

New York City Atheists

October 2002

Serving the tri-state area ■ An affiliate of American Atheists

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Events

Come to our October meeting!

Sunday, October 27, 2002
1:00-5:00 P.M.

Source of Life Conference Center
352 Seventh Avenue, 16th floor
(between 29th and 30th Sts.)
Slide show: Tortures of the Inquisition, then discussion and mingling
Donation requested



Also of atheist interest:

Godless Americans March on Washington

Washington, D.C., the Mall
Saturday, Nov. 2, approx. 11:00 A.M.-3 P.M.

\$60 round-trip bus from Manhattan: seats still available
March, bus, and hotel details inside this newsletter

New Meeting Space a Winner

Our meeting's new space, the Source of Life Conference Center, is friendly and freshly renovated. 21 people attended in September, with 17 remaining after a short break. For the first half we had a general discussion and introductions; afterward we discussed -- and noisily debated -- the issues behind the September 11 attacks. We collected \$111 in donations; the room had cost \$112. October's meeting will be in a slightly larger and darker room for a slide show featuring the rarely photographed Torture Museum in Amsterdam, with its repli-

cas of Inquisition devices, followed by socializing and discussion.

Members picked up free issues of New York City Atheists' newsletter and those of Long Island Secular Humanists (the *Inquirer*), the Secular Humanist Society of New York (*Pique*), Atheists United, Atheists for Human Rights, and the Council for Secular Humanism (*Free Inquiry*). Someone asked for *Freethought Today* from the Freedom from Religion Foundation, which he praised. One member said that FFRF settled lawsuits too quickly, instead of trying to set precedent more. FFRF has generously agreed to comp us a monthly copy for future meetings.

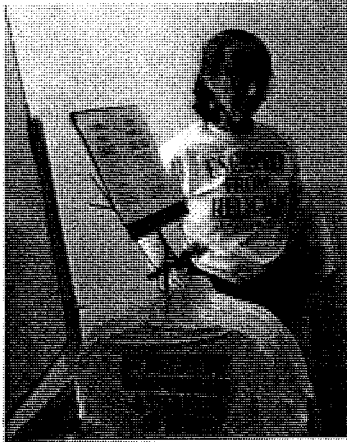
We applauded the appearance of atheist letters to the editor in *Newsday*. We discussed New York State's appeal of the constitutionality of its kosher laws (see September's newsletter), and the economics of the kosher market. According to Integrated Marketing & Communications, a firm that tracks kosher foods, two-thirds of the U.S. kosher market of about five million people are non-Jews who associate kosher certification for higher-quality food. (Apologies for the 90 percent figure mentioned at the meeting.) There's little activism possible when an issue will be settled by courts rather than legislatures.

Joe Zamecki of the national group American Atheists (of which NYC Atheists is a local affiliate) updated us on the Godless Americans March on Washington, and the on the low-cost hotel and bus rates

he had arranged (see the article "Godless Americans March on Washington" elsewhere in this newsletter). We talked about the 14 percent statistic for the proportion of "godless" in the United States, and what fraction were atheists. According to the American Religious Identification Survey 2001, conducted by the City University of New York, about 14 percent, or 29.4 million people, say they adhere to no religion, up from 8 percent, or 14.3 million, in 1990. Six percent disagreed with the statement that "God exists."

When asked whether any politicians would attend the march, Joe said all of Congress had been invited. Gov. Jesse Ventura was suggested; Joe talked about Rush Holt, a New Jersey member of Congress who spoke at an American Atheists luncheon. We discussed the low political status of atheists. According to a 1999 Gallup survey, only 49 percent of Americans would vote for an atheist for U.S. president. Americans would rather vote for gays (not communists, as erroneously said at the meeting), blacks, and women, in progressive order. This figure is up from 1958, when only 18 percent would have voted for an atheist, but still confirms atheists as the most discriminated against in politics.

Kirsten introduced her T-shirt project, showing off a rackful of samples, and asked for feedback. Some liked the shirts' big, bold designs; others said they were too loud. One person said she wouldn't wear an "Escaped from Religion" slogan because she favored Ethical Culture's interpretation of religion as meaning "to bind together," e.g., community. Some said they just weren't T-shirt wearers, and suggested buttons or sweatshirts. Some said buttons were so overused that they're ignored, and that sweatshirts are expensive. See the article "Atheist T-Shirts" for her description of the project, and also "More Slogans."



The meeting's discussion of the slogans and kosher food brought up two greater issues, that of separating religion from culture/ethnicity, and that of working within the religious establishment, or outside of it. Either could make good topics for future discussion.

After some introductions, we broke up briefly to mingle, buy snacks, and rearrange the chairs into a big circle. The September 11 discussion -- which grew strained when someone who dismissed the value of the lives of the killed corporate-finance workers was repeatedly challenged on where his "sense of morality came from" -- showcased with wide range of politics than can be held by atheists. One blamed the attacks on the U.S. government, saying that government and religion both work to control a sheep-like public. Another said they were civilians working for a living who were killed as a nonmilitary target, and that were not heroes, but had died meaninglessly.

"Worry about your family -- if you didn't like them before, like them now," she said.

Another said he avoided the aftermath media. Another com-

legitimacy to a government "already crushing the wall between church and state." Another said she was more afraid of *Americans* in the aftermath, and that as media was positively promoting religion from religion's point of view, nothing was being said about religious indoctrination. Another said that Israel has been treated "as the fifty-first state," and that the "people died because of our foreign policy."

A mathematics teacher described his public, state university's president participating in a Campus Crusade for Christ memorial. The president had said, in response to the teacher's complaint, that there had been complaints that an earlier, secular, all-campus memorial should have been more religious.

We discussed the semiofficial memorial I-beam cross at ground zero (see "The Aftermath Anniversary" in this newsletter). Someone said she had seen a photo with wreckage that looked like an ankh, no less likely a "miracle."

The Aftermath Anniversary

Mayor Michael Bloomberg had decreed that there would be no original speeches during the ceremony. Indeed, aside from dignitaries' introductory comments, and comments such as "God bless them all" from a few family members, the tightly scripted ceremony's words came only from what the *New York Times* called "secular scriptures": the Gettysburg Address, part of the Declaration of Independence, and FDR's Four Freedoms speech, and of course the names of the 2,801 World Trade Center victims, from Aamoth to Zukelman.

The prelude to the ceremony began before dawn, when teams of bagpipers began marching through each of the cities five boroughs,

toward the disaster site. At 8:46 A.M., the moment when the first tower was struck, Bloomberg began the formal ceremony with a moment of silence, which was echoed across the city. Mayor Rudy Giuliani began the reading of names, with help from other politicians and from family members, as cellist Yo-Yo Ma played the Sarabande to Bach's C Minor cello suite. The roll call was continued by Secretary of State Colin Powell, Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton, actor Robert De Niro, and relatives of victims from hard-hit companies such as Cantor Fitzgerald and Aon. The recitation of names paused three times; at 9:03 A.M., the moment when the second plane struck, at 9:59, when the first tower collapsed, and again at 10:29, when the second fell. Meanwhile, bereaved family members descended into "the pit," which was cleared of the eight-story-tall wreckage where once stood two 110-story buildings, to walk around a wide temporary ring called the "Circle of Honor" to leave flowers and mementos, and to scoop up sand and rocks from the soil. When the long roll call ended, Gov. George Pataki concluded by reading a section of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. The ceremony closed with the playing of taps, and with New Jersey governor Jim McGreevey reading from the Declaration of Independence, but some families lingered all day.

Although the sky was clear, gusting winds blew the dirt from the site into faces, stinging eyes and choking breathing, and threatening the stability of tents protecting news camera crews. *Daily News* columnist Pete Hamill claimed that the wind began the same minute the ceremony began, although it was simply more audible during the initial moment of silence. "My son is kicking up the dust," said a mourning parent to a reporter. "He's saying, 'Please don't worry. I'm in a better place.'"

LISTEN TO "EQUAL TIME FOR FREETHOUGHT"

Sunday evenings at 6:30, WBAI-FM (99.5). See foody.org/freethoughtradio.html to listen to past programs.

Near Ground Zero

Thousands of events across the city preceded, accompanied, or followed the ground zero ceremony, some civil, some public, some private. Many New Yorkers also busied themselves with everyday tasks, some not wanting to face the anniversary, others finding it irrelevant. That morning, most of the city's public schools observed a moment of silence, which had been endorsed by United Federation of Teachers president Randi Weingarten as a fitting "universal" remembrance. Some schools, especially those with younger children, treated the anniversary as a normal day. At dusk, an "eternal" flame was lit beside the massive, dented sphere sculpture from the twin towers' plaza.

Usually, moments of silence have been seen by many atheists as excuses for organized silent prayer, or as preludes to organized spoken prayers in schools, and thus easily and automatically challenged. Since then, such moments are politically difficult to oppose.

They also seem, in contrast, almost a relief when compared the more explicit religiosity saturating the city. An example of the latter is a Woodside, Queens minister, Joan Daily, receiving permission from Brooklyn Federal Court on September 11, 2002 to conduct prayer and grief counseling at a local community center. The Housing Authority had denied her request "to conduct Bible studies" to "help comfort and encourage" people, since Housing Authority regulations "prohibit the use of any NYCHA property for religious or political activities." But Judge David Trager said that "carries an implication of hostility toward religion. In the light of the Supreme Court's consistent approval of the use of government property by religious groups [within certain parameters], such hostility is unsupported. . . . Any reluctance toward allowing 'purported religions' to usre community centers is inherently discriminatory and an untenable reason for the restrictions." A public-interest law firm said that filed to suit on behalf of Daily said, "At a time when New Yorkers are still dealing with the aftermath of the terrorist events, it is only proper that the city permit prayer and public counseling to take place in a public housing facility, which is often used for a wide variety of community programs."

Several days before the anniversary, 300 members of Congress held a ceremonial session in the financial district's Federal Hall. At the end of the session, a public high-school chamber choir sang "God Bless America," and the members of Congress joined in, rising and holding hands in a scene reminiscent of their Sept. 11 performance of the song on the federal Capitol steps. A few days earlier, 200 people walked from Engine Company 1/Ladder Company 24 on West 31st Street on a "journey of faith [to] retrace the path taken Sept. 11 by the Rev. Mychal Judge, who died at the Trade Center praying for others. 'Through this pilgrimage,' said [an associate], 'I want people to remember Father Judge's example of faith in God and service to people.'" The walk included stops at several firehouses and ended in prayer and song near ground zero.

Elsewhere in the city there were gatherings in public squares and parks, with concerts and moments of silence, and a resurgence of memorial walls of photos and candles. Red, white, and blue flags, pins, and T-shirts were in abundance. In Times Square, a digital theater marquee scrolled the names of the dead instead of movie titles. Many sources called the city unusually subdued that day, with greater quiet in public spaces.

Speaking at a ceremony at Ellis Island, President George W. Bush said "God had placed us together in this moment, to grieve together, to stand together, to serve each other and our country," and he called national security a "sacred promise." The Pentagon event, with upbeat soft-rock patriotic songs, was less a solemn memorial than a salute to soldiers in Afghanistan and preparing for battle in Iraq. In rural Shanksville, Pennsylvania, a bell tolled slowly 40 times, once for each life, over the field where United Airlines Flight 93 crashed.

Unlike President Bush, who last year had proclaimed a National Day of Prayer and Remembrance and encouraged employers to permit workers "to attend the noontime services to pray for our land," Mayor Bloomberg's urge for

observance was more secular: "I would encourage all New Yorkers that day, no matter how they plan to participate or not participate, to take a few moments and reflect on the 2,800 people whose lives were taken by terrorists," said Bloomberg.

"For better or for worse," added the *Times*, "the contemporary words that many New Yorkers take away as a frame for reflecting on Sept. 11 will come from the mouths of the clergy. It will fall to the city's priests and rabbis, imams and ministers, to give spiritual comfort and moral compass."

What did they say? At an interfaith service at Harlem's Abyssinian Baptist Church, minister Calvin Butts said the twin tower attacks could not have been "the will of God" because "God's will is never seen in tragedy. His will is in our response to it."

Downtown at Trinity Church, the visiting Archbishop of Canterbury, said "You were not alone in your suffering then." The archbishop then presented the church with a 650-pound commemorative bell from the London foundry that had also forged the original Liberty Bell. Further mixing piety with patriotism, Trinity had unsuccessfully lobbied to get President George W. Bush to visit to ring the bell during services. Trinity, whose Episcopalian "relief ministry" was central to the recovery effort, thanks to the church's location near the twin towers, is also one of downtown's biggest landlords, and is now busy evicting tenants whose shattered businesses can no longer pay its pre-September 11 rents.

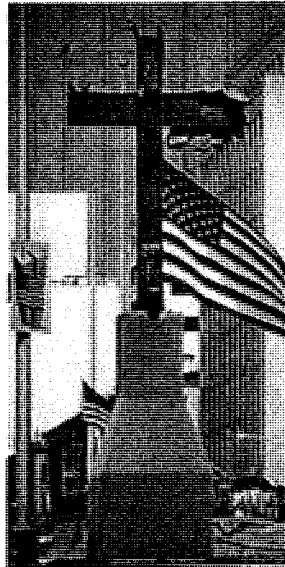
A year ago, because of the widespread deaths at the World Trade Center, many New York City rabbis softened harsh Rosh Hashanah sermons, which normally stress that repentance, prayer, and charity can lessen divine judgment's severe decree over who lives and who dies. This year, *Newsday* quoted various rabbis who said that Rosh Hashanah services would now "recharge spiritual batteries" and "vanquish indifference and awaken a resolve to fight terrorism." Police erected concrete barriers against possible attacks. "Look at this this place!" said one elderly worshipper. "It looks like a fortress when it should be temple of peace."

In his weekly *New York Times* "Beliefs" column, Peter Steinfelds noted that "truly convinced nonbelievers can ignore the question" of "where was God on Sept. 11? . . . Where was Santa Claus, Spiderman or the Tooth Fairy on Sept. 11?" He quoted one Trinity Church cleric who said the nonreligious words of the workers trapped in the towers testified "to what religious language is supposed to be about -- the triumph of pointless, gratuitous love."

In Jersey City, a September 11 tribute went awry after the organizers, who had been looking for doves or homing pigeons that would soar into the sky, settled for weak-winged squabs from a poultry market. The squabs, which may never have been outside cages, slammed into nearby plate-glass windows and into the crowd, sometimes perching on people's heads. The *New York Times* waited a discreet six days before reporting the story.

In Piscataway, New Jersey, a dozen New Jersey members of American Atheists met to mourn the attack victims. "As an atheist, I am acutely aware of how fleeting and precious life is because I know this is the only life we'll ever have," said American Atheists president Ellen Johnson. "All we have is the here and now." Johnson pointed to religion's role in the terrorist attack. The perpetrators believed they would be rewarded for their actions in heaven, she said, adding that no terrorist acts have been committed in the name of atheism.

What Kind of Memorial?



Some, including leaders of the public agency commissioned to redevelop the site, are demanding that a cross made of intersecting steel I-beams, one of many found sticking upward in the wreckage like cloves in ham, be made part of a permanent memorial. The cross was found by a fundamentalist construction worker and was then approved by the city as a temporary memorial for rescue workers, thanks to the efforts of a Franciscan priest. It was first displayed at the corner of West and Vesey Streets, and is now at the southeast corner of the site near, ironically, Church Street.

A banner near the cross has promoted the religious Web site www.wtcgodshouse.com, which advocates sectarian faith and sells jewelry in the shape of a cross. Most of what the *Daily News* has called "Trade Center relics," which are being held for possible use in the permanent memorial, have been stored in a hangar at Kennedy Airport. But workers and volunteers who attended services under the cross during the recovery effort have resisted any move to take it away from ground zero.

The anniversary ceremony reportedly increased the popularity of retaining most or all of the 16-acre site as a memorial. "People felt that there are souls there," said the leader of an association of victims' families. "This is clearly a message from God, that he was always there for us -- a message to keep having faith," said one widow. American Atheists president Ellen Johnson has repeatedly -- and, in the pious political climate, bravely -- warned that inclusion of the cross, or of sectarian mottoes or religious symbols of any kind on the public site, would violate the constitutional separation of church and state, and invite legal challenge. As of this newsletter's press time, the cross still is being considered for inclusion.

A Local Gay Saint?

Admirers of Fire Department chaplain Mychal Judge, grateful for a positive priestly figure during the church's pedophilia scandals, are promoting his canonization to sainthood. The famous photograph showing Judge being carried from the rubble in a chair, his head slumped sideways, "is now invariably referred to as a modern *Pietà*," said the *New York Times*. A Web site not only calls for reports of miracles but also receives requests for relics to heal cancer patients or copies of pictures to pray to. A parent wrote in to say that her daughter was born healthy after she was diagnosed as having water on the brain in utero, thanks to the prayers and touch of Judge.

Talk of sainthood is unwelcome for some of those closest to Judge. One of his two sisters said she would rather not discuss the subject. "Everybody's entitled to their opinions," she said. Judge's canonization

canonization campaign also is complicated by his reputed sexual orientation. Gay-rights advocates and gay media frequently claim Judge. "What his life says is, 'Yes you can be gay and good, you can be homosexual and holy,' " said one gay-rights advocate who was a friend of the priest's. This is causing resentment among some of his friends and among conservative Catholics, who either deny he was gay or say that his orientation is irrelevant and should not be discussed.

In upstate Utica, a priest who was invited but then barred by Catholic conservatives from leading that city's September 11 memorial events because of his support of gays later led that area's first Catholic mass for gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgendered people. As the local local Right to Life organization demonstrated against the mass, two unidentified, additional demonstrators held signs that said "Catholicism Preaches Intolerance" and "The Bible Is Just a Book."

Popular Piety

In June, the *New York Post* profiled a police officer who had been carving, from the twin towers' lobby floors, up to 400 marble crosses to give to victims' families. (The article said he also used "surplus marble that had been found largely undamaged in a basement level of the trade center.")

A "Healing Pole," a 13-foot totem pole carved and painted by members of Washington State's Lummi Indian tribe, was placed during "blessing songs" in upstate Sterling Forest State Park. Carved from a 140-year-old cedar, its 13-foot length represents the 13 original colonies, while the black, red, white, and yellow paints symbolize different races. The pole was trucked across the country by the carvers and their families, plus some tribal dignitaries. Along the way, they stopped at Indian reservations, gas stations, truck stops, and diners, asking for prayers.

So many people selected 911 for September 11, 2002's New York State Lottery drawing that lottery terminals began auto-

automatically refusing that combination. The winning number turned out to be 911, which the *New York Post* called "bizarre and eerie." The state paid out \$2,607,250 to 5,631 winners. Math experts patiently explained that the odds of picking any given number in that drawing were only 1 in 1,000. "It's really not extraordinary," said one.

Bad Time to be Swarthy

As local patriotism increased, so did local fears of everyday Arabs or Muslims, who tended to "stay away from fireworks displays, parades, or other large crowds where they fear they may be mistaken for terrorists by edgy law enforcement officers or suspicious citizens." A rumor of Middle Eastern men driving fake ambulances turned out to be caused by a shipment of 78 properly Arabic-marked ambulances headed for Saudi Arabia from Indiana via New York. Two Long Island boys were arrested for assaulting a 15-year-old Muslim boy after yelling that he and his mother "blew up the Twin Towers." In Nassau County, a man was arrested after threatening to shoot two Pakistani Muslim neighbors while yelling racial slurs and spray-painting anti-Muslim epithets on their property. In Suffolk County, two men were charged with assaulting a Pakistani Muslim woman and her 15-year-old son after accusing them of the September 11 attacks.

Sikh men who wear turbans and untrimmed beards have been victims of discrimination when mistaken for Muslims. A turbaned, 16-year Sikh employee of the Transit Authority caused a terror panic when he climbed out of a subway maintenance hatch in a sidewalk, a routine task for him.

Sikhs also have been in the news for demanding special accommodation of their religious customs -- in the name of equal treatment. In New York, one Sikh filed a federal discrimination complaint against the New York Police Department, saying he was fired during his training period because he would not shave his beard or remove his turban. In Connecticut, Sikhs successfully cam-

paigned for the reversal of a DMV policy requiring drivers to remove turbans and other head coverings for ID photos. The Sikhs called the policy "sacrilegious" and "harassment," and said they would consider themselves treated equally only if allowed to retain their turbans. The Connecticut DMV policy, which did not allow any motorists to wear hats and other objects on their heads while being photographed, will now exclude drivers who say their religion prohibits them from removing their headgear in public.

Connecticut will still require the removal of veils for photographs since the purpose of the license is to have a facial picture. But the DMV will continue to make special arrangements, such as allowing motorists to come in early when less people are around or allowing only women to operate the camera. "We make arrangements and accommodations and we haven't had any problems," said a DMV representative. Across America, state governments that once permissively allowed religious exemptions are now asserting a compelling interest in full-face photography for purposes of identification. "Now we know there is a relationship between some forms of religious belief and mischief of the worst kind," said the dean of a law school -- the Catholic University Law School -- to the *New York Times*.

Atheists aren't the only people unhappy about government-sponsored prayer at previous September 11 memorials. David Benke, a high-ranking Brooklyn Lutheran minister who prayed with a Muslim imam, a rabbi, Cardinal Edward Egan, Sikh and Hindu clergy, and Oprah Winfrey at the Yankee Stadium national prayer service, was suspended by the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod for mixing Christian and non-Christian views. He was ordered to apologize to all Christians, or appeal the decision; he is appealing with the aid of a Long Island law firm.

Terrorism Fears

Americans "don't live with fear because God is with us," said former vice-presidential candidate and current senator Joe Lieberman when speaking at a Long Island synagogue. He should have spoken in Brooklyn. After one of the terrorists who had bombed the World Trade Center in 1993 said that the original plan had been to bomb several Jewish neighborhoods, ultra-conservative rabbi Yakove Lloyd, founder and president of the Jewish Defense Group, announced that armed vigilante Jews would begin patrolling local streets. The Jewish Defense Group follows the principles of the late rabbi Meir Kahane, founder of the Jewish Defense League. After politicians and police denounced the plan, Lloyd explored whether followers can carry unloaded shotguns. Then he called off the patrols -- only to resume plans a week later, after an FBI nationwide warning that fuel tanker trucks might be used to attack Jewish synagogues or schools.

The *Village Voice's* James Ridgeway criticized "George W. Bush's continuing, unabashed depiction of the war on terrorism as a Christian crusade. More and more, Congress and the White House have the feel of Bible study groups as religious quackery fills the capital air. In this state of affairs, secular humanists might as well throw in the towel."

Sources: "Clerics' Daunting Task: Forming 9/11 Sermons," *New York Times*, 9/8/02; "At Ground Zero: Baggpipes, Readings and Flowers," *New York Times*, 9/11/02; "City Relives Day of Terror," *Daily News*, 9/12/02; "They Crowd into Pit to Mourn -- And Remember," *Daily News*, 9/12/02; "Bearing Witness," *Newsday*, 9/12/02; "Bush Comforts Country," *Daily News*, 9/12/02; "A Day of Tributes, Tears, and the Litany of the Lost," *New York Times*, 9/12/02; "Recalling the City's Darkest Day," 9/12/02; *Newsday*, "Quiet Descends on the City that Never Sleeps," Associated Press, 9/11/02; "Lost Souls Blowing in the Wind," *Daily News*, 9/12/02; "Schools Going Silent for Poignant Moment," *New York Post*, 8/23/02; "Young Students Get an Early Taste of Commemoration and Ceremony," *New York Times*, 9/12/02; "Prayers & Tributes Engulf Somber City," *Daily News*, 9/10/02; "Rev. Wins OK to Lead Prayers in Projects," *Daily News*, 9/19/02; "Somber Congress Honors NYC," *Newsday*, 9/7/02; "Take Time to Reflect, Mike Urges," *Daily News*, 9/10/02; "Prayers from Many Religions: Services at Churches, Mosques, Synagogues," *Daily News*, 9/12/02; "Rabbis Revise Sermons to Soften a Stark Prayer," *New York Times*, 9/18/01; "High Holy Days Hit More Somber Note," *Newsday*, 9/6/02; "Temples Boost Holiday Security," *Daily News*, 9/6/02; "Searching for God During a Tragedy," *New York Times*, 8/31/01; "Church to Get Special 9/11 Bell, Wants Bush to Ring It," *Daily News*, 7/27/02; "A Tribute Gone Awry, on the Wings of Pigeons," *New York Times*, 9/18/02; "Atheists Mourn Those Killed 9/11," *Home News Tribune*, 9/16/02; AANEWS, #1044, 7/16/02; "Day at Pit Impacting Memorial," *Daily News*, 9/13/02; "Push on to Keep Cross at Ground Zero for Good," *Daily News*, 6/6/02; "Steel-Beam Cross Considered for Memorial," *New York Times*, 10/5/02; "Families Want 9/11 Cross in Memorial," *Daily News*, 10/5/02; AANEWS, #1037, 6/25/02; "Killed on 9/11, Fire Chaplain Becomes Larger Than Life," *New York Times*, 9/27/02; "Reverend Uninvited from Sept. 11 Remembrances Leads Mass for Gays," 9/16/02; "His Memorial Cross to Bear," *New York Post*, 6/27/02; "NW Tribe's Healing Pole Raised in New York State Park," Associated Press, 9/8/02; "Last Night's Chilling Lottery Winner: 9-1-1," *New York Post*, 9/12/02; "Lottery: 9-1-1 Drawing No Fix," *Newsday*, 9/12/02; "Arab' Ambulances A-OK," *New York Post*, 7/3/02; "Fearful of Being Mistaken for Terrorists, Some Muslims to Avoid July 4 Events," 7/3/02, Associated Press; "L.I. Teens Arrested in 9/11 'Revenge' Attack," *New York Post*, 9/3/02; "Arrest in Anti-Muslim Threats," *Newsday*, 7/8/02; "2 Men Arrested in Bias Crime," *Newsday*, 9/2/02; "Subway Panic Makes TA Worker a Turban Legend," *New York Post*, 9/15/02; "Sikh Man Charges NYPD with Discrimination over Beard, Turban," Associated Press, 6/10/02; "Sikhs Protest DMV Head Covering Policy," Associated Press, 8/24/02; "DMV Reverses Policy Requiring Turban Removal," Associated Press, 8/28/02; "Behind the Legal and Private Worlds of the Veil," *New York Times*, 8/11/02; "Minister in Interfaith Service Is Suspended," Associated Press, 7/9/02; "Preparing to Take On His Church Suspended Lutheran Minister Is Accused of Worshiping With 'Pagans'," *New York Times*, 7/10/02; "Lieberman: We'll Win Terror War," *Jewish Week*, 11/02/01; "'93 WTC Bomber Targeted Jews," *New York Post*, 6/1/02; "Armed Jews to Patrol B'klyn," *New York Post*, 6/10/02; "Armed Citizen Patrols in B'klyn Opposed," *Daily News*, 6/11/02; "Rabbi Vows to Resume Patrols in Wake of Fuel Tanker Warning," 6/21/02; "Mondo Washington: Onward, Christian Citizens," *Village Voice*, 5/8-14/02.

HELP NYC ATHEISTS GROW

Our monthly meetings and newsletter are free, but we depend on donations to keep them going. Donation amounts are reported in the monthly treasury report, anonymously unless requested otherwise. Donations are non-tax-deductible, and checks must be made out to "Josh Karpf." Mail to New York City Atheists, PO Box 1187, New York, NY 10013.

Mississippi Review's Atheist 9/11 Commentary

The prestigious Mississippi Review's commentary Web site, Public Scrutiny, has published NYC Atheists' director's essay on the religiosity surrounding the September 11 aftermath:

publicsc.website12.com/Content/ps0105-karpf.html

Treasury Report

Mid-September's balance was \$271.71. We spent \$56.71 to print and mail September's newsletter; and for September's meeting, \$10 on cold drinks and \$1.50 on Xeroxes. (The \$112 room rental was paid the previous month.) Members donated \$111 at the September meeting. As of mid-October, the treasury balance is \$314.50, excluding the cost of this newsletter.

Godless Americans March on Washington, November 2

Several seats are still available on the \$60 round-trip chartered bus between New York City/New Jersey/Philadelphia and Washington. The bus will leave from near Pennsylvania Station at approximately 3:30 P.M. on November 1. For more information, contact Joe Zamecki by e-mail at aajoejr@aol.com, or call him at (908) 276-7300.

The official hotel for march is the Hilton Garden Inn at 1333 North Courthouse Road in Arlington, Virginia. The special room rate is only \$89 plus applicable taxes per night beginning Thursday, October 31 to Sunday, November 3, 2002. You must make reservations directly through the hotel. Contact Julie Duchin, Director of Sales, at (703) 528-4444 or through e-mail at jduchin@hgicourthouse.com. You may also call (703) 528-4444 or (703) 528-4599. Mention that you are with GAMOW to receive the special rate. The special \$59 rate for the Best Western Capitol Skyline Hotel is no longer available.

There will be an informal post-march gathering on Saturday night, November 2, in the bar lounge (cash bar) at the Hilton Garden Inn starting at 7:00 P.M. The Friday night, pre-march dinner buffet there is already sold out.

Freethinkers across the country are planning and discussing online both the official and unofficial gatherings. To participate, join the Yahoo discussion group groups.yahoo.com/group/GAM-Org/ (registration with Yahoo required for access).

The official Web site of the march is: www.godlessamericans.org. Official march T-shirts are now on sale for \$15, including shipping and handling, and may be ordered online at that site.

Atheist T-Shirts

New York City Atheists member Kirsten is creating atheist T-shirts for only \$5 each, plus \$2 shipping if you don't pick them up at a regular monthly meeting. Your choice of any two phrases (one on front, one on back). Any size shirt. Order through New York City Atheists, P.O. Box 1187, New York, NY 10013. Use the attached order form on the next page, and make checks payable to "Josh Karpf."

Kirsten says:

"The short phrases are made in very large letters and are best put on the front of a T-shirt so that people walking toward you can read them quickly from a distance, and the longer phrases, printed in smaller letters, are best worn on the back of a shirt, where people walking (or sitting) behind you have more time to read them. Since the list is in alphabetical order, it does not indicate which phrases match up nicely with particular other phrases, but if you study the list you will note that certain slogans combine well with others, thus allowing the front of the shirt to complement the back, and vice versa. Some of the slogans are political in nature; others have more to do with logic, indoctrination, abuse of children, hypocrisy, education, morality, etc. All of them touch upon atheism in one way or another.

"If you've got atheist slogans of your own you'd like to use, I'd be happy to put them on a shirt for you, unless I find something objectionable about them.

"The purpose of the T-shirts is threefold: 1) to let the world know that we are simply here, despite what the media would like everyone to believe, 2) to say a few things that might encourage theists to question religious contentions, and 3) to stimulate conversation between atheists and theists. This third purpose is especially important because most theists never pick up an atheist publication, and atheists don't go to theist gatherings. So how do we get to talk to theists and try to pull them a little closer to rational thinking? Wear a T-shirt! Wear it in the supermarket, at a concert, on the subway or bus, in a restaurant - any place where you'd be visible to a great number of people. Since I've been wearing these shirts a few months now I've gotten many compliments and thumbs up from passersby on the street, which was very uplifting. But more importantly, I've gotten into conversations with people: a math and science teacher, a physicist and folk dance teacher, a security guard, a doorman, a young woman worried about her ill mother's belief in faith healing, a checker in the supermarket, a waiter, two women in a movie theater, an MD, a lawyer, a minister, a filmmaker. Three

of these thirteen were atheists happy to meet and talk with a fellow atheist. The other ten were theists curious to know more about atheist thinking. Some of the conversations with the theists were brief, others fairly long; some unproductive, others clearly valuable from the standpoint of making inroads on their thought patterns. The chance to converse is what counts. I do believe there are more people on the brink of leaving religion than we know about, and if we can hold good conversations with them, we stand a chance of nudging a few of them over the brink. The nudge has to be gentle, not angry, even though sometimes you're arguing, and it's good to know when to quit. Not easy. Sometimes frustrating. But worthwhile.

"A word about the finished product: I make these T-shirts using a PrintShop program designed for use with a computer, ink jet printer, and special transfer paper. The slogans are printed onto the transfer paper and then ironed onto the shirts. When I peel the backing off the transfer paper a thin film keeps the slogan attached to the fabric. Because the print made by this process is not likely to hold up as well under repeated washings as that made by a professional process, and because I want everyone to buy and wear these shirts, I decided to charge only \$5 per shirt, which is a lot less than the cost of materials, and nothing for my labor. To hire a professional company would require printing up a bulk amount of shirts with one particular slogan, and I did not want to go that route. I prefer the freedom of being able to make any combination of slogans, yours or mine, in any size shirt, one at a time. I like the idea of getting a lot of different phrases out there. If you pay for some of the cost of materials, I donate my labor and sundry expenses to the cause. If you want to buy a PrintShop program and do it yourself, please feel free to use my list of slogans. Otherwise order my shirts through New York City Atheists."

[continues on next page]

- A God that Defers to "Man's Free Will" Is Omnipotent?
- A God that Fails to Rescue A Child From Chronic Abuse Is All-Powerful? Loving?
- A Government that Forces Anyone to Profess Belief in any God Is Oppressive
- "A Miracle" Is How You Explain Things When You Don't Know the Real Answer
- Atheism Frees the Mind
- Atheism Opens the Mind
- Atheist Family Values: Love, Hope, Charity, Education, and Faith In Reasoning
- Atheists Believe in Humanity
- Atheists Believe in Reasoning
- Atheists Believe in The Mind
- Atheists Bless America
- Atheists Like to Discuss Reality
- Atheists for America
- Boy Am I Lucky My Parents Were Atheists
- Celebrate Clear, Critical Thinking
- Dare to Doubt
- Dare to Think for Yourself
- Democracy, Not Theocracy.
- "Divine Guidance" Often Leads Believers to Do Harm
- Escaped from Religion
- Evolution Is Fact. Creationism Is Fantasy.
- Freethinker
- Free to Think for Myself
- Freethinkers Bless America
- Give Children Logical Explanations, Not Magical Ones
- Government Should Support Free Thought, Not Indoctrination
- I Pledge Allegiance to the Flag that Used to Represent Free Thought, Free Speech, Freedom Not to Bow to Any God; Presidency Not By Court Appointment But By Citizen Vote; One Nation, Indivisible, with Liberty and Justice for All, Including Atheists
- In God We Trust? What God? What We?
- In God We Trust? What We? Not Me
- In Reasoning I Trust
- Keep All Gods Out of Government
- Keep Religion Out of Schools and Government
- Keep Religion Out of Court
- Leaders Who Create Prejudice against Atheists Dishonor Themselves and This Country
- Magical Thinking Fosters Ignorance
- Maintain the Wall Between Religion and Government
- "Man's Free Will" / Religion's Scapegoat
- Mind-Game: Bad Is Bad When Done by a Person. Bad Is Good When Done By a God
- Morality Should Be Based on Current Insight, Not Ancient Ignorance
- Mysterious Ways: The Big Lie
- No God / No Devil / Just Us
- No Heaven / No Hell / Just Here
- Over 30 Million Americans Have Rejected Religion
- Please Tell Me Why / The Guy in The Sky / Just Stood By / And Watched Them Die. / Were There Vacancies in Heaven on 9/11?
- Religion Does Not Care If Things Make Sense. Science Does.
- Say No to Religion. Say Yes to Reasoning.
- Say No to Theism
- Science Saves
- "So Help Me God" Compromises Atheists in Court
- "So Help Me God" Compromises Atheist Witnesses
- Stop Indoctrinating / Start Educating
- Teach Kids Logic, Not Magic.
- The "Good Book" Preaches Violence, Hatred, and Magic
- "Under God" Is Indoctrination. Throw It Out.
- What Morality Has Religion Taught if Clergy Abuse Children and Pay Out Millions in Hush Money?
- When Gods Work in "Mysterious Ways" They're Excused. When We Do, We're Jailed.
- Your Brain Is Your Shepherd

THE ATHEIST'S PRAYER.

Our brains, which art in our heads,
 treasured be thy name. Thy reasoning come.
 Thy best you can do be done, on earth as it is.
 Give us this day new insight to
 help us resolve conflicts and ease pain. And
 lead us not into supernatural explanations;
 deliver us from denial of logic.
 For thine is the kingdom of reason,
 and even though thy powers are limited,
 and you're not always glorious,
 you are the best evolutionary adaptation we
 have for helping this earth now and
 forever and ever.
 So be it.

More Slogans

These slogans, chants, and lyrics come from recent discussion on groups.yahoo.com/group/GAM-Org, a Yahoo newsgroup (registration required for access) in which various freethinkers are planning and discussing participation in the march; and from AACHAT, the American Atheists discussion mailing list (American Atheists members only; e-mail owner-aachat@atheists.org to join). Use them on shirts, banners, buttons, whatever!

- Atheism Is Nothing to Be Afraid Of
- Religion Breeds Chaos
- Theism Sucks
- Civil Rights for Atheists
- If Atheists Get Civil Rights Then Everyone Will Want Them
- Theists Worship The
- One Nation, Under Observation
- One Nation, Under Fascism
- One Nation, Under God, With Discrimination and Injustice for All
- "Under God" is the Mewling of a Tiny Mind
- We Pledge Allegiance To . . . One Constitutionally Illiterate Nation
- One Nation, with Liberty and Justice for Those Who Can Afford It
- The Opiate of the Masses
- Secular American
- Nonreligious American
- Atheist American
- Atheist Americans: The Last Minority
- 30,000,000 Atheists Can't Be Wrong
- Religious Atheist
- Faith-Based Americans for Ayatollah Ashcroft
- Tom Ridge Is the Antichrist
- Ashcroft Is the Missing Link
- Darwin Loves You
- Faith Is Insanity
- Atheism: The Fourth Largest "Religion" in the World

More Slogans, continued

- Blind Faith: The Quickest Way to End Civilization
- I'm an Atheist and I Vote
- A Person Without Religion is Like a Fish Without a Bicycle
- Secular Humanism: Theists Can Go to Heck
- Praise the Invisible Pink Unicorn
- State-Sanctioned Prayer Hurts Everybody
- Atheist in Foxhole / France 1944
- Atheists Are Patriots Too
- Founding Fathers Who Opposed Fundamentalism:
 - George Washington
 - Thomas Jefferson
 - Benjamin Franklin
 - Paul Revere
 - John Adams
 - John Quincy Adams
 - Benjamin Rush
 - John Marshall
 - Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr.
 - Abraham Lincoln
- Pick a Side:
 - Thought Faith
 - Production Sacrifice
 - Freedom Slavery
 - Pleasure Pain
 - Pride Humility
 - Life Death
- Copernicus Loves You
- Why Do Fundamentalists Oppose Education? / Fundamentalists Love Ignorance
- Imagine No Religion / Its Easy If You Try
- Atheist on Board
- Atheists Burned At the Stake: 3,000,000 / People Burned by Atheists: 0
- No Gods / No Masters
- What Would Brian Boitano Do?
- People Who Think God is On Their Side Are Dangerous [picture of G. W. Bush]
- Repeal the Patriot Act
- No Preaching
- Nothing Fails Like Prayer
- Just Say No to Blind Faith
- Give It Up
- Devout Atheist
- Keep Your Religion Out of My Happy Life
- Think for Yourself
- Religion: Surrender Your Mind
- Fundamentalism: Surrender Your Mind
- Homeland Security: Surrender Your Rights -- Or Else
- Support Rational Thought
- Atheists: The New Political Scapegoat
- Heresy: Using Your Brain
- Blasphemy: Using Your Mind
- Fundamentalism: Belief without Knowledge
- Eat Shit for the Lord! / Isaiah 36:12
- Crush Your Nuts for God! / Psalms 137:9
- Neuter Yourself for Jesus! / Matthew 19:12
- Kill Everyone but Rape the Virgins! / Numbers 31:18
- Atheism: The Only Way to Stop Holy Wars
- God Is a Myth
- They Didn't Outlaw Slavery / Now They Just Call It Christianity
- Bin Laden Believes God Is on His Side Too
- Hitler Was a Christian
- The Baptist Minister Who Wrote It Didn't Put God in the Pledge
- Founding Fathers Who Opposed State-Sanctioned Religion: All of Them
- Uphold the Constitution or Resign
- The First Amendment Is Not Optional
- Boo Hoo There's No God in the Constitution
- Atheist Pride -- We Don't Hide
- God Is My Codependent
- There's Always "One Nation OVER God"
- No Way Yahweh
- Keep YOUR gods out of OUR government
- One Nation, Under . . . educated
- What Our Schools Need Is a Moment of SCIENCE
- I'm an Atheist and I VOTE
- I'm Honest, Moal, Just, Good, and Kind -- I'm Also an Atheist
- God? What God? What Are You Talking About?!
- One Nation. Indivisible. Period.
- One Nation, Easily Divisible -- Just Add Religion
- Religion Divides. Reason Unites.
- Got Proof?
- Where Are My Atheist Congressmen?
- We Vote for Separation of Church And State
- The U.S. Constitution Does NOT Contain the Word "God" in Any Form
- End Taxpayer Subsidy of Religion Now
- 30 Million Atheists Can Vote YOU Out of Office
- Restore the Pledge to Its Original Form
- One Nation Getting Over God
- No Justice -- No Peace / Know Justice -- Know Peace
- In "E Pluribus Unum" We Trust
- We're 14%
- We're 14% of the US Population and WE VOTE
- 14%
- What Would Jefferson Do
- Godless America
- Thou Shalt Evolve
- What Part of "One Nation Indivisible" Disturbs You the Most?
- What Part of "One Nation Indivisible" Disturbs Congress the Most?
- No State-Sponsored Misinterpreted Fear of Nature
- Holy War! Religious Sects! Let's See How Divided We Can Get!
- The Founding Fathers Knew You Would Try to Divide America
- Taxation without Representation = Supporting God with Secular Money
- Jefferson vs. McCarthy -- Wisdom or Eternal Paranoia?
- United We Stand / No God to Trust

"God-Less America"
(by Dan Barker)

God-Less America
Land that we love
We'll stand beside her
and guide her
Living life without help from above.
Free from bible
superstition
Free from masters
on their throne
God-Less America
My mind's my own
God-Less America
My home sweet home

From "Imagine"
(by John Lennon)

Imagine there's no heaven
It's easy if you try

ORDER FORM

Please write clearly when filling out, and send with check made payable to "Josh Karpf" to New York City Atheists, P.O. Box 1187, New York, NY 10013. \$5 per shirt, plus \$2 per shirt for shipping if you don't pick them up at a regular monthly meeting. Delivery may take up to three weeks after clearance of check. We are sorry but we cannot accept orders online.

Name _____

Address _____

_____ zip _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

Date _____ Amount enclosed _____

In choosing long slogans from the list, use only the first few identifying words.

Size: ___ Qty ___ Front: _____

Back: _____

Size: ___ Qty ___ Front: _____

Back: _____

Size: ___ Qty ___ Front: _____

Back: _____

Use this space for your own pair of slogans:

Size: ___ Qty ___ Front: _____

Back: _____

Please note: I reserve the right not to print slogans that I find objectionable.

The Godless Americans March on Washington!



It's Our Turn Now...

In the fall of 2002, "Godless Americans" of all stripes will follow in a grand tradition and march on Washington!

Just about every political and social

"cause" organization has done it – gays, blacks, women, even the Promise Keepers. Groups of every ideological coloration have spoken out and demanded "a seat at the table" by mobilizing their supporters for a march or demonstration in the nation's capital.

It's American as apple pie.

In the fall of 2002, "Godless Americans" – individuals and representatives of the nation's diverse community of nonreligious people – will make history and march on Washington. At the 28th National Convention of American Atheists, President Ellen Johnson announced this new initiative in giving "Godless Americans" a new voice and presence. We are reaching out to all and everyone who has no religious beliefs – Atheists, Freethinkers, Secular Humanists. Whatever the label, we're asking you to come to Washington, D.C. and be part of this important event.

We are calling this the "Godless Americans March on Washington." Like every other group that has fought its way from the margins of society into the mainstream, we have some demands. They are:

- We demand equal rights including fair treatment and protection in the workplace; when seeking public office and the right to serve on juries or give testimony; and in having a voice in the halls of Congress, in our state legislatures and other government venues.
- We call for an end to discrimination against Atheists in organizations which receive public funds and special entitlements, such as the Boy Scouts of America. Nonbelief must not be a litmus test for inclusion in such groups.
- We demand an end to harassment and other violations of our rights in public schools. "Prayer Bullying" and other forms of coercive religion cannot be tolerated in what should be a totally secular public school system. Public

schools must not become centers for religious proselytizing, the unconstitutional promotion of religion through teaching so-called "creationism," or smuggling sectarian beliefs into the schools through ruses such as "student led" public prayer.

- We call for an end to the government use of our tax money to subsidize religious denominations, faith-based social programs and other entitlement schemes.
- We demand an end to the exclusion of Atheists, Freethinkers and other "Godless Americans" as full citizens of this nation. Our leaders, including the President, must stop calling the nation to prayer, or claim that we are a "Christian" country. Godless Americans have been patriotic, and many have served – and now serve – in our nation's armed forces. We insist on inclusion when this nation is rallied to appropriate causes.
- We call for an end to the display of religious mottoes and symbols on government property, and especially in public schools and the halls of government. We also call for the restoration of "E Pluribus Unum," ("Out of Many, One") as the secular, national motto of a free people.

The Time Is Now...

There are millions of Godless Americans. The latest American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS) reflects that nearly 13% of the population has no religion. This includes millions who identify themselves with labels such as Atheists, Freethinkers, Humanists and others. There are over 30,000,000 of us, a figure larger than most American religious denominations.

It's time for us to be heard...

President Bush and other political leaders often ignore us and instead rally the nation to prayer and religious faith. "Godless Americans" have been marginalized and excluded in everything from electoral politics to the public events commemorating the tragedy of September 11. No other group would tolerate such bigotry and exclusion! It's time to speak out and be heard.

The Godless Americans March...

American Atheists will be inviting representatives of national and local Atheist, Freethought, Humanist and other nonbeliever organizations to join us in the Godless Americans March on Washington. This will include a program of speakers addressing the major issues of concern to our community, along with entertainment and other events.

WHEN: November 2, 2002 – On The Mall In The Nation's Capital!

WHERE: The event is planned on the National Mall on the west side of the U.S. Capitol Building from approximately 11 a.m. to 2-3 p.m. depending on the program. Staff members of American Atheists are working on ancillary details. There will be a canopied stage area with podium and loudspeakers, rest-room facilities and support services. We are negotiating with the National Park Service for a march down the Mall from 14 St. (near the Washington Monument) to an area on the west side of the Capitol Building.

Further details will appear in subsequent issues of the *American Atheists Newsletter*, and on-line at the Godless Americans March on Washington Web-site at <http://www.godless-americans.org>. You may also call the American Atheist Center for updates at 908-276-7300.

Resources

Washington, D.C. is convenient to major interstate highways, airlines and trains. We suggest that you begin making arrangement for traveling to the capital, though, as soon as possible. Here are some tourism resources:

Washington, D.C. Convention and Tourism Corp. 1212
New York Avenue, NW Suite 600 Washington, D.C.
20005
phone: 202-789-7000
Web: <http://www.washington.org>

Washington, D.C. Hotels Reservations Center
1-800-554-2220 or on the Web at:
<http://www.1-washington-dc-hotels.com>

D.C. Visitor Information Center
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
The Ronald Reagan International Trade Center Building
Ground Floor
Washington, D.C. 20004
phone: 202-328-4748
Web: <http://www.dcvisit.com>

What to Bring...

The rally will include an extensive program; so you might consider bringing a blanket or folding chair to relax on. Washington can be warm at this time of year, so consider a container of water, umbrella (in case of iffy weather), even sunscreen and a hat. Good walking shoes and appropriate dress are helpful, too. You'll want to plan your schedule from your departure point.

Many hotels in the Washington, D.C. region are convenient to the Metro system, which is clean, fast and relatively expensive. This may be a factor to consider when booking, so you don't have to drive into the downtown area. Consult with a travel agent if necessary. You might also want to extend your stay in Washington and make this event part of a "mini-vacation."

Signs, Banners

We invite and encourage members of groups to attend this historic gathering – and bring appropriate signs and banners. "Appropriate" means sticking to issues, especially relating to public policy concerns (faith based initiative, coercive prayer in schools, government promotion of religion, equal rights and recognition of Atheists and other Americans "of no religion" in the public square). We want to project a professional, courteous and mainstream issue to media covering this event. Please take this into consideration if you are bringing a sign or placard. We want to convey a polite but firm message, not play the role of "shock jocks."

And More...

American Atheists is hard at work on the details of this event; we're determined to make the "Godless Americans March on Washington" a successful and historic "first" for the tens of millions of nonreligious people in our country.

The rally will include representatives of various Atheists, Freethought, Secular Humanist and other like-minded national, regional and local organizations.

There will also be a pre-march press conference and social event

on Friday,
November 1, 2002.

We look forward to seeing you Washington, D.C. as a participant in The Godless Americans March on Washington!

