

NYC ATHEISTS INC.



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AN AFFILIATE OF AMERICAN ATHEISTS

VOL. VIII ISSUE NO. 12

DECEMBER 2011



KENNETH BRONSTEIN

PRESIDENT'S "SERMON"

Get Ready for November 6, 2012

Why We Need a Day of Secular Block Voting

November 6, 2012 may very well be the most cataclysmic day in American Atheism's future. It is our presidential election day. And if the radical right wing wins with any one of the cretins currently vying to be their candidate, this country will be well on its way to becoming a theocratic nation--i.e., a country run by religious zealots.



Republican Candidates at New Hampshire Debate

This is not, by any means, a stretch of anybody's imagination. Do you want to see prayer returning to schools? Do you want to see classroom devotions, book banning? Creationism taught in public school science classes? Intelligent design taught along with, or instead of, evolution? How about school vouchers for parochial schools? Crosses in front of every town hall, on every hill top? "In god we trust" on every building? And don't forget taxpayer-subsidized religious charter schools.

I am not exaggerating. Every one of these things is on the radical-right-wing agenda for the christianizing of the U.S, beginning with the tearing down of the wall between religion and government. Have I upset you? Are you concerned and outraged? Good, because I believe we are in grave danger.

I know there has been much disaffection about Obama among Liberals and Atheists. Despite the fact that he mentioned nonbelievers in his inaugural speech, (the first time any president has done so in the history of presidential speeches), it has been mostly downhill for Liberals and Atheists in this administration after that.

There has been much pandering to the religious with "god bless you" and "god bless America" after every speech. Some believe Obama flipped us off on the Faith-Based Initiatives issue and that he never intended to ease taxpayers' money out of these church programs or eliminate discrimination in hiring for these tax-subsidized church child care programs.



President Obama

But I don't care whether you like Obama or not, we still need to vote for him. He's the only candidate we've got. Or as Bill Maher said on the David Letterman show, "I was opposed to Obama until I watched the debates of the Republican candidates. Now I'm running straight back into Obama's arms."

Crucial Issue: Supreme Court

It's crucial that we Atheists back our candidate with a great outpouring of secular block voting--meaning single issue voting--for one critical reason: the Supreme Court. If the Republicans win, and start appointing Supreme Court conservative justices, the impact for us will be felt for several generations because a conservative-dominant Supreme Court will whittle away at whatever wall we now have separating church and state.

Right now, there are four conservative Supreme Court Justices (Justices Scalia, Thomas, Alito and Roberts) and four liberals (Justices Ginsburg, Breyer, Sotomayor and Kagan). Justice Kennedy is the swing vote. Justice

Ginsberg, who is in poor health, may decide to retire soon, and it is crucial--particularly for Atheist issues--that we have a liberal administration in place to make sure that the Supreme Court does not become hopelessly, one-sidedly, right wing reactionary conservative.



Supreme Court Justices -2011

As a matter of fact, I feel that Justice Scalia should recuse himself even now from any case involving the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment since he has already put on record that he believes that any U.S. state has the right to establish its own religion. He props up that notion by the citing the belief that anything that is not in the U.S. Constitution falls into the category of states' rights.

Republicans Packing District Courts?

NYCA's issue of removing the Ground Zero "Miracle Cross" out of the 9/11 Museum is bound to come up before the Supreme Court in the not-too-distant future and it is just one of the Atheist issues that would be doomed to oblivion by a one-sided right-wing Supreme Court.

But even more important is the fact that the U.S. President also appoints judges to federal court districts. This is a vital issue because when we file a suit, it goes to a federal district court first--and these judges are the ones who can throw out our case. Appointment of good, liberal Democratic judges to these courts is important.

The Supreme Court hears only about 60 – 75 cases a year, though hundreds apply. It is said that the Republicans are holding up some 60-plus judicial openings in federal court districts all over the country, awaiting a Republican president in 2012 so they can pack the courts with their right-wing conservative allies.



911 Cross in Debris



911 Cross as Shrine

We Atheists must fight fire with fire. It is time we gathered our forces to vote in a secular block even though our candidate may not merit A+ on other issues.

Theocracy Looms

But there is even more you can do. You can work for our candidates in their campaigns. We at NYCA will supply a Voter's Questionnaire for all candidates. Find out how each of your local candidates stands on our issues and send it to us for publication. You can enlist your family and friends in rooting for and supporting our liberal, democratic, pro-secular candidates.

We must put our not-insignificant weight behind the candidates who will move us into a future based on facts, not fancy, those whose decisions will come from reason and logic, not from god. The alternative, if we lose, is four to eight years more of George W. Bush-type Jesus-and-hallelujah thinking in our top political offices and the steady encroachment of religion into all aspects of our lives. And that, my friends, is called theocracy. □

I'M VOTING

SEPARATION of CHURCH & STATE

The 2011 NYCA Year-End Awards



By Jane Everhart

Ed. Note: Last year we began a new annual custom, namely: a tongue-in-cheek skewering of various elements in our society for doing some mighty dim-witted things. This year, we continue our dissidence even though the continued proliferation of dimwittedness shows that we have had no effect whatsoever.

The Bernie Madoff Long-Term Ponzi Scheme Award: To Pope Benedict XVI (otherwise known as Joe Ratzinger) for conducting a bigger, older and better Ponzi scheme than Bernie could ever have imagined: In the pontiff's game, he gives no interest whatsoever to those who give him money--until they are dead. Then they get their reward in heaven. No one has ever come back to complain that they expected a bigger yield. Meanwhile, Bernie, not so imaginative, languishes in jail.

The Lourdes Award for Best Shrine Find of the Year That Wasn't on Toast: To the Ground Zero worker who found a piece of steel beam wreckage in the 9/11 debris, stood it upright to resemble a cross, dubbed it a miracle, and triggered a church-load of believers to kneel and pray before it. The award also goes to the Franciscan Friar Rev. Brian Jordan, who subsequently adopted the so-called "Miracle cross" and has said he sees the steel beam as a "message" from god.

The Charlie Sheen Self-Deluded "Winning!" Award: To Rev. Brian Jordan of St. Peter's Church near Ground Zero in Manhattan for asserting to the *New York Times* that NYCA and American Atheists Inc. will most certainly lose their suit to have the Miracle Cross removed from the 9/11 Museum because the lawsuit constitutes--we quote exactly-- "the bizarre ramblings of angry minds." In contrast, Jordan's "blessing" of the piece of the debris he calls a cross, in which he says, "Give praise to our redeemer, god the son, who was fully human and fully divine and died for our sins and rose from death for our salvation..." is, of course, NOT a "bizarre rambling."

The George Bush Snoozing-Through-College Award: To TV host Bill O'Reilly of the CNN political commentary program *The O'Reilly Factor*, for his on-camera comment to David Silverman of American Atheists, evidently to prove that there is a god, "The tide goes in, the tide goes out, but who knows what causes it?" Well, actually, Bill, quite a lot of people know what causes it. And for a guy who attended Marist College, spent his junior year abroad at the University of London, taught school for a while and then got a Masters in journalism from Boston University as well as a Master's from Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government--and STILL does not know what causes the tides, either BU and Harvard need to rethink their curricula or else it just goes to show that just because you went to college doesn't mean you know anything.

The Choctaw Code Talker Award: To god, who has apparently chosen to send cryptic messages to believers via rubble from a fallen skyscraper, proving once and for all that He is not all-knowing, or He could have picked a better way to communicate. The question remains, what exactly was god's message via that rusty piece of junk? "Do not work on the 90th floor of any building?" "Send all donations to St. Peter's church?"

The Neville Chamberlain Peace at Any Price Award: To Susan Jacoby and TV comedian Jon Stewart for backing placement of the so-called "Miracle cross" in the 9/11 museum so the feelings of the faithful will not be hurt. Chamberlain lived to regret his appeasement of Hitler; will Jon & Susan do the same and live to regret they that they turned their backs on the U.S. Constitution? Meanwhile, the Templeton Foundation, purveyors of money and kudos to those who favor appeasing religious folk (otherwise known as accommodationists) are celebrating that they are getting Jacoby and Stewart for free.

The Alice in Wonderland Mad-Hatter Award: To the U.S. House of Representatives, who voted, 396 to 9, to "reaffirm" that the national motto of the U.S. is, still, "In god we trust." At a time when our economy is failing, people can't pay their mortgages, homes are being foreclosed, our Representatives, like the Dormouse in *Alice in Wonderland*, suddenly wake up from their deep slumber just long enough to cry out "in god we trust!" and then fall back into their Tea Party snooze. Off with their heads!

The Oscar Wilde Unintentional Comedic Twists Award: To American Atheists, whose otherwise exemplary billboards have been successfully shouting our god-free message for more than a year, a cautionary note about the time-sensitive statements on the bottom of these huge billboards: “Reasonable since 1963,” “Telling the truth since 1963,” and “Right since 1963.” What, before 1963, Atheists were NOT reasonable, truthful or right?

The Sometimes-Even-a-Blind-Sow-Finds-an-Acorn Award: To the evangelical fundamentalists who picketed in front of the Embassy Suites Hotel in Downtown Des Moines while American Atheists Inc. was having its 2011 convention there. Among the placard messages the fundies carried were “If Ur [sic] Faith Is Big Enough, Facts Don’t Count” and “There are No Atheists in Hell.” Unlike most Fundie placards, both sentiments are essentially true. Facts are lost on true believers--and, since there is no hell, no Atheists will ever be found there.

The Redneck Boys-Will-Be-Boys Award: To the American Atheist men who bounced around balloons shaped like male genitalia at the final session of the last AA convention. Boys may be boys, guys, but with YouTube, your peccadilloes go down in history for posterity.

The Wizard of Oz You Can’t Fool Everybody All the Time Award: To the state of Utah for declaring that the commemorative crosses it put up by the side of a public highway to honor its fallen state troopers, were really “not religious” but rather--- (drum roll, please) “a secular symbol of peace and death.” Luckily, the courts weren’t fooled by that little whopper. The 10th Circuit Court of Appeal said, uh, wait a minute, last we looked, that symbol of peace and death was on top of every Christian church in the state. American Atheists won its suit. ☐

Book Reviews

Title: “Belief in Science and the Science of Belief: A Guidebook to Fact-Based Thinking” by Tyson Gill. (189 pages)



If you are going to read only one book on Atheism this year, let this be it. Tyson Gill gets it right: It’s not just religion that Atheists oppose, it’s all kinds of belief-based thinking, including superstition, magic and spiritualism. Without bashing religion, Gill tells the importance of fact-based thinking, traces its history and growth, and explains why society may be doomed if we don’t adopt fact-based thinking.

Tyson Gill is a chemist who worked for many years as a research scientist. But it was his Peace Corps work in rural South Africa, where he taught science in “a very challenging environment of belief-based thinking” that inspired him to become what he terms “a life-long evangelist for science and fact-based thinking.”

This short, readable (I couldn’t put it down), very accessible book is available now, for a limited time, as a free download on <http://www.lulu.com/tyson>. It is also available as a Kindle download on Amazon.com. Get it now, because in the future, I’m sure it will cost you \$25 at Barnes & Noble.

--Jane Everhart

Title: “Monkey Girl: Evolution, Education, Religion and the Battle for America’s Soul” by Edward Humes. (380 pages)



This book, NYCA’s pick for discussion at our January Book Club, recounts the tumult, politics and media circus in the small town of Dover, Pennsylvania, site of a famous court case (*Kitzmiller v. Dover*) when the local school board decided to add an “Intelligent Design” text to the ninth-grade science curriculum and some parents opposed it. The Judge’s eventual decision, which opposed teaching Intelligent Design in biology classes, was especially shocking to the U.S. religious population because the judge, John E. Jones III, was a Republican appointed by then-president George W. Bush.

The Dover school fight, like the Scopes Trial, will undoubtedly go down in the annals of American history. In the end, the Judge decided, “...we have addressed the seminal question of whether Intelligent Design is science. We have concluded that it is not...”

Pulitzer-prize winning author Edward Humes uses a novelistic approach to heighten the drama of the Dover court case and has inspired other reviewers to call this book “an engrossing community drama.”

--David Orenstein

Editor's Q and A

On Being 'Nice' to Believers



By Jane Everhart

Dear Editor,

I am wondering why we, as Atheists, aren't nicer to Believers. Maybe if religious people see how nice we are, they will be more open to the Atheist message and we would win converts to Atheism.

--Bert from Brooklyn Heights

Dear Bert,

I am trying hard not to get exasperated by your question. I hear it at least once a year. I call it the Atheist delusion. Do you really think that after seeing how "nice" we Atheists are--how smart, how charming, how clever and amusing--a believer is going to say, hey, maybe I should become an Atheist? If you think that's going happen, there's a bridge I'd like to sell to you.

Religious people dislike us not because we are not nice but because we are Atheists. If you converted to religion, I think you would quickly find that religionists embrace you even if you are as mean and nasty as Vlad the Impaler. "Nice" is not what they value; it is the conquest of yet another mortal.

I think religionists have passed down to us the message that we Atheists should be "nicer" in order to impose on us feelings of guilt. You will find that when you talk to religious people and point out the factual inaccuracies of their faith, they interpret your very questioning of their beliefs as "not nice." "Nice," to religious people, means accepting their beliefs verbatim. That is their real interpretation of nice.

The Dark Side of Niceness

We all know that a surface niceness, which is mostly what religionists display or expect of us, can hide deep wellsprings of deception and unscrupulousness. One of the things that people who as children had been sexually abused by pedophile priests will tell you is that the priest who abused them was invariably a popular, well-liked, charming and personable guy.

In many cases, the pedophile priest was so liked and trusted by the victim's clueless parents that he was invited to meals at the family home or overnight stays, and the parents were even pleased to let the priest take

their child on weekend camping trips. "Oh, Father Smith--he ran the soup kitchen! There's no way he could be a pedophile," parents would exclaim. There were several child abuse cases in which the priest was so well liked by the family, the parish and the community that the parents took the priest's side over their own child's pleas when the pederasty was disclosed.

Bottomline: It would be hypocritical for Atheists to project what could be interpreted as tolerance of religious delusions that we don't really feel.

Why Aren't Believers Nice to Us?

Why not turn the question around and ask instead, *why aren't religionists nicer to Atheists?* Down through the ages, as Madalyn Murray O'Hair, the founder of American Atheists, often reminded us, religious folk have done some terrible things to Atheists, such as burned us at the stake, tortured us, ripped out our tongues, blinded us, chained us to prison walls, burned down our homes and forced us into exile. All because we had the temerity to say we didn't believe.

We were called heretics in those days.



Madalyn Murray O'Hair

In more recent times, Madalyn Murray O'Hair found herself the victim of continued vandalism when it became known that she had filed a suit to remove prayer from the Baltimore public schools: Her cat was strangled, her dogs were poisoned, the air was let out of her car tires, bricks were thrown through her windows, her sons were beaten up after school, she got tons of hate mail and death threats, and when she complained to the Baltimore cops about these things, she was ignored.

In the most shattering turn of events, O'Hair was murdered in the 1990s, and although Atheism was not said to have been the motive for her murder, there are moves today to reopen her murder case on the suspicion that Atheism was indeed part of the motive for her murder. Atheism was, at the very least, suspected to be

the reason that the Austin, Texas police did not spend much time investigating her disappearance. Since she was kidnapped and kept prisoner in a San Antonio motel for a month before she and her family were killed, it is quite possible that, had the police done an adequate investigation, they might have saved her life and that of her son and granddaughter.

Risk Being Disliked

I think there is a rather primitive subconscious self-preservation motive in wanting to be liked when you are a minority in any society. But we Atheists need to have the courage to risk being disliked in order to accomplish our goals of equal rights for Atheists.



Black Sit-in

Other minority groups have had to contend with the dislike and disapproval of the majority in order to accomplish their goals. In the Black civil rights movement, trying too hard to be liked or being obsequious around Whitey, was called “shuffling.” The nice “Yes, Massa” Blacks never had their lack of civil rights even acknowledged. It wasn’t until Blacks demonstrated, marched, had sit-ins, refused to go to the back of the bus, got themselves hosed down or been sic’d on by police dogs that they won some civil rights.

JOIN

NYC ATHEISTS – FACEBOOK

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/New-York-City-Atheists/187304681037>

**This newsletter is published by
New York City Atheists Inc.
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Editor – Jane Everhart
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Not being liked by their oppressor was the least of the concerns of these activist Blacks--and they will go down in the history of the struggle for civil rights as heroes.

Not a Popularity Contest

Our mission as an Atheist group is not to convert religious people but to get civil rights for Atheists. We want Atheists to be able to run for office. We want representation in Congress. We want religious folk to stop putting their crosses on public property, to stop shoving their Bibles in our faces and their religious slogans on our buildings. We want them to stop putting their religious mottoes on our money, in our pledge, in our school textbooks, in our kids’ heads.

But keep in mind that our struggle for rights is not a popularity contest. It is not a game. We are dead serious about equal rights for nonbelievers. By putting pressure on us to be “nice” and thus tolerate their incivility, religionists may very well be trying to divert us from our goal of civil rights for Atheists. “Nice” people don’t make demands, nice people don’t chain themselves to the White House fence or march on Washington.

I say, let’s not be fooled by standards of conduct imposed on us by our opponents. Let’s throw niceness to the winds and take big, bold unpopular steps that will not endear us to believers but may help us achieve our civil rights. ☐

Renew your NYC Atheists Inc. Membership!

This is the Season for renewals, so don’t forget NYC Atheists!
Your dues and contributions are an educational 501-C3 tax -free contribution, and are 100% deductible.

If you are a basic member now, consider increasing to a higher category:
Friend, \$100, Sustainer, \$250, Patron, \$500, Benefactor \$1000.

You can donate via check or web site. Make checks payable to NYC Atheists Inc. and send to: NYC Atheists Inc. (Membership), P.O. Box 6060, New York, NY 10150-6060. Or there is a donation form on NYC-Atheists.Org. See the enclosed Membership flyer!

Have you considered giving a NYCA membership to your favorite Atheist or Agnostic as a holiday or birthday gift? And remember NYCA in your estate planning! Why leave your money to a religious person? Our civil rights efforts for Atheists’ goals can move ahead faster if you make NYCA the beneficiary of an insurance policy, bank account, IRA or property. Let your money work for YOUR cause when you no longer need it.

UPCOMING DECEMBER EVENTS
CALL: 212-330-6794 FOR LAST MINUTE CHANGES

DEC. 14, 2011 (WED.) 7:00 PM
NYC ATHEISTS LIVING W/O RELIGION GROUP

GROUP LEADER: LINDA BLAIKIE, L.C.S.W



SUBJECT: Hypocrisy. How do you deal with the hypocrites in society or in your family—those who feign beliefs, feelings or virtues?

LOCATION: Moonstruck Diner - 449 Third Ave. /31st -2nd Floor

COST: Free to members (can join at meeting if desired), but participants are expected to purchase a drink or food to compensate Moonstruck for use of their space.

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DEC. 11, 2011 (SUN.) 12:00 NOON
NYC ATHEISTS BRUNCH / SPEAKER

SPEAKER: RICHARD PANEK



SUBJECT: “The 4% Universe: Dark Matter, Dark Energy and the Race to Discover the Rest of Reality” – The inside scoop behind the latest Nobel Prize winners in Physics for the discovery of the accelerating expansion of the universe. Panek will tell about the rivalry between two science teams to see which would be first to nail down the nature of the universe. In an exciting bit of timeliness, Panek will be speaking on the day after the Nobel winners are awarded their prize.

Panek has won a Guggenheim fellowship for science writing. His prize-winning writing has been called “elegant,” with a “compelling narrative of science at its best,” told with clarity, ease, and verve.

LOCATION: The Press Box Restaurant
932 Second Avenue (bet. 49th & 50th Sts.) -2nd Floor

COST: BRUNCH is \$20, which includes a selection of Buffet Entrees, salad, one soft drink, coffee, tax and tip.

DEC. 16, 2011 (FRI.) 6:30PM
NYCA SOLSTICE PARTY AND OPEN MIKE

We Celebrate the Silly Season!

Enjoy the Joyous Changing of the Seasons surrounded by cheery Atheist friends in a relaxed, friendly old French provincial restaurant, *Les Sans Culottes*, known, of all things, for its sausage trees. (The restaurant name means “The Pants-less” but please bear in mind, that is not the dress code!)

There will be an Open Mike—for those who feel moved, after a glass of wine or so, to go up and tell a joke, play a musical instrument, sing a song, recite a poem, confess your sins, wish someone a Happy Birthday, announce your love to your Significant Other, cry in your beer or curse the Republicans. Lack of talent needn’t be a deterrent; we applaud all efforts!

This is the Silly Season! All those making efforts to be Serious will be given 40 lashes with a limp French sausage. All foolishness, wackiness and general absurdity will be rewarded with cheers, whistles and wild applause.

Choose your entree from a cuisine that allows you to select a French-version recipe of Duck, Chicken, Beef, Fish or Pasta as done bistro-style in the shadow of Montmartre.

Reservations: NYCATHEISTS@GMAIL.COM

LOCATION: LES SANS CULOTTES – 2nd Floor
1085 SECOND AVE, (57th St.)

COST: \$40 includes appetizer basket, choice of five entrees, dessert, one soft drink, tax and tip.

**THE TUESDAY DISCUSSION MEETUP,
BOOK CLUB AND MONTHLY MEETING
ALL RESUME JANUARY 2012.**

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UPCOMING EVENTS AND MEETINGS

CALL: 212-330-6794 FOR LAST MINUTE CHANGES

DECEMBER 2011

Dec.	11**	Sun.	12:00 PM	NYCA Brunch / Speaker
Dec.	14*	Wed.	7:00 PM	NYCA Living Without Religion Group
Dec.	16***	Fri.	6:30 PM	NYCA Solstice Party

JANUARY 2012

Jan.	8**	Sun.	12:00 PM	NYCA Brunch / Speaker
Jan.	11*	Wed.	7:00 PM	NYCA Living Without Religion Group
Jan.	17***	Tue.	7:00 PM	NYCA Meet-Up
Jan.	20***	Fri.	6:30 PM	NYCA Book Club
Jan.	26****	Thur.	6:30 PM	NYCA Monthly Meeting

* Moonstruck Diner – 449 Third Ave. (31st) – 2nd Floor
 ** Press Box Restaurant & Pub – 932 Second Ave. (49/50th St.) – 2nd Floor
 *** Stone Creek Bar and Lounge – 140 East 27th St. (3rd/Lex)
 **** SLC Conference Center–352 Seventh Ave./16th Floor-(29/30th St.)
 ***** TBA

NYCA CABLE SHOWS

Wednesdays:	5:30 PM	Atheism in History	(Manhattan Cable # 57)
	6:30 PM	This Week in Atheism	(Manhattan Cable # 57)
Thursdays:	7:00 PM	NYC Atheists	(Manhattan Cable # 67)
	7:30 PM	Atheists Book Club	(Manhattan Cable #67)

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In This Issue

Page 1: Why We Need to Back Obama

Page 3: 2011 NYCA Dim-Wit Awards

Page 5: Should Atheists Be Nicer?

Page 6: Holiday Reading for the godless

Page 7: Exciting Speakers, Solstice Party