But he acknowledged some business and civic leaders were suspicious at first: "They seemed to think I wanted to turn the place into the People's Republic of Traverse City."

Moore and his wife, Kathleen Glynn, moved here from New York after his mother's death to be closer to his father, a retired auto worker in Flint.

Two years later, Moore teamed with author Doug Stanton and photographer John Robert Williams to establish the festival, a godsend for local tourism. Moore said he'd grown tired of driving 250 miles to Detroit or Ann Arbor to see a foreign film or documentary, and was concerned about the decreasing quality of movies in the typical cineplex.

The festival's premiere event in July 2005 drew overflow crowds. Moore critics sponsored a competing "freedom film festival," but few attended.

For the first festival, organizers renovated and reopened the State Theatre, a long-shuttered downtown movie house. Over the next two years, Moore negotiated with the owner -- Rotary Charities of Traverse City -- to operate it full-time as a non-profit. Eventually, the group handed over the \$1.2 million facility for free.

It's now a glittering showplace, one of the nation's top-grossing theaters -- featuring not just art-house and classic films but broadcasts of the Metropolitan opera and sporting events, while attracting customers to downtown restaurants and shops.

"I don't like Michael Moore's movies. I don't like his message," said Al Bonney, 65, a Rotary Charities board member. "But I certainly like what he's done for this town. The guy has shown he's legit and honest and he believes in serving the community, so he's OK by me."

Moore has talked up the area to Hollywood pals. Moore and Garlin, a star and executive producer of the HBO series "Curb Your Enthusiasm," plan next year to start a Traverse City Comedy Arts Festival.

"People have mentioned to me the irony that between the film festival and the State Theatre, what they've done for the local economy, the millions of dollars they've brought in ... I've ended up helping many Republican businessmen survive, or at least do better," a chuckling Moore said. "But life is full of ironies."

Each year, the festival has grown. This year's included 71 feature movies and 50 shorts, panel discussions with filmmakers and classes for youths.

An army of volunteers keeps the festival and State Theatre going.

"There's such loyalty to Michael," said Sara Klebba, who works for a brew pub. "You see him walking down the street, shopping, eating at the restaurants -- he supports us and we're all behind him."

But he still has critics around town.

"I'd call him unpatriotic," said Randy Sniff, 35, who works for an oil and gas company and has never attended the festival.

"If a guy like me, who's been billed as Public Enemy No. 1 by Rush Limbaugh and Fox News ... can make friends and break bread and work to improve his community alongside his Republican neighbors, **maybe it can happen anywhere**" he said.

Plan Your HumanLight Event

There's a new HumanLight video on the American Humanist youtube channel (HumanistVision)!



How often do you get a chance to have a positive impact on the world by partying? Well, when you celebrate HumanLight, a December holiday for Humanists, you get a chance to enjoy, entertain, educate, and enlighten.

HumanLight was first celebrated in 2001. It has been celebrated in dozens of locations across the U.S. and has gained the attention of the national media, but many Humanists still don't know about it. The attached video link tells the story of this new holiday. Please take a few minutes to view it. After you do, we hope that you will start thinking about planning a HumanLight celebration of your own this year. The holiday is typically celebrated on or around December 23rd.

Check out the new video here: Cut and Paste

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qsiYANxesTo>

You can learn more about HumanLight by visiting the website at:

www.humanlight.org



Lt. Dan Choi, who faces discipline from the military after coming out as a gay man, received the first Service to Humanity award from the Harvard Humanist Chaplaincy. In a dramatic gesture, Choi burned his discharge letter at the podium during the award ceremony.

Lt. Dan Choi is not asking. He is telling.

In an appearance at Harvard last week (Sept. 17), the West Point graduate, Iraq veteran, and Arabic linguist told the story of his coming out this March as a gay man — and his campaign since then to repeal DADT, the military's "don't ask, don't tell" policy.

DADT is shorthand for a 1994 federal law that allows members of the U.S. military to be discharged for the "propensity or intent to engage in homosexual acts." Those who keep their sexual orientation a secret are allowed to serve.

Since 1994, about 13,000 gay soldiers, sailors, and Marines have been dismissed from the service, including more than 300 since the start of the Obama administration.

"I want to attack this issue on a moral basis," said Choi, who spoke at an evening ceremony at Science Center D, where he received the first Service to Humanity award from the Harvard Humanist Chaplaincy. (The event, swarmed by a capacity crowd, was co-sponsored by the Harvard Gay and Lesbian Caucus.)

Requiring gays in the military to lie violates the many creeds that give American life its moral ballast, said Choi, a 2003 graduate of the United States Military Academy. DADT violates the idea of "freedom and justice for all" in the Pledge of Allegiance, he explained, and it contradicts a traditional West Point pledge: "A cadet does not lie."

In his own life, being in the closet involved living a lie that violated his own Christian upbringing, added Choi, the son of conservative Korea-born parents. (His father is a Southern Baptist minister.) He recounted telling his mother, "I refuse to bear false witness against you."

Mad as Hell Doctors Signal New Era of Healthcare Activism

Single-Payer, Yes, Public Option, No

by Mark Harris

"I am not the first person to take up the cause of health care but I am determined to be the last," President Obama declared to great applause in his recent speech before Congress."

It was a stirring moment, but in the end perhaps just one more ephemeral moment on the stage of what passes now for political drama in the United States. Whatever results from the final health care legislation passed by Congress, we can be sure it will not come close to solving the health care crisis. The cause of health care, post-Obama, will go on.

That's the message of the "[Mad as Hell Doctors](#)" for single-payer, an intrepid troop of Oregon physicians now on a three-week national road tour fueled by a Winnebago and the energy of boisterous supporters at every stop. They're on their way to Washington, D.C. where they'll rally on Sept. 30 and ask to meet with the President to discuss the merits of single-payer.

It's unlikely the group has any high hopes to win Obama back to the single-payer cause he once formally supported. Actually, it's unlikely Obama will even meet with the group. The White House has not exactly objected to the efforts of Sen. Max Baucus (D-Mont.) and others in Congress to shut single-payer advocates out of the debate.

The Mad as Hell Doctors serve as a counterpoint to everything wrong with the current health care reform debate. "What we're mad about is actually not health care," said group spokesperson Dr. Paul Hochfeld recently on MSNBC's *The Ed Show* with Ed Schultz. "What we're mad about is that the industry has once again manipulated the political process for profits instead of health."

The emergency room doctor from Corvallis, Oregon suggests even Obama may not have grasped the insurance industry's power before taking office. But if the President now finds himself a political victim of an industry whose profits are bought at the price of a society of victims, he has also not shown the requisite courage to take on the industry's real power.

Indeed, health care reform ought be the last issue the right wing is able to exploit. Not when tens of millions are without insurance, while almost everyone else faces derisory coverage with exorbitant premiums and out-of-pocket costs. A dismal economy has only aggravated this sorry state of affairs.

Yet thanks to Democratic efforts to limit and complicate health care reform, the right has turned an unassailable moral imperative for social justice into a stupid, noisy uproar over "death panels" and other nonsense. Meanwhile, many progressive supporters of health reform have been reduced to saying their prayers that some form of "public option" plan at least makes it through Congress.

Unlike many liberals, the Mad as Hell Doctors doubt a government-run public option will amount to much. "This is how we're going to fix healthcare [with the public option]?" ask Hochfeld. "We're going to mandate that everybody in the country that doesn't have health insurance buy a commercial product that's flawed. If you can't afford it, we'll make you pay slightly more than you can comfortably afford and the taxpayer will pay the difference. If you get your insurance through your employer, then you won't qualify for the public option. That's 'fixing' health care?"

As Hochfeld also reminded MSNBC viewers, employed people tend to be healthier than unemployed people. Thus, it's likely under a mixed public-private system that the public plan will gradually morph into a mechanism for insurers to transfer the most burdensome patients onto the public system. The healthier, wealthier, and more profitable individuals will remain disproportionately represented in the private system.

In an interview with the *San Francisco Chronicle*, (Sept. 18, 2009), filmmaker Michael Moore makes the observation that no one should be surprised by the dispirited turn health care reform (now called insurance reform) has taken. "If you start, right off the bat, compromising, don't be surprised if (Obama) is going to keep compromising," notes Moore.

It didn't have to be. A *New York Times/CBS News Poll* earlier this year found 59 percent of Americans in favor of government national health insurance, with 49 percent saying such insurance should cover all medical problems. Other polls show even greater support for the single-payer concept.

Instead of mobilizing this base, the President has conducted himself as if the most important concern in the health debate is bi-partisan agreement with the opponents of reform. Apparently, Obama feels constrained to keep the Republican valets of the health insurance status quo in the loop for whatever change happens. Other than to perhaps prove what a reasonable man the President is, the question to be asked is just: Why?

Indeed, what kind of productive agreement is possible with people whose motto is no, no, and no to reform? Actually, it's not so much that the President necessarily cares about Republican support. But he does accept the entrenched economic power of the health insurance industry as here to stay. And the Republicans cravenly represent the latter.

If Obama truly wants to be the leader of historic change in health care, he should call for a mass grassroots activist campaign to demand insurance companies out of health care. He did once say that single-payer was probably the best system, if we had the luxury of starting from scratch. But is it really a "luxury" to try to make the system right by tackling the root of what's wrong?

Continued from page 4

Unfortunately, while the crazed right screams about Obama's "Marxist" mission to dispense Grandma to the gulags for some "end of life" counseling, the millions of voters once galvanized by his run for the Presidency have not mobilized with anywhere near equal passion.

It's not hard to grasp why. "He's only going halfway with this public option," Moore tells the *Chronicle*. "He needs to remove the private, profit-making insurance companies from the table." But here the deeper reality of the political status quo emerges. When was the last time a Democratic President did anything to promote grassroots mass action for a progressive cause, at least when it didn't involve their own election?

The Mad as Hell Doctors remind us that the fight for health care reform isn't really over whether private insurance is more or less good or bad in taking care of people's health care needs. It isn't over whether premiums are too high; or there are too many co-pays or policy exclusions. It certainly isn't about anything the Republicans say it's about.

This is a battle for the way we define ourselves as a nation. Will we be a society guided by a sense of compassion and justice, in which our every medical resource is devoted to the well being of the people? Or will we be a society in which in the end money trumps justice, and people suffer and even die because it's just more important to let the profiteers keep their good thing going?

We need to guarantee every American the right to the best care possible, regardless of their income. That means private health insurance companies out of the picture. That means single-payer into the picture. And, as the example of the Mad as Hell Doctors teaches us, that also means a new, long-term commitment to grassroots activism for health care justice.

Mark T. Harris attended the Sept. 8 send-off rally for the Mad as Hell Doctors at Portland's Pioneer Square and he's been rooting for them ever since. Harris is a former senior editor for the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations. Website: www.Mark-T-Harris.com. Email: Mark@Mark-T-Harris.com. For more info, see www.madashelldoctors.com.

It's unlikely the "Docs" will even be heard by the President, He seems to want to make a pact with the health insurance devils. At least it seems so to me. Ed

PETA Killed 95% of Their Pets Last Year By [Mark Lorenz](#) September 30, 2009

PETA is your local neighborhood crazy. They yell at you to fall in line and do things, then drink whiskey out of a pumpkin and try to sell you drugs. I've never liked them. mber 30, 2009

From advocating drinking human breast milk, to throwing paint on people they disagree with, to telling parents not to bring their kids to the circus, to having Bill Maher, Jared Leto, and Andy Dick as prominent members, to having their leader say you can eat her when she dies, PETA, in general, blows. But here's another reason. According to documents released today, they've killed 95% of the pets placed in the adoptive care program. How many did they place in homes? Seven. How many were taken behind the shed and read the riot act? 2,124. And I'm sure the seven placed were by some dreadlocked man telling his friends, "TAKE THIS DOG. I CAN'T KEEP TELLING PEOPLE I KILL ANIMALS FOR PETA."

PETA has a \$32 million dollar budget, and yet still has failed to build any sort of shelter to humanely house the pets in their program. More likely, the money is used to pay the salaries of their employees, so they can say ridiculous shiz, picket events and hand out stupid stickers with adorable chickens on it that say, "I am not a McNugget." They're like the town slut, boning everybody, then trying to shame them in church. Except this town slut aggressively markets to children.

And yes, I've researched this as early as 2005. They're still at it! Ed

Contact Information For Humanists of Ft Worth:

Chair Dick Trice trice932@yahoo.com Tel 817-791-9927
3500 Hidden Pines Court, Arlington, TX 76016

Vice Chair Don Ruhs laidback935@sbcglobal.net
1036 Hill Top Pass Benbrook 76126 Tel 817-246-3840

Secretary Suzie Lotven lotven@sbcglobal.net
1727 Hurley Ave Ft Worth 76110 Tel 817-927-7213

Treasurer Dolores Ruhs ruhsdol@sbcglobal.net
1036 Hill Top Pass Benbrook 76126 Tel 817-246-3840

Past Chair Michael Little slittle71@gmail.com

Webmaster Russel Elleven doctorelleven@gmail.com
6120 Comfort Dr Ft Worth 76132 Tel 817-370-2171

Newsletter Editor Ray Weil Cowtown_humanist@myway.com
2204 San Ramon Ct Arlington 76013 Tel 817-205-8603

Humanists of Ft Worth is a member of the

