

Boy Scout/National Constitution Center Orientation Speech

April 15, 2007

Good afternoon everyone. Thanks so much for attending this orientation meeting concerning the April 21, 2007 National Constitution Center protest.

I am so happy to see that people are interested in learning more about why the event is an important one. As concerned citizens we have an opportunity to show officials at the National Constitution Center and members of the Boy Scouts of America that the nontheist community is not to be feared or forgotten.

What should be feared is intolerance and bigotry.

Intolerance and bigotry have come to symbolize the membership policy of the Boy Scouts of America. In order to keep a few atheist and gay children and adult volunteers out of the Boy Scouts of America, they declared themselves a private organization in 2001.

As most of you in this room know, that privacy status was recognized and confirmed by the United States Supreme Court in June of 2001 when they ruled against a gay scout who sued to keep his membership active.

Remember that the lawsuit, *Dale vs. Boy Scouts of America*, was filed at a time when the Boy Scouts of America was a public non-profit organization founded to service the entire community in teaching about Scout Crafting.

We feel that the Boy Scouts of America are doing a huge disservice to the community **and** their members when they advocate separation and disassociation of the gay and atheist community.

When I learned that the National Constitution Center was hosting a "Boy Scout Day" on April 21, 2007 right here in the city of Brotherly Love, I contacted the Center's public relations office.

"Did they know that the Boy Scouts of America's membership policy excludes gays and atheists," I asked.

I also asked, "Do you realize that hosting the Boy Scouts of America on **a special day just for them** only encourages and condones bigoted behavior?"

The answers I received from the Center's public relations department were not satisfactory. I then turned to the Center's activity director with the same questions.

“Sorry,” she said. “The Center does not get involved in controversial issues. We just host groups when we can.”

“Would the Center host a group of White Supremacist,” I asked.

“White Supremacist form private clubs just like the scouts and they are just another group,” I pointed out.

I was getting nowhere so I made a plea to host a table at the event where members of the Boy Scouts of America could earn a “Diversity Appreciation Badge.”

The Center, after all, was planning to conduct special events just for the Boy Scouts. The Center advertised the event as a way for Boy Scouts to get credits toward earning American Heritage and Citizenship in the Nation merit badges.

The Center is even giving out commemorative National Constitution Center Fun Badges, setting up special events and activities just for the Boy Scouts.

The Center is honoring a dishonorable organization and we need to make them realize that hypocrisy.

Imagine that you are a nontheist or gay family visiting the National Constitution Center as a tourist attraction and you come upon the event where you notice that all sorts of gratuities and kindnesses are being heaped upon an organization that openly discriminates against you and your children. We need to be there for those gay and atheist families, ladies and gentlemen.

We need to convey support for those families who are demeaned by and are caused to feel ashamed for who they are.

It was no surprise that my idea for a “Diversity Appreciation” table was rejected by the Center.

But I would not let that rejection for an *indoor* table keep me away. I obtained a permit from the National Park Service so that a “Diversity Appreciation” booth could be set up on the front lawn of the National Constitution Center.

We will be meeting on April 21st at 9 AM to set up the booth, tables and signs in time for the Scouting Day to begin at 10 AM.

Please arrive early to help us unload the car at the front entrance of the Center. There is a lot of work to do and we need as many helping hands as possible.

My plans to travel out of the country have changed. I will be able to attend the event after all. I will be assisted by **Sally Cramer** and **Christopher Evans** that morning. But we will need all the help we can get.

The 10' by 10' booth takes about four people to properly lift it into place quickly. We will need to ready the literature tables and we will have signs to hang.

Here is a sample of one banner which will be hanging from the booth canopy.

(Show banner)

Here is a sample of the signs we will place prominently around the booth.

(Show sign)

The literature we will be distributing has been donated by Scouting For All and is appropriate for the event. I have samples on the table you can take a look at later.

Scouting For All is also donating T-shirts for all the volunteers to wear. Please plan to wear shorts, jeans, or slacks to match their wonderful T-shirt (green, yellow, white, or black).

(show T-shirt)

I think that the Scouting For All T-shirt conveys a very nice message. Wearing a shirt that states "Scouting For All. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere" is non-offensive and more people are likely to stop by to chat when they notice our team T-shirt.

I also like the fact that we will all look like a team and that we are working hard to convey a single message. The message of tolerance and acceptance.

Speaking of acting in a team like manner—no unauthorized literature will be allowed.

We must stay focused on the issue at hand and our goal is to convey that the Boy Scouts of America should accommodate us without hesitation. Why? Because we are good people.

Our message to the Center, to the Boy Scouts and to the public at large is that we are not people to fear and if we are accepted as part of the world's largest youth group, we will not impose our doctrine on others.

We will respect other beliefs—just as we expect to be respected for our philosophical life stance.

If you have the opportunity to talk to a Scout or anyone who stops by the booth, please do not demean their beliefs. Do not debate whether there is or is not a God. Save those arguments for an appropriate venue.

We are there to prove we are unfairly demeaned and we are there to prove that we will not destroy the Boy Scouts should they open their membership to our families.

Attacking someone's belief in God would hurt us tremendously. It's none of our business who believes in god or not and that is the entire point. We accept them—they accept us.

We are attacking bigotry, prejudice and negative stereotyping—not religious beliefs!

Please do not use the venue to get into a philosophical argument.

If a conversation about why we don't believe in God comes up, please try to carefully select your words to not be offensive or demeaning.

Remember why we are there and bring the conversation back a discussion about the benefit to society a public organization has verses the harm that a private organization does. The harm is that it teaches children to hate and separate from others for no good cause.

If you are obnoxious and difficult—that is showing a good cause why they should keep you out. Please show how polite, kind, thoughtful, courteous, brave and tolerant you are.

The goal is for us to prove that by accepting our children and atheist adults who volunteer, BSA will be building a bridge to better understanding, tolerance, brotherhood and unity.

There will be a contingency of people who will represent the gay issue and the harm that excluding gays in the Boy Scouts can cause. If you encounter a person who wants to discuss the gay issue with you, please refer them to an expert in that field.

We are experts in the issue of bigotry against nontheists and it's best to rely on the experts when someone wants to engage in an intense conversation. Please refer people to me if you can't answer a tough question. I know the Boy Scout organization very well and this issue has been my passion for over 15 years.

We are going to ask for people to sign a Scouting For All petition.

(show petition)

If there are any questions, please listen carefully and direct them to an expert if you can't answer the question fully. We will also be giving out Scouting For All literature which will explain what the mission and purpose of the organization is and how they can help. Our goal is to get those materials into the hands of as many people as possible.

We also have literature that explains the objectionable resolution that the Boy Scouts of America passed in 2002.

If someone is interested in assisting the Freethought Society of Greater Philadelphia to make sure that the Boy Scouts are not getting public funding and public gratuities, please give them a “Watchdog” form and explain how they can help.

The form includes a “Suggested Activism” sheet a copy of the Scouting For All petition and a copy of the 2002 Boy Scout resolution.

You can tell people that if they complete the Watchdog Discrimination Protest Information sheet and complete at least one task on the sheet, we will send them a “Diversity Appreciation Badge.”

(show badge)

If asked why we are at the National Constitution Center, please explain that we are there because of the bigoted Boy Scouts membership policy. Boy Scouts do not deserve any special treatment, especially what is being given to them by the National Constitution Center.

The Boy Scouts are in violation of Philadelphia Anti-Discrimination statutes and yet the National Constitution Center has gone out of their way to make the day special for them.

The Boy Scout’s bigoted membership policy is shameful. Giving the Boy Scouts of America special privileges and welcoming them with open arms gives the impression that the National Constitution Center endorses and agrees with their policies of discrimination.

The National Constitution Center is giving the Boy Scouts of America a nod of approval and encouragement to continue with their prejudicial membership policies.

You might be asked by the media why you felt compelled to protest the National Constitution Center’s honoring of the Boy Scouts of America and why you object to the Boy Scouts membership policy.

Today, like good Scouts, we are going to “get prepared” to answer those questions.

I am going to suggest that you work on some message points and sound bites in the time that we have left.

As you can see by the worksheets being handed out by Christopher and Sally, we can work on several different styles of message points.

Let's use the next 15 minutes or so to try to come up with message points and sound bites.

This exercise will be well worth the time we spend today, but you can also take the worksheet home to think of more message points and sound bites before April 21st.

Are there any questions before we take a break?

OK, so let's take a 10 minute bathroom break and then take another 15 minutes to think of things to say to the press. You can team up or work on your own if you like.

We will share message points and sound bites at about 3:40 PM.

After we share the sound bite and message points we develop I will take names, volunteer time information, contact information and T-shirt sizes.

I hope to have the booth covered at all times and I realize that some of you can only give us a few hours on April 21st. That's fine and with your name and volunteer information, we can design a workable schedule to follow.

See you at 3:40 PM.

Developing Your Sound Bites

Analogy: _____

Bold action words: _____

Emotions and examples: _____

Attacks and absolutes: _____

Clichés: _____

Humor: _____

Pop Culture References: _____

Rhetorical Questions: _____

Opposition Quote: _____

Issue Worksheet

Talking Points and Sound Bites

The issue is: _____

My **first talking point** is:

My **second talking point** is:

My **third talking point** is:

My **humorous sound bite** is:

My **sound bite cliché** is:

My **sound bite analogy** is:

My **attacking sound bite** is:

My **pop culture sound bite** is:

My **opposition quote** is:

My **rhetorical question sound bite** is: _____

Message Points and Sound Bites
Created on April 15, 2007

The Boy Scouts of America have lost their moral compass!

Discriminatory policies contradict what should be the goal of the Boy Scouts!

Any and all forms of discrimination breeds hatred!

Now that the Boy Scouts of America are conducting themselves as a private organization and discriminating against gays and atheists, one must ask, "who will be the next victim of Boy Scout discrimination?"

The Boy Scout campfire of bigotry fans the flames of hatred!

If the Boy Scouts are truly honest, they would acknowledge the contributions that atheists have made to improve the conditions of society.

The Boy Scouts of America claim that they teach traditional American values. What is more traditional to American than the appreciation of diversity?

All we are asking from the Boy Scouts of America is that they open their membership to us with open minds and open hearts.

The Boy Scouts of America should explore tolerance and acceptance.

The Boy Scouts of America deserves a Badge of Dishonor for their bigoted membership policy.

The Boy Scouts of America preaches religious prejudice.

The National Constitution Center needs to question the ethics and values of the Boy Scouts of America. The truth is that bigotry and intolerance are immoral!

Bigotry doth not a good Scout make!

Boy Scouts are being taught by example to be intolerant!

A Scout is trustworthy, loyal, helpful and friendly to heterosexuals and religious people only!

A Scouts obstacle course should not include jumping the hurdle of bigotry and prejudice!

The bigoted Boy Scout membership policy hurts gay and youths from atheist families. Not one child should be harmed by prejudice!

Concerned Scout members should rescue the Scout program from the radical wrong!