

THE SECULAR CIRCULAR

Newsletter of the Humanist Society of Santa Barbara

January, 2006

California's Population Time Bomb

By Nancy Wahl

California's burgeoning population is a highly charged issue that has created many a strange political bedfellow.

According to the latest census, California's population increased by 539,000 to over 36.5 million last year. At this rate, the state's population will double in 47 years, potentially causing loss of wild lands and native species, choking pollution, brutal traffic and chronic water shortages.

What makes this such a controversial topic is that almost all of California's growth is coming from immigrants. So suddenly, liberals who support population limits because of environmental concerns are finding themselves on the same side of the podium as conservatives who emphasize law enforcement.

Likewise, pro-growth conservatives and business owners who benefit from the steady stream of low-cost labor from Mexico now find themselves next to left-leaning pro-

gressives concerned with immigrants' rights.

Our own society appears sharply divided on the issue, with some equating tougher immigration measures with immigrant-bashing, and others supporting more restraints such as members of Californians for Population Stabilization (CAPS), the group our January speaker represents.

On January 21, Dr. Diana Hull, President of CAPS, will tell us how she believes California's population growth affects our environment and quality of life and how the

major driver of this growth has been immigration and births to immigrants.

Dr. Hulls says achieving population stabilization and environmental sustainability "requires opposing

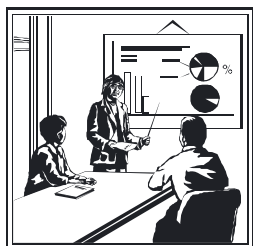
both business interests on the right and 'politically correct' multiculturalists on the left."

A behavioral scientist and former Sierra Club member, she believes, "The question is what size and kind of state and nation we want to leave to our children and grandchildren."

This month...

**Diana Hull, Ph.D., President
Californians for Population Stabilization
will speak about
"California's Population Time Bomb"**

Saturday, January 21, 3 pm at Vista del Monte

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Board meetings are scheduled on the Monday preceding the Saturday general monthly meeting of the Society and are usually held at the home of one of the board members. All HSSB members are welcome to attend these meetings. Contact any Board member for more information.

Membership Notes
by Mary Wilk

Humanist Society meetings are usually held on the 3rd Saturday of each month at 3 pm in the Patio Room of Vista del Monte, 3775 Modoc Road, Santa Barbara, CA. More information is available at our web site:

www.SantaBarbaraHumanists.org

or by contacting any of the board members listed in the left-hand column of this page.

If you would like a copy of this newsletter mailed to a friend or someone who might be interested in our Society, please send their contact information to PO Box 30232, Santa Barbara, CA 93130 or call Mary Wilk. Alternatively, all of our newsletters are available online at the web address shown above.

If you are not already a member, we encourage you to join our Society. Annual membership dues are \$36 for a single person, \$60 for a couple, and \$100 (or more) for a sponsor. Members receive the monthly newsletter and have the option of attending meetings, outings, and special events sponsored by the society.

Those unable to attend our monthly meetings may subscribe to our newsletter for an annual fee of \$20 but are not entitled to other membership privileges. When attending our meetings, a donation of \$2 from members and \$5 from non-members is appreciated. If you are not a member and would like to learn more about our society, please contact any Board member to attend one of our meetings on a complimentary basis.

(See *Membership*, page 3)

(Membership, continued from page 2)

We are pleased to welcome the following new members to our Society:

Barbara Galloway
945 Ward Drive #65
Santa Barbara, CA 93111

Richard & Connie Kennelly
1650 San Leandro Lane
Santa Barbara, CA 93108

Mae & Jerry Miles
5 Paseo del Rio
Solvang, CA 93463

Shyama Osborne
1027 E. Ortega St. Apt. F
Santa Barbara, CA 93103

Lulu Withers
2624 State St. #1
Santa Barbara, CA 93105

A membership list with address, telephone, and e-mail information for all members as of January 2006 is now available to members. If you wish to receive a copy, please contact Mary Wilk at mwilk@cox.net or 967-3045. This list is intended for use related to the Humanist Society only. No other use is permitted.



I don't want any yes-men around me. I want everybody to tell me the truth even if it costs them their jobs.

— Sam Goldwyn

Social Scene

by Anne H. Rojas

We finished up 2005 with our Winter Solstice Party attended by 58 people. The delightful duo—The Bunkers---entertained us with violin and guitar music. As usual, Mike, the Sizzler Manager, provided a very nicely served dinner and was very generous with the wine. Our grand prize raffle winner was Bea Duncan who may now shop at Gelsons with a \$50 gift certificate.

We are already planning our summer solstice party and are looking for a home donation for this event which will most probably be held on Saturday, June 17th. This will be a pot luck meal with hired clean-up help for the hostess. Plates, napkins, etc. will be provided. If you have a home which can accommodate about 60 persons, please consider making it available for this event. The approximate times are 3:00 to 7:00 PM.

I am getting a good response to our theater evening in Ventura at the Rubicon Theater for the Ben Franklin show. Tickets go on sale in mid-January. We have some car pool volunteers so you may not have to drive. We will dine out in Ventura prior to the show. If you have not been to the Rubicon, it is in a beautiful refurbished church and you will sit in pews. The production quality is always first rate.

Our January dining out at will be at Rusty's Pizza

We still could use some help on the Activities Committee. Let me know if any of you have an interest in helping to plan some activities or have suggestions.

Chairman's Chat

by Dick Cousineau

There is a two hundred year old wall, with an American flag proudly flying from its battlement. It's like no other wall in the world, built before or after. It was put together by patriots, intellectuals, farmers, and trades-people with the sweat of their and their children's brows. With no help whatsoever from the priests, ministers, or rabbis of the community, it was built to last for countless generations, even to this day and beyond.



Built not with cement, stones or wood, but at the cost of more lives per capita than any war this nation has ever fought, it has survived two centuries against onslaughts by those who would demolish it. It is a wall of ideals, dreams, and hopes yet so delicate

as to see through it just who is attempting to destroy it.

While not fragile it is susceptible to decay caused by ostensible "good causes" such as "faith-based initiatives," "fairness in education," and "support for repairs and reconstruction to historical yet still in use religious structures."

Ancient superstitious siege equipment can stealthily open small passageways in the wall that begin to erode wider and wider with familiarity. Faith-based sappers can chip away at the superstructure entering the interstices, with the help of politicians, to

remove more and more wall support.

As the philosophical inheritors of this wall separating our secular state from a dogmatic theocracy, we must withstand the religious (and off-times popular) pressure to relax our vigilance. We must encourage and support those organizations that stand up to the potential destroyers and repel with all legal means their efforts to overturn and undermine this wall of freedom.

Join me in financially supporting our own Dudley Duncan Fund (The First Amendment Defense Fund), The Freedom From Religion Foundation, and Americans United for the Separation of Church and State. All three of these funds fight for the maintenance of the wall of separation and support the Bill of Rights with dedication and vigor.

Web Site of the Month

by Diane Krohn

www.ebonmusings.org

It's now winter in Santa Barbara, and we can expect some all-day rain. Ebon Musings is a good site with which to while away the day, reading these essays and articles about theology, biblical errors and contradictions, the existence of the soul, the origins of Christmas, the Ten Commandments, and other topics important to atheism, theism and more specifically, Christianity. There are also links to many interesting deconversion and Atheist-In-Foxhole stories. New and timely updates include "The Wall" and "An Essay on Christmas."

Silent Auction

by Adrian Wenner

At the February meeting, we will have a silent auction as a small fund-raiser for the Society.

As a start, the following three donated books will be available:

Freethinkers: A History of American Secularism, by Susan Jacoby. This 2004 Hardback Edition is in excellent condition, with dust cover.

Infidels: A History of the Conflict Between Christendom and Islam, by Andrew Wheatcroft. This is a 2004 Hardback Edition in excellent condition, with dust cover.

The Hole in the Universe: How Scientists Peered over the Edge of Emptiness and Found Everything, by K.C. Cole. This 2001 Hardback Edition is in excellent condition, with dust cover.

If you enter those titles into Google before you come to the meeting, you can find just about any information you desire about these books — both pro and con. You will also find a link to Amazon.com that lets you know how you can buy new or used copies through that agency. You can also go to Borders or wherever and buy the books directly (discount for Seniors on Thursdays).

Alternatively, you can study the merits of the books and bid for them in our silent auction. The money becomes a contribution to the our Humanist Society instead of into the pockets of individuals or a commercial firm. Furthermore, if you win the bid, you won't have had to go to the trouble of going to the bookstore or ordering and waiting for your copy.

HSSB Book Club

by Marty Shapiro

Our first 2006 Book Club meeting will be held on Wednesday, Jan. 18th at 1:30 p.m. at the home of Dick Cousineau and Judy Freeman.

This month's book is the popular best-seller *Freakonomics* by Steven D. Levitt (an economist) and Stephen J. Dubner (a writer). *Publishers Weekly* reviewed this book as follows:

Forget your image of an economist as a crusty professor worried about fluctuating interest rates: Levitt focuses his attention on more intimate real-world issues, like whether reading to your baby will make her a better student. Recognition by fellow economists as one of the best young minds in his field led to a profile in the New York Times, written by Dubner, and that original article serves as a broad outline for an expanded look at Levitt's search for the hidden incentives behind all sorts of behavior. There isn't really a grand theory of everything here, except perhaps the suggestion that self-styled experts have a vested interest in promoting conventional wisdom even when it's wrong. Instead, Dubner and Levitt deconstruct everything from the organizational structure of drug-dealing gangs to baby-naming patterns.

While some chapters might seem frivolous, others touch on more serious issues, including a detailed look at Levitt's controversial linkage between the legalization of abortion and a reduced crime rate two decades later.

(See *Freakonomics*, page 6)

(Freakonomics, continued from page 5)

Underlying all these research subjects is a belief that complex phenomena can be understood if we find the right perspective. Levitt has a knack for making that principle relevant to our daily lives, which could make this book a hit. Malcolm Gladwell blurbs that Levitt "has the most interesting mind in America," an invitation Gladwell's own substantial fan base will find hard to resist.

Call me at 968-0478 or Dick at 687-2371 for more information.

Letter to the Editor by Micki Stern

In response to the letter by David Thomas, I want to say that for me being a Humanist means much more than just not believing in an anthropomorphic god. The values of humanism are what drew me to the Santa Barbara Humanist Society. Humanism means caring deeply about other living things and taking care of the planet we live on. It means doing what we can to help those less fortunate and protecting the environment.

That was also the consensus of the wonderful meeting we had in October skillfully led by Carol Palladini and attended by a good crowd of humanists. No one expressed the view that our group should not take stands. The consensus was that we care deeply about a wide range of issues and that those who wanted to should be able to take stands in support of social justice and the environment as part of the social justice committee, and those who didn't want to take a position would be able to not be part of the social justice activities. But I think the group clearly felt that being a

Humanist means more than NOT believing in something, but rather means sharing values with most of our group and trying to make a better world.

I would respectfully suggest that Dr. Thomas review the principles of Humanism and I think he will see that Humanism embraces the social justice ideas that our members strongly supported at our October meeting.

Letter to the Editor by Robert Perry, Sr.

Responding to the David Thomas letter in the December *Circular*:

Humanism is concerned with many important issues other than religion. Many of them are enumerated in the Humanist Manifesto and listed as Affirmations in *Free Inquiry*. Paul Kurtz has elaborated on many of them in his articles and books. If the Democratic and Green parties support and actively work for a variety of these concepts it is reasonable to assume that they would have much Humanist support. If the Republican Party would seriously consider these issues, and do something to implement them, I am sure it would attract many more Humanists.

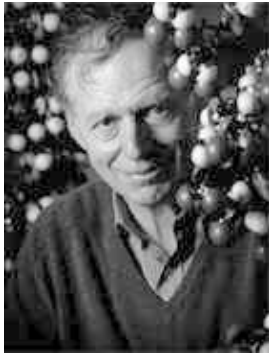
The Ecstatic Editor by Roger Schlueter

No doubt you know that the "Dover Intelligent Design (ID) trial" decision came down on the side of reason, science, and rationality. But the written decision was much more than simply a statement of the (de)merits of ID.

(See Dover, page 8)

Upcoming Events

Saturday, February 18, 2006 at Vista del Monte, 3 pm
“Science and Myth in the Origin of Life”



Robert Shapiro, Ph.D. Professor of Chemistry at New York University

Dr. Shapiro’s research in DNA chemistry has been supported by grants from the National Institutes of Health, the Department of Energy; the National Science Foundation; and other organizations. He has written three books for the general public: *Life Beyond Earth*, with Gerald Feinberg, *Origins: A Skeptic's Guide to the Creation of Life on Earth*, and *The Human Blueprint*.

Saturday, March 18, 2006 at Vista del Monte, 3 pm
“Truth or Consequences: The Search for Credibility in an Age of Media Spin”



Susan Rogers, Editor & Publisher of MediaLiteracy.com

A passionate advocate for media literacy education, Susan Rogers provides incisive analysis and thoughtful commentaries on the media's impact on our lives and the importance of media literacy for parent and community groups and general audiences. She has more than 25 years experience in communications and marketing and public relations for non-profit organizations, small businesses and large corporations.

Saturday, April 15, 2006 [location to be determined] 3 pm
“Advances in Longevity: How Much Longer Can We Live?”



Joel Rothman, Ph.D., Professor of Molecular, Cellular and Developmental Biology at UCSB

Dr. Rothman will discuss recent genetic discoveries that could add many years to the average lifespan. A Helen Hay Whitney fellow and EMBO fellow at the Medical Research Council, Cambridge, England, he is the recipient of a Searle Scholars Award and Shaw Scientists Award. He is also on the Board of Trustees of the Cancer Center of Santa Barbara.

(*Dover*, continued from page 6)

Rather, it was a withering statement about the lies, tactics and subterfuges of the ID movement's attempts to insert religion into the science curriculum of our public schools.

Judge Jones (a Republican appointee by Bush) wrote a scathing yet scientifically sound decision that should be the death knell of all attempts to insert religion into the science curricula in our schools. Unfortunately, ID proponents have already vowed to continue their push to adulterate the scientific curricula of our schools with religious propaganda.

Although I am neither a biologist nor a lawyer, as I read the decision text (which is actually quite accessible to the layperson), I found myself cheering aloud. It is an exem-

plary piece of writing that will serve as a benchmark for future science/religion decisions for decades to come. I encourage you to read it if for no other reason than for its clarity of thought and evidence-based decision-making.

As you might expect, there is an interesting story behind the final decision. It reads like a Perry Mason episode which includes, literally, a dramatic introduction of evidence which sealed the case. If you can't activate these links online, contact me and I will send you a hardcopy of the story. This story has all the elements, and more, of *Inherit the Wind*. It is truly a timeless classic, one that will give Humanists a rallying point for many years to come.