

scientia, artes, humanitas

November 2014 · Issue 1

Humanitas is a Latin noun meaning civility and kindness – getting along with each other and helping each other along. Stanislaus Humanists are people, without superstitious or supernatural beliefs, who come together to better the quality of life in our homes, our community, and around the world. Our compassion extends to all nations and to all living things. We hope this newsletter creates a supportive environment where people can cultivate and share insightful analysis, passion for human expression, and promotion of humane science-informed policies.

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OUTGOING MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

It's been a year since we organized our group as a chapter of the AHA, aiming to make ethical nonbelievers visible in our community. We built big corporate shoes for what is basically a club with a piggy bank. However, I am encouraged by the slow but steady growth as new friends make new friends and our web of fellow-travelers grows.

This year we've focused on building a community and generating a regular schedule of things to do. In 2015, I hope we become more politically active, doing community service, increasing our visibility, and encouraging others to get involved with donations of time, talent, and money. I look forward to the new ideas and energy that the Board will bring in the coming year.

With warm regards,
Troy Spears, Chair, Stanislaus Humanists

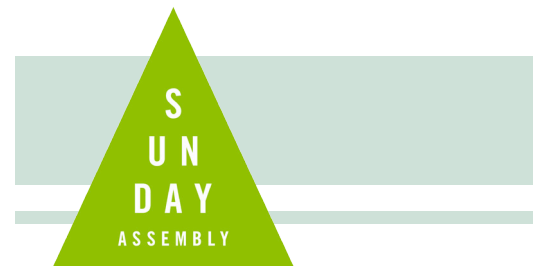
SACRAMENTO'S FIRST SUNDAY ASSEMBLY

FREEDOM BAERHEIM

September 28, 7:30 AM, Sunday morning. Instead of sleeping in late and waking up to the smell of waffles and coffee, I was creeping around a dark, silent house trying my best not to wake anyone as I dressed. By 8am, I was out the door ready to start the two hour drive to Sacramento.

It was the launch of Sacramento's first Sunday Assembly. Though I had prepared to go for a few weeks, I found myself wondering why I was doing this. Why would a Sunday Assembly be important to me? Or for that matter, why it would be important for anyone who has given up their religion? It's just a church service without god, right? I felt I had earned my Sundays off now that I no longer believed.

By 10am, I made my way to the Reason Center. Right away I noticed how packed the parking lot was. I saw people dressed in their Sunday best



entering the building. As I walked toward the center the sound of music filled my ears. Not the somber melody of a pipe organ, but modern, fast upbeat music that one would hear at a local bar.

My mood quickly turned optimistic when I stepped inside. All around me I saw smiling faces. People who had gathered, not because it was their religious obligation, but because they had chosen to be there. I was greeted, given a button to write my name on, handed a program, and then I made my way into the crowded room. After a few minutes, the assembly began. A familiar voice welcomed everyone, The speaker, David Diskin is someone I have known for years. I was happy to be there watching him speak. He has come a long way in trying to form successful social groups of freethinkers in this area and once again he had managed to obtain a large gathering.



We're always looking for new content – articles, reviews, commentary, pictures, poems, events. Send submissions to StanislausHumanists@gmail.com, or send hard copy to:
1905 Kienitz Ave, Modesto, CA 95355

ASSEMBLY (CONT.)



After another song and a poetry reading, the next speaker came up.

The speaker told his story about finding a home within the local atheists and freethinkers group. When he was diagnosed with lymphoma six years ago, he appreciated more how precious time was on this earth. It moved me when he said how thankful he was to the doctors, modern medicine, his friends, and loved ones who stayed with him during that trying time.

The third speaker talked about her taking time away from college to travel around to other countries, like Uganda, with other humanists, to help in the villages. They provided clean water systems, gave supplies, made friends with the locals, taught education, and offered support. Every slide we were shown of her travels reminded me just how needed we were. To help others when we could, not for some divine point system, but just for the sake of helping others.

The assembly concluded with a song from Billy Joel, "Only the Good Die Young." As I stood and sang along, I paid attention to the lyrics. "I'd rather laugh with the sinners than cry with saints." And here we all were, together, laughing and smiling.

Then the music started again. Ironically it was, "Don't Stop Believing," by Journey. I couldn't help but laugh out loud as I watched a group of atheists stand and sing this song so gleefully first thing in the morning.

I was reminded of something I read by one of the founders of the Sunday Assembly, Sanderson Jones, "They [other atheists] really don't like the Sunday Assembly because, apparently, the way we don't believe in god is not the right way to not believe in god."

He is correct. There is no one particular way to not believe. If coming together once a month to listen to speakers talk about their lives, read poetry, sing songs, and meet people is what some atheists wanted to do, why was that wrong?

The hat was passed around and I put in a few dollars that I had in my purse. David came back on and asked the crowd, "What are you doing to live better, help often, and wonder more?" He then invited us to stay for the potluck. I didn't stay, instead I placed my button on a table, filled out the survey inside the program and wrote the words "Good Luck" on it. I grabbed a bite to eat at a local restaurant with some friends, and then drove the two hours back home.

I was glad that I made the effort to come all this way, and I appreciated all the hard work everyone had done to make this happen. Did I discover why it would be important for me to attend one of these monthly? Maybe.

I don't miss the church, I'd rather be home with my waffles and coffee, but I believe that every once in a while people just need to find that place to belong. Also, I believe that by working together we can accomplish the change we all want to see happen in this world. Perhaps Sunday Assemblies can be the answer to that. What are you doing to live better, help often, and wonder more?

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HORSE

TROY SPEARS

Chomping the bit,
I rise on two legs
for a moment, like my masters -
two limbs for earth, two limbs for the
sky.
But as I fall, remembering
that all my limbs are promised
to the ground -
good solid ground with no place
for sky-limbs
or wings.

But dreams of Pegasus still come
whenever I chomp the bit and reel
beneath the shifting
of grinding continents.
And I turn my eyes inward
to a gravity
that pulls
up.

STANISLAUS HUMANIST T-SHIRTS



Available in S, M, L, XL, and 2XL. Currently, we only have black but we hope to expand. Get yours as an appreciation gift for donations of \$20 or more. Members can request one for donations of \$15. Make check or money order payable to Stanislaus Humanists, 1905 Kienitz Ave, Modesto, CA 95355, or donate online and tell us your size and where to ship

PAINTING YOUR ROSES RED & YOUR LAWN GREEN

BRANDILYN BROWN

As we officially enter our fourth year of California's historic drought, many of us are trying to find creative ways to reduce our water usage. However one of the least creative ways is one of the most effective ways to save water, and that is with our lawn maintenance. Or for some of us, our lack of lawn maintenance. Having lived in apartments for 30 years, it was quite a shock to learn how much water my new lawn was drinking in my rented house. Watering for 45 minutes a week was wasting roughly 30 gallons, according to our water bill. Thirty gallons every week adds up to 1,560 gallons a year. Needless to say, I quit watering my lawn after my first City of Modesto bill.

Unfortunately, it didn't take long for my landlord to complain that we were neglecting our duties as tenants, so I started to research what we could legally do to protect the Earth, conserve our water, without breaking our lease. Modesto Irrigation District pointed me to the site leginfo.legislature.ca.gov, and gave me several bills to look up.

AB2100 was signed by Governor Jerry Brown on July 21st, 2014. It took effect immediately. The preamble of the bill states:

This bill would prohibit an association from imposing a fine or assessment against a member of a separate interest for reducing or eliminating watering of vegetation or lawns during any period for which the Governor has declared a state of emergency, or a local government has declared a local emergency, due to drought.

AB2104 was also signed by Governor Jerry Brown on September 18, 2014, and it also took effect immediately. This bill provides for the:

creation and regulation of common interest developments. That act provides that a provision of any of the common interest development governing documents, as

defined, that governs the operation of a common interest development, is void and unenforceable if it prohibits, or includes conditions that have the effect of prohibiting, the use of low water-using plants as a group, or if it has the effect of prohibiting or restricting compliance with a local water-efficient landscape ordinance or water conservation measure.

Armed with knowledge of the new laws, I then did what anyone in my predicament would do: I asked Facebook for ideas to re-vamp my lawn area, without completely disobeying my lease. I was looking for something I could do within a 2 week window, something that wasn't too expensive (i.e. more than \$250), something that I could do within the law, but wasn't outlandish enough to cause my own eviction. Several friends recommended having my lawn painted, like the golf courses do. I took to Google and ordered 32 concentrated ounces of Lawn Lift (lawnlift.com) for a test section. Although I found several different kinds of lawn paint, I liked Lawn Lift because it is clay based and safe for pets. After shipping, the price came to \$59, and it arrived within 3 days. (See Figure 1.)



The grass on the left is control group grass. The grass on the right is the experimental group. It has one coat of Lawn Lift. Since it came concentrated, I had to mix it accordingly with water in a sprayer. I used a hand-pumping fertilizer sprayer I had laying around. The sprayer I had is only a one gallon size, and you really should use a bigger one if you have it, otherwise you will be stopping to remix every 5 minutes or so. The first coat took 1.75 hours, approximately 500 sq ft of lawn. The first coat used my entire 32 ounces of paint. It looked very natural, and the lawn wasn't crunchy

if you walked on it. Short on time, and needing to do a second coat before my landlord stopped back by again, I went into the local OSH and purchased a concentrated gallon bottle of Colorback for \$63 after tax.

Colorback is a latex based paint, and price-wise it was the same as ordering Lawn Lift and having it shipped, though I did get more concentrate with the Colorback than the Lawn Lift. The color was definitely green, but it wasn't as convincing as the Lawn Lift, and it left the lawn crunchier than it was simply being dead. (See Figure 2.)



The left side in Figure 2 is still control group grass, while the experimental group here is a bottom coat of Lawn Lift, and a top coat of Colorback. The second coat (due to being more meticulous and covering every inch) took me 3 hours, and I used ¾ gallon of Colorback.

It appears to have done its job. The landlord hasn't mentioned anything about the lawn, and neighbors have asked what I did to have green lawn overnight. It's been five weeks, and it's time for a new coat of paint, but I'm holding out hope it will start to sprinkle soon and this will be the last coat I need until May of 2015. When I need to buy a new gallon, I'm going to go with Lawn Lift, because I think it looks a lot more like healthy green grass.

If you have 5 hours of time on your hands, and \$60, this is a great way to reduce your water usage. Every drop saved now is a drop in the well for our farmers to grow our food. Every drop saved now is a drop in your belly tomorrow!

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EVENTS!

JOIN US FOR OUR REGULAR EVENTS!

	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 ST	SECULAR MEDITATION 10:00 AM 1905 KIENITZ AVE, MODESTO		BOOK GROUP 7:00 PM PRIVATE HOME, CERES				THEATRICAL MOVIE NIGHT 6:00 PM 1905 KIENITZ AVE, MODESTO
2 ND	VEGAN HEATHANS POTLUCK BRUNCH NOON PRIVATE HOME, TURLOCK	SIRENS & SATYRS OF SHARP CRAFT GROUP 6:30 PM PRIVATE HOME, MANTECA	MUSIC & MAYHEM 6:00 PM PRIVATE HOME, CERES			GAME NIGHT 7:00 PM PRIVATE HOME, SALIDA	THEATRICAL MOVIE NIGHT 6:00 PM 1905 KIENITZ AVE, MODESTO
3 RD	COFFEE KLATCH (QUEEN BEAN) 11:00 AM 1126 14TH ST, MODESTO		SECULAR MEDITATION 7:00 PM 1905 KIENITZ AVE, MODESTO			DOCUMENTARY FILM DISCUSSION 6:30 PM 2401 E ORANGEBURG, MODESTO	THEATRICAL MOVIE NIGHT 6:00 PM 1905 KIENITZ AVE, MODESTO
4 TH	TURLOCK BRUNCH (PANERA) 10:00 AM 3050 HOTEL DR. TURLOCK		MUSIC & MAYHEM 6:00 PM PRIVATE HOME, CERES			FINAL FRIDAY KARAOKE (TORII'S) 8:00 PM 2401 E ORANGEBURG, MODESTO	THEATRICAL MOVIE NIGHT 6:00 PM 1905 KIENITZ AVE, MODESTO

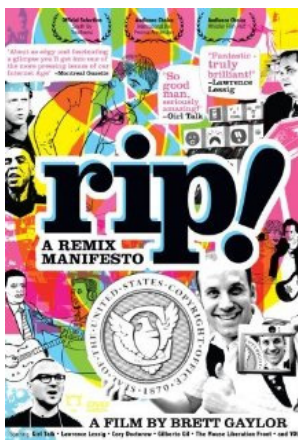
FOR MORE INFORMATION ON ANY OF THESE EVENTS PLEASE VISIT US AT STANISLAUSHUMANISTS.ORG OR OUR [FACEBOOK](#) & [MEETUP PAGES](#).

FILM DISCUSSIONS

Watch and discuss an informative documentary in a comfortable living room setting. After the screening, we discuss what we disagreed with and what we liked about the presentation. Feel free to bring refreshments to suit your taste.

NOVEMBER 21

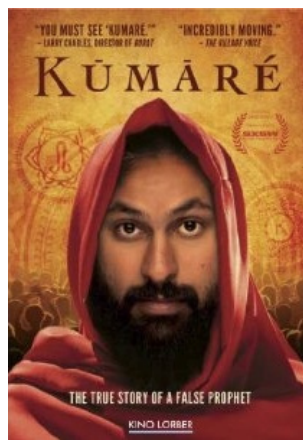
6:30 PM
1905 KIENITZ AVE, MODESTO



“In riP: A Remix Manifesto, Web activist and filmmaker Brett Gaylor explores issues of copyright in the information age, mashing up the media landscape of the 20th century and shattering the wall between users and producers. The film’s central protagonist is Girl Talk, a mash-up musician topping the charts with his sample-based songs. But is Girl Talk a paragon of people power or the Pied Piper of piracy? Creative Commons founder, Lawrence Lessig, Brazil’s Minister of Culture Gilberto Gil and pop culture critic Cory Doctorow are also along for the ride.”

DECEMBER 19

6:30 PM
1905 KIENITZ AVE, MODESTO



“A provocative social experiment-turned-documentary, KUMARE follows American filmmaker Vikram Gandhi as he transforms himself into a wise Indian guru, hoping to prove the absurdity of blind faith. Instead, he finds himself forging profound connections with people from all walks of life -- and wondering if and when to reveal his true self. Will his followers accept his final teaching? Can this illusion reveal a greater spiritual truth? Winner of South by Southwest’s Audience Award, KUMARE is an insightful look at faith and belief.”

COLLOQUIUM: DR. ALAN LENZI NOVEMBER 19, 8:00 PM



On the third Wednesday of every other month, we invite a fascinating speaker to our local area. This is a free event, open to the public, at the Manteca Library.

Two ancient poems — the biblical Book of Job and the Babylonian Ludlul Bel Nemeqi (composed 800 years earlier) — amid all of their differences, display several striking similarities and share a common theme.

The common theme in both texts is the necessity for humans to accept the inscrutable sovereignty and decisions of the god who caused the suffering.

Dr. Lenzi will argue that these two texts ultimately are about silencing religious criticism and dispelling doubts about the religious status quo in their respective communities (a function the Book of Job carries on to this day).

About the Speaker

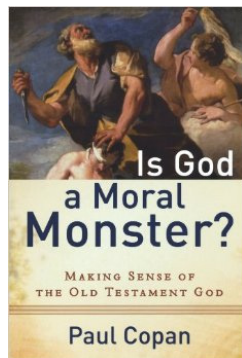
Alan Lenzi (PhD, Brandeis University) is an associate professor in the Department of Religious and Classical Studies at University of the Pacific. He works in the field of first millennium ancient Near Eastern religious traditions, especially Babylonian and Assyrian.

He has published books on secrecy in Mesopotamian and biblical religious texts, the Babylonian “Job,” and ancient Akkadian prayers and hymns. He is editor of the ancient Near Eastern section of the online journal Religion Compass.

BOOK GROUP, DECEMBER 2, 7:00 PM (CERES)

TO GET THE ADDRESS, RSVP ON OUR WEBSITE, FACEBOOK, OR MEETUP.

Please come whether you enjoyed the book, hated the book, or didn't quite finish it! Every month we try to rotate through a variety of viewpoints and disciplines. Sometimes that's history, biology, sociology, economics, theology, or philosophy. Every once in a while, we try to throw in a book that represents a point of view we may not share. This month's book features apologist Paul Copan's attempt at taking on the accusation that the god of the Bible is a “moral monster.”



“A recent string of popular-level books written by the New Atheists have leveled the accusation that the God of the Old Testament is nothing but a bully, a murderer, and a cosmic child abuser. This viewpoint is even making inroads into the church. How are Christians to respond to such accusations? And how are we to reconcile the seemingly disconnected natures of God portrayed in the two testaments? In this timely and readable book, apologist Paul Copan takes on some of the most vexing accusations of our time, including: God is arrogant and jealous, God punishes people too harshly, God is guilty of ethnic cleansing, God oppresses women, God endorses slavery, Christianity causes violence, and more. Copan not only answers God's critics, he also shows how to read both the Old and New Testaments faithfully, seeing an unchanging, righteous, and loving God in both.”

NEW SECULAR MEDITATION GROUPS

TROY SPEARS

On October 5th, I started hosting two secular meditation meetings on the first Sunday of the month at 10 AM and the third Tuesday of the month at 7 PM. The meetings will be held in my living room at 1905 Kienitz Avenue in Modesto.

Meditation is misunderstood by some nonbelievers to be a religious practice, but it's really as normal and as simple as counting to ten. But this hasn't stopped many a guru from setting up classes, retreats, how-to books and videos, and turning focused relaxation into a multibillion dollar-a-year industry. Hopefully, these meditation groups will offer a nice introduction to the practice, and participants can decide if they want to proceed to more formal training.

At our secular meditation group, we sit in a candle-lit circle. If you like, you can bring a mat or towel and lay on the floor. There is a very short how-to introduction. After that, we start a 15 minute recording of waves lapping on a beach with seagulls in the background. After the meditation, participants talk about their meditation, and as trust builds, I hope people will feel safe to share more about their lives. After everyone has had a chance to speak, a short secular affirmation is read.

This group will not be focused on addictions or behavioral compulsions, although regular meditation can help with changing behavior for the better. It will merely be a place where nonbelievers can come together and learn to relax.

BECOME A MEMBER

NAME _____

STREET _____

CITY _____ ZIP _____

PHONE _____

EMAIL _____

MEMBERSHIP TYPE (CHECK ONE)

INDIVIDUAL (\$24/YEAR) COUPLE (\$36/YEAR)

AHA MEMBER (SINGLE \$12/YEAR - COUPLE \$18/YEAR)

PLEASE READ THE PRINCIPLES OF HUMANISM AND CHECK THE BOX:

I HAVE READ THE PRINCIPLES OF HUMANISM AND I SUBSTANTIALLY AGREE WITH THE PRINCIPLES STATED.

MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO STANISLAUS HUMANISTS. ACTIVE MEMBERS RECEIVE DISCOUNTS ON CLOTHES AND MERCHANDISE. ACTIVE MEMBERSHIP IS REQUIRED TO BE ELIGIBLE TO VOTE AT THE ANNUAL MEETING OR TO SIT ON THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS. SEND YOUR APPLICATION AND CHECK TO:

STANISLAUS HUMANISTS
1905 KIENITZ AVENUE
MODESTO, CA 95355

YOU CAN ALSO APPLY ONLINE AT:

WWW.STANISLAUSHUMANISTS.ORG/MEMBERSHIP.HTML

PRINCIPLES OF HUMANISM

Humanism is a naturalistic philosophy, informed by science, inspired by art, and motivated by compassion. The document Humanism and Its Aspirations* states six basic principles with which AHA members and chapters should substantially agree:

- 1.** Knowledge of the world is derived by observation, experimentation, and rational analysis.
- 2.** Humans are an integral part of nature, the result of unguided evolutionary change.
- 3.** Ethical values are derived from human need and interest as tested by experience.
- 4.** Life's fulfillment emerges from individual participation in the service of humane ideals.
- 5.** Humans are social by nature and find meaning in relationships.
- 6.** Working to benefit society maximizes individual happiness.

*The full text of Humanism and Its Aspirations can be found at www.americanhumanist.org/Humanism/Humanist_Manifesto_III



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