

New York City Atheists Inc.

May 2006

Serving the Tri-State area • An affiliate of American Atheists & Center For Atheism Vol. III Issue No. 5

WEB: NYC-ATHEISTS.ORG COOPER STATION - Box 93, NY, NY 10276-0093 212-330-6794

NYC ATHEISTS – HIGH SCHOOL & COLLEGE ESSAY CONTESTS SEE PAGE 4 FOR DETAILS

MAY

May	4	Thursday	4:00 - 7:00 P.M.	NYCA BLOOD DONATION PROGRAM
May	4**	Thursday	8:00 P.M.	NYCA Cable Show
May	11**	Thursday	8:00 P.M.	NYCA Cable Show
May	14***	Sunday	12:00 P.M.	NYCA Brunch, Library, Book Club
May	16****	Tuesday	7:00 P.M.	NYCA Meet-Up (New Location)
May	18**	Thursday	8:00 P.M.	NYCA Cable Show
May	23**	Thursday	8:00 P.M.	NYCA Cable Show
May	25***	Thursday	6:30 P.M.	NYCA Monthly Meeting

JUNE

June	1*	Thursday	6:00 / 7:30 P.M.	NYCA Dinner / Movie Nite
June	1**	Thursday	8:00 P.M.	NYCA Cable Show
June	8**	Thursday	8:00 P.M.	NYCA Cable Show
June	11***	Sunday	12:00 P.M.	NYCA Brunch, Library, Book Club
June	15**	Thursday	8:00 P.M.	NYCA Cable Show
June	20****	Tuesday	7:00 P.M.	NYCA Meet-Up (New Location)
June	22**	Thursday	8:00 P.M.	NYCA Cable Show
June	25***	Sunday	12:00 P.M.	NYCA Monthly Meeting
June	29**	Thursday	8:00 P.M.	NYCA Cable Show

* Dinner: South Street Seaport – Pier 17 – [3rd Floor Food Court](#)

* Movie: Southbridge Towers – 66 Frankfort St. - Community Room

** Manhattan Cable Channel 67 / RNN Cable Channel 110 (86-digital)

*** Garden Restaurant – 145 East 60th St. (Lexington / Third)

Brunch Cost: Order from Menu — Reservations not required.

**** [Corner Billiards – 110 East 11th St. \(4th/3rd\) – across the street from Webster Hall](#)

[JOIN](#)
[NEW YORK CITY ATHEISTS](#)
[MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION - PAGE 8](#)



KEN BRONSTEIN

WHY NYCA HAS DUES

About three years ago, I attended my first NYC Atheists meeting. I asked Josh Karpf, the founder and then president of NYCA, about the organization's membership policies. Josh said that NYCA was not a membership-dues-paying organization and that most of the American Atheists and Atheists Alliance affiliates are not dues-paying groups.

The only rationale I could figure out for this is, as Madalyn Murray O'Hair once famously said, "Organizing atheists is like herding cats." And Ellen Johnson, head of American Atheists (of which NYCA is an affiliate) has recently added, "Atheists, for the most part, aren't joiners. They're independent-- that's why they're atheists."

I have a problem with non-dues paying groups. I feel that a person does not really make a commitment to the group and its cause unless he or she is a dues-paying member. I have clearly noticed the difference when people who have come to our meetings officially join NYCA. The member's commitment, participation and continued involvement is significantly greater than in non-dues-paying groups. For the last two years, we have had more than 85 percent of our members renew their membership—which is an outstanding renewal figure.

Psychologists have found that putting down one's own money enhances a commitment. For example, it has been found that students who work for and pay their own tuition do better in school than those whose tuition bills are paid by Mom and Dad.

We in NYCA hope to change the world's perception of atheists. A study done by the Graduate Center of the City University of New York found that the percentage of the population that describes itself as "nonreligious" has more than doubled from 1990 to 2001, to 29.4 million people. As atheists, we must come out of the closet and proudly announce, "I am an atheist."

We do not tithe, as many churches do. For a very nominal sum, you can become a dues-paying member of New York's most forward-looking, most socially aware, most active secular group whose goal is to make atheism as popular and acceptable as apple pie.

I would appreciate your comments. Ken Bronstein at NYCATHEISTS@AOL.COM or 212-535-7425.

PAST APRIL EVENTS		April 18	Tuesday
April 6, 13, 20, 27	Thursday	NYCA Meet-Up	Twenty-three bright, friendly people attended.
NYCA Cable Show		-----	
April 6	Thursday	April 20	Thursday
NYCA Dinner & Movie Nite		Madalyn O'Hair Banquet / Birthday Party	
Darwin's four great books.		Caroline Gilman, a NYCA board member and past American Atheists board member (1985-1995) played the part of Madalyn in a reading of Act I from Jane Everhart's play-in-progress about Madalyn's life. We also saw some TV videos of Ms. O'Hair.	
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April 9	Sunday		
NYCA Brunch, Library, Book Club			
Great meeting and discussion.			

April 30

Sunday

NYCA Monthly Meeting

Guest: Beth Lamont

Subject: Secular Rites and rituals

Ms. Lamont described secular weddings, funerals, namings and invocations. She encouraged atheists to come up with their own secular rites to mark these events without relying on the established invocations of religions.

UPCOMING MAY EVENTS

May 4, 11, 18, 25 Thursday 8:00 PM
NYCA Cable Show -Manhattan Cable # 67

May 4 NYCA Dinner & Movie Nite
Canceled because of the NYCA Blood donation Event (see below). Will resume in June.

May 4 Thursday 4:00 – 7:00 P.M.
NYCA BLOOD DONATION EVENT

**NYCA'S RESPONSE TO
THE NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER
*A deed instead of a prayer!***

B.L.O.O.D. (Benefiting Lives Of Others Donations) program.

Location: NYC Blood donation center
310 East 67th St. (1st / 2nd Ave.)

Time: 4:00 - 7:00 PM

Reservations: Not required

NYCA members will donate blood and sign up for the organ donation program.

BLOOD DONATION

If the NYC Blood Center is not convenient:
To find your local Blood Donation Center, [Click here: America's Blood Centers - It's About Life.](#)

ORGAN DONATION SIGN UP PROGRAM

Organ Donation Form, [Click here: http://www.donatelife.net/downloadables/pdf/become_donor_card.pdf](#)

FAMILY NOTIFICATION FORM

http://www.donatelife.net/become_notifi_form.pdf

Other information: <http://www.donatelife.net>

QUESTIONS: Ken Bronstein

FIREBELL1@AOL.COM / 212-535-7425

May 14

Sunday

12:00 P.M.

NYCA Brunch, Library, Book Club

Location: Garden Restaurant @ 145 East 60th St.
(between Lexington and Third)

Reservations: Not required

Cost: Individual checks

After brunch, we will go to the NYC Atheists' Library on West 48th Street. You will have an opportunity to borrow and return books, followed by the book club meeting.

May Book Club Readings

Our NYCA Librarian, Pat Berger, has selected our next book club selection: *Sense & Goodness Without god* by Richard Carrier.

We will be reading and discussing Pages 161-176, *The Meaning of Life; How Did We Get Here?*.

May 16

Tuesday

7:00 P.M.

NYCA Meet-Up

Casual conversation and drinks with your fellow freethinkers. Register at <http://atheists.meetup.com>

Location: [Corner Billiards – 110 East 11th St. \(4th/3rd\) – across the street from Webster Hall – three blocks south of Union Square.](#)

May 25

Thursday

6:30 P.M.

Monthly Meeting

Location: Garden Restaurant
145 East 60th St (Between Lexington and Third)
Reservations: Not required

Cost: Individual checks

Guest Speaker: Lee M. Silver,

Professor of Molecular Biology and Public Affairs, Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, Princeton University.

Subject: *Challenging Nature: The Clash of Science and Spirituality at the New Frontiers of Life.*

Why do religious fundamentalists and New Age devotees alike react so strongly against genetic engineering, a science that has been evolving for

centuries? In his book, *Challenging Nature: The Clash of Science and Spirituality at the New Frontiers of Life*, Princeton professor of biophysics Lee Silver claims that the way that Far Eastern cultures view deities makes those societies more accepting of modern scientific advances such as biotechnology.

Professor Silver will also discuss how Judeo-Christian beliefs limit human knowledge and stand in the way of progress.

NYC ATHEISTS ESSAY CONTESTS

NYC Atheists Inc. has established two \$500-award essay contests--one for high school students, the second for college students. The essay subject this year is: "WHAT SHOULD BE YOUR RIGHT-TO-DIE LEGAL OPTIONS?" (i.e. Terri Schiavo case, Oregon State assisted-suicide law)
For questions: Call Ken Bronstein – NYCATHEISTS@AOL.COM - 212-535-7425

The student does not have to be an Atheist. (Both non-believers and believers are eligible.) Only one entry per student. The essay must be the sole, unpublished, original work of the entrant and must not violate or infringe upon the rights of any third parties.

High School Student Requirements:

- * Must be a full time student enrolled in a NYC high school (public or private).
- * Should be not less than 500 words (excluding bibliography), typed (double-spaced).
- * Must include a cover sheet that includes the student's name, complete address, telephone number, email address, date of birth, name of the teacher, school name, school address, name of parent or legal guardian.

College Student Requirements

- * Must be a full time undergraduate student enrolled in a metro-New York City (25 mile radius) college/university.
- * Should be not less than 1,000 words (excluding bibliography), typed (double-spaced).
- * Must include a cover sheet that includes the student's name, complete address, telephone number, email address, school name and address, number of hours completed and program major.

Decision

Essays will be judged on style, content and writing that is clear, articulate, and logically organized. The decision of the NYC Atheists Inc. Board of Directors is final. The NYC Atheists Board of Directors may choose not to select a winner if they deem no entry meets its criteria.

Submit:

NYC Atheists Inc./Awards Committee / Cooper Station PO Box 93 / NY, NY 10276-0093

Deadline:

Entry must be postmarked no later than May 31, 2006.

Other:

- * All entries become the property of NYC Atheists Inc. and will not be returned.
- * Acceptance of the prize constitutes permission to use the winner's name and to publish in whole or in part the winning essay.
- * NYC Atheists Inc. is not responsible for lost, misdirected, illegible, damaged, postage due, or late entries.

Notification:

- * Winners will be notified by US Mail
- * Name will be posted on the NYC-ATHEISTS.ORG web site on June 30, 2006.



Bertrand Russell

From *Why I Am Not a Christian and Other Essays on Religion and Related Subjects* by Bertrand Russell.

“Religion is based, I think, primarily and mainly upon fear. It is partly the terror of the unknown and partly, the wish to feel that you have a kind of elder brother who will stand by you in all your troubles and disputes. ... A good world needs knowledge, kindness, and courage; it does not need a regretful hankering after the past or a fettering of the free intelligence by the words uttered long ago by ignorant men.”

Madalyn Murray O'Hair
Founder: American Atheists
April 13, 1919 – 1995



American Atheist Convention Honors Madalyn Murray O'Hair

By Jane Everhart

San Antonio—The 32nd national convention of American Atheists opened on April 14 with a tribute to the founder of American Atheists, Madalyn Murray O'Hair--fittingly enough in this Texas city where she was killed in 1995.

After a video retrospective of Madalyn's life, investigator Edmond J. Martin of the Internal Revenue Criminal Division, who helped solve her murder, told the more than 250 atheists assembled what is known today about the last days of Madalyn, her son Jon Murray and her granddaughter, Robin Murray O'Hair. Much is speculation, Martin pointed out, because the kidnapper/murderer of the Murray-O'Hair family, David Waters, died of cancer in prison several years ago.

What is known is that Madalyn, Jon Murray and Robin Murray O'Hair were in captivity for 30 days in a motel in San Antonio in September, 1995. They were presumably killed on September 29, which is the day they no longer answered calls to their cell phone. In 2001, their bodies were uncovered in a shallow grave on an isolated Texas ranch, where Martin and other investigators were led by David Waters who, in a plea bargain, got 20 years for the murders. Investigator Martin showed slides of a shackled David Waters as he led the investigators to the burial site.

Also moving were the American Atheists' video images of Madalyn, years before her murder, commenting on her own death someday: "I hope I live my life in such a manner

that when I die, someone cares—even if it is only my dogs. I think I want some human being somewhere to weep for me." In San Antonio, she got her wish; there were few dry eyes in the audience.

Rich Accomplishments

Madalyn Murray O'Hair accomplished much before her death, pointed out current American Atheist president, Ellen Johnson. Among Madalyn's many accomplishments as head of American Atheists are the establishment of the first Atheist library, the first Atheist radio series and an American Atheist forum on TV. Madalyn also launched an American Atheist press, magazine, and international forum. She began the tradition of holding American Atheist annual conventions. She inaugurated the first Equinox and Solstice holidays, sponsored the SOS anti-alcoholism program for non-believers, helped organize the Gay Atheist League, and fought for grave markers in Arlington for deceased atheist soldiers. At the time of her death, she was preparing to picket the Pope during his visit to the U.S., had planned other atheist pickets and was preparing to sue those involved in establishing a religious program in space.

Is Jesus a composite?

Among speakers highlighting the convention was author-activist Dave Fitzgerald of San Francisco, who traced Christianity's origins back to myths and legends that existed many centuries before the birth of Christ. Christianity, said Fitzgerald, is really a composite of Persian and Hebrew influences, mystery cults and savior gods. "Christianity was born in a thousand places from doomsday cults to scholars, zealots and heretics," he related. Many of the pre-Christian myths had similarities to the Christ legend, he pointed out: "All the demigods had virgin mothers." Fitzgerald's forthcoming book demythologizing the Bible, *The 10,000 Christs and the Evaporating Jesus*, is scheduled for publication.

Another California atheist, constitutional lawyer Eddie Tabash, told the convention that though our founding fathers wanted government

to be religiously neutral, “since 1980, the Religious Right has begun to take over” and the result has been that the Religious Right, through faith-based charities, “has put religion on welfare.”

Tabash said he feels that right now it is difficult to stop the Religious Right because of its preponderance in the Senate and courts, but we must continue to try. “We atheists cannot go it alone,” he noted, “but we have allies in the mainstream. We need to work with believers, work with anyone. We can’t do it alone.” He advocated the ongoing promotion of atheism in any way possible and defended atheism’s “right to give offense,” adding, “...the far right wants to cut our liberties but we are the true patriots because we want to keep government and religion separate.”

Is god a unicorn?

The showpiece of the convention was, perhaps, a debate on Sunday morning between a Christian evangelist and an atheist on the topic, “*RESOLVED: There is a God.*” Fundamentalist minister Bob Siegel, who converted from Judaism to Christianity, took the “yea” position. Taking the “nay” position was Edwin Kagin, a constitutional attorney, National Legal Director for American Atheists, and the founder, with his wife Helen Kagin, of Camp Quest, a camp for atheist youngsters.

The low-key debate, characterized by politeness on both sides, gave the advantage to Kagin, who was supported by the predominantly atheist audience. (The Christian followers of Siegel were presumably all attending Sunday church services.) Kagin complained that “god never gives you an explanation,” and that “god is wasting our time.” He pointed out that Joseph was born after the death of Jesus, and that there is no non-Biblical reference to Jesus anywhere in historical documents. Siegel countered that the Israelites wrote records of Christ’s death, (alas, calling him a sorcerer).

Kagin won the debate hands down, as far as the audience was concerned, ending his argument with a touch of humor by saying that “We atheists believe in life *before* death” and pointing out that “kids learn at my Camp Quest that it’s okay not to believe in god. We ask them, do they see any invisible unicorns in camp?”

Siegel apparently took the loss good-naturedly, shaking hands with his atheist opponent and wishing him well. #

The Treaty of Tripoli Is Proof That U.S. Not Founded As Christian Nation

“... the government of the United States of America is not in any sense founded on the Christian Religion”- Treaty of Tripoli

Unlike most governments of the past, the American Founding Fathers set up a government divorced from any religion. Their establishment of a secular government did not require a reflection to themselves of its origin; they knew this as a ubiquitous unspoken given. However, as the United States delved into international affairs, few foreign nations knew about the intentions of the U.S. For this reason, an insight from a little known but legal document written in the late 1700s explicitly reveals the secular nature of the U.S. government to a foreign nation. Officially called the “Treaty of peace and friendship between the United States of America and the Bey and Subjects of Tripoli, of Barbary,” most refer to it as simply the Treaty of Tripoli. In Article 11, it states:

“As the Government of the United States of America is not, in any sense, founded on the Christian religion; as it has in itself no character of enmity against the laws, religion, or tranquillity, of Musselmen; and as the said States never have entered into any war or act of hostility against any Mehomitan nation, it is declared by the parties that no pretext arising from religious opinions shall ever produce an interruption of the harmony existing between the two countries.”

The preliminary treaty began with a signing on November 4, 1796 (the end of George Washington's last term as president). Joel Barlow, the American diplomat, served as counsel to Algiers and held responsibility for the treaty negotiations. Barlow had once served under Washington as a chaplain in the

NYCA Member Treatment Progress

NYCA Member Bob Curci started his chemotherapy and radiation treatment on March 20th at Montefiore Hospital in the Bronx, New York.

After seven weeks, Bob ended his radiation treatments this week, but will be continuing chemotherapy indefinitely. Except for some hair loss, Bob has not had any negative side effects. Next week, Bob will have a brain scan to analyze the impact of his medical treatments.

As Bob states; "My outcome is solely based upon science and my own body's DNA." We all wish him a successful outcome, a full recovery and a long and happy atheist life.

**STOP
FAITH-BASED SUBSIDIES
THAT WILL BECOME
FAITH BASED ENTITLEMENTS**

**Question religion!
No free pass for faith**

**YOU ARE ENTITLED
TO YOUR OWN BELIEFS,
BUT YOU ARE NOT ENTITLED
TO YOUR OWN FACTS**

**Science will replace religion.
Knowledge will replace faith.
Understanding will eliminate fear**

revolutionary army. He became good friends with Paine and Jefferson, and read Enlightenment literature. Later he abandoned Christian orthodoxy for rationalism and became an advocate of secular government. Joel Barlow wrote the original English version of the treaty, including Amendment 11. Barlow forwarded the treaty to U.S. legislators for approval in 1797. Timothy Pickering, the secretary of state, endorsed it and John Adams concurred (now during his presidency), sending the document on to the Senate. The Senate approved the treaty on June 7, 1797, and it was officially ratified by the Senate with John Adams signature on June 10, 1797. All during this multi-review process, the wording of Article 11 never raised the slightest concern. The treaty even became public through its publication in The Philadelphia Gazette on 17 June 1797.

So here we have a clear admission by the United States in 1797 that our government did not found itself upon Christianity. Unlike the Declaration of Independence, this treaty represented U.S. law as all U.S. Treaties do (see the Constitution, Article VI, Sect. 2: "This Constitution, and the laws of the United States which shall be made in pursuance thereof, and all treaties made, or which shall be made, under the authority of the United States, shall be the supreme law of the land; and the judges in every State shall be bound thereby, anything in the constitution or laws of any State to the contrary notwithstanding."

Although the Treaty of Tripoli under agreement lasted only a few years and no longer has legal status, it clearly represented the feelings of our Founding Fathers at the beginning of the American government.

**ATHEISM
IS A CONCLUSION
NOT A BELIEF**

**man invented god
god did not invent man**

NYC Atheists Inc. is a non-profit, non-partisan educational association. Our meetings and membership are open and all are welcome, both non-believers and believers: atheists, agnostics, humanists, freethinkers, skeptics, secularists, separation-of-church/state advocates and individuals who are questioning and searching.



April 2006- American Atheists Convention, San Antonio, TX. NYCA members: L. to R. Eric & Elaine Stone, Dennis Horvitz, Jane Everhart, Howard Charcofsky, Ken Bronstein.

April 14-16, 2006 American Atheists Convention Ellen Johnson – President - AA



March 26, 2006 Don Phillips March Meeting – Featured Speaker

April 20, 2006 Caroline Gilman playing the part of Madalyn Murray O'Hair at a reading of Act I of Jane Everhart's play-in-progress about Madalyn titled "The Most Hated Woman in America."



NYC ATHEISTS — 2006 MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

First Name: _____ Last Name _____

Street Address: _____ Apt No.: _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email: _____@_____ Phone: (____) _____ - _____

NYC Atheists Inc. is a non-profit (501c), non-partisan, and educational association with the purposes and goals:

1. To promote the total and absolute separation of church and state
2. To educate and inform the public about Atheism
3. To provide a forum for examination and discussion about Atheism
4. To develop and engage in educational, cultural, charitable and social activities that are beneficial to the members of NYC Atheists Inc., the Atheist community and the community at large.

YOUR 2006 MEMBERSHIP DUES ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE

Basic – \$ 25 Supporter – \$ 100 Founder – \$ 250 Patron – \$ 500 Life – \$ 1000

Senior (Age 65 or greater) – \$ 20 Full Time Student – \$ 10 Military (Active) – \$ 15

Signature: _____ Date: _____

CHECK PAYABLE TO: NYC ATHEISTS INC. - SEND APPLICATION TO:

NYC ATHEISTS INC. MEMBERSHIP - COOPER STATION P.O. Box 93 NY, NY 10276-0093