



Humanists Hawaii

NEWSLETTER

March 2008

March meeting

THE FOUR HORSEMEN

Discussions with Richard Dawkins: Episode 1

Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, Sam Harris and Christopher Hitchens

*March 30, 2008 (Last Sunday, not fourth Sunday)
10:30 a.m.*

*Krauss Hall 112
University of Hawaii*

On the 30th of September 2007, Richard Dawkins (*The God Delusion*), Daniel Dennett (*Breaking the Spell*), Sam Harris (*Letter to a Christian Nation*) and Christopher Hitchens (*God is Not Great*) sat down for a first-of-its-kind, unmoderated 2-hour discussion, convened by Richard Dawkins Foundation for Reason and Science and filmed by Los Angeles video producer Josh Timonen.

All four authors have recently received a large amount of media attention for their writings against religion – some positive, and some negative. In this conversation the group trades stories about the public's reaction to their recent books, their unexpected successes, criticisms and common misrepresentations. They discuss the tough questions about religion that face the world today: spirituality, humility, doubt, appeal to authority and others.

We will view and discuss the first hour of this first episode of a projected series called *Discussions with Richard Dawkins*.

Limits on tables at Dawkins events

R.J. DeSmedt, AHA Grassroots Coordinator, sends a letter to all Humanist groups saying that setting up tables or attempting to do so may cause more harm than good. Liz Cornwell of the Richard Dawkins Foundation for Reason and Science emailed Mr. DeSmedt Feb 28:

Dear Mr. DeSmedt,

I am writing in regard to your email dated February 27 concerning members of AHA hosting tables at the various venues that have been secured for Richard's lectures. While we deeply appreciate your enthusiasm, unfortunately attempting to set up tables at events where RDFRS and the various student organisations have worked so hard to secure may in fact cause terrible trouble for us. In fact, we could actually lose two of the venues if they thought that other organisations other than the student organisations on campus were involved. I would hate for Richard to arrive in the US with two or three of his venues canceled because of such issues.

Universities tend to have very strict protocol for these events, and we have put in a great deal of effort on the local level to make certain that such protocols

are followed. Additionally, two of the events were contracted with Richard, and at these two events they have graciously allowed the student secular groups to be present and host tables. At one of these venues, we are still negotiating to allow the students to sell merchandise in order to raise money. I deeply fear that if members of your organisation start to phone up these venues and ask to be present – all of our efforts will be for naught.

Richard is very keen on working with various organisations in the US; however, I am afraid by suggesting that individual groups start setting up tables at these various lecture venues without at least contacting us and letting us know what they are doing – Richard as well as the student groups will be facing a rather an icy reception.

If you could please assure me that you will send out a new email to your groups, inviting them to attend the lecture by all means, and perhaps leaving some literature at the student tables if they like (given the local student groups agree) but not contacting these venues to set up tables, I would be very grateful.

Very best regards,
Liz Cornwell

Richard Dawkins Foundation for Reason and Science

World War

by Cleo Kocol

Americans are in a war of words, words that often lead to actions used both knowingly and unknowingly to keep women in line. During the women's movement of the seventies and early eighties it became apparent that words were used to the detriment of women. Non-sexist terms were implemented. Although few Humanists today would call a grown woman a girl, some of us have internalized other terms that continue to keep women in a second-class status. These words are culturally imposed, and while many are racist and ethnically biased, most are sexist and impact both women and men.

Women used to be told that the term 'man' encompassed women, that when books, documents, and speech-makers used the term "man," they really meant mankind or humanity and women were included. But if that were so, why did it take until 1920 before women got the vote? Women began to examine the whole phenomenon of words, beginning with the Constitution. The XIV amendment introduced the word "male" into the Constitution and made it clear women were citizens who could not vote. Following is a short list of words that need to be reviewed:

If you're saying "chairman," you're still back there in 1960. Chair works well and isn't sexist. If a man is the chair, he can be called chairman, and a woman "chair" can be addressed as chairwoman, but in referring to the position, "chair" is appropriate.

If you're asking people to "man" tables or booths at an event, you're being sexist and old fashioned. Today we "staff;" we don't "man."

We no longer have stewardesses on airplanes. We have flight attendants.

For years we heard the term, "woman writer" and "woman painter." Using the construct in this fashion a writer was by definition male and therefore a woman who wrote or painted had to be an aberrant being and undoubtedly have work of a lesser quality. Poets cringe at the word "poetess" and actors usually prefer "actor." Using any form of diminutive lessens the worth of the woman and the product.

"Layman" is still seen and heard routinely. How about laity, lay-person, lay-people instead?

For much of the 1900's, the term "bellboy" kept men working in those positions in an inferior position. This word also contained racial undertones because until the 1950's most bellhops were African/American.

This small recap of words reminds us how it used to be. But while as a society we have risen past many of those old stereotypes, many people in the United States still fall for denigration of groups or classes or individuals through denigrating certain words. "Liberal" has become a bad word, "feminist" even worse.

How could anyone object to the phrase "right to life?" Since the concentrated effort to overthrow *Roe V Wade*, the phrase has been used. It sounds innocuous. But think about it. The phrase automatically makes one think all in opposition are against the right to life.

The words did not evolve, are no accident but are used deliberately. As George Lakoff, linguist, author of many books including *Don't Think of an Elephant*, *Moral Politics*, and *Women, Fire and Dangerous Things*, points out, opponents to abortion frame words in such a way that anyone objecting sounds immoral. This can cause stumbling blocks to the young or the uninformed. This "when did you stop beating your wife?" terminology is what lurks behind the term, "family values." You're certainly not a loyal American if you're against "family values." It also is a signal to those who look to god for answers. "Family values" means no to abortion. "Family values" means "father knows best," and the latter phrase serves to keep mother "in her place."

But shouldn't parents decide what an underage daughter should do? In a perfect world, yes. But our society is far from perfect. Abuse, battering, and incest happen, not only in lower class homes but also among the rich and affluent. Teenagers need to be protected.

When anti-abortion people took center stage in the 80's, Americans grasped the commercial and social aspects of the debate. Hollywood ran a series of "baby" films. They teamed men like Tom Selleck with babies. Egged on by media, women began to be concerned with their biological time clocks. Surrogate motherhood arrived on the scene. I called it "baby-pushing" in an article in *The Humanist*, doing my own framing. I was thrilled to see the term picked up by the late Isaac Asimov and used by him. Now we have stores catering just to infants and very young children. We have "partial birth abortion," another framing phrase, and "problem pregnancy" clinics, a euphemism for that other euphemism, "right to life."

This is a war on women, girls and progressives that goes beyond words. Even among the "family values" men who shout and holler the loudest, few would make their daughters bear a child conceived through rape or incest, no matter the buzz words they use, and few would ruin their own prestige by having a pregnant unmarried daughter at home. Before *Roe V Wade*, such men whisked their daughters off to states or countries where abortion was legal. Such men would do likewise today.

This war on women is a power play and Humanists must not abet it. From the labor movement poem, "Bread and Roses," comes the line, "The rising of the women is the rising of the race." It is the same today. Don't denigrate your own partners, friends, and co-workers. Humanism should be synonymous with humanity. As Sacramento's Ted Webb so properly pointed out in a recent article, we should spend less time debating how many humanists can dance on the head of a pin and (as I see it) appeal to the masses confused by the present name-calling.

Originally published in Human Interest, the newsletter of the Humanists of the Greater Sacramento area.

US engages in medieval methodology

If I would grab a naughty cat and dip its head underwater and make like I'm drowning the rascal in full view of the public, there would be an outcry and lots of letters to the editor. Someone would surely call the cops and I would be arrested and probably given a long sentence in the klink. Probably more so if I did it to a cute dog.

But our government can torture humans (non-Christian, non-Europeans) by simulating drowning and the public can't seem to be bothered much and no one is investigated, no outcry or punishment.

You know water boarding-type torture isn't new. The medieval church (Christian) used it during the Inquisition to get women to admit they were witches. While water was poured onto their mouths, a cloth was washed down their throat and then it was pulled out rapidly to wreck their throats. After a few of these simulated drowning and cloth ripping, they admitted to being a witch. But usually the torture continued until they named other witches and they fingered others so they could finally be burned alive to stop the torture.

Is this the standard for America, the great leader of democracy and freedom for the world?

Edwin Corl
Honolulu

Ed titled this "Olde time waterboarding." The Star-Bulletin changed it. Ed said "OK."

NPG (Negative Population Growth) Journal

Agri-food firms are hot on Wall Street

Steven Levingston of *The Washington Post* Business Section reports that agri-food companies are a good long term play in today's stock market. Citing the fact that "Feeding the world is a growth business" he notes that "The global population is expanding by more than 70 million mouths a year, and the system that supplies the food is racing to keep pace. You see the strain in the mere 1.3 percent growth in grain production each year during the past 20 years. To keep up with global population trends, grain production needs to reach 3.3% annual growth, according to Credit Suisse Group."

"This agri-food trend is not . . . short-term," Levingston points out that "it is a long-term structural shift driven in large part by rising populations in Asia and by surging demand for renewable fuels such as corn-based ethanol. Also behind the trend are the increasing affluence of emerging countries, widening dietary tastes and greater longevity for the mouths that need to be fed."

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See scheduled events, pictures of officers and current and archived newsletters at our website:

<http://hawaii.humanists.net/>

HH's Meeting Place Room 112 Krauss Hall

HH meets the last (not the fourth) Sunday of each month at 10:30 am. Here's how to get there.

Driving on Dole Street past the University, turn mauka on East West Road then ewa on Correa Road. Drive to the end and turn makai toward the circle with the big tree.

There's free parking on part of the circle, on the other side of Krauss Hall and various lots around campus. The entrance to Krauss Hall 112 is at the Diamondhead end of the lily pond.

We'll put up a sign by the door.



If you need transportation to the meeting, call another Humanists Hawaii member or Dave at the number listed above.

The continuing odyssey of Taslima Nasrin

Taslima Nasrin is a Bengali Bangladeshi ex-physician turned author and feminist who describes herself as a [secular humanist](#). Her own experience of sexual abuse during adolescence and her work as a gynaecologist influenced her to write about the treatment of women in Islam.

She began writing poems in the mid-1980s and expanded into novels in the early 1990s, most notably with *Lajja* in 1993. The word *lajja* (lôjja) means "shame" in Bengali and many other Indic languages. The book was published in the Bengali language and was subsequently banned in Bangladesh and a few other states of India.

Taslima dedicated *Lajja* "to the people of the Indian subcontinent" and announced in the beginning of the book: "let another name for religion be humanism."

In 1999, she published *Amar Meyebela* (My Girlhood), her autobiography which, after editing attempting to render it more acceptable to a wider public was republished in 2002 as *Meyebela, My Bengali Girlhood – A Memoir of Growing Up Female in a Muslim World*. *Meyebela* has also been banned in Bangladesh because, say authorities, "[its contents might hurt the existing social system and religious sentiments of the people](#)."

Meyebela is very frank about Taslima's family. Her father is described as rude and tyrannical. She tells how she was sexually exploited by two of her uncles.

Of Bangladesh, [she says](#), "Girls suffer. I could not go out and run in the fields. I was supposed to stay home to learn how to cook, to clean. Women are not treated as human beings. They are taught for centuries that they are slaves of men."

"When I was at the hospital (in Dhaka), I treated so many seven- or eight-year-old girls who were raped by their male relatives, some 50 or 60 years old. I treated them, and I remembered when I was raped."

She fled Bangladesh in 1994 to escape fatwa and death threats by Muslim fanatics and lived in Sweden, Germany, the USA and France. In 2000 she moved to India and found in West Bengal, an Indian state, her adoptive home. Taslima wrote of her stay in West Bengal: "I am a Bengali within and without; I live, breathe, and dream in Bengali."

However, the communist government of West Bengal, in a move to please Muslim fanatics (whom they had already pleased by banning her book), forcefully deported Taslima in November 2007 to Rajasthan, an Indian state ruled by the Hindu nationalist party BJP. The next day the Rajasthan government sent her to Delhi. There the central government took her to an undisclosed place in Delhi claiming to protect her.

Secluded in secret government custody in India since November 2007, Taslima announced on March 17, 2008 that she was [willing to leave India](#) due to failing health. In an email to supporters she revealed that she suffers from very high blood pressure and has developed cardiac distress. Her visa for staying in India was extended in February on condition that she respect the sentiment of Indian citizens in writing and speech.

Now (March 18, 2008) as a result of continuing threats and persecution, Taslima Nasrin has left India for Canada. However, while transiting through Heathrow Airport, London, she declined to name her destination and [said](#), "If I disclose my destination my security will be compromised. My face has now become recognizable and I could be target of religious fundamentalists".

According to a piece posted on [her official website](#), she conceded defeat to popular pressure and alleged that Indian Foreign Minister, Pranab Mukherjee, had exerted "great mental pressure" on her to leave the country. Taslima, who had not been allowed to see any visitors for nearly four months has [described her confinement](#) as living in "a chamber of death".

Taslima Nasrin writes about her situation in the Indian newsletter *Rationalist International*:

Where am I? I am certain no one will believe me if I say I have no answer to this apparently straightforward question, but the truth is I just do not know. And if I were to be asked how I am, I would again answer: I don't know. I am like the living dead: benumbed; robbed of the pleasure of existence and experience; unable to move beyond the claustrophobic confines of my room. Day and night, night and day. Yes, this is how I have been surviving.

This nightmare did not begin when I was suddenly bundled out of Calcutta – it has been going on for a while. It is like a slow and lingering death, like sipping delicately from a cupful of slow-acting poison that is gradually killing all my faculties. This is a conspiracy to murder my essence, my being, once so courageous,

so brave, so dynamic, so playful. I realise what is going on around me but am utterly helpless, despite my best efforts, to wage a battle on my own behalf. I am merely a disembodied voice. Those who once stood by me have disappeared into the darkness. I ask myself: what heinous crime have I committed? What sort of life is this where I can neither cross my own threshold nor know the joys of human company? What crime have I committed that I have to spend my life hidden away, relegated to the shadows? For what crimes am I being punished by this society, this land? I wrote of my beliefs and my convictions. I used words, not violence, to express my ideas. I did not take recourse to pelting stones or bloodshed to make my point. Yet, I am considered a criminal. I am being

persecuted because it was felt that the right of others to express their opinions was more legitimate than mine. Does India not realise how immense the suffering must be for an individual to renounce her most deeply-held beliefs? How humiliated, frightened, and insecure I must have been to allow my words to be censored. If I had not agreed to the grotesque bowdlerisation of my writings by those who insisted on it, I would have been hounded and pursued till I dropped dead. Their politics, their faith, their barbarism, and their diabolical purposes are all intent on sucking the lifeblood out of me, because the truths I write are so difficult for them to stomach. How can I—a powerless and unprotected individual—battle brute force? But come what may, I cannot take recourse to untruth.

What have I to offer but love and compassion? In the way that they used hatred to rip out my words, I would like to use compassion and love to rip the hatred out of them. Certainly, I am enough of a realist to acknowledge that strife, hatred, cruelty and barbarism are integral elements of the human condition. This will not change; and how can an insignificant creature like me change all this? If I were to be eradicated or exterminated, it would not matter one whit to the world at large. I know all this. Yet, I had imagined Bengal would be different. I had thought the madness of her people was temporary. I had thought that the Bengal I loved so passionately would never forsake me. She did.

Exiled from Bangladesh, I wandered around the world for many years like a lost orphan. The moment I was given shelter in West Bengal, it felt as though all those years of numbing tiredness just melted away. I was able to resume a normal life in a beloved and familiar land. So long as I survive, I will carry within me the vistas of Bengal, her sunshine, her wet earth, her very essence. The same Bengal whose sanctuary I once walked many blood-soaked miles to reach has now turned its back upon me. I am a Bengali within and without; I live, breathe, and dream in Bengali. I find it hard to believe that I am no longer wanted in Bengal.

I am a guest in this land, I must be careful of what I say. I must do nothing that violates the code of hospitality. I did not come here to hurt anyone's sentiments or feelings. Wounded and hurt in my own country, I suffered slights and injuries in many lands before I reached India, where I knew I would be hurt yet again. For this is, after all, a democratic and secular land where the politics of the votebank imply that being secular is equated with being pro-Muslim fundamentalist. I do not wish to believe all this. I do not wish to hear all this. Yet, all around me I read, hear, and see evidence of this. I sometimes wish I could be like those mythical monkeys, oblivious to all the evil that is going on around me. Death who visits me in many forms now feels like a friend. I feel like talking to him, unburdening myself to him. I have no one else to speak to, no one else to whom I can unburden myself.

I have lost my beloved Bengal. No child torn from its mother's breast could have suffered as much as I did during that painful parting. Once again, I have lost

the mother from whose womb I was born. The pain is no less than the day I lost my biological mother. My mother had always wanted me to return home. That was something I could not do. After settling down in Calcutta, I was able to tell my mother, who by then was a memory within me, that I had indeed returned home. How did it matter which side of an artificial divide I was on? Now, I do not have the courage to tell my mother that I have been unceremoniously expelled by those who had once given me shelter, that my life now is that of a nomad. My sensitive mother would be shattered if I were to tell her all this. Instead, I have now taken to convincing myself that I must have transgressed somewhere, committed some grievous error. Why else would I be in such a situation? Is daring to utter the truth a terrible sin in this era of falsehood and deceit? Is it because I am a woman?

I know I have not been condemned by the masses. If their opinion had been sought, I am certain the majority would have wanted me to stay on in Bengal. But when has a democracy reflected the voice of the masses? A democracy is run by those who hold the reins of power, who do exactly what they think fit. An insignificant individual, I must now live life on my own terms and write about what I believe in and hold dear. It is not my desire to harm, malign, or deceive. I do not lie. I try not to be offensive. I am but a simple writer who neither knows nor understands the dynamics of politics. The way in which I was turned into a political pawn, however, and treated at the hands of base politicians, beggars belief. For what end, you may well ask. A few measly votes. The force of fundamentalism, which I have opposed and fought for many years, has only been strengthened by my defeat.

This is my beloved India, where I have been living and writing on secular humanism, human rights and emancipation of women. This is also the land where I have had to suffer and pay the price for my most deeply held and fundamental convictions, where not a single political party of any persuasion has spoken out in my favour, where no non-governmental organisation, women's rights or human rights group has stood by me or condemned the vicious attacks launched upon me. This is an India I have never before known. Yes, it is true that individuals in a scattered, unorganised manner are fighting for my cause, and journalists, writers, and intellectuals have spoken out in my favour, even if they have never read a word I have written. Yet, I am grateful for their opinions and support.

Wherever individuals gather in groups, they seem to lose their power to speak out. Frankly, this facet of the new India terrifies me. Then again, is this a new India, or is it the true face of the nation? I do not know. Since my earliest childhood I have regarded India as a great land and a fearless nation. The land of my dreams: enlightened, strong, progressive, and tolerant. I want to be proud of that India. I will die a happy person the day I know India has forsaken darkness for light, bigotry for tolerance. I await that day. I do not know whether I will survive, but India and what she stands for has to survive.

Humanists Debate Alternative Views on Iraq War

American Humanist Association

In recognition of the fifth anniversary of the Iraq War, and in a spirit of the free exploration of ideas, the American Humanist Association is publicizing alternative humanist views on U.S. military involvement in Iraq.

Articles pro and con appeared in the January/February 2008 issue of the *Humanist* magazine. And today the organization posted a debate on its Humanist Online Web site.

"Even when most humanists are on one side of a question, as they are on this one, respect for dissenting views remains a staple of humanist thought," said Roy Speckhardt, executive director of the American Humanist Association. "That's why we are letting two views battle it out today."

The first article posted, "[Fighting for Iraq: a Case for Liberation](#)," is by Jende Huang, who argues, "The justification for [liberating Iraq] can be drawn from Enlightenment values as well as common human decency. The dignity of the individual, the power of the life of the mind, and the creative potential of all of humanity are values that can and should be extended to all peoples . . . The reluctance to extend such basic considerations as universal human rights to those living on foreign soil is disturbing. The tragedy of the Left is in its newfound unwillingness and inability to apply the idea of 'justice for all,' to, well, all."

T. F. Kelley offers a counter argument in a web extra article titled "[A Case of Invasion](#)" in which he writes, "Sadly, Iraq has not been liberated; it has been conquered, occupied, and decimated by any definition . . . What happened after Baghdad fell were not missteps, they were disastrous blunders with enormous consequences. I feel no obligation as a progressive to follow a fool's path to obvious disaster, nor would I expect any humanist or anyone else to do so."

You can read an extension of the debate on the [Humanist blog](#), Rant and Reason.

Though individual humanists may differ, however, the American Humanist Association as an organization, informed by this longstanding debate, takes a clear position. The [AHA was opposed to Congress authorizing the original use of troops, opposed to Bush's decision to start a unilateral war, and supported efforts to bring the troops home.](#)

"We stand firm with those who say five years is too long," Speckhardt concluded, "and call for decisive action to end a conflict that continues to make matters worse."

Humanists Join Legal Brief in Pharmacist Controversy

American Humanist Association

The [Appignani Humanist Legal Center](#) (AHLC), the legal arm of the American Humanist Association (AHA), participated Wednesday as a sign-on to a "friend of the court" brief prepared by Americans United for Separation of Church and State. The brief was submitted to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit and sets forth the legal opinion that Washington State has the right to require pharmacists to fill doctors' prescriptions.

The brief argues that two Washington State Board of Pharmacy regulations, which require pharmacies to dispense all medications in a timely manner, don't impinge upon the religious freedom rights of pharmacists and should therefore be upheld.

The brief in the case of *Stormans, Inc. v. Selecky* asks the appeals court to kick the decision back to the district court with instructions to use a different standard for reviewing the regulations.

"Pharmacists know what they're getting into when they take the job," commented Bob Ritter, legal coordinator of the AHLC. "Though pharmacies should accommodate religious beliefs when possible, the rights of the patient to receive needed medication takes precedence."

Moreover, the regulations don't target any particular religious belief, as secular pharmacists are required to fill prescriptions also. So the idea that pharmacists are being negatively singled out due to their religion doesn't hold true."

The regulations were put in place by the pharmacy board after it became aware of pharmacists in Washington and other states refusing on religious grounds to fill prescriptions for medicines such as birth control and the morning-after pill. However, as noted in the brief, regulations appropriately accommodate pharmacists' religious beliefs by allowing them to have a colleague at the same store fill the prescription (if the other pharmacist is willing to do so). The brief argues that the regulations don't single out religious beliefs, and requiring pharmacies to fill prescriptions is a religiously-neutral regulation.

The Washington pharmacy board acted after several incidents came to light in Washington and other states of pharmacists refusing to fill prescriptions for birth control pills, emergency contraception and other medications.

In its brief, AU notes that the state's pharmacy regulations accommodate objecting pharmacists. A pharmacist can, for example, pass a prescription along to a colleague at the same store.

The American Humanist Association was involved in reviewing the Americans United-written brief and recommending changes.

Humanists call for repeal of US blasphemy laws

American Humanist Association

Following March 5th action by the British House of Lords to abolish all blasphemy laws in the United Kingdom, the American Humanist Association reiterated its longstanding call to remove all such statutes within the United States and its territories. Although few Americans know of their existence, unenforceable blasphemy laws appear on the books in several states including Massachusetts, Michigan, Oklahoma, South Carolina and Wyoming. No such federal laws exist. In 1952, in *Burstyn, Inc. v. Wilson*, the US Supreme Court ruled against blasphemy bans of all sorts.

"Laws prohibiting blasphemy are a relic of the Middle Ages and are blatantly unconstitutional," said Mel Lipman, a constitutional lawyer and president of the AHA. "Blasphemy is a purely religious offense and hence the sole concern of religious organizations and their own members . . . people without religion, or who have religious beliefs that don't condemn blasphemy, shouldn't be affected."

Ordinary citizens, however, have been affected in America's past. People who publicly used religious profanity or criticized God, Christ, Christianity or belief in a god were occasionally intimidated or criminally charged. The last known person actually jailed for this offense alone was Abner Kneeland in 1838. Since then, remaining blasphemy laws have gone largely unenforced and are now legally unenforceable.

"Unenforceable statutes that remain on the books, especially unconstitutional ones, undermine public respect for the rule of law," noted Roy

Speckhardt, executive director of the AHA. "Beyond this, the British government has come to realize that the existence of blasphemy laws can hamper a nation's credibility when it seeks to oppose the enforcement of such laws by nations dominated by political Islam.

In November Britain protested Sudan's arrest of a British schoolteacher on a blasphemy charge wherein she was accused of letting her students give the name Muhammad to a class teddy bear. Then it was pointed out that Britain still had blasphemy laws on its own books. This fact limited the impact of that Britain's principled human rights stand – leading the House of Lords to vote 148-87 on March 5 to abolish its laws against blasphemy and blasphemous libel.

The state legislature of Massachusetts is now considering a bill to remove its blasphemy law and other religious prohibitions.

Nonetheless, humanist leaders say this process has taken too long.

"The lack of foresight in this issue is astounding," said Fred Edwards, AHA director of communications. "Throughout the twentieth century humanists have pointed out the moral, legal and practical problems with blasphemy laws. Other secularists did so going back even to the nation's founding. Yet it requires specific extreme examples emerging from the Middle East during today's global era before enough people realize what a few moments of thought would have readily made clear. This is cause for concern."

If spirituality means pertaining to consciousness and the needs and development of consciousness, then whoever commits to awareness and personal growth as a way of life – which entails, among other things, self-awareness and self-examination – is on a spiritual path . . . Whoever continually strives to achieve a clearer and clearer vision of reality and his or her place in it – whoever is pulled forward by a passion for such clarity – is, to that extent, leading a spiritual life.

-- Nathaniel Branden, *The Art of Living Consciously*

In a more serious vein . . .

Do you think that humans should search relentlessly for truth, that they feel compassion for all humankind and determine and promote what is right?

Do you think people can live meaningful, responsible and ethical lives without the need for believing in supernatural beings or places?

Would you like to join a group that shares your thoughts? Humanists – generally – believe these things.

If you'd like to join Humanists Hawaii, please complete and mail this form, with \$25 for individual dues or \$40 for couples, to: Marcia Lambeth at 825 Coolidge St. #310 Honolulu HI 96826.

Dr/Mr/Ms _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phones: Home: _____ Work: _____ email: _____

The Humanist Perspective

Coming up on *The Humanist Perspective* on [Olelo Community Television](#) VIEWS channel 54 Sunday afternoons at 3:30: *The Humanist Perspective* visits the "Future of Naturalism" conference:

"The Naturalism of Akeel Bilgram"

Sunday, March 23, 2008

Bilgram, professor of philosophy at Columbia University, suggests studying religion as phenomenon rather than as hypothesis to be evaluated.

"Radical Naturalism" with Tom Clark

Sunday, March 30, 2008

Tom Clark is the founder of the Center of Naturalism in Boston. He talks about the science of naturalism and applies it to the US penal system.

"Naturalism and Ethics" with Arthur Caplan

Sunday, April 6, 2008

Caplan is a specialist in bioethics who is constantly circulating discussing relevant problems with medical and research practitioners.

"The Naturalism of Laura Purdy"

Sunday, April 13, 2008

Purdy focuses on ethics with some (negative) mention of metaphysics.

Poverty and Climate Change Are Clearly Linked

UN Human Development Report 2007/2008

The new 2007-2008 [UN Human Development report](#) is focused on "Fighting climate change: Human solidarity in a divided world." According to [the British Guardian](#), the report clearly links overcoming climate change with global poverty:

"The poorest countries and most vulnerable citizens will suffer the earliest and most damaging setbacks, even though they have contributed least to the problem," the report says . . .

As the world's richest countries bear the greatest responsibility, the UN Development Programme called on them to bear the largest burden in cutting emissions and in providing financial aid to the poor. And, as is true with so many of the big issues facing us,

Without the money, the panel said, a warmer world "could stall and then reverse human development" in the countries where 2.6 billion people live on \$2 (96p) a day or less.

"The world lacks neither the financial resources nor the technological capabilities to act," the UN report said. "What is missing is a sense of urgency, human solidarity, and collective interest."



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The American Humanist Association (www.americanhumanist.org) is dedicated to ensuring a voice for those with a positive outlook, based on reason and experience, which embraces all of humanity.