

NEW YORK CITY ATHEISTS

<http://foody.org/atheist.html> atheist@foody.org

February 2002

Planning for WBAI, Museum

Our Next Meeting (February)

Our next meeting will be held this coming Sunday, February 24, will discuss the WBAI radio show in planning, and a proposed outing to the Museum of Natural History, plus any other business and general socializing. See details in box at right. Please come!

WBAI Radio Show

Listener-sponsored, "First Amendment radio" WBAI-FM has tentatively approved a rationalist call-in show. Named *Equal Time for Freethought*, it may run for thirteen episodes, on weekday afternoons. Each program may be divided into segments for news, arts, a speaker addressing a theme, and then calls.

Dorothy Klein, who has coproduced atheist/humanist radio before, is spearheading this effort. She, Mary Beaty, Joe Fields, Lila Smith, and I (Josh Karpf) visited WBAI on February 1. The program director was friendly and was receptive to our proposal. We are preparing a sample program for our next meeting at WBAI, possibly to be held next week.

This project is not limited to New York City Atheists. The Corliss Lamont Humanist Society, American Atheists, other groups, and other rationalists are needed to make this a diverse show that will accommodate all flavors of freethought. It can promote all of our groups, and freethought in general.

We'd like people who want to help (especially production volunteers) to come to this Sunday's meeting to share ideas (e.g., suggest topics, guests), or to do so via e-mail to atheist@foody.org. The WBAI working group already comprises, loosely, the core group that visited WBAI plus six more people e-mailing ideas.

Museum Jazz and Exhibit

I will propose a March or April social outing to the American Museum of Natural History. The "Starry Nights" café under the planetarium sphere is a casual, high-tech space that showcases ambient jazz from 5:45 to 8:15 on Friday evenings and also sells drinks and snacks/tapas. The museum is open till 8:45 so we also can see an exhibit. Admission to the café is included in the museum's suggested donation of \$10, but the museum accepts a dollar or even a quarter. If the group approves,

Come to our February meeting!

Sunday, February 24, 2002, 3 P.M.

Moonstruck East diner (upstairs room),

449 3rd Ave. (corner of 31 St.), Manhattan

Agenda: WBAI, museum visit, socializing

For more information, contact Josh Karpf via e-mail at atheist@foody.org, or Jose Zamocki at anjeyjn@aol.com or at the American Atheist Center, (908) 276-7300.

Also of atheist interest:

Humanist Society of Metropolitan NY

Tuesday, February 26, 2002, 6:30 P.M.

Regular meeting of the Corliss Lamont Chapter of the American Humanist Association.

Location: Moonstruck East diner (upstairs room), 449 3rd Ave. (corner of 31 St.), Manhattan. For more information contact HSMNY by e-mail at info.hsmny@corliss-lamont.org or by phone at (914) 588-5284, or check its Web site at www.corliss-lamont.org/hsmny.

African Americans & Freethought:

Critical Color for the 21st Century

Monday, March 4, 2002, 11:30 - 1:30

Special seminar on religion and freethought in African-American culture. Speakers: Norm Allen, Jr.; Leonard Bethel; Arnell Dowret; Debbie Goddard; Jesse Rhines; Anna Stubblefield. Sponsored by CFI-MetroNY.

Location: Rutgers University's Robeson Center, Room 231, 350 Martin Luther King Blvd, Newark, New Jersey. For more information contact Barry F. Seidman at (973) 655-9556 or CFIMetroNY@aol.com.

we'll discuss a date and pick a gallery; for instance, the new hall on human biology and evolution. For more information on Starry Nights, point your Web browser to http://www.amnh.org/rose/specials/jazz/index.html?src=h_sn or call the museum at (212) 769-5100.

Our Last Meeting (January)

We had a productive January meeting. None of the 13 people present wanted to replace me as director, but several offered to help with organizational work: Dorothy (press liaison, phone tree); Brad (meeting organizer, press liaison); Sydney (activity organizer, mailings); Ileen (newsletter, mailings, flyers); Melody

(mailings); Joe Zamecki (phone tree, e-mail, flyers); and Maria (cartoons).

I'm calling this the "organizers circle" till someone comes up with a better name. If you'd like to help organize, e-mail us at atheist@foody.org. I agreed to remain as director *pro tem*, acting mostly as a coordinator.

The newsletter will be shorter, with less exhaustive meeting minutes and local news analysis, to reduce writing time and printing. We'll also follow Joe Fields' excellent suggestion to print the newsletter only for those with no e-mail. This will more than halve both postage and printing costs. Bulk mail was also suggested, but that requires a greater volume of mail and more mailing labor.

We explored some new ideas that should mean more fun and growth for New York City Atheists:

- The WBAI *Equal Time for Freethought* show, discussed above.
- There was enthusiasm for outings, in addition to or in substitute of the cholesterol-rich monthly meetings at the diner. Diner meetings may be limited to brainstorming/decision making meetings that can involve more members than the organizers circle's e-mail discussions. Such meetings could also be held other places besides the diner.
- Joe Zamecki agreed to research the cost of print ads in the *Village Voice* and the *New York Press* for promoting NYC Atheists.

We also discussed philosopher Richard Dawkins' view of gullibility being evolutionarily programmed into children as a survival tactic, and how children might be damaged by religious parenting.

This led into an exchange over how much intervention was permissible. On the one hand, parents have great latitude over how to raise their children. On the other, Bible-justified corporal punishment is often prosecuted by the state, even when it takes place in separatist religious movements. We also discussed Albert

Ellis' views on psychological dependence on religion.

We also discussed the value of socializing, and how atheism forms common ground despite our diverse backgrounds.

The treasury holds \$66.29, after the costs of this mailing, thanks to a generous donation at the January meeting.

Atheist Viewpoint

The talk show on the political and social concerns of atheists and other nonreligious people.

Manhattan: Wednesdays, 6:00 P.M. channel 67 (Time Warner)

Staten Island: Saturdays, 4:00 P.M.; and Sundays, 6:00 P.M.

<http://atheistviewpoint.tv>

Other NYC freethought groups

Atheists, Agnostics and Freethinkers (NYU)

"An official student club at New York University. To provide an open forum for the discussion of a wide range of controversial issues of philosophical, social, and political interest. . . . To raise awareness of various issues related to Atheism, Agnosticism and free thought including the separation of Church and State."

nyuath1@aol.com or charles@bigfoes.com
<http://www.nyu.edu/clubs/athists>

Humanist Society of Metropolitan New York (Corliss Lamont Chapter of the AHA)

"Meets approximately twice per month—generally on the evening of the second and fourth Tuesdays, usually with a speaker followed by a discussion." Meets at same location as NYC Atheists. Mailing address:

177 United Nations Plaza (lobby floor), New York, NY 10017-1521

(212) 687-2477, info.hsmny@corliss-lamont.org
<http://www.corliss-lamont.org/hsmny>

New York Society for Ethical Culture

Several events per month. "A humanistic religious and philosophical movement in which people share a core of common values: the worth of each individual, ethics as central to our lives, eliciting the best from each other and doing good in the world. We seek truth as a growing, changing body of knowledge based on experience, reason and scientific observation, and seek to use it in support of human well-being."

2 West 64th St., New York, NY 10023
(212) 874-5210, ethc.org@nysec.org
<http://www.nysec.org>

Secular Humanist Society of New York

Meets occasionally at the Greenwich Village Center, at 219 Sullivan St., for lectures and discussion.

P.O. Box 7661, F.D.R. Station, New York, NY 10150
(212) 861-6003
<http://www.humanist.com>

Egan to Lead Anti-Gay St. Patrick's Parade

New York City's Cardinal Edward Egan will lead the 2002 St. Patrick's Day Parade up Fifth Avenue, which will involve him in the struggle between two groups to control the event -- the Ancient Order of Hibernians, the nation's oldest Irish-American group, and the St. Patrick's Day Parade Committee. The latter group has won the Police Department permit since 1993, much to the Hibernians' dismay. The Hibernians accuse the committee of disorganization, and says the committee appointed Egan in order to make the committee more popular. Both groups have refused to permit gays from formally participating in the Irish Catholic heritage parade, which has taken place since 1761.

Source: "Cardinal to Lead Parade," 12/27/01; "A New Position for Cardinal: Grand Marshal," *New York Times*, 12/28/01.

Upstate Islamberg: Terrorism Training?

Islamberg, a remote Muslim settlement in the western Catskills town of Tompkins, New York, is allegedly a branch for a terrorist group founded by Sheik Mubarak Ali Shah Gilani, the radical Islamic cleric whom *Wall Street Journal* reporter Daniel Pearl was trying to interview when he disappeared. Since its beginning in Brooklyn about 20 years ago, the national Jamaat ul-Fuqra group has been linked to more than two dozen murders and firebombings across the United States, the *Binghamton Press and Sun-Bulletin* reported.

But the 300 residents of Islamberg deny they are members of ul-Fuqra. They insist they are followers of a different organization, Muslims of the Americas, which was also founded by Gilani. That group preaches Islamic study and urges its members to live in rural enclaves "free from the decadence of a godless society," members say.

The FBI says it has investigated Muslims of the Americas and come up with nothing. But critics say the group is dangerous. A federal agent testified last year that members of ul-Fuqra who engaged in violent acts in the United States were trained at the Tompkins settlement.

Source: "Cleric's Upstate Followers Seen as Threat," *New York Post*, 2/1/02.

Court Won't Charge Embezzling Priest

Thomas Gradilone, the former pastor of Our Lady Queen of Martyrs Church in Queens, will not be charged with secretly spending \$1.8 million in church funds on a string of ex-convicts and drug users for years. Gardilone handed them cash-stuffed envelopes and wrote checks to cover bad debts, rent, and bail money for the men. Despite the "disturbing" pattern of financial misdeeds, Queens District Attorney Richard Brown said Gradilone cannot be charged because of the wide leeway given to pastors when handling church funds. Because the payments were made to charitable causes -- people the

priest believed were in need -- there was no crime under church or criminal law, said the authorities. "In the end, it presents an insurmountable impediment to the filing of criminal charges," Brown said.

Gradilone was forced into retirement later and sent to a retreat for troubled priests in Canada. He is now living at St. Margaret Mary Church in Manhattan Beach, Brooklyn. Bishop Thomas Daily backed the decision not to prosecute the priest, but chided Gradilone for abusing the trust of his flock. "The monsignor is naturally pleased that the investigation is over," said Gradilone's lawyer. "Obviously, he'd like to hear they believe there was no wrongdoing. But he's a Catholic priest, and priests are very good at humility, so he'll live with it."

Source: "Ex-Pastor Won't Have to Face Raps," *Daily News*, 12/18/01; "Priest Will Not Face Charges in Handling of Church Funds," *New York Times*, 12/18/01.

Local Bishop Protected Pedophile Priest

The *New York Post* marked the 50th anniversary of the ordination of Thomas Daily, bishop of Brooklyn and Queens, by revealing his alleged connection to a former Boston priest convicted of pedophilia. The *Post* said that in 1980, when the now defrocked clergyman John J. Geoghan allegedly confessed to molesting seven boys, Daily moved him to another Boston parish. Geoghan is accused of sexually abusing more than 130 boys during a 30-year stretch. The Boston archdiocese so far has paid more than \$10 million to settle suits by about 50 other victims. Geoghan was convicted this month of molesting one boy and faces two more criminal trials.

"I am not a policeman -- I am a shepherd," the *Boston Globe* quoted Daily telling lawyers for some of the boys. Daily has admitted urging relatives of the boys to remain silent, saying he wanted to avoid a scandal, the paper said, citing a deposition he gave. Several *Globe* stories said church officials, including Daily, shuttled Geoghan among parishes -- where he had continued to have contact with children -- despite years of mounting molestation allegations against him.

The *Post*, which called Daily a "perv-linked cleric," is braver than the *Daily News* on the issue of priestly pedophilia. In January, when Pope John Paul II (Karol Wojtyla) quietly ordered churches to hold secret tribunals for clergymen accused of child molestation, the *Daily News* blandly repeated the Archdiocese of New York's boast that Cardinal Edward Egan "has put into place his own policies about sexual misconduct with children, including mandatory background checks on anyone working in an archdiocesan facility." In August 2001, the *Daily News* was silent when *Post* reported that when Egan was bishop of Bridgeport, Connecticut, he was accused of "sitting on a string of sexual-abuse lawsuits involving six priests and 26 adults, who charged that they were abused as kids." This month a *Daily News* opinion explored the issue in depth, but laid the blame for the shuffling of Geoghan on safely remote Cardinal

Bernard Law of Boston, and crediting the *National Catholic Reporter* with "breaking the story of the nation's first major pedophile scandal to involve an American priest." Ignoring the psychological effects of enforced celibacy on clergymen, the *Daily News* opinion added, "All churches have pedophile problems, but scandals tend to be rarer in Protestant churches because leaders of congregations vet the candidates before they are called."

Sources: "B'klyn Bishop Shuttled 'Sex' Priest," *New York Post*, 1/25/02; "Perv-Linked Cleric Marks Anniversary," *New York Post*, 1/27/01; "Pope Orders Tribunals for Pedophile Cases," *Daily News*, 1/19/02; "Church Played Role in Changes to Sex-Abuse Bill In Conn.," *New York Post*, 8/1/01; "Pedophile Priests Cost Church Moral Authority," *Daily News*, 2/5/02.

Jewish Apostacy Grows

According to the new American Jewish Identity Survey, Americans who identify themselves as Jewish are more than ever abandoning their religion for other religions or no religion. 1.4 million Jews say that they are Jewish via parentage or ethnicity, yet follow another religion. In 1990, only 625,000 Jews identified themselves that way. An additional 1.4 million Jews -- another quarter of the Jewish population -- now say they are secular or have no religion at all, leaving just 51% of American Jews to say they are Jewish by religion.

The study is a subset of the greater American Religious Identity Survey conducted by the City University of New York's Graduate Center. The new study also found that the number of Americans who say they are Jewish either by religion or upbringing has remained stable at 5.5 million for more than a decade and that those who identify as Jewish are, as earlier studies have also indicated, far more inclined toward atheism and secularism than Americans in general.

Source: "Jews Turning From Judaism," *Jewish Week*, 11/2/01.

The Devil Gets Jiggy in Greenwich

How do Andy Kaufman ("Akrimone") and Chris Brown ("Browndogg") two college-enrolled white teens in wealthy Greenwich, Connecticut, distinguish their hip-hop from that of more mainstream black or working-class white rappers? Besides addressing suburban teenage ennui and school shootings, their duo, named the Sons of Belial -- Belial is a biblical reference to the devil -- attacks the hypocrisy of religion.

They formed their first group, God Complex, as a way to vent their rage at popular mindless acceptance of religious doctrine. "Anti-religion was, like, our main staple," said Kaufman. "'Don't follow, like, the Bible.' We figured that hip-hop would be a good way to express that message." In last year's recording, *The Anarchist's Cookbook*, the Sons of Belial mock Christianity. In "360°," Brown, raps, "Tell me, God/why do I exist?/cuz I'm sick of livin' my life/before a crooked crucifix."

This year, the Sons of Belial plan to regroup in New York City, where Kaufman and Brown hope to attend college, study music, and write more songs.

Source: "Two Rappers Find Rhyme and Rage in Greenwich," *New York Times*, 1/15/02.

Churches Are Dangerous Tinderboxes

Recent fires at Manhattan's Cathedral of St. John the Divine and at the West Side Presbyterian Church in Ridgewood, New Jersey, have highlighted the unique vulnerability of churches to fire damage and their dangers to those who try to save them. Other types of structures can often be saved from fire, but churches are often destroyed and pose unusual risks to firefighters. A New York City fire chief estimated that more than 90 percent of large churches that catch fire are ruined.

Most churches are vulnerable to fire because they have soaring roofs, with up to 100 feet of open air between the floor and the ceiling. That increases oxygen that feeds flames. Many of the churches that burn are older structures, made of dry timber, topped with roofs that are prone to collapse quickly in a blaze. "They're almost designed to burn," said a Jersey City fire director. "It becomes a furnace; it's almost impossible to stop."

Older churches rarely have smoke detectors or sprinkler systems. Many churches are built with truss roofs, a design style in which each of the support beams is interdependent on the others. They are among the most deadly types of roof, and firefighters are wary of going near them in a blaze. "That type of roof can collapse within three to five minutes, and the typical response time for firefighters is about three to five minutes," said the fire director. "I've yet to find a building that's worth dying over," said Ridgewood's acting fire chief.

The United States averaged 1,310 church fires a year from 1992 through 1996, causing more than \$42 million worth of damage each year. Arson was the leading cause of church fires, accounting for nearly 29 percent of the blazes. The January Ridgewood fire and December St. John's fire were attributed to electrical malfunctions.

Source: "Church Fires Almost Impossible to Fight," *Newsday*, 1/13/02.

Jersey Rabbi May Face Death Sentence

The New Jersey rabbi who was tried in 2001 on charges of murder and conspiracy for allegedly arranging the death of his wife in 1994 could face the death sentence in his next trial, ruled the judge who had declared a mistrial last year. Fred J. Neulander's lawyers had said that last year's trial, which had resulted in a hung jury, legally absolved him from having to face the death penalty a second time. The judge, Linda G. Baxter of State Superior Court in Camden, rejected Neulander's motion.

Source: "Motion to Bar Death Penalty in Rabbi's Retrial Is Rejected," *New York Times*, 1/12/02.

Conversion Doesn't Sell

Hip-hop/soul diva Mary J. Blige has found religion, replacing with piety and charity what she says was an abuse-, drug- and depression-saddled past life. Her new boyfriend "wants to know God instead of money," she says. Although her new single "Family Affair" has hit #1 nationwide, religion usually cripples the careers of hip-hop musicians. Months after another Sean "Puffy" Combs protégé, Mase (Mason Betha) "found God" in April 1999, he disappeared from the charts, despite further recording.

Source: "Love and Religion Soothe a Wild Hip-Hop Queen," *New York Times*, 11/29/01.

Israel Extradition Lightens Sentence

A former Brooklyn electronics dealer, extradited from Israel to stand trial in a \$115 million bank-fraud scam, plans to cut his 11-year sentence to less than half by serving his time in the Jewish state. A dual citizen, Dov Engel relocated to Israel in 1997 just as the FBI was investigating him. Under a 1999 extradition-treaty amendment, he can serve his sentence in that country, where fraud charges carry a maximum of five years' imprisonment, and where he can also avoid paying \$87 million in court-ordered restitution.

Source: "Con Cuts Jail Time By Going To Israel," *New York Post*, 12/4/01.

Upon This Rock I Will Build My Lawsuit

Goshen Seventh Day Adventist Church paid only \$300,000 for a \$1 million job to rebuild the church, complained a Brooklyn contractor and worshiper who is suing for the remainder. He says he prayed for a settlement but was forced to take legal action, which the *New York Post* called a "modern-day crusade of sorts." The church plans to countersue, and claims the contractor's work was deficient and that the dispute has cut the church's membership in half. Meanwhile, the contractor continues attending Goshen's Saturday services, temporarily being held at a nearby church. The church plans to revoke his membership, saying, "He's not a devout Adventist. A devout Adventist doesn't sue his own parish."

Source: "Builder Declares Holy War on Church," *New York Post*, 12/1/01.

Minister Hides Marriage

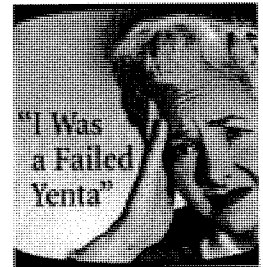
A married, charismatic Brooklyn preacher had a 14-year-long, drunken affair with a woman in his own choir — then attempted to evict her when the relationship ended, according to her palimony lawsuit. The 71-year-old Willie James Hall, pastor of the Bethel Baptist Church

in Crown Heights for the past 40 years, lived with choir member Velma Martin from 1985 to 1998, says the lawsuit. During that time, Hall lavished expensive gifts — fur coats, diamonds and fancy cars — on Martin, a public school teacher, while hiding the fact he was still married, the suit alleges. In 1994, Hall arranged for Martin to have an abortion, she said. The relationship ended abruptly in May 1998, when Hall suffered a stroke and Hall's estranged wife turned up at the hospital, after which Martin found herself evicted from — yet liable for debts on — property she had bought with Hall. Hall admitted the affair in a 1999 court affidavit — and revealed he had been married all along.

Source: "Pastor In Tryst Trouble," *New York Post*, 11/26/01.

Matchmaker, Matchmaker

To use any dating service can lead to too-high expectations. But a *Forward* article on traditional Jewish dating services, which use traditional matchmakers who charge much more than modern services, shows even higher tensions. One man is suing a Jewish matchmaker because he claims she introduced incompatible women and "employed a stable of women to create a false impression that the company was performing its services." The matchmaker blames the plaintiff's "negative energy." The article includes woes from other matchmaking services, one of which was founded "to stave off rising intermarriage rates among Jews."



Source: "Suit Highlighting Lack of Love Between Matchmakers, Clients," *Forward*, 8/31/01.

Pious Long Islander Kid Pornographer

The FBI has arrested a Bay Shore landscaper, Paul Alexander, for allegedly videotaping at least 20 boys as young as 11 having sex with him, or photographing them in the nude since 1985. He also ran a Web site featuring the pictures.

Because Alexander was active in many church groups, the FBI is exploring whether he recruited boys there. Further investigation may discover "many more victims." He is held without bail on a charge of using minors to produce child pornography, and if convicted would be sentenced to at least 10 years in prison.

Neighbors said he attended the local Ascension Lutheran Church, and helped out when the church held community events. An employer said Alexander was "a very religious guy who was always talking about religion . . . about his church."

Source: "Suspect Arrested in Kid Porn," *Newsday*, 12/7/01

Noach Dear Sets Sail

Noach Dear, a 20-year member of the New York City Council and the only Orthodox Jew in that legislature since 1981, is retiring, forced out of office by term limits.

A Democratic representative of his Borough Park-Flatbush district in Brooklyn, Dear was a strong advocate for the interests of his Orthodox Jewish constituency. The Jewish newspaper *Forward* praises him extensively: "He's railed against immodest advertisements on city property, stood up Israel and for Sabbath-observant bus drivers, and tried to censure City College professor Leonard Jeffries for anti-Semitic remarks. He even fought, unsuccessfully, to block a McDonald's franchise from opening too close to a shul in his district."

Other examples include stopping the autopsy of an Orthodox Brooklyn man who died in London, and defending a synagogue that was fined \$50 for failing to keep its sidewalk clean on Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath (the littering law doesn't make allowances for religious holidays).

Despite Dear's seniority and his aggressive pursuit of public funding for local programs, Dear was never regarded as a major power broker. He was seen as at odds with the area's other Orthodox elected official, New York State Assembly member Dov Hikind, who often had a higher profile.

Hikind's chief of staff, Simcha Felder, was elected to replace Dear, who will remain in politics thanks to his unpaid appointment to the Taxi and Limousine Commission.

Sources: "End Of An Era," *Forward*, 12/28/01; "City Soils Temple's Sabbath," *Daily News*, 8/27/01; "Councilers Get New Lease On Political Life," *New York Post*, 12/20/01.

Brooklyn Kosher Dairy Is a Bad Neighbor

Red Hook residents say that an ultra-kosher dairy,

Ahava Food Corp, which was awarded a \$6 million city tax-relief package last year, is subjecting them to round-the-clock noise, forcing them to stay indoors, with windows closed, even in summer. "It sounds like the roar of a jet engine, and it goes all day and all night," said a 68-year-old resident. "I sit three feet from my husband in our house and we have to shout."

Residents of the mixed-use industrial-residential area also claim that milk spilled around the dairy has attracted rats. The dairy, in turn, complains that their operations, which include the all-night operation of refrigerated trucks in its parking lot, are legal and that a



mixed-use neighborhood must adjust to industrial practices.

The dairy has pledged to build an outdoor sound baffle and an indoor generator to power its trucks, but residents and a City Council member say that the company repeatedly promises relief without delivering it.

Source: "Red Hook Sours on New Dairy," *New York Post*, 8/26/01.

Mormons Sue Harrison

The Mormon Church has filed a federal lawsuit against the town of Harrison, New York, accusing the town of infringing on the church's rights to freedom of religion and freedom of assembly, after the local zoning board restricted the size and height of a proposed temple.

Earlier this year, the Zoning Board of Appeals refused to waive the town's 30-foot height limit for the temple, which would be 53 feet tall not counting a steeple. A state Supreme Court justice overruled the board, but the town is appealing.

The Mormons ask the court for permission to build the original 89,700-square-foot temple as opposed to the 56,000-square-foot version mandated by the town Planning Board. As reported in the November edition of "Local Insanity," many Harrison residents have opposed the temple, which would reduce the town's tax base.

Source: "Zoning Board Says Temple Would Violate Height Limit," *Newsday*, 12/19/01.

Clergy Defend Abusive Warden

At New Jersey's Essex County Juvenile Detention Center, youthful offenders are subjected long-term isolation, straitjackets, restraint "mittens," and other techniques prohibited by state law, according to the state Juvenile Justice Commission. When the commission criticized youth house director Joe Clark for these alleged abuses, Clark held a press conference to defend himself and to highlight the support of several ministers.

"I am in a state of apoplectic rage," said Clark, "that the . . . commission has the gall to say that the 200 mentors and 80 clergymen we have brought into this institution would permit child abuse here. It is an insult!" The executive director of the Black Ministers Council of New Jersey said he and other ministers used to protest outside the facility because of the poor conditions, but that now they are welcomed inside to act as mentors and lead religious services for the youths.

Clark gained national attention in the late eighties as the bat-toting principal of Paterson's Eastside High School, perhaps best remembered in the 1989 film *Lean on Me*. Although Clark admits no wrongdoing, he does say that "archaic and anachronistic" state regulations limit his ability to discipline hardened gang members.

Sources: "Clark Defies State Critics, Backed By Exec and Clergy," *Star-Ledger*, 12/14/01; "Officials, Ministers Stand Up for Clark," *The Record*, 12/14/01.