

# NYC ATHEISTS, INC.

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An Affiliate of American Atheists

VOLUME X11 / ISSUE 9 / 10  
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Kenneth Bronstein

## PRESIDENT'S "SERMON" NYC ATHEISTS: PROGRESS AND SUCCESSION

We have our work cut out for us: with the 2016 presidential election and its crowded, combative field full of Religious Rightists dedicated to ending the Separation of Church and State, it's time for us to fight back—hard. We need to be at the table when decisions are made by our elected officials. We need strategies, we need commitment and the energy of our entire membership to influence the candidates of both parties. (Or even three parties, if Donald Trump makes good his threat to run as an Independent!)

And there's more: The Mayor has answered our letter of June 17th; we are moving ahead with our campaign to oppose prayer in the classroom for four-year-olds in the Mayor's pre-K program (see July/August newsletter). We are now in discussions with members of the Mayor's staff and the Board of Education. If a lawsuit is necessary, there will be essential work for our members on the project.



New NYCA Street Tabling Equipment

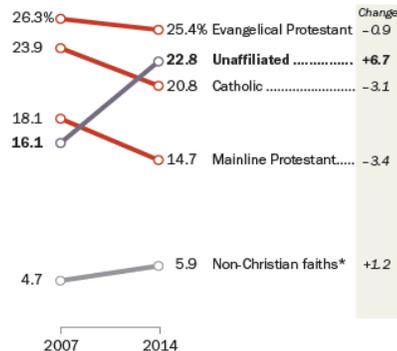
Finally, as I approach my eleventh year as president of NYC Atheists, it's also time for some reflection about how far we've come. When I became president of NYCA, our newsletters were sent in envelopes because they would "disappear" or be damaged in the mail and our members were afraid their neighbors would learn they were Atheists. We had learned, though fear, to keep a low profile.

But things began to change. We started tabling throughout the city to increase our visibility and membership, and finally landed in the spotlight at Columbus Circle. During the Bush convention in New York, we demonstrated openly with signs and slogans.

We got attention and the confidence to "come out" with our beliefs. Today, our newsletters with their distinctive logo go out uncovered because we are proud of being Atheists. There's been a real shift in the weather and it turns out we have a lot of company!

### Changing U.S. Religious Landscape

*Between 2007 and 2014, the Christian share of the population fell from 78.4% to 70.6%, driven mainly by declines among mainline Protestants and Catholics. The unaffiliated experienced the most growth, and the share of Americans who belong to non-Christian faiths also increased.*



\* Includes Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, other world religions and other faiths. Those who did not answer the religious identity question, as well as groups whose share of the population did not change significantly, including the historically black Protestant tradition, Mormons and others, are not shown.

Source: 2014 Religious Landscape Study, conducted June 4-Sept. 30, 2014

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

The Pew Research Center's Religious Landscape Study of May 2015 describes a dramatic increase in the "Nones" (Atheists, Agnostics, Non-religious and Unaffiliated) across genders, generations and racial and ethnic groups; it has surged from 16.1% of U.S. Adults in 2007 to 22.8% in 2014. The "Nones" now eclipse the Jews, Muslims and Catholics, and they are getting younger in the bargain. <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/05/12/5-key-findings-u-s-religious-landscape/>

Now that our numbers are climbing, there's no limit to what we can accomplish IF we use the resources of our membership to make sure we can impact the 2016 presidential campaign and oppose prayers during school hours. By being proactive

as issues arise we have a tremendous opportunity to make a difference and strengthen NYCA for the future.

### ALL HANDS ON BOARD

About the future: the importance of membership participation for the continuing growth, health and longevity of NYC Atheists cannot be overstated! We need the involvement of our entire membership to be effective; each and every one of you has something to contribute to empowering the organization.

Now let's go back to the value of being proactive and add one more essential: being proactive as first responders. When events move fast, NYCA must be able to move even faster. This is only possible with a well-organized structure in place, with teams and committees, committee chairs, and a chain of command which makes the best use of members' skills. Let's call it a triangle.



June 25, 2009, NYCA Bus Poster Campaign

The simple triangle is one of the strongest shapes in geometry; by using it to establish an efficient organizational structure, we can use our unique capabilities, join with our friends to develop new skills and abilities, and see our efforts getting tangible results. Nothing motivates like tangible results! It's the best way to explore and develop talents for leadership—to advance and be promoted into ever-more challenging roles. As the committees grow and prosper, we will find potential leaders for a chain of command. These initiatives will lead to greater efficiency and decentralization—another important consideration for the future.

These are some committees NYC Atheists can use to advantage, some of the work they can contribute, and what you might bring to them as a founding member or chair:

- 1) Legal: Help us to pursue the lawsuits that enhance our mission and visibility. Monitor and respond to appropriate news and political events and devise plans to lobby officials.
- 2) Events: Follow Atheist initiatives. suggest speakers. identify, coordinate and support regular group leaders. Manage special events (social, blood drives, demonstrations.) Organize outreach (tabling, etc.) and venues.
- 3) Communications: Monitor current events. Make public statements/responses. Publicize NYCA events in collaboration with Events Coordinator and Events Committee. Write Web content and draft official correspondence.

4) Internet and Web: Design and maintain Website and Newsletter and other NYCA publications.

5) Equipment Management: Procure, store and maintain all organization assets/equipment. Assure delivery of equipment to activity sites. Assure smooth setup, operation, and return of equipment.

6) Membership and Volunteer Coordination: Recruit and orient new members focusing upon generations X, Y, and Z, women, Blacks and Hispanics. Support members during times of need (death in family, etc.) Recruit and coordinate volunteers for special projects. Recruit interns, particularly college students, to implement new initiatives.

7) NYCA Newsletter Editor: Create and content.

8) Fundraising: Plan and coordinate strategies.



April 18 2009: Demonstration during the Pope's visit in NYC

The first step in our structure will be to appoint committee chairs to help organize and guide the committees. As we get things up and running, we will identify those with the potential to assume greater responsibility.

As the committees prosper, we will find potential executives. Some will earn the opportunity to chair multiple committees. Finally, those who have been moving up will be potential new presidents. Bottom line: you have good suggestions, make them! Put your shoulder to the wheel. Do a lot of work—you might become president one day.

Change is always hard to effect, and there are always some bumps in the road. But it's what keeps organizations vital and growing, and it's time for us to find the best way to move forward—to participate and to make the long-term commitments that will ensure the survival of our group. I estimate it will take a couple of years to work out the best committee structure for the future so that I can consider stepping down to let a strengthened NYAC take the reins.

**If we are not successful in obtaining the cooperation and commitment of our entire membership, I question the viability and the future of our mission and our group.**

**We have scheduled a meeting for everyone for Thursday, September 24<sup>th</sup>, at 6:30 pm. We will convene at the SLC Conference Center, 15 West 39 Street.**

**The discussion will focus on which committees each of you will participate in. Be there!**

**ATHEISTS ARE VOTERS TOO!**

## WANTED: NYC ATHEIST ACTIVISTS



By Tyson Gill

We're New Yorkers, citizens of the greatest city in America! And since we represent the saner people in our city, we're also the most enlightened and influential of New Yorkers! We are a large and united voice to be respected and reckoned with! We cannot be ignored! Hear us roar!

Well, not so much. Our collective roar is that of a mouse, not a lion. We are about as organized and animated in common cause as the pigeons in Central Park. Other groups like our Hasidic community command politicians to respect their power, to kiss their rings and attend to their every crazy self-serving whim. Threaten politicians with the wrath of the Atheist voting block and they will only be forced to wipe away their tears of laughter.

Why is that? There is certainly no shortage of Atheists in New York and organizing is logistically easier here than in most areas. There are lots of shared interests to bond us together and plenty of important causes worth uniting around. Yet our atheist organizations have a lot of difficulty recruiting and energizing members as compared to Atheist organizations in other states.

### Feeling Too Complacent

One major reason for this may be because living here in the Big Apple we don't feel as personally impacted or oppressed by anti-Atheist sentiments as our fellow Atheists living in other cities. We don't feel particularly trod upon and don't generally suffer abuse in our day-to-day interactions. We can admit to being Atheists without being ostracized from the country club and local PTA. It may be true that a recent Quinnipiac University study found that 30% of New Yorkers would be reluctant to elect an Atheist to office, but most of us aren't running for public office anyway. Bottom line, it just doesn't feel much like we New York Atheists are personally under attack because of our Atheism.

So it is understandable that New York Atheists aren't very activated by Atheist issues. People don't think much about causes until they're personally affected by them. Sure, I guess I should care more about starving kids in Africa, but I don't know any of them personally so it's hard to get too worked up. People typically become really active in a cause only when it personally affects them. We're apathetic about gay rights until we have a gay child. We don't think much about cancer until our spouse is stricken. We don't condemn guns until our child dies because of a shooter. It is often only when something impacts us profoundly that we suddenly become activists and are motivated to spend a great deal of our energy convincing everyone else they should care about it too. You find these "born-again activists" out there working hard for every possible

cause. It sometimes seems difficult to accept their impassioned urging that we should care, when they never cared until it personally affected them. You have to wonder, what kind of people are they that they only became concerned about a problem after it affect them or someone they love personally? Was it not a problem before it impacted them? Did they not pretty much ignore the pleas of those affected before they were personally impacted?

The truth is that there are way too many important and worthy causes for us to become deeply, emotionally involved in every one. But it would be nice, would it not, to choose a cause, any cause, that we really care about, rather than maybe someday simply adopting a cause only because we have been stabbed through the heart by it?

I don't fault any of my fellow New York Atheists for not being rabid militants. I only fault you if you have no cause you care about because you have not been personally traumatized yet. There are so many tremendously important causes; one of them should touch you before it touches you. There are many causes, like poverty or global warming or polluted water worth fighting for before you personally suffer from their effects. Find your cause before it finds you.

### Why Not Atheism?

But if you don't have another cause you are passionately invested in and working hard for, why not Atheism? It is a worthy cause. Bias against non-religious people is widespread and real. The continual pressure to move America toward theocracy has to be resisted with blood and sinew. The Separation of Church and State is as important as any fundamental principle and the NYC Atheists are fighting to protect it. Further, Atheism is a foundational cause, since belief-based thinking inhibits real progress on a wide range of critical issues for us and for our planet.

So join the fight. Don't let NYCA President Ken Bronstein and a handful of other dedicated NYCA members stand alone. Stand with them to oppose superstition and ignorance and to fight for a fair and just and sustainable nation built upon a real foundation of sanity and reason. ☐

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*Tyson Gill is a scientist who has served in the Peace Corps in Africa. He is the author of the highly recommended book, "Belief in Science and the Science of Belief: A Guidebook to Fact-Based Thinking," Also see Tyson's blog: <https://figmentums.wordpress.com/>*

**ATHEISM IS A CONCLUSION**

**NOT A BELIEF**

## ONE IN THREE AMERICANS WANT A DIVORCE BETWEEN CLERGY AND CIVIL MARRIAGES



Kenneth Bronstein

As reported on December 2, 2014 in the Religious News Service (RNS): *Should clergy divorce themselves from civil marriage?* In a survey of 2,000 American adults, the Nashville-based Christian research company (LifeWay Research) found that 36 percent of them said that clergy should no longer be involved in the state's licensing of marriage.

LifeWay also conducted a parallel survey of 1,000 Protestant pastors. It found that one in four favored separating religious marriage rites from the need for their signature on a government-issued marriage license that make the ceremony legally binding. This is how it's done already in many foreign countries, but not — so far — in the United States. Ed Stetzer, executive director of LifeWay Research, called it noteworthy that so many pastors are willing "to stop saying 'By the power vested in me by the state ...' during a church wedding ceremony."

In July, the traditionalist magazine *First Things* launched a campaign for clergy to pledge to stop signing marriage certificates. So far, more than 330 pastors have signed the pledge.

Philadelphia Archbishop Charles Chaput told the nation's Catholic bishops last month that Catholic priests might consider opting out of certifying civil marriages as a sign of "principled resistance" to growing legal recognition of same-sex marriage.

The basis for these actions is found in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, June 26, 2015, a landmark United States

Supreme Court case in which the Court held that the recognition and provision of same-sex marriage is a fundamental right guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution. *Obergefell* requires all states to issue a license to marry between all people of the same sex and it requires all states to recognize same-sex marriages legally performed in other jurisdictions.

Justice Roberts specifically questioned the tax status of religious organizations that wish to discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation. This was a question that came up during oral arguments for *Obergefell*. Indeed, the Solicitor General candidly acknowledged that the tax exemptions of some religious institutions would be in question if they opposed same-sex marriage.

Alito cited a 1983 case involving the evangelical Christian Bob Jones University, which had refused to allow interracial dating on its campus. The Court ruled that the school could not be tax-exempt if it maintained its ban; the university accepted the consequences, not changing its policy until 2000.

We are now faced with the religious liberty question; 1) should religious participation be required to marry same-sex partners? 2) should religious organizations lose their tax exemption if they refuse to perform same-sex marriages?

Divorcing clergy from civil marriages would be a solution to this problem and help maintain the Separation of Church and State.

**RELIGIOUS FREEDOM / LIBERTY: NOT AN EXCUSE TO DISCRIMINATE**

**BELIEVERS HAVE THEIR YOUR OWN VERSION OF REALITY**

**EMOTIONS ARE NOT SCIENCE**



## IN THE NEWS

### NYC ATHEISTS ACTIONS

Mayor Di Blasio allowed Pre-K student prayer. We wrote a letter objecting to his actions. His response claimed legality and identified staff and Board of Education contacts for us. We had a conference call to get further details; they will get back.

Port Authority NY and NJ airports have digital signs displaying "god bless our troops." Our letter of objection was sent and is awaiting response.

#### ANOTHER SOLD-OUT BRUNCH / SPEAKER (PAUL OFFIT, M.D.) *BAD FAITH: WHEN RELIGIOUS BELIEF UNDERMINES MODERN MEDICINE*



#### OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF U.S. WOMEN DON'T REGRET ABORTION

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/07/17/us-usa-women-abortion-idUSKCN0PR1KP20150717>

#### ATHEIST POLITICIANS MIGHT BE RARE NOW, BUT NOT FOR LONG

<http://cathyllynnrossman.religionnews.com/2015/06/29/atheists-politicians-might-be-rare-now-but-not-for-long/>

#### CALIFORNIA GOVERNOR SIGNS NEW, STRICTER LAW REQUIRING VACCINATIONS FOR MOST KIDS

<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2015/06/30/california-vaccine-bill/29485063/>

#### PHARMACY OWNERS CANNOT CITE RELIGION TO DENY MEDICINE: U.S. APPEALS COURT

<http://news.yahoo.com/pharmacy-owners-cannot-cite-religion-deny-medicine-u-175216202--finance.html>

#### CRITICS PETITION OBAMA TO ABOLISH FAITH-BASED HIRING BIAS

<http://www.religionnews.com/2015/08/21/critics-petition-obama-abolish-faith-based-hiring-bias/>

#### HUNDREDS OF MORMONS OUTSIDE OF NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS STAGE MASS RESIGNATION EVENT

<http://fox13now.com/2015/07/25/nearly-100-submit-resignation-letters-to-lds-church/>

#### SATANIC GROUP UNVEILS GOAT-HEADED STATUE IN DETROIT

<http://www.foxnews.com/us/2015/07/27/for-one-night-devil-is-in-detroit/>

#### FEDERAL PRISONS AGREE INMATES CAN BE 'HUMANISTS'

<http://necronline.org/news/faith-parish/federal-prisons-agree-inmates-can-be-humanists>

#### HOW SECULAR FAMILY VALUES STACK UP

<http://touch.latimes.com/#section/-1/article/p2p-82535717/>

#### EAST RAMAPO SCHOOL DISTRICT ACCUSED OF RELIGIOUS FAVORITISM GETS STATE-APPOINTED MONITOR

<http://news.yahoo.com/district-riven-religious-favoritism-claims-gets-monitor-183101025.html>

#### LAST WEEK TONIGHT WITH JOHN OLIVER: TELEVANGELISTS

(HBO)[http://mp3convert.me/videos/1440016491\\_55d4e86b29b6c5.73730997.flv](http://mp3convert.me/videos/1440016491_55d4e86b29b6c5.73730997.flv)

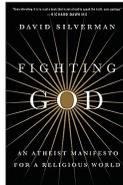
## UPCOMING SEPTEMBER EVENTS

CALL: 212-330-6794 FOR LAST-MINUTE CHANGES

**SEPTEMBER 13, 2015 (SUNDAY) 12 NOON**  
**NYCA BRUNCH / SPEAKER; DAVID SILVERMAN:**  
**PRESIDENT, AMERICAN ATHEISTS**



**BOOK: *FIGHTING GOD: AN ATHEIST MANIFESTO FOR A RELIGIOUS WORLD***



*Fighting God* is a firebrand manifesto from one of the most recognizable faces of atheism. Silverman--a walking, talking atheist billboard known for his appearances on Fox News--discusses the effectiveness, ethics and impact of in-your-face-atheists who refuse to be silent. *Fighting God* is a provocative, unapologetic book that takes religion to task; it will inspire non-believers and serve as the ultimate answer to apologists.

**LOCATION: The Press Box Restaurant (2nd Floor)**  
**932 Second Avenue Street (bet. 49<sup>th</sup> & 50<sup>th</sup> Sts.).**

**COST: BRUNCH, \$20, includes selection of buffet entrees, salad, one soft drink, coffee, tax and tip.**

**SEPTEMBER 15, 2015 (TUESDAY) 7:00PM**  
**NYC ATHEISTS DISCUSSION / MEETUP**  
**GROUP LEADER: MICHAEL DORIAN**



**SUBJECT: MICHAEL TACKLES SUBJECTS AS DIVERSE AND CONTROVERSIAL AS BLASPHEMY AND SUING THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.**

What will he challenge this month? It's a surprise, but rest assured that it will be fascinating, audacious and provocative.

**LOCATION: Stone Creek, 140 East 27th St. (3rd/Lex)**  
**(Rear Room)**

**COST: Free, but purchase drink or food to compensate Stone Creek for their space.**

**SEPTEMBER 17, 2015 (FRIDAY)**  
**6:30 PM HAPPY HOUR / 7:00 PM FILM CLUB**

**HOST: DAVID ORENSTEIN, Ph.D**



**FILM: "THE ROOT OF ALL EVIL?"**  
*The Root of All Evil?* (later retitled *The god Delusion*), is a television documentary written and presented by **Richard Dawkins** in which he argues that humanity would be better off without **religion** or belief in god.

Dawkins' book *The God Delusion*, released in September 2006, goes on to examine the topics raised in the documentary in greater detail.

**NEW LOCATION: EMERALD INN, 250 W 72nd St. (Rear Room) / ONE BLOCK WEST OF BROADWAY**

**COST: Free, but purchase drink or food to compensate Emerald Inn for their space**

**SEPTEMBER 24, 2015 (THURSDAY) 6:30PM**  
**NYC ATHEISTS MONTHLY MEETING**

**SPEAKER: KENNETH BRONSTEIN: PRESIDENT / NYC ATHEISTS**



**SUBJECT: YOU ARE NYC ATHEISTS' FUTURE!**  
This is a crucial meeting. We will discuss how our members will bring their skills and experience to participate in assuring our future.

Also crucial: Understanding that this is your path to taking leadership positions. We will explore options for future presidential succession.

If you care about this organization, it's time to take responsibility for its destiny.

### ALL SHOULD ATTEND

**LOCATION: SLC Conference Center, 15 West 39th St. (3rd Floor)**

**COST: \$10 Donation covers room rental.**

**PLEASE NOTE: SEPTEMBER 17, 2015 (FRIDAY) 6:30 PM HAPPY HOUR / 7:00 PM FILM CLUB**  
**NEW LOCATION: EMERALD INN, 250 W 72nd St. (Rear Room) / ONE BLOCK WEST OF BROADWAY**

# MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM



NYC Atheists Inc.

NYCATHEISTS@ GMAIL.COM

PHONE: 212-330-6794

## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

First Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Apt No.: \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ @ \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

### YOUR 2015 MEMBERSHIP DUES ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE

- Individual: \_\_ \$ 25
- Family: \_\_ \$ 50
- Friend: \_\_ \$ 100
- Sustainer: \_\_ \$ 250
- Patron: \_\_ \$ 500
- Benefactor: \_\_ \$ 1000
- Life: \_\_ \$ 5000

Additional Donation: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Total: \$ =====

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**MAKE CHECK PAYABLE TO: NYC ATHEISTS INC.**  
**SEND APPLICATION TO: NYC ATHEISTS INC. (Membership)**  
**P.O. Box 6060**  
**NY, NY 10150-6060**

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

**SEPTEMBER 2015**

<b>SEPT.</b>	<b>13*</b>	<b>Sun.</b>	<b>12:00 PM</b>	<b>NYCA Brunch / Speaker</b>
<b>SEPT.</b>	<b>15**</b>	<b>Tues.</b>	<b>7:00 PM</b>	<b>NYCA Meet-Up Discussion Group</b>
<b>SEPT.</b>	<b>18***</b>	<b>Fri.</b>	<b>6:30 / 7:00PM</b>	<b>NYCA Book / Film Club</b>
<b>SEPT.</b>	<b>24****</b>	<b>Thurs.</b>	<b>6:30 PM</b>	<b>NYCA Monthly Meeting</b>

**OCTOBER 2015**

<b>OCT.</b>	<b>11*</b>	<b>Sun.</b>	<b>12:00 PM</b>	<b>NYCA Brunch / Speaker</b>
<b>OCT.</b>	<b>16***</b>	<b>Fri.</b>	<b>6:30 / 7:00PM</b>	<b>NYCA Book / Film Club</b>
<b>OCT.</b>	<b>20**</b>	<b>Tues.</b>	<b>7:00 PM</b>	<b>NYCA Meet-Up Discussion Group</b>
<b>OCT.</b>	<b>29***</b>	<b>Thurs.</b>	<b>6:30 PM</b>	<b>NYCA Monthly Meeting</b>

- =====
- \* Press Box Restaurant & Pub – 932 Second Ave. (49/50th St.) – 2nd Floor  
 \*\* Stone Creek Bar and Lounge – 140 East 27th St. (3rd/Lex) – Rear Room  
 \*\*\* ***EMERALD INN - 250 W 72ND ST, REAR ROOM / ONE BLOCK WEST OF BROADWAY***  
 \*\*\*\* SLC Conference Center – 15 West 39th Street – 3rd Floor
- 

**NYCA CABLE SHOWS**

			<u>MNN</u>	<u>RCN</u>	<u>FIOS</u>
<b>Wednesdays:</b>	<b>5:30 PM</b>	<b>Atheism in History</b>	<b>1997</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>35</b>
	<b>6:30 PM</b>	<b>This Week in Atheism</b>	<b>1997</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Thursdays:</b>	<b>5:00 PM</b>	<b>NYC Atheists</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>36</b>
	<b>5:30 PM</b>	<b>Atheists Book Club</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>36</b>

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