The Freethought Society News

Logo and website banner contest details inside. Submissions sought. See page 13.

July/August 2010 Newsletter, Volume 1, Number 4
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CLS v. Martinez Supreme Court Ruling Hailed

by Margaret Downey

In the article "When it comes to religious groups, who's really facing discrimination?" (published in the March/April 2010 issue of *The Freethought News)*, writer **Elliott Welsh** highlighted a few legal details of the United States Supreme Court case *Christian Legal Society v. Martinez* (08-1372). Welsh connected the discrimination he and his son experienced by the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) to the question of whether or not a private club could obtain federal funding and college endorsement while practicing a prohibitive membership policy.

In a 5-4 ruling, the Supreme Court held that Hastings Law School (HLS) was within its rights to apply a non-discrimination policy to the Christian Legal Society (CLS), a national network of lawyers and law students devoted to upholding Christian ideals.

Every campus group at HLS, other than CLS, complied with non-discrimination rules that sought to prevent any type of bigotry from flourishing. However, CLS chose to ignore anti-discrimination regulations. The Supreme Court's affirmation of the 9th Circuit Court's decision allowing the California college of the law (HLS) to deny recognition to a Christian-only student group was correct and within the framework of Constitutional law.

At HLS, complying groups have various benefits, including an opportunity for a small monetary resource, the use of certain bulletin boards and the use of email distribution channels. When universities such as HLS receive public funding, affiliated organizations must welcome all applicants. CLS, however, required that interested persons sign a "Statement of Faith." CLS's position was that without the written promise to uphold a vision of Christianity and the role sexual conduct has within it, CLS's viewpoint could not be maintained.

This case has been ongoing since 2004. HLS barred CLS from school funding, priority access to facilities and the use of HLS's logo. After CLS's exclusion of non-Christians and gays from voting and leadership positions became apparent, CLS was denied its exemption request from the school's non-discrimination policy.

The United States Supreme Court decision affirms that university non-discrimination policies are to be upheld and confirms that no monetary allowances or validation of any kind should be extended to private discriminatory groups.

In the majority opinion, **Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg** rejected CLS's claim that unsympathetic students could sabotage the Christian group and gain control.

CLS's restrictive membership policy runs contrary to the Freethought Society's (FS) open-to-the-public policy. FS welcomes religious members and would look forward to having open dialog with people of faith. Should people of faith attend a meeting or social event hosted by FS, they would be welcomed. Furthermore, no bias or prejudices shall be imposed on a candidate nominated to run as an officer and/or board member of FS. This policy is in keeping with the *Christian Legal Society v. Martinez* decision. For this reason, I urge like-minded FS members to fill volunteer roles, run for office and serve in board positions. While FS maintains an open-to-the-public policy, no persons (religious and non-religious alike) will be allowed to disrupt meetings and activities. Disruptive individuals will be asked to leave.

The ruling in *Christian Legal Society v. Martinez*, upholds a policy that prohibits school-subsidized student clubs from engaging in religious discrimination. Discrimination of any sort is wrong, and a public school should be able to take steps to prevent it from happening. A very important precedent has been set and FS plans to use the ruling in future projects. Please watch for Anti-Discrimination Support Network (a committee of FS) activities and volunteer opportunities. It will be interesting to see what effect the CLS decision will have on the entanglement of private discriminatory organizations with public schools and other state/federally funded entities. The ruling may give more negotiation power to the City of Philadelphia as they deal with a recent jury ruling that allows the BSA to continue using a city owned building rent free even though BSA blatantly violates city anti-discrimination statutes.

In the case of *Boy Scouts of America v. City of Philadelphia*, also known as *Cradle of Liberty Council v. City of Philadelphia*, (2:08-cv-02429RB) the jury's job was to answer factual questions, but it is up to the judge to issue the actual "order." Legal precedents in *Christian Legal Society v. Martinez* will surely have an impact in the case. ◆

FS Report on BSA Rental/Use Lawsuit

by Margaret Downey

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: The week of June 14, 2010, began with jury selection in the Federal lawsuit of *Boy Scouts of America v. City of Philadelphia*. A small group representing the Freethought Society (FS) gathered in front of the Federal Courthouse on that first day of the trial.

The intent of the rally was to raise public awareness that the Boy Scouts of America's (BSA) restrictive membership policies affect many people beyond the gay community. The harm of discrimination by BSA is much more extensive than revealed in court papers.

Rally participants politely discussed the issue with passersby who stopped to learn more. During the day, FS rally members were interviewed by newspaper journalists, filmed, yelled at and hugged. Names of supporters were gathered and many passersby wanted to help FS stop BSA recruitment in public schools. Several people also agreed to write letters to former President **Jimmy Carter** regarding this issue.

The rally started at 9:00 AM and ended at 5:00 PM. Rally participants each have stories to tell about their experience. Please watch for a future article highlighting the event in the next issue of *The Freethought News*.

Pictured above (left to right) are **Glen Loev**, **Sue O'Connell**, **Margaret Downey** and **Daniel Brown**.

Pictured below are Downey (left), **Bob Kay** (center) and Loev (right). Not pictured are **C. J. Connor** and **Bill Paci**.

Oral arguments began on Tuesday, June 15, 2010. The building in question was built in 1929 (with money raised by BSA) and since that time it has been maintained by BSA's Cradle of Liberty Council (BSACLC). BSACLC claims that the building was renovated at the cost of over $2 million dollars. The City of Philadelphia sought to carry out an eviction unless BSACLC rejects the national membership policy of BSA, which bans homosexuals from membership.

In the *Boy Scouts of America v. Dale* case of 2000, the Supreme Court of the United States ruled 5-4 that the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) were constitutionally permitted to prohibit open homosexuals from being members or troop leaders. The city however, argued that while BSACLC is free to exercise its First Amendment right to create its own policies, it is not free to receive special benefits from the City of Philadelphia.

The City of Philadelphia's anti-discrimination statutes are renowned and honored by ethical citizens of the Commonwealth.

BSA's requirement for members to be "morally straight" and "clean in thought, word, and deed," was intended to exlude homosexual conduct, according to a 1991 BSA statement.

City attorneys also wanted BSACLC to pay $200,000 a year in rent for the land at 22nd and Winter Streets. The argument was whether or not BSACLC should leave or change their biased membership rules.

BSACLC contended that the City of Philadelphia has adopted a "selective" application of its anti-discrimination statutes. BSA attorneys argued that other private groups such as a Roman Catholic parish and the Colonial Dames of America discriminate in their membership and enjoy subsidized leases. The Colonial Dames and the Maternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (a large Roman Catholic parish) have not been threatened with the end of their "sweetheart deal" lease agreements.

I have written to the Freedom From Religion Foundation, Americans United for Separation of Church and State, The American Humanist Association and the Center For Inquiry to notify them of this possible separation of religion and government violation highlighted in court documents.

On Wednesday, June 23, 2010, the jury decided that the City of Philadelphia *cannot* evict BSACLC. Arguments that nonprofits must abide by local anti-discrimination laws if using city owned property, fell on twenty-four deaf ears.

BSA lawyer **Jason Gosselin** said that he hopes the two sides can work out their differences in negotiations which began almost immediately.

FS is hopeful that the U. S. Supreme Court ruling in *Christian Legal Society v. Martinez* will enter into the negotiation talks. Should the City of Philadelphia seek an appeal in this matter, *Christian Legal Society v. Martinez* is sure to play a significant role. ◆

Sample Letters to Former President Jimmy Carter

In January 2010, the Freethought Society initiated an "old-fashioned" letter-writing campaign to former President Carter. Below are sample letters written by participants of that campaign. Please consider writing your own letter and sending it to:

James E. Carter, Jr. c/o Carter Center, 453 Freedom Parkway NE, Atlanta, GA 30307

Sally Flynn's letter:

Dear Mr. Carter,

Long before the Supreme Court declared the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) a private club (in 2000), allowing them to continue excluding gays and atheists, I realized how radically they had changed from the days when they truly served all American boys…well, maybe not all since there was racial discrimination.

Now this supposedly all-American youth group has gone a step farther and are discriminating against the disabled. Your name on BSA's Advisory Council belies your reputation for tolerance, kindness and good works, so this is a request that you tell them you can no longer be associated with them.

Perhaps your special influence will make them consider the hateful policies they are imparting to a future generation of male leaders.

Thank you for your lifetime service to our wonderful nation.

Sally Flynn
West Chester, Pennsylvania 19382

Glen Loev's letter:

Dear President Carter,

It has come to my attention that you serve on the advisory committee for the Boy Scouts of America.

As you know, the Boy Scouts of America has had, for some time, an official policy that excludes from membership, volunteer work or employment of anyone who is gay and/or an atheist. They have now expanded their list of "undesirables" to include disabled people as well.

The discriminatory practices of the Boy Scouts of America have gone on far too long. I urge you to use your influence to try to change the patently unfair policies of the BSA.

If the leadership of the Boy Scouts of America will not change their policies on these matters, I strongly request that you publicly denounce their unjust exclusionary practices and remove yourself from their advisory committee.

I trust that you, sir, as a person of high moral values and as a champion of ethical behavior, will agree that it is the right thing to do.

Thank you for your consideration of my request.

Glen Loev
Haverford, Pennsylvania

Margaret Downey's letter:

Dear Former President Carter,

I first contacted you regarding your Advisory Board position with the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) on January 9, 1996. I followed that correspondence with another letter dated, January 15, 1996 (please see enclosed). Fifteen years later, my message to you remains the same — please re-consider your affiliation with BSA.

In 2000, BSA declared itself a "private" organization and the United States Supreme Court recognized it as such in the Dale v. Boy Scouts of America *case. Thus began the blatant application of BSA's "right of association" stance. I write to update you and to seek your assistance in ending a highly unethical situation.*

BSA discrimination has worsened, Mr. Carter. BSA camp manuals are being revised indicating that BSA is no longer (as a private organization) required to comply with Americans with Disabilities Act regulations. I am aware of several instances where wheelchair bound people have been rejected from participation.

While it is legal for a group to institute private membership rules, it is highly immoral for the world's largest youth group to advocate intolerance and separation from certain members of the community. I'm sure you agree that prejudice against homosexuals and atheists is NOT an American value. Yet, BSA advocates a policy of segregation from those who they have prejudged as unworthy of association.

The question is whether or not BSA is listening to members of their Advisory Board, of which you are a member. The fact that the bigotry continues can only mean one of two things:

1. *You are in agreement with the policy*
2. *Your voice of objection is not being heard*

If, in fact, you oppose a policy that represents separation and intolerance, you should consider firmly and publicly announcing your resignation from an advisory board position with BSA.

Your voice of objection could significantly impact BSA's membership policy. Please join us in our quest to treat every citizen with respect, dignity and participation. BSA's membership policy is an antiquated viewpoint that must be changed. You can help, by refusing to have your good name associated with BSA's limited membership policy.

Margaret Downey
Pocopson, Pennsylvania

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African American Humanists in the Secular Movement: New Directions?

by Naima Cabelle

In the May/June 2010 issue of *The Freethought News*, **Margaret Downey** published a report about attending the May 16, 2010 "African Americans for Humanism" conference held in Washington, DC. I was at the event and desired to go beyond the superficial discussions about problems within the secular movement.

While it is no secret that African American Humanists are a numerical minority within the secular movement, we also lack power and influence within the movement. Whether it is a deliberate or an accidental oversight, the fact is that when it comes down to being heard, or more importantly, being part of the decision-making process, we are certainly overlooked as well as underutilized.

There is no question in my mind that there are many African American Humanists who eat, sleep, walk and talk secularism. They are not closet atheists yet they are nowhere to be found in humanist organizations. Many nonbelievers may also simply be non-joiners. They prefer to fly solo.

For years as an active feminist, socialist, tenants' rights organizer, etc., I met nonbelievers who were also committed activists, but like myself, did not belong to and may have been unaware of the existence of organizations which promote secular values.

African American Humanists who expect to be treated like dignified women and dignified men need to face the fact that we are not entirely blameless for our status within the secular movement. Furthermore, there are others, not only African Americans, who see themselves as being excluded from the decision-making process as well as from positions of leadership. Some people may think it is more important to be liked than to be respected by our allies in the movement. We may not wish to be thought of as troublesome women, people of color, gays, etc.

Long before there was anything which could be even remotely recognized as a secular movement, there were individuals throughout history who dared to open their mouths or put pen to paper in order to critique the throne, religious authority, or the state. They took risks, and some lost their lives — not in hopes of winning any popularity contests, but to speak the truth. If these brave people stood up to the power of authority by pointing out injustices, why should we fear the possibility of being seen as troublesome by our allies?

Sure, some of us have mumbled and grumbled, but so many of us still give out free passes and we have, to some extent, been disrespected for doing so. African Americans have fought for first-class membership and treatment in trade unions, the armed forces, many professions, and in every social movement from the abolition of slavery to the fight for gay rights. We have fought for inclusion in society as human beings and as Americans, yet we have accepted second-class membership and treatment within the secular movement.

There is not a single African American Humanist that I know of who would think of returning to the mosques, churches, temples, Kingdom Halls, etc., should they decide that they have had enough of secular organizations treating them like outsiders. We can go on with our work with unions, domestic violence prevention projects; advocating for children, senior citizens, etc. Some of us are doing that already — and some of us want to continue working within the secular movement. We are not, however, willing to abandon our self-respect.

We owe it to ourselves to make good use of our time by participating in a movement based on ethics, integrity, and respect rather than to watch it crumble under the weight of resentment, divisiveness, mistrust, and hostilities. To not struggle to resolve these issues is to say that our allies are too arrogant, too weak, too narrow to change. Why not challenge *them* to raise the bar? Those of us who have been excluded from full participation in the secular movement are going to have to require much more from ourselves as well.

Susan B. Anthony's message is to challenge people of conscience to think their best thoughts, speak their best words, and to do their best work. Many of us in the movement have not done our best. I think that we can all do better. African American Humanists have the opportunity, as well as the duty to become agents of change in the secular movement and in the broader society.

We become agents of change when we embrace humanist lifestyles and promote, practice and demand inclusiveness in this movement. We need to become active leaders and members. We must reject any and all policies and conduct that does not contribute towards the building of a positive and dynamic secular community.

The secular movement will either accept or reject the fact that African American Humanists are ready to join as members and leaders. On the other hand, I would never encourage any African American to remain in an organization which would publicly point to the presence of a few African American members as proof that the organization embraces diversity yet marginalizes its African American members.

It may be easier for those in decision-making positions to just call upon African American Humanists and tell them what to do after the decisions are made. Personally, I respect those kinds of decision-makers when they don't bother to call me at all! I understand completely that the movement has survived and even expanded with only a small number of African American members. I'm sure it will continue to expand with or without us.

The secular movement has described with razor-sharp precision how the Bible and Koran are used to justify both the historical and contemporary oppression of women as well as people of color, particularly people of African descent. The secular movement has refused to give any wiggle room to theists as they attempt to deny and/or explain away this oppressive treatment. Yet, the secular movement continues to fail to rise to the challenge and use that same razor-sharp

precision to address the contradictions in its own organizations and organizational structures.

The secular movement has remained a vigilant watchdog and advocate for democracy in a world in which it is outnumbered and out-financed. Against all odds, the secular movement has not flinched nor has it failed to do its duty. The secular movement has challenged religious bigotry and religious privilege. It has consistently pointed out the injustices and the suffering caused by the irrational adherence to religious doctrines. It has exposed the physical, sexual, and emotional exploitation of believers as well as of nonbelievers. It has taken on the Roman, Protestant, Mormon, and Islamic religious empires. The secular movement has challenged the inclusion and intrusion of religious doctrine in the form of Bible-reading and/or prayers in public schools, challenged the use of tax-payer dollars to fund religious schools, and has advocated for the right of universal free speech and the right to critique any idea including religious doctrine. Secularists have taken this fight up to the United States Supreme Court defending the separation of religion and government. We have great thinkers in our movement as well as people who are talented and brave. How can these intelligent and courageous leaders and members of such a movement be reduced to a bunch of mindless head-scratchers when it comes down to facing and resolving its internal contractions?

The question of whether or not we should expect the inclusion of African American Humanists as both members and leaders must be addressed and it must be addressed now. It could be that this question has already been answered and that African American Humanists just weren't listening. Perhaps the participation of African American Humanists is so unimportant within the secular movement that we can only be viewed through the lens of second-class membership. Regardless of whether or not African American Humanists remain in the secular movement, we may continue to go unnoticed.

Maybe the majority of those who are leaders and members of the secular movement are satisfied with the current power arrangements. If so, please say it loud and say it proud because if the role of leadership is for a select few there should be no problem telling it like it is. The frustrated among African American Humanists as well as those who understand how the lack of diversity is problematic as well as unjust will go elsewhere; the content will remain.

If the national organizations which make up the secular movement are ready to take up one more challenge, we should look forward to building a movement in which "diversity" is not just some meaningless word which easily rolls off the tongue but a reality which is reflected at all levels of the movement. How do we begin? We can start out by doing something as simple as directly talking to one another. Let's stop hiding behind the computer screens and caller ID. On a personal level, I can't even begin to express just how awesome it would be for me to get to know my allies!! It's really not possible to respect or trust each other if we don't know each other. We will not ever get to know each other if we continue to avoid each other.

We can create structures for on-going formal discussions so that we can begin to build ethical, respectful relationships. We need to make sure that the positive results and suggestions coming from those discussions become incorporated into the formal policies of national secular organizations. There should be no more phony discussions where we visit the topic of diversity — once a year.

To build a strong movement we will need to develop strong membership as well as strong leadership. The role of leadership cannot be seen as a sacred cow to be embraced by only a select few. In order to create an effective leadership, the movement needs to act in a deliberate manner recruiting, identifying, training and mentoring the next wave of leadership. Just as important is the fact that the membership of the secular movement must be made up of independent thinkers, not just followers. By helping all members to develop strong leadership qualities we strengthen the movement that much more.

Developing programs designed specifically to help members who are active in their communities will also strengthen the movement. Workshops on humanism, seminars, public speaking opportunities, etc., should all be part of membership development. Nothing would destroy a movement more than having a membership made up of people who are sitting around waiting for someone to tell them what to do! If we care about this movement then we must not leave the development of strong leadership and membership to chance. There is a need to plan for the continuation and the success of the secular movement.

I don't believe for one moment that this transition will be painless for anyone involved. We will all make mistakes; some of us may very well make serious mistakes. If we have open, honest discussions, if we try to think deeply and act honorably, we can all grow because we will be learning. It will be more than possible for those in the secular movement to retain a sense of dignity while addressing the problems which we have managed to avoid, thus far. We cannot only address these problems, we can solve them as well. The time to act is now.

I joined the Freethought Society (FS) because I saw action and a plan in development. The creation of the FS Diversity Outreach Committee (DOC) looks promising. I hope many readers will add their voices to the DOC Yahoo Discussion Group. Everyone is invited! Please sign up at the FS website at www.FtSociety.org on the page dedicated to DOC. ◆

Pictured above is **Naima Cabelle**. She is a resident of Washington, DC and is keenly interested in freethought issues. Cabelle attends as many freethought events as possible and enjoys reading and writing. Please watch for more articles from Cabelle; she has many ideas and plans.

Summertime — When the Thinking is Easy

by Robert Slack

The summer of 1983 seemed to be a particularly hot one. Our house, thoroughly insulated to shut out the frigid Pittsburgh winter air, was in turn transformed into a virtual sauna. My bedroom was on the third floor of that rickety old house built at the crest of a steep hill. During those long summer days I would often rest my chin on the windowsill and stare for long stretches of time at the hillside across from us.

On the left side of the hill was an old dairy farm that, from my vantage, presented an almost vertical patch of green. Next to the farm was a gigantic cemetery — actually three cemeteries joined together. Each cemetery represented a different Christian sect. The combined cemetery seemed particularly beautiful to me, row after row of marble rectangles climbing in an orderly procession up the side of the hill.

I was simultaneously happy and lonely that summer. I was 13 and on most days the world still seemed like a simple place. In 1983 I spent my days much as I had the summers before. When I wasn't playing in Little League, I would wander down by the "crick", a muddy little stream that flowed through the woods below our house. I was looking for salamanders and crayfish.

I would arrive home just before dinner with muddy knees and wild, almost feral, hair. My once-best-friend Johnny, who I had always been able to count on for a game of whiffleball or Monopoly, suddenly seemed to have acquired other interests — interests that didn't include me.

A few months before my 13th birthday my brother enlisted in the Navy. It was an event I had been determined to bear bravely, but the night before his departure, my mother found me balled up beneath a rhododendron bush quietly crying into my hands.

If my days were still free and happy, my nights brought a new and complicated dread — as if my halting steps towards adult wisdom could only occur after dark. I began to entertain dangerous and sinful thoughts: doubts. I knew from Sunday school that those doubts would be sufficient to consign my soul to an eternity of blistering agony. During those sweltering nights I would lie in bed thinking, my sweaty face turned towards the drone of the electric fan that mostly just circulated hot air around the room. My white bed cover, twisted into a gangly rope that wrapped around my loins, seemed to be my last shred of protection. The religious formula I had learned on Sunday mornings — to obey a few rules and be freed from death — had begun to seem cartoonishly simple. My endless indecision about the matter reminded me of the debates my neighbor and I had about professional wrestling.

I remember holding my father's hand when I was a young child at the funeral of his mother a few years earlier. She adored me and announced to my horrified parents that she was going to "spoil me" by feeding me "spoonfuls of sugar."

When she died we hurried back to my father's hometown in southern Ohio for her funeral. Her body rested heavily in the casket, as if weighted by a heavier than usual gravitational pull. My grandmother's face was unrecognizably immobile and inert. I had never seen death up close, and the absolute stillness of it shocked me.

During the funeral I looked up at my father, whose eyes rested glassily in their sockets, and I understood why he wanted my grandmother to live forever. Did such overpowering desire make it true, I wondered. As I pondered the question, I felt my own sweaty body sink into my bed, believing no other child in the world could entertain thoughts as wicked and brazen as these.

Earlier that summer I had begun to quarrel with my parents about going to church. Their own attendance had a somewhat dutiful character. In fact, my father, who liked to graft crackpot theories about aliens onto his theology (I suspect my father wanted a little more thrill out of his Bible) seemed particularly sluggish on his way to church. Even still my parents were officially adamant about their Christianity.

My parents incongruously listened to polka music on the way to church. The plodding *ompah-pa-pa* beat made the drive feel like a Slavic death march. I had finally graduated from Sunday school that summer allowing my attendance to adult church services. This transition was not exactly awe inspiring.

Our pastor, a particularly nice man who would even cut sermons short during the winter so parishioners could get home and watch the Steelers play, conveyed all the power and the glory of a soft spoken librarian. I even noticed that he would occasionally recycle sermons from months earlier. I wondered if the rest of the congregation failed to notice or simply pretended not to notice. A third possibility crossed my mind: that the words themselves were irrelevant, that mere physical presence was supposed to satisfy their spiritual debts.

One Sunday I got up early and ran into the woods rather than endure another hollow two hours in church. The woods were choked with briar bushes and only young boys could navigate the paths. I crouched at the base of a stand of trees in a clearing and listened to my parents angrily yell my name. The air smelled clean and laden with mist as I hid beneath the trees. I felt entirely lacking in guilt, except for a vague feeling that if I were a better person I would feel more guilt. Mostly I trembled at my parent's anger, knowing there would be a price to pay. Surprisingly, when they returned home from church, my parents seemed only a tad icy. They did not punish me and I never went back to church.

During the night, however, I became consumed by the torment that I was risking an eternity in hell. My Sunday school teacher had described hell with cinematic flair. I knew I was flirting with ideas that could lead to my eternal damnation.

Drifting off to sleep, I could almost feel the flames licking at the tattered and fraying fringes of my soul. Deep into the

night I would sometimes jolt awake after a moment or two of sleep, feeling a pit in my stomach as if I had been in free fall. I could hear the echo of sinister laughter ringing in my ears. The devil, I imagined, was laughing at my doubts, like a trickster in school who gets you in trouble by daring you to say a curse word.

I don't know if I ever really settled my mind that summer, or if I simply lived with the feeling of my own doom long enough to incorporate it into my adolescent sense of a compromised self. By the time September rolled around I found more concrete things to worry about: classes, fitting in and, to my utter shock and dismay, *girls*.

On the first day of school, I wore brand new tennis shoes and a new shirt, having scrubbed off a summer's worth of sweat and dirt from my skin. The electric fan had been lugged to the basement and the leaves would soon fall and the air began to pick up hints of autumn chill. In three short months I had progressed from an all-American boy to being on the verge of identifying with the most foul and wicked word in the American lexicon: atheist. At the time, however, I viewed my inability to believe as a sign of deficiency, of inadequacy.

That September I wandered the noisy halls of my high school suddenly feeling more alone than ever, burdened with a terrible new secret I thought I could never share. It would take many years before I had the strength to apply the word atheist to myself — and many more years before I resolved to join with likeminded people in organizations such as the Freethought Society. ◆

Robert Slack is a writer living in Takoma Park, Maryland. He lives with his wife Lisa and their adorable dog Buck. He has been a "conflicted heathen" since his early teenage years, when he came to the realization that an honest truth trumps even the most comforting and beautiful falsehoods.

Slack has worked as a technical writer/editor, journalist and language arts teacher at a Navajo Native-American reservation. He most recently served as director of communications at Arc of Philadelphia (a Philadelphia nonprofit).

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A Beef with Montgomery County Township over Venison

by Glen H. Loev

Sometime in April 2010, the Spring edition of my township quarterly magazine, *The Lower Merion Messenger* (Montgomery County, Pennsylvania) arrived in the mail. I usually flip through the glossy flyer quickly before tossing it into the recycle bin, but for some reason — just for a change — I decided to read through this one a little more carefully.

A particular article looked interesting. Within the article, I caught an announcement about the township having performed a "culling" of the deer population in November and December '09. The culling was needed in order to reduce the number of deer in the area. Altogether, the township "harvested" 119 deer. "Harvested" was the terminology used by the township, but don't you just love the euphemism? It was the last sentence of the article that really caught my attention:

> *A total of 2,930 pounds of venison was donated to the City Team Ministries (CTM) as a result of this project.*

It seemed to me that our township, as a public governmental entity, should have given the meat to a *non-religious* food charity. I decided that this might be an interesting church-state separation question. The donation of deer meat may appear to be a minor issue, but it seems to me that every little religion/government entanglement issue needs to be questioned. Asking the township about this issue seemed a great opportunity for me to take a small step on my own towards political activism in support of the separation of religion and government.

I sent an email to **Margaret Downey**, who besides being a good friend, is the founder and president of the Freethought Society (FS). She has a lot of experience in challenging religious interference in civil affairs.

Downey thought that the situation was at least worth checking into, and encouraged me to pursue the matter saying:

> *I do wish the meat had been donated to a secular distributor, but we don't know if there is one out there able to process the deer meat correctly. Perhaps the CTM has a way to distribute the food that no other charity has. It's an interesting question.*

Downey also suggested asking the following questions:

> *Did the meat go only to the religious community?*
>
> *Were other secular organizations that could process the meat given an opportunity to bid for the meat equally with City Team Ministries?*

With that encouraging response, I decided to look into what had happened with almost a ton-and-a-half of venison that resulted from the township sponsored culling of "excess" deer. I thought it would be straightforward and easy to find out the answer to two simple questions:

1. *Who* decided that City Team Ministries would get the donation?
2. *How* did the township decide on that particular organization to be the recipient?

As it turned out my quest for answers was neither easy nor straightforward!

I called the township commission offices, and was referred to the person in charge of the deer culling program. **Lieutenant Bernie DeMoore** told me that the deer belong to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and that most of the features of the deer management and culling program are controlled by the Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC). He said that PGC granted permission to shoot the deer, to regulate the kinds of animals that may be killed (no bucks, for example) and determines what happens to the meat.

Lt. DeMoore told me that he did not know anything about CTM being a religious organization. What the #%*@! He went on to say that he only knew that CTM provides meals to poor people.

A quick look at CTM's website makes it absolutely clear that it is a religious organization. On the home page a large, prominent cross is used in their logo. See:

http://www.cityteam.org/philadelphia/

Whether or not CTM proselytizes when they distribute meals is another question, but CTM is obviously a *very* Christian organization.

Based on that information, and at Lt. DeMoore's suggestion, I called the head of PGC's South East Region. I was told that decisions regarding the donation of meat from deer culling is made by the PGC in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, the state capital.

I immediately called the Commonwealth Commission. After going through a huge voicemail chain, I finally spoke to someone who said I should check with the PGC's South East Region. Hummmm.

I told her I had already done that and, in fact, PGC's South East Region was the agency that instructed me to check with the commission administration in Harrisburg.

I was then connected to a commonwealth commissioner. **Jason DeCosta** told me very emphatically that... guess what?... the decision regarding where to send the meat was made by the *Lower Merion Township*.

DeCosta was very friendly and accommodating. He actually went to his filing cabinet to look up the original physical permit from the Commonwealth. That permit clearly states that the "township" is expected to donate the meat to a charitable organization, however, there is *no stipulation* as to which organization should be the recipient.

I called the township again! This time the secretary of administration said that I should talk to the same Lieutenant I had spoken with before — the fellow who sent me to the regional PGC!

I explained the story briefly to the secretary and this time she connected me to the office of police **Captain Dockerty**. I left a message with him requesting a return call.

While waiting to hear back from Dockerty, I called PhilAbundance. PhilAbundance is a regional non-profit food bank that distributes food to both secular and religious organizations. Those organizations then distribute the food to people in need. I wanted to find out if PhilAbundance would have been willing to accept a large donation of raw venison had they been aware of it's availability.

I spoke first with **Lisa Hodaei** who is in charge of acquisitions. She said they could have accepted the meat if it went through the Fairmount State Parks Commission, but she needed more details. Hodaei needed to know how the meat was handled from kill to packaging including details on when the deer was killed, how and where it was processed, and whether it was approved by the USDA.

Next I spoke with **Jenna Linke**, the agency relations monitor for PhilAbundance. She told me about the regulations regarding organizations that accept the donations from PhilAbundance:

1. They must not discriminate and give to all regardless of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, etc.

2. They must welcome all.

3. Receiving food can not be tied to any type of membership.

4. They are allowed to have information about their groups on display. A religious group, however, must separate all materials from food registration tables. It must be clear that taking informational materials is not required in order to receive a food donation.

Later that day, Captain Dockerty called. He said that he would mention the matter to first officer I spoke to. It turns out that Lt. DeMoore is in charge of the program. I was told to expect a return call from the Lt. DeMoore.

Shortly thereafter, I received quite a return call! After I described the information I had gathered, specifically that the PGC had not specified the recipient charity, Lt. DeMoore said, "So what do you want?"

I told him that I would like to know how the meat donation decision was made, and who had made the decision to give the meat to CTM.

Lt. DeMoore responded with "I already told you."

My reply was something to the effect of "Well, it seems that information was incorrect."

"So you are calling me a liar," he barked.

I said, "No sir, it's just that I was told by the PGC that they did not make that decision, so I am trying to find out who did."

Continuing with his defensive attitude, Lt. DeMoore aksed, "Why do you care and who do you think should have gotten the meat?"

I responded, "I don't know, I am just trying to find out how the venison ended up in the hands of CTM."

Lt. DeMoore asked (and at this point I detected a distinctly antagonistic tone in his voice), "So, you don't like that organization? You don't think the meat should have gone there?"

I told Lt. DeMoore that I was concerned about the meat having gone to a religious organization. He replied, "Are you sure it is a religious organization?"

I said, "Yes, I am."

DeMoore asked, "What religion?"

"Christian," I answered.

Lt. DeMoore fired back, "Do you know that? Do you know it isn't Baptist?"

I said "I don't know exactly what type of Christianity , but I know CTM is a Christian organization. Anyone can see that from their website."

Lt. DeMoore's voice was quite angry at this point. He said "So you're mad that the meat went to CTM, but you don't know where you want it to go instead."

I replied that PhilAbundance might have been one option, and repeated my original question about wanting to know who made the donation decision, and how CTM was selected.

After more back and forth, Lt. DeMoore (sounding *really* nasty now) said, "You should talk to **Officer Chris Heil.** He is the head law enforcement officer for the PGC South East Region He was in charge of the decision."

I thanked Lt. DeMoore for (finally) giving me that information, and hung up. Unbelievable!

I tried to contact Officer Heil at the South East regional PGC office. I spoke with a very unfriendly person in the dispatch office who asked me what I wanted (he sounded suspicious and unsympathetic). After listening to my questions, the dispatcher took my name and number. He said Officer Heil would call me back.

A few days later I finally talked to Officer Heil. He told me that I should speak with **Officer Chuck Lincoln**, who is Law Enforcement Supervisor of the South East Region Game and Wildlife department.

At this point, I was feeling quite determined to unravel the meat donation mystery. During my attempt to get in touch with a string of officers supposedly in charge of donation decisions, I was surprised by the suspicion, resistance and obfuscation I encountered. It was especially upsetting to get "attitude" from my

own township police. Even after those conversations, I still did not have the answer to two simple questions:

1. Who made the decision regarding which charity would receive 3,000 pounds of venison?

2. Why did they select that particular organization?

I never expected that it would be so difficult to get even one answer! I wondered if someone had something to hide. I mean, this isn't Watergate!

After trying for another three days, I was finally able to speak with Officer Lincoln at the South East Region Game and Wildlife Commission. He was the final authority in that office, anyway. He told me that the decision regarding which charity would receive the meat was made by the township together with the local officer Lt. DeMoore (my favorite of all).

Officer Lincoln said that he thought the reason for the selection of CTM was that they were willing to accept the meat, even though it is not USDA approved (this being a requirement from PhilAbundance) and CTM was also willing to pay some of the fees involved with processing the meat.

As it turns out, Margaret had actually "nailed" the answer in her first reply to me. CTM was probably one of the very few organizations able to accept the venison due to the township's processing and handling procedures.

That's the end of this story, since I admit that I didn't make a big search in the area to try to find other organizations that might have accepted the venison and would be able to meet the specific circumstances under which it was offered. Still, it was a learning and even rewarding experience for me, I'm not sorry that I pursued it. I got a taste of the "joys" involved in trying to buck city hall (pun intended). Sometimes this kind of investigation can actually lead to a productive outcome — you never know – there are no guarantees. In this instance it was still worth the effort. I heartily recommend that freethinkers keep a vigilant watch for opportunities to hold our public officials' toes to the fire. We must prevent them from bringing their own personal religious preferences and influences into the public domain. It's up to us! ◆

Glen Loev (pictured above) resides in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania and is a (new) Board Member of the Freethought Society. He is also on the Board of Shir Shalom, a community for Secular Humanist Jews in the greater Philadelphia area. Loev retired from the practice of Dentistry in 2001. Loev's main occupation is playing Mr. Mom for his two adolescent children, Noah and Eve. He also works as a bookkeeper for his partner's hair salon, and is general manager of their two vacation rental villas in Costa Rica. Loev's interests include travel, reading, bicycling, and the intellectual challenge of discussing faith with religious friends and relatives.

Why in this day and age?

by Edward Baker

I attended a celebration in honor of the 200th anniversary of **Charles Darwin**'s birth on February 16, 2009. After the event, I sat down to write about a question that begs to be asked. Why do so many Americans still cling to Bible stories, ancient tales and folklore?

This question naturally leads to more questions. I wonder why, with all the scientific evidence available to us, is religion still growing? I also wonder if people cling to their religion to avoid upsetting family members — in particular parents?

My guess is that there is a great amount of fear involved. There is no doubt that declaring oneself an "atheist" is risking being regulated to the status of a "social outcast." I am writing to share my journey to freedom of thought and to further contemplate those questions.

My journey was simple. I never read challenging science books, but I was fascinated with books that focused on anatomy and paleontology. After the age of fifteen, I developed a love of reading and learning. When I truly accepted that I was an atheist it was as if a ton of woe was taken off my shoulders. I was enlightened through a quest for knowledge even though I was an average student until 11th grade.

I look back on my life and see that there was not one person who saw me cry about the treatment I received from others because I had a cleft lip. At school I was harassed daily because of my speech impediment. I was also made fun of because of the hearing aid I needed to wear. I never let my parents or siblings see the pain. I suffered in silence.

The horrendous treatment I endured in school was heaved upon me mostly from so-called "good Christians." During my school years, music classes included Christian hymns and public prayer was common. Students of different religions and ethnicities were relegated to the back of the room during those times. They were excluded from activities due to their religious differences. I sympathized with their segregation.

I attended public school before major United States Supreme Court decisions guaranteed separation of religion and government (for example, *Abington Township v. Schempp* and *Epperson v. Arkansas*). However, the negative social stigma of not accepting a religious belief remains strong in the United States.

I have had my cleft lip fixed, but I still face bigotry and prejudice — not so much for my use of a hearing aid or the scar I have on my lip, but for my non-religious conclusions.

Today is June 21, 2010. In the sixteen months since Darwin's 2009 birthday celebration, there is even more scientific evidence concerning the origin of the species. Biblical fairytales seem more ridiculous thanks to the publication and popularity of books such **Christopher Hitchens**' *God is Not Great* and **Richard Dawkins**' *The God Delusion*. Still the question remains: Why do a majority of American citizens still cling to Bible stories, ancient tales and folklore? ◆

Supporting the Efforts of the Free Thinkers of Haiti

by Margaret Downey

As president of the Freethought Society (FS), it is my honor to act as the liaison between the Free Thinkers of Haiti (FTH) and freethinkers in the United States. As reported in the March/April 2010 issue of *The Freethought News*, monetary donations were immediately sent to FTH after the January 12, 2010 earthquake. Donations from the American Humanist Association (AHA), Freethinkers of Arkansas and the Atheist Alliance International were so appreciated that the group sent the above photos expressing their gratitude.

Pictured above in the center photo in the back row (left to right) **Esnor Pierre**, **Patrick Alcimo, Edjel Geneste, Hyacinthe Roginot, Hyacin** and **Farizien Jean**. In the front row (left to right) are **Jamesly Augustin**, **Lorcy Valsaint** and **Billy Almoza**.

On June 29, 2010, Almoza, the president of FTH, notified me that a new member had joined. FTH's newest member was an architectural student at the G.O.C University in Port-au-Prince prior to the January earthquake. **Roody Othelo** spent four days and nights under concrete after the January 2010 earthquake left the university in ruins. Othelo was taken to the hospital, but his right arm and right foot were amputated in order to save his life. I connected Othelo to the Hanger Ivan R. Sabel Foundation to request arm and foot prostheses.

Othelo does not credit a god or prayers for his rescue. He knows that it was human endeavors and rescue technology that saved him from dying in the rubble. It is medical technology that will help him survive and live to fulfill his dream of becoming an architect.

Almoza kept in touch with FS by going to an Internet café to log on to the Internet. It was a costly way to keep in communication as the Internet café charges hourly use fees.

With the help of my friend and assistant **Christopher Evans**, I refurbished a little-used laptop computer I've had for four years. The computer's operation system was changed to French and the hard drive was cleared of old files. We then wrapped the computer and readied it for shipment.

In the meantime, my dear friend **Becky Hale,** from EvolveFish (see: http://evolvefish.com/), designed and produced custom light blue T-shirts for FTH.

The words "Doing Good Without God" in both French and English are printed in white lettering across the front of the T-shirt. The words "Free Thinkers of Haiti" in both French and English are printed on the back of the T-shirt. Hale donated the T-shirts to FTH and I added them to the box containing the refurbished computer.

The estimated cost for sending the box of T-shirts and computer to Haiti was shocking. A kind Pack and Ship business owner in Kennett Square, Pennsylvania (he prefers to remain anonymous) gave FS his "at-cost" FedEx shipping rate. Even so, the shipping fee was close to $200. Donations received by FS and earmarked to FTH were not sufficient to cover costs, so I added my own money to the effort. The box was sent via FedEx on May 20, 2010.

A week later, Almoza sent a desperate message that the box was being held in customs. The customs agent told him that he would be required to pay an additional $150 to take possession of the box. I sent Almoza the money via Western Union, knowing full-well that government officials in Haiti find various ways to extract money from Americans trying to help the citizens of Haiti.

FS supporter **Marshall Martin** sent a donation of $75 to help offset some of the shipping costs, but more money is needed. Please consider sending a donation to FS earmarked "Helping Hands/FTH."

There are several community service projects in Haiti in which FTH may participate. The group is interested in promoting solar box cookers. They are training through Solar Box Cookers International (solarcookers.org/index.html).

FTH is also talking to **Sebastian Velez** (from Children of the Border) about expanding a women's health project to Port-au-Prince through FTH. The project has been met with great success in neighboring Dominican Republic (Santo Domingo). To learn more, please listen to AHA's podcast number 47 at the following link:

http://www.americanhumanist.org/hnn/podcast/

Whichever project is adopted by FTH, FS will offer the group long distance mentoring and support when possible. ◆

Presenter Acknowledgments

The Freethought Society (FS) thanks **M. Kelly Tillery** pictured left with **Margaret Downey**. Tillery's April 26, 2010 presentation "You *Can* Fight City Hall" was a fascinating overview of the 1980 lawsuit *Gilfillan v. City of Philadelphia*. To view his presentation see:

http://www.vimeo.com/11581136

Tillery graciously refused to accept a $50 honorarium check and asked that the money be used by FS to continue work upholding the principles of separation of religion and government. Tillery is a partner in the Intellectual Property Group at Pepper Hamilton, LLP in Philadelphia.

Pictured left (holding a stuffed squid) is **Abby Hafer**. She is a professor at Curry College in Massachusetts. She traveled to the Philadelphia, Pennsylvania area to attend a reunion at Swarthmore College. FS thanks her for taking the time during her reunion to deliver a speech at the Norristown Library on June 2, 2010.

Hafer's presentation entitled "Un-Intelligent Design: Why Evolution Explains the Human Body and Intelligent Design Does Not," included a Power Point slide show. Her speech pointed out that if there is a God, that God must like squid more because its design is better than that of the human body. Hafer's presentation will be posted on the FS website soon.

In the above right photo FS special guest **Roy Zimmerman** is pictured with FS supporter, **Carol Blanchard**. The photo was taken on May 24, 2010 at Maggie O'Neill's Pub when Zimmerman performed songs about ignorance, war and greed. In the above photo, Zimmerman is holding Blanchard's Ukulele which he autographed for her. Blanchard found the concert location, distributed advertisement fliers and set-up the pub sound system. Without her hard work, the concert would not have happened at all. View portions of a Zimmerman concerts at:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l6Fm7wswv98

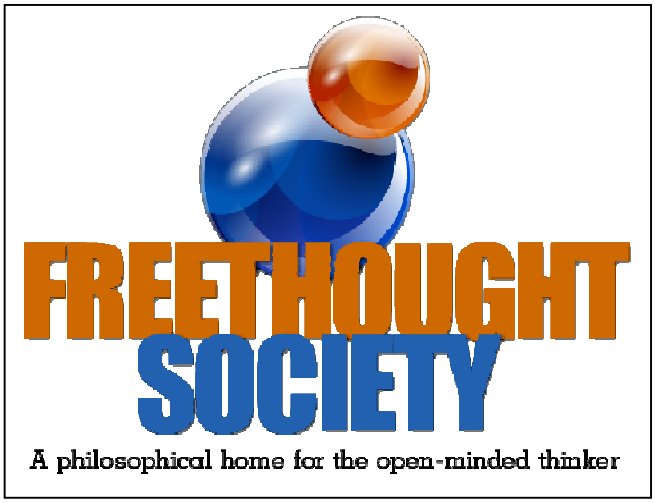
Zimmerman has produced seven fantastic CDs. The CDs can be purchased at:

royzimmerman.com/store.php

Freethought Society Logo Contest

Now that the Freethought Society of Greater Philadelphia has adopted the new name of the Freethought Society (FS), the organization is in need of a new logo and website banner. The use of the Liberty Bell was fine when the name reflected the geographical location of Philadelphia, but the outreach area is now much larger. A new logo can be very general in nature because no geographical location needs to be indicated. The Logo Contest prize is a lifetime membership to FS (valued at $1,000).

Here are a few new logo entries from **Craig Fine**:



Freethought Society Logo Submission

Name: _____

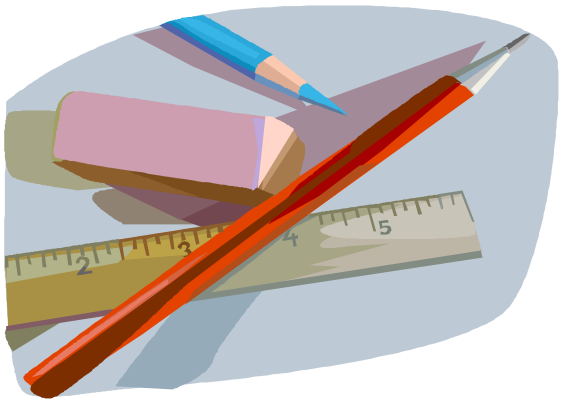
Email Address: _____ Phone: _____

Send this form, logo submission and any design information to:

Freethought Society
Logo Contest
P. O. Box 242
Pocopson, PA 19366

A scan can be sent via email to: Margaret@FtSociety.org

Fax designs to: (610) 793-2569



The Freethought Society's (FS) 2010 Three-Month Activities Calendar

July

Sunday, **July 25, 2010** will be the third unity picnic bringing together members of FS and the Humanist Association of Greater Philadelphia.

The picnic will take place at the **Flourtown Pavilion** in **Fort Washington State Park** (500 North Bethlehem Pike, Fort Washington) at **1:00 PM**. To cover the cost of burgers, hot dogs, and vegetarian alternatives for the grill, as well as buns and beverages, a minimum donation of $10 per adult person is requested.

Please also plan to bring a dish large enough to share with 7-10 people. To insure a wide variety of food, please follow the chart below using the first letter of your last name as a guide:

A-G
Salad or Vegetable
H-P
Fruit or Desert
Q-Z
Bread, Potato or
Rice Dish

Don't miss **Roger Scott Jackson**'s (also known as **Sam Singleton**) 2:30 PM "G" rated picnic presentation, "Too Big for God" which is the story of young Brother Sam's escape from superstition and fear. Jackson is a New York City actor who created the satirical character Brother Sam in order to educate people about the harms of religious beliefs.

Jackson hopes that, through Brother Sam, he will raise questions that many of the famous atheist authors have not discussed. You can read more about both Jackson and Brother Sam at Jackson's website:

www.samsingleton.com

"Too Big for God" is the scary, funny, and ultimately inspiring tale of how young Sam Singleton learned to use his own power to think in order to overcome the disabling fear he acquired as a child being raised among snake-handling holy rollers. This 40 minute presentation is appropriate for all-ages.

The presentation is followed by a question and answer session.

August

FS is pleased to host **Tom Verenna** as the **Thursday, August 19, 2010** speaker. The meeting will start promptly at **7:00 PM** at the **Norristown Public Library** located at:

1001 Powell Street
Norristown, Pennsylvania
19401

For information about public transportation visit:

http://www.septa.org/stations/rail/norristown.html

Verenna's speech "Ancient History: Why Ancient Historiographical Sources from the Past are Unreliable," will examine what ancient sources can actually be considered historical evidence. Is there any truth to them at all? Did the authors of the Gospels really care about what happened historically or did they have other intentions in mind when they wrote them? Did the Exodus occur? These questions, along with others, will be raised.

Verenna is an amateur historian. He brings together sources from all over the ancient world in this engaging lecture.

September

Are you tired of being ignored by politicians because you are an Atheist? Would you like to curb the stress created living in a society seemingly ruled by a majority?

Please attend the **Wednesday, September 15, 2010** FS meeting when **Ellen Johnson** addresses these important topics and more. Her speech "Let's Play Hardball" will start promptly at **7:00 PM** at the **Norristown Public Library** (1001 Powell Street, Norristown, Pennsylvania 19401).

For information about public transportation visit:

http://www.septa.org/stations/rail/norristown.html

Supporters Added and Renewed

Naima Cabella	Washington, DC
Sally Flynn	West Chester, Pennsylvania
Marshall Martin	Panama City, Florida
Richard Myers	Doylestown, Pennsylvania
Victoria Myers	Doylestown, Pennsylvania

General Donation

Marshall Martin $75

Donation to Helping Hands Committee

Marshall Martin $75

Donation to Unity Events Committee

Stephen and Diane Uhl $1,000

FS Website Update

The grand unveiling of the Freethought Society (FS) website (see: www.FtSociety.org) has been postponed for a few more months. The new website volunteer is **Brian Fields**. He is working long hours to make sure the website offers a great deal of information about the many projects, activities and meetings offered through FS. The website will provide volunteer opportunities through the following committees:

1. Acknowledgement of Secular Occasions
2. Anti-Discrimination Narrative Collection
3. Billboards/Bus Signs
4. Diversity Outreach
5. Establishment of Meet-Up Groups
6. Free Speech Zone Displays
7. Friggatriskaidekaphobia Treatment Center
8. Helping Hands/Community Service Programs
9. Media Training
10. Mentoring Connection
11. Meetings (Social and Educational)
12. Newsletter
13. Protests/Demonstrations
14. Speaker's Bureau
15. Street Fair Participation
16. Student Outreach
17. Teaching Acceptance
18. Thomas Paine Memorial Committee
19. Unity Events

With such a wide variety of committee subjects, freethinkers around the country are sure to find a philosophical home where life passions can be pursued. Please contact FS to submit your suggestions, articles, opinions and to volunteer for one of the above mentioned committees.

Autographed Bible Give Away

A Bible autographed by **Christopher Hitchens** will be given to the next person who becomes a Life Member of the Freethought Society (FS). The title of "Life Member" is given to anyone donating $1,000 or more to FS. Below is a photo of **Margaret Downey** and Hitchens after he signed the give-away Bible. The photo was taken at the Free Library on June 15, 2010. On June 30, 2010, it was reported by *The Washington Post* that Hitchens has been diagnosed with esophageal cancer. He is currently undergoing chemotherapy for this very serious condition. FS will keep readers informed.

Downey commented that Hitchens looks rather sad in the photo, but "we now know why." She further said, "I was very happy to see 'Hitch' again and will look forward to hearing that the cancer will be successfully treated."

Yes! I want to be a Life Member of Freethought Society. Enclosed is my donation of: $_____.

Name: _____

Street Address: _____

City, State and Zip: _____

Phone or Email: _____

☐ Please keep my membership anonymous.

The Freethought Society (FS) is a chapter of the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) and is a member of the Atheist Alliance International (AAI). FS members are committed to the advancement of Freethought and issues of religion and government separation. FS activities and services are supported by donations. A list of activities and services can be found at the FS website (**www.FtSociety.org**). Please help finance FS's endeavors to promote freedom of thought, freedom of expression, freedom of choice and freedom from religious intrusions by donating now on at the website.

Yes, I want to:

( ) become a supporter of FS (includes PDF newsletter): **$30** basic, **$35** family supporter, **$20** student and email newsletter recipient. Please make checks payable to **FS**.
( ) join FFRF: **$45** individual membership or **$50** family membership. Please make checks payable to the **Freedom From Religion Foundation**.

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

( ) Check here if you want your sponsorship to be anonymous.
( ) Check here if you want to receive the newsletter as a **PDF** email (make sure to provide your email address below).

Please provide your email address to enable FS to send you a newsletter and keep in touch:

_____

Our policy is to give interested readers a free newsletter to decide whether or not FS is for them. Please provide email address information to us regarding people who might be interested.

Name _____

Email Address_____

Clip and mail to: Freethought Society, P.O. Box 242, Pocopson, PA 19366-0242

Freethought Society

P. O. Box 242
Pocopson, PA 19366-0242

Print and Place First-Class Postage Here

Please consider donating to the Freethought Society. Supporters are needed and appreciated. Every dollar counts!

Special Quote

"Secular humanists suspect there is something more gloriously human about resisting the religious impulse; about accepting the cold truth, even if that truth is only that the universe is as indifferent to us as we are to it."

Tom Flynn, born August 18, 1955 is a longtime secular humanist activist. He is the editor of *Free Inquiry* magazine and is the Executive Director of the Council for Secular Humanism. Flynn's books include *The Trouble with Christmas, Galactic Rapture, Nothing Sacred*, and (as editor) *The New Encyclopedia of Unbelief*.