

NYC ATHEISTS INC.



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AN AFFILIATE OF AMERICAN ATHEISTS

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KENNETH BRONSTEIN

PRESIDENT'S SERMON"

It Does Not End With Voting

We Must Use the Victory Momentum for Atheist Advances

It was only around 1 a.m. on November 7th, after Mitt Romney made his concession speech, that I was able to shed my apprehensions a bit. I had been most concerned that if Romney won, the Supreme Court and Federal Circuit courts would eventually be packed with right-wing judges who would make ultra-conservative religion-biased decisions for the next 20 years.

A Republican-packed court system would have meant a bleak future indeed--a return to the Dark Ages--for Atheists, women, gays, immigrants and any other group that is seeking civil rights through the courts. I figured that an even more conservative court network than we have now--and it is plenty conservative right now--would be a setback for any progress toward Atheist rights, and possibly even wipe out the wall of separation between church and state. But with the Obama victory, there is hope that any retiring justices will be replaced by more open-minded and unbiased judges.



President Obama's 2012 Election Victory Speech

Here's the final election figures that brought hope to me and many others:

	<u>Votes</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Electoral</u>
Barack Obama	60,500,000	50%	332
Mitt Romney	57,650,000	48%	206

But there was more good news as a result of this election:

One of the most interesting bits of news to come out of this hotly contested election was that *Super PAC money did not determine the outcome!* Republican high rollers, such as Sheldon Adelson of Las Vegas, were, in fact, disenchanted by the ineffectiveness of their donations in getting their candidates elected. In Adelson's case, not one of the six candidates he backed got elected. Major donors are saying "never again." Moral: You can't throw money at a candidate and expect him to win anymore.



Governor Romney's 2012 Election Concession Speech

The right-wing pundits, such as Bill O'Reilly, Sean Hannity, Rush Limbaugh, and politicians such as Carl Rove, lost a lot of credibility. They were said to come across as biased and stupid in their pernicious comments about liberal candidates.

Voters were also turned off by the saturation of political TV ads, polls revealed. Some election experts claimed that the public has begun to discredit the self-promotion or the disparagement of a rival in TV ads as unseemly, biased and unfair. And boring as well.

There were some surprising and even history-making wins in this election. Kyrsten Sinema, a bisexual and an Atheist, won a Congressional election in Arizona, of all places. Extreme Christian

conservatives lost their races, including Todd Akin and Richard Murdock. Tammy Baldwin was elected in Wisconsin to the U.S. Senate. She is the first openly gay Senator and does not list a religious affiliation.

The not-so-good news is that Pete Stark, the openly Atheist longtime congressman from California, lost his re-election bid. But my study of his loss revealed that it cannot be attributed to his Atheism but more likely to a scandal about funneling some \$300,000 of campaign funds to his third wife. And it didn't help that his second wife backed his competitor.



Pete Stark

Population trends show that Latinos are now 10% of U.S. population; Blacks, 13% and those aged 18 to 25 are 19%. All are growing populations that mainly vote Democratic. Also important: Latinos and Blacks are increasingly moving to red states, changing those states from red to purple to blue states as each state gains more Democrats.

An even more startling result of this election was that 60% of U.S. women voted Democratic. But that shouldn't be too surprising: With their harsh stand on abortion, Republicans have been losing women voters for some time.

There were some positive gains for progressive issues. In Florida, Amendment 8, which would have allowed for taxpayer funding of religion, was voted down. Same-sex marriage was approved in Maryland, Maine and Washington state--the first time same-sex marriage has been approved by popular vote. An initiative to ban same-sex marriage was defeated in Minnesota.

What Now? Operation Big Bang!

A recent Pew study of "Unaffiliates"--those who say they are not connected to any church or religion--found that they are now 16.1% of the U.S. population. Obama won a full 70% of the Unaffiliates, according to CNN's exit polls, as well as more than half of those who said they "seldom or never attend religious services" though they may have some connections to a church.

Interestingly, another survey found that the Nones (called "Nones" because in the space for "religion" on

any application, they put "None") voted for Obama by a margin of 70 to 26.

With so many positive changes in the air for nonbelievers and progressives, we must keep up the momentum to achieve the recognition and acceptance of Atheism. I am suggesting that our movement begin an initiative I tentatively call "Operation Big Bang"--meaning that we will hammer legislations at the federal, state, and local level, lobbying frequently and consistently, to let legislators know that we exist and are not going away.

The goal is for us to be recognized as an important voting bloc. We want to be courted by candidates for elected office in the same manner that many religious voters are! We want to share our concerns about separation of church and state issues with our representatives in government. We want to influence laws and those who make them! We want to make our opinions known about new legislation being considered in Congress. We cannot afford to be politically apathetic!

Let's Run Atheist Candidates!

I also want the Atheist movement to groom and run candidates for legislative offices on the local, state and school board level. And I want us to initiate outreach programs that have high media value.

I think we need to increase the number of public demonstrations we do; we shouldn't come out publicly in street actions only when the Pope visits! We need to be prepared to hold a demonstration at the drop of a hat, like a Flash Mob, whenever a legislator does something opposed to our interests and whenever a religious organization violates the wall of separation between church and state.

OK, we're not going to rev up our Operation Big Bang activities overnight, I understand that. It takes time to groom candidates for office. It even takes time to prepare placards to have on hand for instant "Flash Mob" type demonstrations. It takes practice to be comfortable doing street demonstrations; it takes more practice to actually make it fun. It also takes preparation and training to learn to lobby in a positive, effective way.

But we can do it. We've accomplished so much so far: I remember when the Pew report claimed nonbelievers were 8% of the population. We seem to have doubled that, to 16%, even with our amateur efforts. Just think what we can do if we move up to really sophisticated methods! ☐

Editor's Q and A

Lies Our Politicians Told Us

So, Whatever Happened to the Working Class?



By Jane Everhart

Dear Editor,

The presidential campaign is over, but I bet a lot of things irked you while it was going on, like when Romney told the nation, at the end of the second debate, "I am a very religious man." He was undoubtedly playing up to the fundamentalists and evangelicals, but with nonreligious Americans now rising to an estimated 18 to 25 percent of the U.S. population, Romney's confession may have actually cost him some votes. What other things do you think may have backfired in this recent political campaign?

--Rachel from Riverdale

Dear Rachel,

I was appalled by the lies perpetrated on American citizens by, alas, both sides. Sometimes they were boldfaced lies (like Ryan's marathon record) but mostly they were little white lies or shadings of the truth meant to impart a softer, kinder nuance to some statement. For example, whatever happened to the working class? Neither candidate ever copped to the fact that the U.S. has a working class. Both candidates promised only to help the "middle class" recover from the recession, as if there are only two classes in the U.S.--the middle class and the rich.



Michelle Obama

Let me tell you, as a person whose parents both worked outside of the home, there is indeed a working class in America, and it is *huge*. It consists of farmers, construction workers, store clerks, garment workers, hospital workers, cab drivers, cleaners, typists, cooks, bartenders, assembly line workers, meat cutters, coal miners, maintenance workers, plumbers, brick layers, government clerks and even teachers.

Honest labor is not something anybody needs to be ashamed of, least of all the candidates. The parents of First Lady Michelle Obama were both working people.

Joe Biden's father was a used car salesman. Can you get more working class than that? This country was built by laborers, and for most of America's history, it was honorable to be a worker, to have a job, to earn an honest wage. To be ignored by both major political parties is a crushing blow to workers. Great Britain has a whole Labor Party; America cannot even acknowledge its workers.

Only Middle Class Recognized

Workers know they are not middle class. The middle class is made up of accountants, doctors, the small store owners, the college professors, the low level executives of corporations--often salaried people, sometime self-employed, but more independent than a worker. Their jobs often lead to upward mobility; for working class people, there is generally no upward mobility.

When both candidates emphasized that they really, *really* cared about middle class people, they apparently felt that meant everybody but the rich. But in Ozone Park, in Queens, in Astoria--wherever a worker and his family sat watching the candidates on TV--I can assure you these words meant, to them, that they were excluded from any consideration by either candidate.

Lying by Omission

Neither candidate ever let the words "working class" pass his lips. I listened to all three presidential debates carefully, hoping one of them would say these words, but neither did. Isn't this is lying by omission? Isn't it negating a major part of American citizenry? Why? Is it that "working class" has become synonymous with "low class" in some people's minds? Let me assure you, no hard-working carpenter, nurse or factory worker considers himself or herself "low class." When working people think of low class, they think of homeless people, n'er do wells, those who are chronically unemployed and cannot or do not work an honest job.

Working class people are proud to be good workers. If you ever doubt this, go to a Labor Day parade and

observe the faces of the marching garment workers or the hospital workers brigade. They march proudly, shoulders back; they wear their union hats cockily: look at me, I'm a proud garment worker! That, Mr. President, is America.

Another lie perpetrated by both parties in the presidential campaign is the use of the euphemism "job creators" for the rich, the capitalists and the corporate moguls. I groaned every time I heard either candidate say those words. Reader, no rich person, capitalist, or corporate mogul goes out to deliberately "create jobs"; their real objective is to *create profit*. The jobs they happen to create are merely a side effect of profit seeking.

'Job Creators' Really Profit-Seekers

For example, do you think that the motive for the many American industries that have moved to Mexico, Thailand or the Philippines was to "create jobs" for the Mexicans, Thais or Philipinos? Of course not. Industrialists moved to those countries because they could make more profit by cutting down their labor and production costs.



Occupy Wall Street Demonstration

Profit seekers move wherever they can make more profit. That's why both candidates were just chewing the fat when they discussed ways of keeping American industries at home: Industrialists will go wherever the cost of manufacturing is cheap so they can make more profit. And it is their right to do so, justified by several other American phrases--"free enterprise" and "the free market." Both of these phrases are euphemisms (or more benign terms) for capitalism.

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If you believe in a totally free market, as Romney says he does, then you are contradicting yourself (or lying) when you say American industrialists should stay in America.

Romney himself is said to have established some industrial ties to China. I'm not condemning this because, under their own capitalist rules, the industrialists who move their operations to a third world country are doing nothing illegal. But I'm not condoning it either; it's really a lousy thing to abandon your workers in order to make a few more bucks for your investors. Workers can't just pack up and move to Mexico; they have to find new jobs at home and often there are none.

Mouthing the Religious Lie

And lastly, let me mention the most flagrant campaign lie of all: the words "god Bless America" mouthed by both candidates after every debate, every speech, every interview. The phrase rolled from the lips of both candidates as if it were synonymous with "goodbye" or "so long."

These words represented a blatant, in-your-face condescension for one candidate and deluded wishful thinking for the other, because god does *not* bless America, never has, never will. We are not special to any fanciful deity, and to have our presidential candidates, both Harvard graduates, look into the camera and say these words implies that they either believe this patent fiction, or are throwing these words out to pander to the believing masses.

If a candidate truly believes that god blesses America, then we must question whether he is capable of reasoned, logical decisions in office. If the candidate does not believe that there is a god who favors America--whose pet country we are--and the candidate *still* says these words, then it is an issue of honesty and integrity, of not having the courage to turn away from a mass delusion. And in that case, to repeat "god bless America" becomes nothing more than another lie perpetrated for political reasons. ☐

NEW LOCATION (MONTHLY MEETINGS)

SLC Conference Center (HAS MOVED TO)

15 West 39th Street – 3rd Floor

Be Proud to Be an Atheist And Get Ready to Battle for Atheist Rights



By Tyson Gill, Ph.D.

November 6th was a day of victory for facts and reason. It was a day when a majority of Americans finally said enough is enough to the brazen overreach of political and religious extremism.

They said enough to the avarice of the 1%: enough to big money buying elections, enough to the systematic dismantling of unions and enough to the raiding of vital social programs to feed the gluttony of the ultra-rich.

They said enough to social excesses of religious fundamentalism: enough to the attacks against women's and gay people's rights, enough to ethnic and religious hate, enough to the intrusion of religion into the classroom, enough to endless wars and enough to the denial of science and facts.

They said enough to dysfunctional politics: enough to the legislative obstruction of the Conservatives, enough to the willful scorn of facts, enough to birthers and climate change deniers and enough to voter suppression.

Religious Right Digging In

However, this victory does not by any stretch signify the end of the war against this extremism. There is absolutely no chance that the Religious Right will have a "come to Jesus" moment and suddenly become rational, reasonable, and compassionate. Quite the opposite, it is already clear that the only lesson they took from this defeat is that they must become even more extreme, double-down yet again, dig in, and push their agenda that much harder.



Christopher Hitchens

The next four post-election years will be critical. As much as we might prefer to remain above the fray, we Atheists are desperately needed to reinforce efforts to push back against the Religious Right until changing demographics ultimately render them irrelevant. Although many Atheists have long served in active duty in this struggle, far too many remain pacifists.

Even as the fundamentalists pound away at the wall that separates Church and State, some Atheists prefer to maintain a live-and-let-live attitude, sometimes even criticizing our more activist leaders and cautioning against "militant" atheism.

Militant Atheists Wanted

But a militant Atheist as advocated by leaders like Christopher Hitchens and Richard Dawkins isn't an angry or hateful Atheist, ranting and raving in futility against religion. Rather, militant Atheists are those who are willing to venture out of their safe circles and openly stand up in defense of science and reason in politics and in our everyday lives. A militant Atheist is one who courageously, intelligently, cogently, persuasively and persistently advocates for secular values. A militant Atheist is one who is willing to put his or her self on the front lines of activism to ensure that religious extremism will not dominate public policy simply because rational and reasonable people failed to stand boldly in opposition.

Coming Years Are Critical

Moral integrity and conviction are hollow delusions unless translated into effective action. It is up to each individual to decide what level of direct action they are comfortable with, but following are some suggestions you might try to put into practice over these next critical years:

1. Expect your leaders to organize bold, effective, and aggressive actions to combat religious extremism, and fully support your leaders in those activities. We should not be satisfied with secular leaders who simply reiterate worn out platitudes and expend all their efforts to remain safe and non-confrontational.
2. Openly proclaim yourself as an Atheist. Embrace the label proudly and publicly. Agnosticism is truly the bankrupt refuge of cowards. There is no logical validity in any of the "rational" arguments commonly put forth in defense of agnosticism as some kind of principled stance.
3. Understand that there are no small or inconsequential battles. Every battle against religious extremism, large or small, is worth fighting and sometimes the most seemingly inconsequential issue

has profound implications in the larger war. The religious right fully appreciates this and so should we Atheists.

4. Realize that there are no small or harmless beliefs. Every little belief we allow to go unanswered, that we tolerate, that we allow to appear equivalent to an opposing position based on fact, through our acquiescence or silence makes it easier for us to collectively accept bigger beliefs. Each one incrementally compromises our ability to discern or advocate effectively for facts on critical matters.

5. Don't buy into the argument that you must "respect all beliefs." Not all beliefs are worthy of respect. If they were, then none would be in fact more worthy than any other. All individuals, regardless of their views, must be treated with dignity and respect, but beliefs are not people any more than corporations are people. Don't allow believers to insulate their beliefs from scrutiny by claiming that disrespecting their beliefs is disrespecting them as persons. A proposition can only earn respect by virtue of how well it is in accordance with proven facts.

6. Stand up at least on occasion as a champion for fact and reason even when there may be undesirable consequences. Take responsibility to educate yourself so that you can counter belief with facts and logic. When colleagues put forth what they assert to be evidence that the Earth is only 6000 years old, you should be willing and able to persuasively and factually refute such assertions.

7. Stand with religious moderates who are out on the front lines pushing back against extremism within their own religions. Despite our differences regarding the origins of morality and the wisdom of belief, we share fundamental values and have far more in common as allies against fundamentalism than the differences that separate us.

Our future well-being and even our very survival require us to have the capacity to make clear and uncompromised decisions based on actual facts, not upon fantasy or magical thinking. Unless Atheists as a whole are willing to stand up and stand together in large numbers, we should not be surprised as our secular society gradually succumbs to the unrelenting pressure of religious extremism.

Back in 1997, Dr. Carl Sagan saw clearly that even then we were on the path to a new Dark Age of ignorance and superstition. Since he voiced those dire warnings, the Religious Right has clearly proven that his concerns were well-founded. They will not quit now and neither should we. I urge you to enlist for active duty into a volunteer army of militant Atheists. Our secular freedoms require your service if we are to avoid the grim future that Dr. Sagan worked so passionately to prevent. ☐

Dr. Tyson Gill's highly recommended book, "Belief in Science and The Science of Belief--A Guidebook to Fact-Based Thinking," is available on Amazon.com.

NYC Atheists' Advanced Writers Workshop Looking for a Few Good Writers

The NYC Atheists Advanced Writers Group has opened up its membership to new members. We are a solid group of proficient writers who meet on the third Thursday of every month and share our expertise with each other. Our purpose is to get more Atheist fiction, short stories, memoirs, biography, novels, non-fiction books and articles out into the world. We help each other improve our writing but our additional emphasis is on how to get published in a world where getting published is half the battle even for the best writers.

Our workshop leader is Elizabeth Gordon, who is an MFA-Fiction candidate at City College, a former journalist, and a superb writer herself. She has had the invaluable experience of studying with writers John Irving, Larry McMurty and Andre Dubus in their Writers Workshops and she has the rare talent of gentle and positive critiquing.

Are you an Advanced Writer? How do you know if you are? The fact is, you may not be able to judge your own writing--you are too close to it--so let *us* judge if you are indeed advanced!

Send two copies of a sample of your writing, up to five pages double-spaced, plus a short letter telling us what you would like to accomplish and how we can help you, to Jane Everhart and Elizabeth Gordon, care of NYC Atheists Inc., Box 6060, New York, NY 10150.

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

NOV. 11, 2012 (SUN.) 12:00 NOON
NYC ATHEISTS BRUNCH / SPEAKER

SPEAKER: PROF. ALAN MANN
Professor of Anthropology - Princeton University



SUBJECT: "THE ORIGINS OF HUMANNESS: IS THERE ANY EVIDENCE FOR A GODLY PRESENCE?"

Prof. Mann will show how the prehistoric development of art and language is without any spiritual guidance or direction.

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.

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NOV. 14, 2012 (WED.) 7:00 PM
NYC ATHEISTS LIVING W/ ATHEISM GROUP

GROUP LEADER: LINDA BLAIKIE



SUBJECT: GREED

The holiday season brings out, what else?--Greed! How should Atheists deal with this acquisitive "me, me, me" monster? How do we deal with the greed of others, including family members, colleagues, friends including children in the family who already have too many toys? And how do we suppress our own greed when the holiday's religious brainwashing encourages spending and acquisitiveness?

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.

NEW LOCATION
(MONTHLY MEETINGS)
SLC Conference Center (HAS MOVED TO)
15 West 39th Street – 3rd Floor

NOV. 16, 2012 (FRI.)
6:00-7:00PM / HAPPY HOUR
7:00 PM / NYC ATHEISTS FILM & BOOK CLUB

HOST: Dr. David Orenstein



FILM: "LETTING GO OF GOD," A JULIE

SWEENEY MOVIE - I chose the film because of Sweeney's approach to freethought, her journey to Atheism and idea that we all follow our personal road in the movement but as we give up the god concept, we all find our selves at the same conclusion.

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.

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NOV. 20, 2012 (TUE.) 7:00PM
NYC ATHEISTS DISCUSSION MEETUP

GROUP LEADER: MICHAEL DORIAN



SUBJECT: "How Do We Get Politicians to Stop Ignoring Atheists?"

Just because Obama won doesn't mean mainstream politics is on board with us. The new Pew study put us at about 16% of Americans, but politicians wish we'd go away. What can we do to get some respect around here?

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.

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NOV. 29, 2012 (THUR.) 6:30 PM
NYC ATHEISTS MONTHLY MEETING

SPEAKER: EX-PASTOR TERESA MACBAIN



SUBJECT: "MY ROAD FROM METHODIST MINISTER TO AMERICAN ATHEIST PUBLIC RELATIONS DIRECTOR"

LOCATION: SLC Conference Center-15 West 39th Street – 3rd Floor
COST: We ask for a donation of \$5 to help cover the cost of room rental.

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

NOVEMBER 2012

Nov.	11*	Sun.	12:00 PM	NYCA Brunch / Speaker
Nov.	14**	Wed.	7:00 PM	NYCA Living With Atheism Group
Nov.	16***	Fri.	6:00 / 7:00PM	NYCA Happy Hour / Book & Film Club
Nov.	20***	Tue.	7:00 PM	NYCA Meet-Up
Nov.	29****	Thur.	6:30 PM	NYCA Monthly Meeting

DECEMBER 2012

Dec	9*	Sun.	12:00 PM	NYCA Brunch / Speaker
Dec.	12**	Wed.	7:00 PM	NYCA Living With Atheism Group
Dec.	21*****	Fri.	6:00 / 7:00PM	NYCA Solstice Party

- * Press Box Restaurant & Pub – 932 Second Ave. (49/50th St.) – 2nd Floor
 ** Moonstruck Diner – 449 Third Ave. (31st) – 2nd Floor – Manhattan
 *** Stone Creek Bar and Lounge – 140 East 27th St. (3rd/Lex) – REAR ROOM
 **** SLC Conference Center – 15 WEST 39TH STREET – 3RD FLOOR (NEW LOCATION)
 ***** Les Sans Culottes - 1085 Second Ave, Corner of 57th Street – 2nd Floor

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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