

## NYC ATHEISTS INC.



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AN AFFILIATE OF AMERICAN ATHEISTS

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KENNETH BRONSTEIN

### PRESIDENT'S "SERMON"

## 'In god We Do Not Trust'

You see it every day of your life. It's there every time you pay for something in cash. You handle it, you touch it; if you are an Atheist you try not to notice it. But you can't avoid it. It is in your face day in and day out: "In god We Trust," the official national motto of the United States since 1956--and it's on all our coins and currency!

You may say, "Enough, already, it will be on cereal boxes next." You may say to your legislators, "Look, this is unconstitutional. Our constitution says that the U.S. government shall not 'establish a religion.' Yet the U.S. government is minting these coins and printing these dollar bills as representing our government--and they have a religious motto on them! You can't do that, it's not right."



Coin

The response from religionists? It is generally: "Oh, don't get excited. It's not important." Not important? Just try getting those four words off our coins and currency and you'll suddenly see how important it is to them! They want you to think it is unimportant so you will go away and focus on something else. My response to them: "Well, if it's so unimportant, then why not take it off the coinage?"

### An Ad for Religion in Your Pocket

The fact is, those four words on our legal currency are a terribly important issue. Money represents the economy and stability of this country. The American dollar used to mean something

worldwide. Those coins and dollar bills are in the hands of every single citizen of this country. You use those coins and dollars as a tool of exchange even if you are Muslim or Buddhist or an Atheist. There is no getting away from them. Wouldn't Campbell's Soup be delighted to have their advertisements on every coin? Their ad in your pocket, on your coffee table, in your wallet? True, you may get so used to the ad that you take it for granted. And that's exactly what religionists want for the words "In god We Trust." They want you to take them for granted.



Currency

There are those of us who think that "In god We Trust" on our coinage is a deliberate act designed to aid the gradual intrusion of religion into our government. First they get us accustomed to the symbolism, then to religion itself. First the wordage, then the dogma. Picture an America with god on all the currency, god on the walls of courthouses, god in school textbooks, god in our pledge of allegiance, god in our national anthem, god everywhere, and suddenly it becomes clear: We have gradually and almost imperceptibly slid into becoming a god-dominated nation.

There is at least one person who is determined not to let this happen. It is Michael Newdow, a California-based physician and attorney, who once sued to get the words "under god" out of the American pledge of allegiance and got as far as the Supreme Court. (Unfortunately, the Supreme Court claimed he had no standing in that case.) *Cont. →*

Now Newdow is suing in U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York to get “In god We Trust” off the nation’s coins and currency. I am one of the plaintiffs in that suit, and I strongly feel that he has a powerful and persuasive case. Newdow feels that the reference to god on our coinage was intended to promote Christian monotheistic religion and thus flouts the Constitution of the U.S. and subsequent case law.



Dr. Michael Newdow

It is important to know that “In god We Trust” was adopted as the official motto of the U.S. in 1956, at the height of the Cold War with the Soviet Union and just after the 1954 McCarthy hearings. It replaced the unofficial U.S. motto *E pluribus unum* (“One Out of Many”) which had been adopted when the Seal of the United States was created in 1782.

In 2006, on the 50th anniversary of “In god We Trust,” the Senate reaffirmed it as the national motto. In 2011 the House of Representatives also reaffirmed it, in a 396-9 vote.

#### **Originated in Star Spangled Banner**

But the phrase seems to have originated in the Star Spangled Banner, written during the War of 1812, in which the fourth stanza includes the phrase “And this be our motto: ‘In god is our Trust.’” During the Civil War, there was a campaign by 11 northern Protestant Christian denominations to add “Almighty god,” in some form, on our coins, apparently to imply that god was on the Union side of the Civil War.

But an Act of Congress in 1837 decided that the U.S. Mint could make no changes on coins without another Act of Congress. Apparently, even then, more than 100 years ago, what was put on coins was deemed important. In 1873, Congress finally allowed the mint to put “In god We Trust” on “such coins as shall admit of such motto”---i.e., where the phrase fit. Since 1938, however, all U.S. coins have the religious motto, even the dime, though you may need a magnifying glass to see it.

Secular critics contend that the motto violates the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment and

separation of church and state because it promotes theistic religion. They have pointed out that the phrase originates from the Bible, that it has been pushed the strongest by religious leaders and that it promotes the belief in a single deity.

#### **Violates Constitution**

The U.S.’s religious motto has been challenged by three lawsuits to date, and, disappointingly, thus far, various judges have opined that it does not violate the constitution. In one curious decision (2004) the judge declared that the phrase *In god We Trust* “has lost, through rote repetition, any significant religious content.” That’s interesting. Secular critics believe that, on the contrary, rote repetition causes the religious message to be deeply internalized into the subconscious mind.

Surveys have found that most Americans do recognize “In god We Trust” to have religious content. That seems so obvious, and the time so ripe, that I have joined Michael Newdow in pressing his case in New York now.

#### **We Won’t Give Up**

We are currently looking for parents of young children to join the suit to protect their children from the constant brainwashing of these words on our currency (see Page 6). And mark my words, this constant in-our-faces repetition of these four words results in the implanting of the god fallacy in our children’s minds and potentially counteracting our educational and scientific efforts to teach our children that trust in mythical gods accomplishes nothing.

Join us, back us, follow our case and support our efforts to resist the continual and constant encroachment of religion into our daily lives!

Let it not be said, years from now, generations from now, that we gave in to the forcefulness and persistence of the religious zealots! Let future generations know that we fought, tooth and nail, through all the courts in the land and even when it seemed we could not possibly succeed against the army of myth-believers and Bible thumpers, even when it seemed like we are David fighting Goliath, we fought on. And sooner or later, we will win, because--guess what--we are right. ◻

Editor's Q and A

## What If Atheists Ruled the World?

### *What Would an Atheist America Be Like?*



By Jane Everhart

Dear Editor,

I've often wondered, what would an Atheist America be like? It's exciting to think about, but hard for me to imagine. Do you have any clues about how our nation might change if Atheism were the prevailing philosophy instead of a U.S. dominated by religious concepts as it is now?

--Bob from Bay Ridge

Dear Bob,

Ah, you have evoked my dream and opened up something that has kept me going for some eight years in the Atheist movement. Yes, I have a pretty good idea of what an Atheist USA might be like, or what I hope it will be like:

**HEALTHCARE:** In an Atheist America, everyone will have affordable health care because Atheists believe in the here and now and, because we know there is no afterlife, Atheists believe in helping everyone enjoy their time on earth. We do not believe that prayer will get you well. Besides, Atheists are logical, and universal health care is a logical extension of what we have now: People get group health insurance on their jobs because any group that signs up for insurance gets it cheaper than an individual who signs up by himself. So national healthcare is just an extension of that idea--that is, the "group" signing up for it is simply bigger: It is 400 million people--or the whole country.

**EDUCATION:** College will be free in Atheist America, as it is in most advanced countries, including France, Italy and Scandinavia, because Atheists believe that everyone, rich or poor, has a right to higher education. Did you know that you can go to the famous Sorbonne university in Paris for free? In the Netherlands, college is not only

free, but every college student receives a few hundred bucks each month from the Dutch government to cover books and transportation. (I found out these fascinating facts when my daughter married a Dutchman and lived in Holland for three years.) What's more, there will be no "elite" colleges in Atheist America. Entrance to Ivy League schools--Harvard, Princeton, Yale--will be by lottery for all those who are academically qualified. In the Netherlands, entrance to medical school is by lottery already.

**SCIENCE:** The emphasis on science will be everywhere in an Atheist USA. The Creation Museum in Kentucky will be made into a northern extension of Disneyland, with saddle rides on the dinosaurs. It will be renamed the Museum of Myths. Mickey Mouse will tell the biblical Creation story; Minnie Mouse will play Eve. Goofy will pose as the snake. American Atheists' attorney Edwin Kagin will be the museum's docent. It will be made clear to children that Bible stories are fairy tales like Jack and the Beanstalk.

**WARFARE:** War will be outlawed in Atheist America just as the killing of individuals is now. As logical Atheists, we will eliminate the strange dichotomy that says it is not okay to kill an individual but it is okay to kill thousands, even millions, in the name of war. The Pentagon will be made into a war museum and tourist hotel. War planes and tanks will be disassembled and made into public transportation.

**MILITARY ACADEMIES:** As folk singer Pete Seeger has implored in his songs, we "ain't gonna study war no more." Instead, Annapolis will become an oceanography college and shopping mall.

The Air Force Academy will become an aeronautics school and stem cell research center. West Point will become a gathering place and hotel for diplomats who are working to resolve disputes between countries via negotiation and compromise.

**WELFARE MOTHERS:** Atheists will throw out the term “Welfare Mother.” All mothers work hard within the home and deserve to be paid for their labor. Communal Child Care Centers will be built in every community so mothers can work outside the home if they wish. Instead of Welfare Mother, the terms “Welfare Bank,” “Welfare Millionaire” and “Welfare Corporation” will become common because these entities have received more government money than any needy Mom could dream of.

**PAY SCALES:** The average compensation for a corporate CEO is currently about \$7.4 million a year, whereas the minimum hourly wage is somewhere around \$8 an hour. Atheists believe such vast economic inequities are unconscionable and undemocratic because everyone from the day laborer on up is important to a nation’s growth. Atheists will advocate that every new employee be signed on for a share of the corporation’s profits--thus giving him or her, even the maintenance man and cafeteria lady, incentive to do a good job.

#### **CORPORATIONS AS ISLANDS OF**

**TOTALITARIANISM:** Actually, there is no democracy in our society from 9 to 5. What that means is, you have the freedom to vote for whatever local or national legislator you like off the job. But on the job, there is total totalitarianism, with the

CEO as dictator, his board and underlings next in command. You must do what the boss says or you’ll be fired. Atheists are strong believers in democratic participation in the work force. We do not believe that any overlord, not even a CEO, is appointed by god or infallible.

**ABORTION** will most certainly be a woman’s choice in an Atheist USA. However, since most abortions are based on economics--that is, the woman or her family feels they cannot support one more child--an Atheist America will seek to provide economic help to those women who choose to bear the child, including a nationwide network of child care centers, food and domestic help. Atheists feel it is not fair to encourage a woman to bear an unwanted child and then abandon her in the ensuing years to raise it in hardship.

#### **Problems to Work Out**

As you can see, I think an Atheist America will be a safer, more humane, more democratic, more satisfying place in which to live. Will it be paradise? No. There’s still that tricky business about corporate totalitarianism that brings up a muddle of practical and philosophical questions--i.e., how do you run a successful corporation without a dictator and with everyone’s participation?

There are a lot of other questions to work out: Can the Pentagon be remodeled into a tourist hotel? What will we do with all those out-of-work priests and pastors? Perhaps their speechifying expertise will help them become adequate tour guides? Will a 20,000-seat big-tent church make a good amphitheater for Bruce Springsteen or Billy Joel? O, the conundrums we will need to face! I can’t wait. □

**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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**ATHEISM IS A NON-PROPHET ORGANIZATION**

# Need Money? Start Your Own Religion!

## *How One Filmmaker Became a Fake Guru and Proved That People Will Believe Anything*



By Jane Everhart

If you haven't seen the movie "Kumare!: the True Story of a False Prophet," get yourself down to the IFC Theatre in Manhattan--or wherever it is playing after this newsletter is published--and see it immediately.

About a dozen or so NYC Atheists went to see it as a group on June 27th and afterwards gathered at a restaurant to discuss it. We concluded that the film shows graphically, interestingly and amusingly how easy it is for any religion to fool people.

Basically, the film is the true story of Vikram Gandhi, the New Jersey-born director of the film as well as its star and narrator. Gandhi, a first-generation immigrant from a Hindu background, was disturbed by the yoga craze in the United States, so he traveled to India--only to discover that the swamis there are "just as phony as those I met in America."

### **Disguised as Guru**

How to expose these phonies? Gandhi decided to disguise himself as a guru in America and "see how far I could push it." He transforms himself into Swami Sri Kumare' by growing his hair and beard, donning orange monk's robes and speaking in halting, broken English by imitating his grandmother's Indian accent.



Kumare'



Posing as Guru

Gandhi acquires two assistants (who are apparently in on the scheme for the film) and tells the world he is from a (made-up) place called Aali'kash, in the shadow of the Himalayas. With his Indian looks, soulful brown eyes and thoroughly authentic Indian accent, he is a very convincing Swami.

Kumare' and his two assistants decide to try their little scam in Phoenix, Arizona--probably a wise idea, as the Phoenix area has long been open to numerous spiritual sects. The assistants connect with a yoga school and rent a studio so their Swami can conduct yoga sessions.

To their surprise (and ours), it works. Swami Kumare'

conducts yoga sessions that attract more and more local spiritual-seekers and soon he has about 40 steady followers, to whom he teaches ersatz yoga moves (some hilarious), meditations and mantras, and imparts some homey wisdom. To his credit, the ersatz Swami's main lesson, to those willing to listen carefully, is: The only guru you need is the one inside you.

### **Transforms Lives**

Several of his earnest clients are interviewed on screen in private sessions with Kumare' and turn out to be very sympathetic characters. What's amazing is how intelligent they are; they include a death-row lawyer, a recovering cocaine addict and an obese blonde woman. They pour out their troubles to Kumare', who listens compassionately but in the end always tells them, "You have the answer."

Yet they revere Kumare', have faith in his simple wisdom, and in several cases, even credit him with transforming their lives.

Of course, there would be no movie without the big reveal, in which Kumare' discloses that he is a fraud. With great trepidation, he shaves his beard, cuts his hair, discards his robes and, in ordinary clothing--jeans and a white shirt--presents himself to his flock as Vikram Gandhi without any mystical trappings, speaking in his normal New Jersey accent.



Vikram Gandhi as himself

What happens next is barely believable: He is applauded! Only four of his followers walk out in disgust. The others all stay, knowing they have been fooled. Some continue to believe he is a guru; some say they do not care that he is not a real guru, he has helped them anyway.

For Atheists, Vikram Gandhi's experience has far deeper philosophical implications. It tells us that people seek out spiritual leaders and when they find them, do not want to let them go. To us, the movie



says that many powerful attributes are heaped on false gods and even when they are revealed as false, the desire to believe in them remains.

At our post-movie roundtable, one Atheist viewer told us that what the movie said to him was, "People are looking for something--acceptance, karma. People are gullible."

Another viewer said that the film showed him that "religion is the poor man's psychiatry." NYC Atheist president Ken Bronstein summed it up: "The director shows us that it is easy to con people. Kumare's message to his people is that they can solve their problems themselves. He showed them that they don't need him."

The bottom-line is that a religion can be invented on the slightest pretext, and that no matter what it is, some will buy into it and further, insist that it is authentic even though all evidence is to the contrary.

Director Vikram Gandhi has shown us a microcosm of how religion is invented and grows and takes root: Some 2000 years of religion's ascendancy eclipsed into an 84-minute film. □

*"Kumare': The True Story of a False Prophet" was directed by Vikram Gandhi, now 33, who also starred in it and narrated it. It is currently at the IFC Center, 323 Avenue of the Americas at Third St., Greenwich Village.*

## **PROPOSED CUBA TRIP DECEMBER 1-8, 2012**

**NEED: MINIMUM OF 15 PARTICIPANTS (MUST BE NYC ATHEISTS MEMBERS)**

**COST: APPROXIMATELY \$4,000 PER PERSON / SINGLE SUPPLEMENT EXTRA INCLUDES AIRFARE / HOTELS / MOST MEALS / This is a good deal because it includes airfare. Almost impossible to do a guided tour of Cuba for less.**

**DEPOSIT: \$400 REQUIRED BY SEPTEMBER 28, 2012  
FINAL PAYMENT: BY OCTOBER 31, 2012**

**TOUR: PRIVATE TOUR FOR NYC ATHEISTS--HAVANA AND AT LEAST ONE MORE CITY**

**CONTACT: NYCATHEISTS@GMAIL.COM or Call Ken Bronstein at [212-535-7425](tel:212-535-7425)**

## **SEEKING 8 – 15 YEAR OLD LAWSUIT PLAINTIFF**

NYC Atheists is working with Dr. Michael Newdow and will be filing a suit in the Second Circuit Court asking for removal of "In god We Trust" from U.S. coins and postage stamps. NYC Atheists and Kenneth Bronstein are already plaintiffs.

We need a parent and their child, preferably 8 – 15 years old, to be an additional Plaintiff in our case. Dr. Newdow feels that a child plaintiff and his parents will be an added asset because children are most affected by exposure to religious messages on coins and stamps. The court needs to graphically see that parents wish to protect their children from unwanted religious messages.

## **NYCA STREET TABLING EQUIPMENT TRANSPORT**

Need someone w/car to transport our street tabling equipment to/from our Columbus Circle site

**CONTACT: NYCATHEISTS@GMAIL.COM or Call Ken Bronstein at [212-535-7425](tel:212-535-7425)**

# UPCOMING JULY EVENTS

CALL: 212-330-6794 FOR LAST MINUTE CHANGES

**JULY 8, 2012 (SUN.)                    12:00 NOON**  
**NYC ATHEISTS BRUNCH / SPEAKER**  
**SPEAKER: ALEX L. WHITE, NYU Psychologist**



**SUBJECT: HOW MUCH OF WHAT YOU SEE IS AN ILLUSION? The Psychology of Seeing What's Not There May Explain 'The Virgin Mary on the Side of the Barn' Phenomenon.**

We've always known that the mind plays tricks on us, but now psychologists are proving it scientifically by examining what the neurons in your brain do when you view certain scenes.

**LOCATION:** The Press Box Restaurant  
932 Second Avenue (bet. 49<sup>th</sup> & 50<sup>th</sup> Sts.) -2nd Floor  
**COST:** BRUNCH is \$20, which includes a selection of Buffet Entrees, salad, one soft drink, coffee, tax and tip.

**JULY 11, 2012 (WED.)                    7:00 PM**  
**NYC ATHEISTS LIVING-WITH-ATHEISM GROUP**  
**GROUP LEADER: PROF. JOHN WAGNER**



**SUBJECT: PERSONALITY!** Everyone wants to have a "nice personality" but what does that mean? Does it mean you let people walk all over you? What constitutes a nice personality? Can we design our own personality or are we stuck with what our parents and the world have imposed on us?

**LOCATION:** Moonstruck Diner - 449 Third Ave. / 31<sup>St</sup>-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.

**JULY 17, 2012 (TUE.)                    7:00PM**  
**NYC ATHEISTS MEETUP**  
**GROUP LEADER: MICHAEL DORIAN**



**SUBJECT: Suing to get "In god we trust" off our money.** Michael Newdow, the doctor/lawyer who sued to get "under god" out of our Pledge, is now suing to get "In god we trust" off our money. Is this a good idea?

**LOCATION:** Stone Creek -140 East 27th St. (3rd/Lex)  
**COST:** Free, but participants are expected to purchase a drink or food to compensate Stone Creek for their space.

**JULY 20, 2012 (FRI.)**  
**6:00-7:00PM / HAPPY HOUR**  
**7:00 PM / NYC ATHEISTS FILM & BOOK CLUB**

**HOST:** Dr. David Orenstein  
**BOOK:** We will discuss Neil deGrasse Tyson's book "Origins: Fourteen Billion Years of Cosmic Evolution" (co-authored with Donald Goldsmith) (2004). It was a great PBS series, and Tyson will be hosting the reboot of Cosmos in 2013.

**LOCATION:** Stone Creek -140 East 27th St. (3rd/Lex)  
**COST:** Free, but participants are expected to purchase a drink or food to compensate Stone Creek for their space.

**JULY 26, 2012 (THUR.)                    6:30 PM**  
**NYC ATHEISTS MONTHLY MEETING**  
**SPEAKER: PROF. NELSON TEBBE**



**SUBJECT: REVIEW OF NYCA LAW SUITS,** "Miracle Cross" and "In god We Trust," by a popular Brooklyn Law School professor who specializes in Constitutional Law and Law & Religion.

**LOCATION:** SLC Conference Center-352 Seventh Ave./16<sup>th</sup> Floor - (29/30<sup>th</sup> St.)  
**COST:** We ask for a donation of \$5 to help cover the cost of room rental

**NYC Atheists Young Professionals (20s/30s)**  
**HOST: LIANNA**



**JULY 18, 2012 (WED.)                    4:30 PM**  
**EVENT: Pool / Ping Pong**  
**LOCATION: Break Bar And Billiards - 32-04 Broadway, Queens, NY**

**JULY 22, 2012 (SUN.)                    2:00 PM**  
**EVENT: Karaoke**  
**LOCATION: Duet - 54 W35th St. / Manhattan**

**JULY 31, 2012 (TUE.)                    7:00 PM**  
**EVENT: Thai Food**  
**LOCATION: YUM YUM - 43-01 Queens Blvd., Sunnyside, Queens**

**UPCOMING EVENTS AND MEETINGS**  
CALL: 212-330-6794 FOR LAST MINUTE CHANGES

**JULY 2012**

July	4*	Wed.	10:00 AM	NYCA July 4th Barbeque /Chappaqua, NY
July	8**	Sun.	12:00 PM	NYCA Brunch / Speaker
July	11***	Wed.	7:00 PM	NYCA Living With Atheism Group
July	17****	Tue.	7:00 PM	NYCA Meet-Up
July	18*****	Wed.	4:30 PM	NYCA Young Movers & Shakers
July	20*****	Fri.	6:00 / 7:00PM	NYCA Happy Hour / Book & Film Club
July	22*****	Sun.	2:00PM	NYCA Young Movers & Shakers
July	26*****	Thur.	6:30 PM	NYCA Monthly Meeting
July	31*****	Tue.	7:00PM	NYCA Young Movers & Shakers

**AUGUST 2012**

**NYC ATHEISTS IS ON VACATION DURING THE MONTH OF AUGUST  
MAY HAVE SOME STREET TABLING**

- \* GRAND CENTRAL STATION – Grand Hall – Info Kiosk
- \*\* Press Box Restaurant & Pub – 932 Second Ave. (49/50th St.) – 2nd Floor
- \*\*\* Moonstruck Diner – 449 Third Ave. (31st) – 2nd Floor
- \*\*\*\* Stone Creek Bar and Lounge – 140 East 27th St. (3rd/Lex)
- \*\*\*\*\* Break Bar And Billiards - 32-04 Broadway, Queens, NY
- \*\*\*\*\* Duet – 54 W35th St. / Manhattan
- \*\*\*\*\* SLC Conference Center–352 Seventh Ave./16th Floor-(29/30th St.)
- \*\*\*\*\* YUM YUM / 43-01 Queens Blvd. / Sunnyside, Queens

**NYCA CABLE SHOWS**

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

**NYC Atheists**  
**P.O. Box 6060**  
**NY, NY 10150-6060**

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