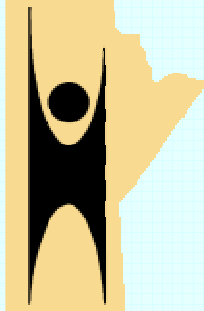


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# Manitoba Humanist



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Manitoba

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## Humanist Association of Manitoba

### Upcoming events

Humanist Association of Manitoba

#### Monthly Meeting Saturday, May 10, 2008

Viscount Gort Hotel 1670 Portage Ave. at Route 90

\*\*\* NEW AGENDA \*\*\*

Meet and Greet 5:30 p.m.

Meeting / Presentation 6:15 p.m.

Dinner (may be ordered from Coffee Shop menu) 7:00 p.m.

#### Guest Speaker: HAM member Kerem Usenmez

Kerem has the distinction of being HAM's farthest member, geographically speaking. He lives in Thompson, MB. He's originally from Turkey, and recently returned there for a visit. Kerem will speak to us about changes that he noticed in his home country.

**Another Great Evening. Don't Miss It!**

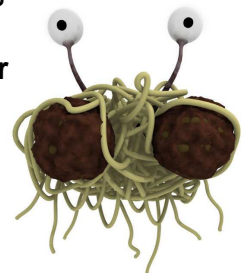
#### June Solstice Party

Saturday, June 14, 2008

David Parker's home near Silver Falls, MB

#### Our Theme: A Flying Spaghetti Monster Pasta Party

More details to be announced.  
Stay tuned!



## The Lord Selkirk Park Project: Humanism in action

*Jim Silver is the Chair of the Politics department at the U of W. He spoke at HAM's April meeting.*

According to Jim Silver, one of the originators of the Lord Selkirk Park project, poverty has always existed in Winnipeg. And today's flavor of poverty is probably worse today than it was 100 years ago.

Now – as it was then – poverty is often linked with racism. Back then it was aimed at immigrants from Eastern Europe and the British Isles. Today, aboriginals and recent African immigrants are most often the ones dealing with inner city poverty.

However, current conditions have been made worse by the increase in gangs and in more powerful street drugs, with corresponding levels of increased violence and prostitution. Complicating matters are growing numbers of single-parent families.

Three years ago, the Lord Selkirk Park project was introduced to try to bring change to one small part of the inner city. Lord Selkirk Park is a public housing complex just west of Main Street, bounded by Dufferin, King, Stella and Robinson.

In this project, the aim was to create opportunities that were tailored to the realities and circumstances of the residents. Also important was that organizations and individuals work in partnership, rather than in isolation; and that the residents be involved in the decision-making process.

Since its beginning, the project has been responsible for:

- Creating a Community Advisory Committee, which allows the various social agencies working in the area to share information with

each other, thus increasing their effectiveness.

- Establishing a Resource Centre, staffed by residents. The Centre provides a meeting place, where the residents can visit and have a cup of coffee or tea. The center also offers services such as laundry facilities and clothing exchanges, which were introduced by the residents themselves. The centre acts to increase a sense of community in the area.
- Creating an Adult Learning Centre. One of the most consistent indicators of educational attainment continues to be the family income level, so by increasing educational levels, better employment will follow. The Learning Centre – in addition to providing education to residents – has had the side effect of improving the education for the local children, since the children of these learners are seeing by example and are also doing better in school.

For the future, there are plans to add a Family Resource Centre that provides child care, and a program to certify youth workers in a Recreation and Healthy Living Program.

So far, the Lord Selkirk Park project appears to be meeting its goal of transforming peoples' lives, and improving their health and happiness.

Thanks go to Jim Silver for taking the time to address our group, and for a thought-provoking presentation.

If you would like to learn more about the Lord Selkirk Park project, there are a number of interesting papers and fact sheets available on-line at the Manitoba office of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, [www .policyalternatives.ca](http://www.policyalternatives.ca).

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*“And man can be as big as he wants. No problem of human destiny is beyond human beings. Man's reason and spirit have often solved the seemingly unsolvable - and we believe they can do it again.”*  
- John F. Kennedy

## Meet Me at The Forum

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*“The Internet is just a world passing around notes in a classroom.”*

- Jon Stewart

Thanks to our dedicated webmaster, we now have our very own Forum. The HAM forum will serve as a place for us to exchange ideas easily and to discuss topics of interest, and even just post humorous stories or ideas.

Just follow the ‘Forum’ link on the menu bar across the top of the home page at [www.mbhumanists dot ca](http://www.mbhumanists dot ca).

The forum is public, so anyone can view the messages posted there, but you need to register in

order to create your own posts, or reply to others. Registration is fast and easy. Just click on ‘Register’ in the top right-hand corner and follow the instructions.

Once you complete the registration, you will receive an email with the activation key. The account then has to be activated within 24 hours.



## New Books for the HAM Library

1. **Irreligion: A Mathematician Explains Why the Arguments for God Just Don't Add Up**, John Allen Paulos
2. **Darwin's Lost Theory**, David Loye
3. **The Year of Living Biblically**, A. J. Jacobs
4. **The Trouble with Islam Today**, Irshad Manji

5. **Islam: A Short History**, Karen Armstrong
6. **The Stillborn God: Religion, Politics, and the Modern West**, by Mark Lilla
7. **The Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets**, Barbara G. Walker

The new books will be available at the next membership meeting on May 10<sup>th</sup>.

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## DARFUR – Proposed Action for HAM

I have been pondering what the Humanist Association of Manitoba could do in the area of social justice. Perhaps, a "Save Darfur" campaign is a way to start.

Governments are stopped on this issue, partly because citizens are not urging action on this catastrophe. It is stated that Darfur is a slow genocide since only 400,000 people have died. Yet many more have been displaced, raped or wounded by the actions of the Sudanese government and by the Arab based Janjweed militia.

I fear that human rights museums may focus on past genocides and hence miss this present one. By now the call of "Never Again" has become rhetoric alone as we have ignored Rwanda, Srebrenica, Cambodia and other mass killings. As the author Arundhati Roy noted years ago, "To stay quiet is as political an act as speaking out." We appear distracted by media which spends more time on entertainment than on moral issues.

Now some may ask why not focus on issues in Manitoba? Of course both local and international events deserve attention, so HAM members ought to endorse both. Genocide appears a greater evil than some because it includes killing, hunger, abuse and loss of livelihood for many. While local hunger and homelessness need to be addressed, both murder and loss of livelihood as in burned villages and destroyed cattle may warrant supplementary attention.

Many churches and synagogues have taken up the case of Darfur. However, the moral issue appears to transcend such groups. The Responsibility to Protect endorsed by the U.N. has not impacted Darfur significantly, although the under-funded African Union has been authorized to monitor the situation. Since the Responsibility to Protect was urged by the Winnipegger Lloyd Axworthy, governments appear unable to act in this area unless urged by their citizens.

HAM or individuals within HAM may do at least two things. First, raise the moral issue of genocide in Darfur to greater consciousness in Winnipeg with letters to the editor or in raising the issue at groups with whom we meet. Second, we can give support to students who wish to initiate significant action for the future. Likely genocide in Darfur and perhaps, in the long range, may arise again.

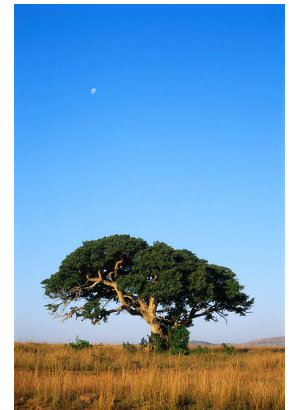
- Barry Hammond

Links:

*Canadian Students for Darfur*,  
www . csfdarfur.net

*Oxfam Canada*, www .oxfam.ca

*International Rescue Committee*,  
www .their.org




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*"Nobody made a greater mistake than he who did nothing because he could do only a little."*

- Edmund Burke

## April's Bullshit! Party

Once again, we had a fabulous time together at Jeff & Leslie Olsson's residence at our most recent Bullshit! Party.

The party started with the video of Andy Thomson's talk on Suicide Terrorism at the American Atheists conference. This was followed by Penn And Teller's "Conspiracy Theories" episode of Bullshit!

A Q&A-style discussion followed each, with "Conspiracy Theories" not making the case Penn & Teller would have liked. However, "Suicide Terrorism" worked for most people. Several found the coverage of aspects besides religion lacking.

Thomson's thesis is that three things go into the suicide bomber:

- A male propensity for what he calls coalitionary violence. That is, bands of men raiding weaker neighbors as a near universal feature of primitive societies and even our closest primate relatives, chimpanzees.
- A capability for suicide, present in us all.
- Religion, a mind bending force capable of subverting the previous two in the service of suicide bombing campaigns.

We cannot do the video justice here. You can find it on [richarddawkins.net](http://richarddawkins.net) or search for "Andy Thomson terrorism" on Youtube.

Penn & Teller approached their topic as entertainers trying to excite and inspire an audience to ask questions, more than likely an audience who would never be caught dead watching a science show unless it were wrapped up in the trappings of a 'reality' show, hollyglitz entertainment, or gossip tv. They must sacrifice depth, and in the case of Conspiracy Theories, sacrifice all depth in favor of emotional appeals and name calling.

They usually do better, so Jeff put on a second episode on the Bible as history. In this episode, facts were presented, with references, and on one point, the 'bible guy' made a case without being mocked. Yet all the appeal to people who think brains are uncool was there.

- Grant Rogerson



# The Amazing Meeting 6 -- I, Skeptic: Modern Skepticism in the Internet Age

June 19 – 22, 2008  
Las Vegas, NV  
Flamingo Hotel & Casino

Presented by : The James Randi Educational Foundation (JREF)  
Keynote Speaker: Dr. Neil Degrasse Tyson

Guest Speakers include Dr. Michael Shermer, Penn & Teller, Dr. Richard Wiseman, Christopher Hitchens, PZ Myers, Phil Plait, Adam Savage from the Mythbusters; plus many more!

For more information, go to [www.randi.org](http://www.randi.org) and click on the link for "The Amazing Meeting". At least three members of HAM are planning to attend. It looks to be a really great event.

Executive

Barrie Webster  
Barry Hammond  
Helen Friesen  
Heather McDonell

Members at Large:

Randy Gibson  
Donna Harris  
Brian Latour  
Jeff Olsson  
Grant Rogerson  
Neil Schipper  
Sophie Shulman

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Yes, I would like to BECOME A MEMBER of the Humanist Association of Manitoba

New Member       Renewal

Membership Category:

- Individual Membership      \$25.00
- Individual Limited Income      \$10.00
- Household Membership\*      \$45.00
- Household Limited Income      \$15.00

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ Province: \_\_\_\_\_

Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone#: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell #: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

\*Household Memberships: Please give the names of all additional Humanists in your household 18 years or over:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

**DONATION** (Tax receipts issued for all donations of \$10 or more)

I would like to make a donation to HAM of:

- \$10     \$20     \$30     \$50     \$100
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

PAYMENT:     Cheque       Money Order  
                   Visa         Mastercard     Amex

Please complete the following if paying by credit card:

Account No. \_\_\_\_\_

Expiry Date: \_\_\_\_/ \_\_\_\_

Name on Card: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Please make cheque or money order payable to: **Humanist Association of Manitoba** and mail to: *Humanist Association of Manitoba, 7 Pinehurst Lane, Mitchell, MB, R5G 2J3.*

Or bring your form and the fees to any HAM meeting and give it to Helen Friesen, or any member of the executive.