

The Idaho Humanist

Humanists of Idaho is a chapter of the American Humanist Association and the Council for Secular Humanism. We are a non-profit corporation organized to promote ethical, democratic, and naturalistic Humanism in the state of Idaho through public awareness, education, and community involvement.

Jan-Feb 2001

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Humanism is a rational philosophy informed by science, inspired by art, and motivated by compassion. It affirms the dignity of each human being and supports individual liberty consonant with social and planetary responsibility. Humanism advocates participatory democracy, the open society, human rights, and social justice. Free of super-naturalism, it recognizes human beings as part of nature and holds that all values—be they religious, ethical, social, or political—have their source in human nature, experience, and culture. Humanism thus derives the goals of life from human need and interest rather than from theological and ideological abstractions, and asserts that humanity must take responsibility for its own destiny.

—*The Humanist*,
Official publication of the American
Humanist Association

HUMCON 2001

The Los Angeles Freethought Federation, an alliance of atheist and humanist groups in the Los Angeles area, is sponsoring the HUMCOM 2001 conference from February 16-18. Speakers will include Paul Kurtz of the Council for Secular Humanism and Sherwin Wine of the Society for Humanistic Judaism. Workshops on various topics from politics, the media, ecology, education, and separation of church and state will be held. Prices range from \$75 for conference only to \$175 with all meals and speakers.

For more information, call (310) 535-1776 or e-mail LAFF@aol.com.

Holiday Sponsor Family

A final report on our sponsor family for the year 2000. Thank you to everyone who helped with the sponsor family. We were able to fulfill their wish lists. Members donated everything from a handmade quilt to bunk beds for the family. With the money donated by HoI members we were able to purchase those things on their lists that were not donated by the group. We were also able to purchase a \$95 dollar gift card to allow them to purchase anything else that they needed. In all the members donated \$200 all of which went to the sponsor family. With the help of Nicolle's father we delivered everything to the WCA.. We recieved a thank you note from the mother and following is what she wrote. "Thank you so much for everything. My son Austin has wanted bunk beds for so long. Without your help my sons wouldn't have had much of a Christmas. I hope I am in a position to help someone the way you have helped me. Thank you, Michelle, Austin, and Kayd."

Inside This Issue

Peace on Earth.....	2
Member Update.....	3
IPTV Festival.....	3
Upcoming Events.....	4

Peace on Earth

By Chris Struble

The holidays can be a time of joy, beauty, and hope, but they can also be a time of contradictions. On the one hand, Americans genuinely wish for “Peace on Earth, good will toward men”. At the same time we fill the air with song declaring how great it is that our religion is the one true religion and that our personal deity is the one true God. It doesn’t seem to occur to most people just how discordant these messages really are.

With the Cold War now over, the greatest remaining threat to Peace on Earth is paternal, rewards-based religion. From the street battles between Muslims and Jews in Palestine, to the sectarian strife between Christians in northern Ireland, to the Taliban’s systematic erasure of an entire generation of Afghani women, religion-motivated violence springs from the same source: the idea that God will eternally reward those who follow the one true faith and eternally punish those who believe differently, regardless of their conduct or moral behavior. The stronger this belief, the more likely a person is to diminish others who have different beliefs, and the easier it is to violate the human rights of others.

When adults teach children that God himself is a bigot who will condemn good people to eternal suffering because they don’t call him by the right name (or don’t talk to him at all), should we really be surprised when some of those children grow up to plant bombs in buses, shoot their neighbors with automatic weapons, or leave a young man to die on a barbed wire fence in Wyoming because God supposedly doesn’t approve of his behavior? The doctrine of hell is a doctrine of eternal violence.

I am reminded of a scene in the movie Gandhi portraying a story of a man who came to the Mahatma during the sectarian strife between Muslims and Hindus after India

declared independence from Britian. The man confessed to doing something so terrible he was doomed to hell. Because Muslim fanatics had killed his son, the man had killed the child of a Muslim family in a fit of rage. Gandhi declared “I know a way out of hell,” and told the man to find a Muslim boy whose parents had died in the troubles, and raise the boy as his own son, but raise him in the Muslim faith.

In a world where no religion is in the majority, and over a billion people have no religious belief at all, the measure of how close we are to achieving Peace on Earth may not be how many people put up Christmas lights, or how many people are shooting each other in the West Bank, but how many of us could do what Gandhi asked this man to do. If you adopted a child from overseas, could you raise it in the beliefs of it’s native land rather than your own? If not, why not? At the dinner table, what do you tell your own children about people whose beliefs are different?

This year, every person who truly wants Peace on Earth should resolve to learn more about other beliefs. Study the texts of another belief not to condemn it but to find beauty in it. Once this year, attend a synagogue, mosque, or interfaith service. Soak up the thundering oratory of Robert Ingersoll for a glimpse into the agnostic mind. Travel the cosmos with Carl Sagan. Spend a reflective evening with the Dalai Lama. Experience the diversity of man’s attempts to find meaning.

Along the way, we might understand what Gandhi probably meant when he said (again, from the movie) “We are all Muslims, and we are all Hindus.” We are all human beings, and human beings are much more precious than any symbol, or doctrine, or church.

Note: This article was submitted to the Idaho Statesman in December but was not published.

RFRA Update

By Chris Struble

Idaho's Free Exercise of Religion Act goes into effect on Feb 1.

Opposition to the legislation has been mounting, with the Idaho Human Rights Commission and the Idaho Association of Commerce and Industry coming out against it, saying it would lead to human rights violations, and lawsuits against employers.

Efforts are underway to repeal the law or amend it so it does not allow discrimination or child abuse on religious grounds.

So far 9 states have passed similar laws, but in every case they have been amended to limit abuses. If this law goes into effect as is, Idaho will be the first state to create such a broad right to discriminate and break laws on religious grounds.

There is still time to comment on this legislation. Comments can be mailed to:

The Honorable (your representative or senator)
State Capitol Building
P. O. Box 83720
Boise, Idaho 83720-0038
E-mail can be sent to
infocntr@lso.state.id.us.

You can leave a message for any legislator at 208-332-1000, or fax to 208-334-5397 (include your name and phone number).

At the last meeting, there was a discussion of whether Humanists of Idaho should be a

Feb Meeting

This month's membership meeting will be on Thursday, February 1 at 7:30 PM, at the Flicks Theater, 646 Fulton, Boise.

Agenda will include:
Discussion of volunteers for the IPTV Festival in March, RFRA discussion, officer reports.

party in any legal action against the law after if it goes into effect. Everyone agreed that we should, but we didn't have a quorum at the last meeting. Please attend this month's meeting if you can.

I will bring information on the law and a statement of what our position should be as a group and bring it to the next meeting for discussion. I have also invited an attorney to talk to us about the law but have not gotten a confirmation yet.

MLK event

Several HoI members attended the MLK event at the state capitol on Jan 15th. Pat Hall's human rights quilt was prominently displayed behind the speaker podium. Pat was the chief designer of the quilt, which honors human rights groups in Idaho.

The event included speeches and songs including "We Shall Overcome". Noticeably absent though was governor Dirk Kempthorne himself.

Member News

By Chris Struble

Congratulations to Nicolle Foster, she graduated from cosmetology school this last week. Nicolle will begin working at the Stylist Group, 322-1809, in February.

John Harms is recovering from surgery. While he is recovering his wife Vi will be staying at the Valley View Nursing Home at 1130 N Allumbaugh, Boise. Vi will be there for several weeks. If you get a chance, we are sure she would enjoy a visit.

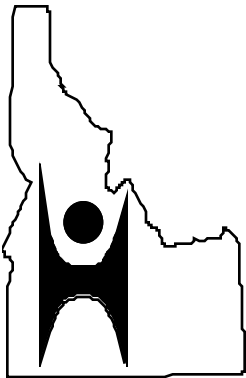
We would like this to be a monthly feature. Please help us do that by letting us know of upcoming birthdays, anniversaries, or other events.

IPTV Festival

Once again Idaho Public Television has asked us to help out at Festival, their annual fund raiser, which raises almost 50% of their funds. We are scheduled to answer phones on March 5, 2001 from 8:00-11:30, I realize this is early but in the past we have had a lot of fun at this event. We can only bring 10 volunteers this year so if you would like to volunteer let us know at the February meeting, or give LeAnne a call at 362-6873. This is an on air event so don't forget to wear your HOI T-shirts if you have one. If you would like to purchase an HOI T-shirt, please let us know .

Upcoming Events

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| Feb 1, 2001 | General Membership Meeting
7:30 PM at the Flicks Theater, 646 Fulton |
| Feb 12, 2001 | Darwin's Birthday |
| Feb 16-18, 2001 | HumCon 2001, Los Angeles (see inside for details) |
| March 1, 2001 | General Membership Meeting
7:30 PM at the Flicks Theater, 646 Fulton |
| March 5, 2001 | IPTV Festival (see inside for details) |



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