

The Freethought Society News

**Logo and website banner
contest details inside.
Submissions sought.**

March/April 2010 Newsletter, Volume 1, Number 2

Editor: Margaret Downey and Various Volunteers

Published by: The Freethought Society (FS)

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

Phone: (610) 793-2737 * Fax: (610) 793-2569

Email: Newsletter@FtSociety.org * Webpage: www.FtSociety.org

Update on the Freethought Society's Sister Group in Haiti

by Margaret Downey

In 2007, I began corresponding with a newly formed freethought group in Haiti. I was president of the Atheist Alliance International (AAI) at the time, and an affiliate application was sent to me seeking approval from the AAI Council for "affiliation status." The group's bylaws and sample newsletter were missing from the application, so I contacted the president of the group, **Billy Almoza**, via email to obtain more information from the Free Thinkers of Haiti (FTH).

Almoza requested help and asked me to send him sample bylaws. I forwarded a copy of the Freethought Society (FS) bylaws and told him that he was welcome to model his group after FS. I also sent Almoza sample newsletters and literature that I had developed for FS.

When my presidential term for AAI was over in October 2008, I kept in touch with Almoza through Facebook and email. I continued to mentor Almoza and considered FTH an un-official FS sister group. FTH was formally adopted by FS at the March 17, 2010 board meeting.

On January 12, 2010, a 7.0 earthquake struck Haiti. Most of the damage occurred in the city of Port-au-Prince. Naturally, I was worried about all the citizens of Haiti, but I was very concerned when I could not reach my friend Almoza. It took two weeks to finally make a connection via telephone.

Almoza had bad news. An FTH officer died in the earthquake and several members were seriously injured. The meeting place for the group was completely destroyed. FTH is a student group that was headquartered at the State University of Haiti in Port-au-Prince.

Many university buildings were leveled in the earthquake. Still-standing structures were seriously damaged and became uninhabitable. Almost everyone in Port-au-Prince no longer had a house and citizens began living in tents. Before the earthquake, the university educated approximately 15,000 students. Those students

pay no tuition even though Haiti is the Western Hemisphere's poorest country. The annual Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita in Haiti is around \$1,300. The United States GDP per capita is \$47,500.

The State University of Haiti was already struggling with severe money shortages. Many students are so poor they can't afford more than two meals a day. Students share books and even notebooks due to a lack of paper. So many homes lacked electricity prior to the earthquake that students studied in public places such as parks and Internet Cafes.

On the date of publication of this article, more than 230,000 people are reported to have died in the earthquake and approximately three million Haitians are homeless, injured and starving. According to government figures the population of Haiti is nine million.

Almoza obviously needed help to re-establish FTH. His base of operation is still Port-au-Prince, but a large number of Port-au-Prince residents moved to Les Cayes. Les Cayes is now a town overrun with starving, homeless people. They sleep in the streets and the parks. Most of the homeless do not even own shoes. Almoza travels back and forth from Les Cayes to Port-au-Prince doing humanitarian work along the way.

Almoza is a proud nontheist. He asked me to help his fellow citizens in any way possible. I sent his address to nontheist groups. Several groups conducted a clothing drive, but sending boxes to Haiti was an expensive venture. One medium size box filled with clothing and shoes cost \$85 to mail via the United States Post Office.

I notified the American Humanist Association (AHA) of the situation with FTH. They immediately sent \$1,500 to FTH. I have connected Almoza to the Haitian AHA representative, **Sebastian Velez**, to help establish FTH as an official AHA group. The status of FTH's application for AAI affiliation is unknown at this time.

(continued on next page)

Haiti

(continued from page 1)

In February, AAI's board passed my motion to match the AHA donation. FTH received the additional \$1,500 from AAI on March 17. When the Arkansas Society of Freethinkers heard about FTH they sent \$230 directly to Almoza.

My outreach efforts to find help for FTH extended to the International Humanists and Ethical Union (IHEU). **Matt Cherry**, the International Representative of IHEU, graciously began connecting FTH to IHEU sources. Almoza is now receiving the French version of the IHEU

magazine. As a nontheist group in a developing country, FTH will be eligible for an IHEU grant.

FS could not spare money, but one FS member donated \$200 to purchase a camera, camera card and flash drive for FTH. FS thanks **Marshall Martin** for his generosity. I mailed the camera items to Haiti via Federal Express on March 11. The owner of the Mail Boxes, Etc. only charged his fee to mail the box. He prefers to remain anonymous. FS members are welcome to earmark donations to FTH and a tax-deductible acknowledgement will be sent. Clothing and shoes are still needed. Please contact FS for mailing details. ♦



Fasting for what?

by Billy Almoza

An earthquake has shaken Port-au-Prince, Petit Goave, Jacmel and Leogane in Haiti. There are many victims and material damage. All the ministries and presidential palaces collapsed. Two weeks after the earthquake, religious leaders claimed to have government support and called for three days of fasting. Haitian people were told to ask God to forgive them during those fasting days.

Who is supposed to benefit from “days of fasting?” Perhaps religious leaders and the government benefit, but certainly not the people.

For over a decade the Haitian government has received international assistance, yet the government does nothing to really help people in need. \$197,000,000 dollars was sent to the Government of Haiti when **Mrs. Pierre Louis Duvivier** held the position of Prime Minister. Even now there is no explanation about how those millions of dollars were spent.

When the earthquake occurred, the Haitian government was not prepared and there was no possibility that they could aid citizens in their time of need. This is why so many people died. The hospital itself was under huge fragments of reinforced concrete.

After a week went by, some Haitians formed groups with the intention of demonstrating against the Haitian government. The citizens of Haiti could not trust government leaders to be of help to anyone. The mistrust of the government grew large. Demonstrators demanded an explanation! Where was the aid we needed? Where had the \$197,000,000 gone?

Even before the January 12, 2010 earthquake, the government did not function well. After the earthquake, it appeared that no government was in existence. The people of Haiti have been deceived by their government and religious leaders have taken advantage of the situation. During the three days of fasting, religious leaders declared that the earthquake was the result of God's rage against us. They said that God wanted to put an end to all sinning in Haiti. “You must ask God to forgive you,” they said. These religious leaders claim that the earthquake proved that God does exist and is all powerful. They announced to the Haitian people that everyone must accept God as their “personal savior.”

Religious leaders told the Haitian people that if they did not accept God as their personal savior, another tragedy would come to Haiti. Ironically, most of the churches in the earthquake area were completely destroyed!

In the south of Haiti a pastor recently told the faithful that there is a snake under the earth. He said that Haitians must pray to fight against this snake for its body is very long.

Many people in Haiti have a vision of a snake actually existing from Petion-Ville to Tiburon (250 km). The faithful are ignorant to believe that there is a snake under the earth. The goal of these religious leaders was to stop people from thinking and questioning. Fasting and prayers could put an end to the Haitian people asking their government why there are no building codes and catastrophe preparation.

As the leader of the Free Thinkers of Haiti, I work to counter this religious nonsense. I tell my fellow citizens that the earthquake is only a natural phenomenon and no amount of prayers can stop a geological movement. I ask that if people believe in a God, they must think about why their churches collapsed and were not saved by their savior.

The people of Haiti were fasting for no good reason! ♦

Email From: Free Thinkers of Haiti

Below is a collection of email messages I received from **Billy Almoza**, the president and founder of the Free Thinkers of Haiti (FTH) I will continue to keep readers updated on the situation in Haiti and FTH efforts.

Margaret Downey

March 4, 2010

Free Thinkers of Haiti and I thank you very much for your efforts and support to help Haitian people in need. I have received \$1,500 from **Roy Speckhardt**.

I have an editorial that I'm preparing about THREE DAYS of fast that were organized in the cold to save the nation by religious leaders.

Again, I thank you very much. I'm waiting for the camera that you promised to take any pictures of the situation. Many people are outside Port-au-Prince. Many of them are very young and want to go to school, but they can't. They want to continue with school. I'm trying to find a way that they can have access to a school.

The FREE THINKERS are their voice. We are HUMANISTS. We want to do what all the Humanists in the world do. There are many families to whom I will distribute food. There are more than 100 families that we already have listed to give food and drinks.

We thank you very much for your support.

March 5, 2010

Today, we distributed rice, peas and oil to around 400 people in the Lakreyol neighborhood.

This Monday, we are going to distribute food and drinks in Nan Reno. This is why I need a camera. There are many people in need and many children and youths who went there from Port-au-Prince after the earthquake. Yes, I can find a camera in a store in the street, but it's very expensive. I would need to pay \$500 to purchase a good camera. Everything is expensive here in Haiti after the earthquake. Yesterday, before distributing the food and drinks, I tried to speak with people about something important. I explained to them that earthquakes and tsunamis are all natural phenomena. I want to tell you that Haitian people thank you very much.

March 19, 2010

I am sending you a photo of the members of the Free Thinkers of Haiti's committee members who participated in passing out food supplies with me over the last few days. From left to right in the back row are **Stanley Larosiliere, Ronald Lubin, me, Rochelin Forzene and Lorcy Valson Dieumaitre**. In the front row left to right are **Feder Myrtil Marcelus, Pierre Esnor Pierre**. The picture was taken in Marchaterre which is 1½ miles from Les Cayes.



The citizens of Machaterre have many needs. Our group was astonished to see how people are living there.

I will send you more information about this locality to see what can be done to improve lives in Machaterre. We borrowed a camera and took videos and some photos of the food supplies that we gave to people in Machaterre. We hope that your friends will watch it. We are having a meeting tomorrow at 10 AM. Thank you!

March 21, 2010

I write concerning your question about the photo and the fact that Rochelin Forzene is wearing a Christian cross around his neck. Rochelin is a new member of our group. He is not holding a position of importance. I also wondered why he mentions "God" in his email address. I investigated him on Facebook. He talked about working with us in Machaterre. At the meeting yesterday, Rochelin arrived with someone who wanted to become a member of the group.

When the meeting started, Rochelin's friend asked us to pray, but we all objected and said, "Why have you asked us to pray? You are new here and you know nothing about this association and you dare to try to have influence on us!"

We told Rochelin and his friend that we are all Humanists and we make reason our guide. We also said we believe in freedom of thought so we will talk to believers and tell them they are free to believe, but they will not have any influence on our group.

The camera you sent has arrived. Thank you very much.

2010 FS Letter Writing Campaign Concerning BSA

by Margaret Downey

It was only in the year 2000 that the United States Supreme Court ruled that the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) was free to establish their own exclusionary membership criteria on the grounds of both religious belief and sexual orientation.

As we have seen since this ruling, there has been an enormous amount of controversy surrounding BSA as an organization, on its relationship with public and governmental agencies, and on its exclusionary practices and policies. BSA's declaration that they are a "private religious organization" with the constitutional right to freely discriminate on whatever grounds they see fit has only spawned more problems for them.

BSA has now included the disabled on its list of undesirables and has created an atmosphere reminiscent of the McCarthy era. BSA has created an environment where anyone, including long standing members, can be thrown out, shunned and retaliated against for the slightest inkling of disagreement with the paid professional staff of the national and local Councils. BSA also blatantly disregards its own long-touted Scout Law and its own internal policies and procedures.

While BSA publicly claims that it has long "encouraged" support for and inclusion of the disabled, recent policy changes and actions against some members show quite the opposite. While BSA claims that they have always excluded atheists and gays, they went a big step further this time and actually changed their policies in writing with regard to the disabled.

The following is from BSA's Risk Management Notebook — Non-Scout Use of Scout Facilities (Rev. 8/2008):

"... Scouting is a private club exempt from the Americans with Disabilities Act, and that the outside group using Scout property is responsible for complying with the Act and accommodating the needs of its participants."

"...because Scouting is a private club, and therefore Scouting facilities are not subject to the requirements of the ADA."

"Therefore, with respect to Scout facilities that are used for Scout activities and events, Councils do not have any ADA obligations. This includes Council events attended by Scout families and invited guests, such as Eagle Scout ceremonies and Scout Camp events."

"...it may be clear that the outside group, e.g. a public school class, is open to the public. ...Councils must be sure that the burden of complying with the ADA is shifted to the outside group leasing Council property."

"While Scouting makes every effort to accommodate all persons with disabilities, it is a charitable, private

organization not subject to the ADA, and any group who uses the property is responsible for ADA compliance and any accommodations necessary for its participants and visitors."

In another extraordinary step, BSA has re-written its own "mandatory" camp standards, which up until 2008 required compliance with the ADA, to a non-mandatory status in 2009 which asks staff to make facilities for the disabled available "if possible".

BSA also receives Federal funds in the form of contracts, fees, grants, legislation, commemorative coins, discounts, land and property access, etc. These funds help to perpetuate a tax supported "private" entity which has chosen to exclude many of the people it claims to "help...at all times".

The discriminatory practices of the Scouts have gone on far too long. Gays, atheists, and the disabled are all excluded, retaliated against and shunned by the organization. This unethical behavior comes from an organization that claims to "...help other people at all times..." and to be "Trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean and reverent." Who will be next? Who will the BSA exclude next in its efforts to uphold "values"?

I ask that you join with me in protesting BSA's biased membership and operational policies. I ask that you demand through your legislators that no Federal funding or gratuities be given to BSA as long as they maintain their prejudices and mistreatment of the disabled, atheists and gays. I ask that you join me in exposing BSA to the media, the public-at-large and politicians who should be very concerned about how tax dollars are being spent. There is something else that can be done.

Please write a letter asking former President James Earl "Jimmy" Carter, Jr. to disaffiliate from BSA. He currently serves on BSA's Advisory Council.

Surely, Mr. Carter does not want his stellar reputation of tolerance and kindness to be tarnished by his affiliation with BSA. Letters may educate him about the seriousness of this matter. Mr. Carter can be contacted at:

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

Thank you in advance for taking the time to add your voice to this protest. Please send a copy of your letter to:

Anti-Discrimination Support Network
P. O. Box 242
Pocopson, PA 19366

Email: Margaret@FtSociety.org



When it comes to religious groups, who's really facing discrimination?

by Elliott Welsh

A very important case is being considered this year at the highest Federal level. In the case of *Christian Legal Society v. Martinez* (08-1371), the U. S. Supreme Court will decide whether it is unconstitutional for a state-run college to exclude from official status a student religious group that limits its officers and voting members to those who accept its religious beliefs.

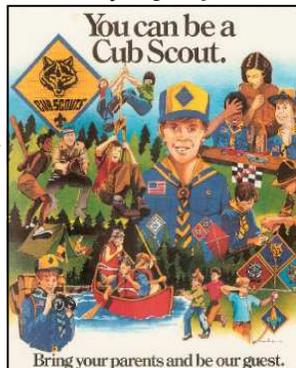
The Court will be examining an issue that has divided the lower federal courts — sometimes involving the same student group. The Christian Legal Society's (CLS) petition noted that the Ninth Circuit Court ruling conflicts with a Seventh Circuit decision. In addition, CLS argued that the Ninth Circuit decision contradicts a line of cases in which the Court has upheld a private group's right to hold its own views. Private groups can also limit their membership. Other court rulings require public universities not to discriminate in student group recognition based on the groups' religious viewpoints.

Hastings Law, CLS told the Court, has barred only this one group from recognition, even while granting that status to student groups that limit their membership to people of shared views. The exclusion denies it access to meeting space at the Law School, access to student bulletin boards and other modes of reaching students, and access to some student funding sources. The Ninth Circuit ruled summarily against the Society's claim of religious bias at the law school, relying on an earlier precedent involving a Bible club's exclusion at a high school.

Christian Legal Society v. Martinez, raises the supposedly difficult issue of public endorsement and support of a prejudiced organization by a publicly-funded institution. The case arose in a university setting but, when viewed in a public grade-school context, arguments against such support may be seen to be far stronger.

A federal lawsuit I filed against the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) for religious discrimination during the late 1980's arose because my son, a six-year-old, had been invited to join the Boy Scouts Tiger Cubs via a flyer handed to boys, in class, by his first-grade public school teacher. "Any boy can join," the colorful flyer read, and a religious test for membership was nowhere mentioned.

My own experience as a Cub Scout, Boy Scout and Explorer Scout had been that religion was really a *pro forma* matter, even though religious belief was clearly encouraged by the Scouting program. What was really important was Scouting's aim to have fun while influencing the character of boys in the program in a positive way. In fact, my ten years in Scouting during the 1940's and 1950's left me with the impression that one of the best things one could learn there was that religious differences ought to be



overlooked: a person's character was what was important, and not his/her particular religious beliefs.

The sign-up form at the recruiting meeting said that I (as the adult "partner") had to profess a belief in God. When I asked about alternatives for families like ours, who profess no such belief, I was stunned to be told that we weren't welcome. We were obliged to leave, my six-year-old by then near tears.

Our ensuing civil-rights lawsuit was directed against BSA. The organization's defense was that it was a private organization, entitled to set its own membership standards. BSA essentially likened themselves to the country club close to where I grew up which was known to exclude Jews.

But, if BSA was really a private group with the right to pick and choose its membership on religious grounds, why was my son's public school promoting it via professionally prepared posters and handouts distributed in class by public employees?

The federal judge at trial eventually found in favor of BSA and suggested that we really ought to have sued the school. This we did not want to do for a number of reasons, foremost among them being the cost of a legal defense to what was a very small school district. Also, officials at the school had been appalled to learn that BSA excluded *any* child on religious grounds. In fact, BSA recruiting was banned in that district for a few years thereafter.

With the advent of laws requiring public school access by religious groups, however, and the implication that BSA could file lawsuits in order to be allowed to recruit in them, most public grade-schools now routinely promote Boy Scouting, despite the fact that some boys who attend these schools can be (and are) excluded from Scouting programs — with prejudice.

This past year, my youngest son was present when a group of boys in his schoolyard discussed the fact that BSA exclude non-believers, and did so with obvious approval. My son later told me (although our family happens to attend a local Unitarian church) that he said nothing, since he was afraid that the boys would "get mad at me."

When I let the school district know about this state of affairs, I was told that religious groups were required under federal law to be given "access" to students, even to the very youngest children. The use of public grade-schools for recruiting by a group known, even by children, to discriminate on religious grounds seems to me to be very ill-advised. It promotes and appears to approve the very kinds of discrimination and prejudice that public schools are not supposed to be teaching young children.

Christian Legal Society v. Martinez raises this issue as well. Is it *punishing* an organization which expresses overt religious prejudice (or invidious discrimination of any kind) to deny it subsidized access to students in publicly supported schools for purposes of recruitment?

Or is it punishing students to tacitly approve and actually help to promote such organizations? ♦

In Celebration of Women's History Month

by Margaret Downey

A passing interest in how women struggled to obtain the right to vote became a passion for me in 1999 when the Center For Inquiry (CFI) asked me to host a bus tour to the Women's History Museum in Rochester, New York. I was not an expert at the time, but I accepted the challenge to develop an entertaining and educational program. I purchased a Suffragist costume, recordings of authentic music, decorations, and studied **Annie Laurie Gaylor's** book *Women Without Superstition* cover to cover. The August 19th bus tour received rave reviews and it inspired me to continue to learn more about the time period between 1848 and 1920.

In 2009 I unveiled a presentation entitled "How Women Fought for Their Rights." I presented it first to a group of elderly women at Kingsley Manor located in Los Angeles, California. While Kingsley Manor residents ranged from ages 75-105, their care-givers are much younger. It was a pleasant surprise to discover that the care-givers found my presentation especially interesting. Most of them are from other countries. They had not known what women in the United States had to do in order to obtain their right to vote. My story and photos were fascinating to them and I was happy to have given them the facts.

The facts were also of great interest to the next group of people who heard the presentation. My next audience were children aged 6-16. I delivered the "How Women Fought for Their Rights" presentation to the children of Camp Quest during the Atheist Alliance International's 2009 convention. With the help of **Eve Loev Balistra**, the compelling story we conveyed captured the attention of all the children and young adults in the room. The Camp Quest directors were thrilled with the presentation because it created on-site entertainment and post conference dialog. Eve's brother, **Noah Loev Balistra**, was the PowerPoint assistant.

After having conducted two practice sessions, I was ready to take my presentation on the road. March is National Women's History Month. It is the perfect time to honor the courageous women who never gave up the hope that someday, women in the United States would have the same rights as men.

President **Jimmy Carter** recognized National Women's History Week in 1980 by proclamation. In 1987, Congress approved March as National Women's History Month. At that time, the contributions of women were mere footnotes in history books. Less than 3% of content found in teacher training textbooks referred to the accomplishments of women. Shockingly, in 1987 women of color were not even mentioned in most textbooks. The goal to change those figures is slowly being reached, but much work has yet to be done.

Many truths about why women were denied their rights for so long are being overlooked. I do not gloss over the biblical dictates that were used against the women who started the Suffrage movement in the United States. I remind the audience that religious leaders railed against the movement,

quoting the Bible as the supreme authority. The fact is that much harm has been heaved on women because of biblical dictates. Just read what the *Holy Bible* states in Ephesians 5:22-24, Corinthians 14:34-35 and Timothy 2:11-15 for examples of the disdain that women had to endure at the hands of the religious community. The issue of pointing out words of hatred in the *Holy Bible* was a dividing force during the Women's Suffrage movement, and it remains a contentious topic even within the nontheist community today. I was recently asked by a member of the nontheist community to reduce the number of times I discuss the Bible during my presentation — but I will not shade the truth.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton is highlighted in my presentation and I quote her anti-Bible statements often. I also praise the work of **Lucretia Mott, Susan B. Anthony, Frederick Douglass, Amelia Jenks Bloomer, Lucy Burns, Alice Paul, Ida B. Wells** and many other little known Suffragists — most of whom did not hesitate to point out hurtful Bible passages.

New York City Atheists (NYCA) hosted me as a Women's History Month speaker on Sunday, March 14, 2010. The event was very well attended and it was a wonderful surprise to receive a letter from **Mayor Michael Bloomberg** welcoming me to the City of New York. The letter stated:

*It is a great pleasure to welcome all those attending **Margaret Downey's** lecture on the Suffragists, hosted by NYC Atheists. Every year during Women's History Month, we celebrate the women who have made our city and nation great—and this event is an important opportunity to remember those courageous and heroic individuals who paved the way for women's right to vote.*

In describing the battle for suffrage, Susan B. Anthony once said, "I have encountered riotous mobs and have been hung in effigy, but my motto is: Men's rights are nothing more. Women's right are nothing less."

The bravery and determination of all those who fought for suffrage helped to transform our nation, moving us closer to the vision of equality laid out in our founding documents. Today, we reflect on the tremendous progress we've made since these incredible women and men first began lobbying for equal voting rights—and honor all those whose hard work and dedication have made it possible.

On behalf of the City of New York, please accept my best wishes for an enjoyable event and continued success.

One week later, I delivered the same presentation to the Humanists Association of Las Vegas and Southern Nevada. When an eleven-year-old boy in the audience said that even though he learned about Women's Suffrage in school, my presentation gave him "99.9% more information," I knew my work for National Women's History Month was worth it! ♦

Women's History Month Photos



The ladies of Kingsley Manor are shown in this photo (at left).

The woman in the front row (left side) holding a small box, received the door prize of pansy seeds and a grow pot. She is 104 years old and recalled observing her mother working hard as a Suffragist. She recalled that she was 14 years old when women finally got the right to vote in the United States.



Pictured above left are **Margaret Downey** and **Eve Loev Balistra**. The photo was taken at the October 2009 Atheist Alliance International conference. Balistra lives near Downey in Pennsylvania. They practiced the presentation several times to ensure that it would be flawless when delivered to attendees at Camp Quest — and it was!

Pictured above right is Downey with New York City Atheist members (left to right) **Dennis Horvitz**, **Ken Bronstein** and **Jane Everhart**. Horvitz is holding the Mayor's "Welcome to New York City" letter.

Pictured right are Downey and her husband **Tom Schottmiller**. He assisted Downey with the New York and Las Vegas PowerPoint slide show and enjoyed seeing enthusiastic responses from the audience.



Criticizing Ridiculous Ideas

by Staks Rosch

Atheism is on the rise in America and the world. Atheists, as such, have become a bigger target for religionists. Many religious people attempt to make it appear that being a vocal atheist is something new and militant. The fact is that there is nothing new, mean, or hateful about criticizing ridiculous ideas.

Being vocal about atheism basically boils down to the concept of criticizing ridiculous ideas. The modern atheist movement is not about murdering religious people. Nor is it about making religion illegal. That would be what extremist militant atheists might advocate if they actually existed. But that is not reality.

The modern atheist movement also is not trying to convert religious people to some other ridiculous supernatural idea. We leave that type of evangelizing to the religionists.

Modern atheists tend to advocate a free market of ideas in which every idea is thought about and scrutinized. Bad ideas get criticized and ridiculous ideas are ridiculed because they are... well, ridiculous. It isn't the fault of atheists that religious and supernatural beliefs tend to be ridiculous. In my opinion, if religious people don't want their beliefs ridiculed, then they shouldn't have such ridiculous beliefs.

I think most religious people know that their beliefs are ridiculous. They know that in the free market of ideas their beliefs won't hold up. So instead of abandoning those ideas in favor of more reasonable ideas which present a more accurate model of reality, they often try to place their beliefs above criticism.

Religionists have dominated our culture in an attempt to form a monopoly on the free market of ideas. They have made it socially unacceptable to criticize their ridiculous beliefs. It is perfectly acceptable to criticize political ideas, philosophical ideas, literary ideas, etc., but when it comes to religious ideas, criticism is seen as impolite, rude, and even hateful. Why is that?

If an idea or belief is ridiculous, then people should be free to criticize it as being such. In fact, people are free to criticize and ridicule ridiculous ideas and beliefs in every other avenue of discourse except in relation to religion.

Now religion's monopoly has been broken and their ideas and beliefs are going to have to compete in the fair market of ideas like every other idea and belief. Not surprisingly, religions aren't holding up and that is why atheism is on the rise. ♦

Last-Minute Message For a Time Capsule

by Philip Appleman

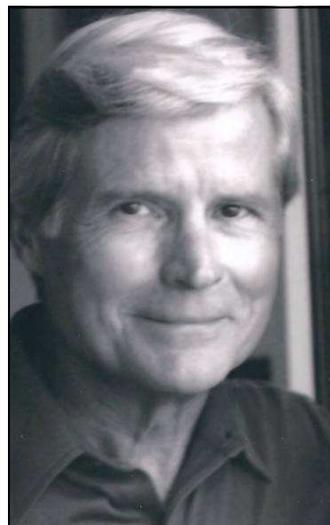
I have to tell you this, whoever you are:
that on one summer morning here, the ocean
pounded in on tumbledown breakers,
a south wind, bustling along the shore,
whipped the froth into little rainbows,
and a reckless gull swept down the beach
as if to fly were everything it needed.

I thought of your hovering saucers,
looking for clues, and I wanted to write this down,
so it wouldn't be lost forever - -
that once upon a time we had
meadows here, and astonishing things,
swans and frogs and luna moths
and blue skies that could stagger your heart.

We could have had them still,
and welcomed you to earth, but
we also had the righteous ones
who worshipped the True Faith, and Holy War.

When you go home to your shining galaxy,
say that what you learned
from this dead and barren place is
to beware the righteous ones.

(from *New and Selected Poems*,
1956-1996, University of Arkansas
Press, 1996)



Pictured left is **Philip Appleman**. His books have been featured on the *Tree of Knowledge* for three consecutive years. His poetry will be a regular column in the *Freethought Society News*, but readers are encouraged to purchase Appleman books for their own library collection. Please purchase books through the FS website at: FtSociety.org.

Saying “Goodbye” to Bill Goetz

by Margaret Downey

Freethought Society (FS) Founding Member, **William (Bill) A. Goetz, Jr.** died on Friday, January 22, 2010. I was with Bill as he drew his last breath. On January 19th, Bill’s family called me to the Bryn Mawr Hospital when they knew that he was near the end of his life. I was honored to be there, holding Bill’s hand, talking to him about my fond memories of his friendship. Bill could not speak, but he was able to make a grunting sound when I asked him a question. I know that he appreciated my company during those last few days.

Over the last sixteen years, Bill served as vice-president, treasurer, secretary and a board member of FS. Bill’s donation of \$1,500 actually started the organization. For more than five years, Bill paid for the use of the a room at the Glenhardie Country Club so that FS could meet every month. I wrote this little poem for Bill in 1993:

*When you need a team player
Don’t call on the Mets,
pick up the phone and talk to
Bill Goetz.*

*He’s generous and kind,
Dependable too,
we’re so glad he’s left
the Catholic pew.*

*Last year was not good
for our precious Bill.
It seemed like he was
continually ill.*

*But now he is healthy
and raising some hell.
His name should be placed
on the Liberty Bell.*

On January 28, 1996, FS awarded Bill with the title of “Freethinker of the Year.” Bill was recognized as an outstanding volunteer and contributor to the promotion of freedom of thought, freedom of choice and freedom from religious intrusion. He was also recognized for his many donations over the years. In 1996 Bill donated a copier valued at over \$600. In 2000, Bill donated \$2,500 during the annual picnic at Ridley Creek State Park. In November 2004, when Bill could no longer drive, he donated his car to FS. It was sold for \$6,000, and that money enabled FS to purchase a computer and many other needed office supplies.

Bill was generous to many groups, giving money to Planned Parenthood, American Atheists, the Freedom From Religion Foundation and Pennsylvania Association of Non-Believers. I’m sure other organizations received donations from Bill. He was a very benevolent man.

About ten years ago, Bill wrote the following statement expressing his joy in being a freethinker. His words are reprinted here to honor his memory.

Statement of Philosophy by William A. Goetz, Jr.

A freethinker is one who believes in logic, reason and knowledge that is learned by observation and experience. The philosophy of freethought does not put faith in things that are not based on fact. As a freethinker, I do not worship so-called “holy books.” Unproved promises or mysteries do not have a hold on my mind.

I was a freethinker and a nontheist all my life. Because I did not want to “rock the boat,” I never expressed my thoughts or asked very many questions. My family was very religious. We had clergy in the family. As I got older I began to search for other people who felt as I did. After some investigation I discovered that a lot of Freethinkers and nontheists do not express themselves or publicly declare their views about religion. This is probably due to fear of reprisal or discrimination.

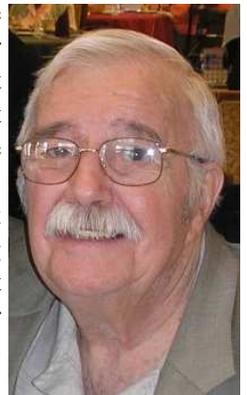
When I was 55 years old, I began to study the writings of **Thomas Paine, Thomas Jefferson, Robert G. Ingersoll,** and other great freethinkers. This type of reading opened my eyes to freethought. I decided not to be timid about showing my feelings concerning religion and many other civil rights matters.

I associated myself with organizations that supported the Constitutional principle of state-church separation and women’s rights. I also found groups that rejected the concept of tax-free religion. It wasn’t long before I became a protector of Pro-Choice women who faced the bigotry of priests, nuns and other religious fanatics. The right for women to choose a medical service, such as abortion, is a fundamental right I work for.

As I became more and more involved in fighting for these and other civil liberties, I saw that a privileged class of religionists were attempting to change our secular Constitution into a theocratic plan. I was fortunate to meet other freethinkers who mirrored my position and together we organized to expose violations of the Constitution and take a stand against discrimination toward nontheists.

Having been a Catholic school student, I am fully aware of organized sponsored school prayer. My freethinking mind tells me that prayer, if one believes in it, is a private matter. Private prayer is always available. It should not take a teacher or “act of Congress” to initiate, condone and endorse religious belief. Public prayer is inappropriate and intolerant because it is disrespectful to minorities that do not adhere to the religious views of the majority.

I encourage all who have been quiet about their true feelings regarding religious doctrine to set themselves free. It is a wonderful feeling to be a freethinker and to be part of the vital and energetic nontheist community.



Critical Thinking for the Family Dinner Table

by Celestia Ward

I had just woken up, my hair was a scraggly scene out of a horror movie, and I was barefoot and bleary-eyed as I walked down our hallway and neared the kids' bathroom. That's when I heard **Patrick** and **Mikayla**, 9 and 7, respectively, urging each other on. They were in the bathroom discussing something over the sink. Then I heard their first incantation: "Bloody Mary I have your baby . . ."

I stopped short of the bathroom and smiled. When a delicious, perfect opportunity such as this presents itself, I can really see the temptation people have to believe that the Almighty himself has delivered it to them. The previous evening, the kids had asked me about Bloody Mary, a ghost they had heard about in school that would jump out of the bathroom mirror and attack you if you said three times that you had her baby. "Bloody Mary I have your baby . . ." they repeated a second time, in unison.

I did not scoff or tell them it was all hogwash when they asked me about it. I said, "Well, you already have a way you can test it out."

I urged them to go to the bathroom and try out their experiment. They declined that night, but apparently had built up their nerve by morning. And now, thanks to extremely lucky timing and the angle of our bathroom mirror to the hallway I was standing in, still unseen, I was being given an opportunity to show them what a false positive is. And, more importantly, an opportunity to make them pee their pants. "Bloody Mary I have your . . . baby," they finished, with trepidation, and as they hit that last syllable I swooped in from around the corner and let out a banshee screech as I grabbed them each around the belly.

Oh, it was so awesome. From their perspective, it looked like some big scary female ghost had indeed come out of the mirror right at them — and they screamed so loud they woke their father in the back bedroom. Terror turned quickly to laughter once their brains processed that it was just me, and I'm pretty sure they will keep that little soundbyte of memory with them the rest of their lives. I know I will.

When I married a man with three young children, and realized I'd have kids in my house five days a week, I suppose my adjustment was similar to Patrick and Mikayla's emotions in front of the bathroom mirror: terror at first, but terror that, happily, gave way to lots of laughter.

Patrick and Mikayla have, over the past seven or eight years, grown into very cool little people who have bright, active minds and are fascinating conversation partners. Kids love ghost stories. They also love superstitions, tales of magic, hints of psychic abilities, and all manner of woo. Anyone who has put together a treasure-hunt for youngsters also knows that kids love puzzles, clues, and actively using their brains to solve problems. My husband and I are not the only family members these children have; so in addition to our (usually) rational freethought approach, they also are bombarded with other ways of looking at the world.

It struck us that arming the kids with some critical thinking skills is something that can — and should — start very early. In elementary school, **Alex**, the oldest, proclaimed that he would not have to study for his math test because he'd been given a trinket necklace of some goddess who, he was told by a trusted and well-meaning loved one, would "help him get a good grade."

Looking back, perhaps we should have just let him fail the test and learn a lesson, but at the time we slapped our foreheads and made him review his math despite his protestations. In addition to help from a piece of plastic, we cautioned him, he would also need to use his brain.

Over the years we have tried to navigate the tightrope of making the kids recognize woo for woo, while also not vilifying the people in their lives who subscribe to it and have no moral problems foisting it onto the next generation. We have found that it helps immeasurably to separate the person from the philosophy. This applies not just to belief systems, but also to habits and traits that other adults have. We try to let the children know that loving someone does not mean you have to do exactly what they do or believe exactly what they believe. It also doesn't make them right all the time. I used my own mother as an example once; I asked Mikayla if she thought I loved my mother. She said "Yes, of course."

Then I asked, do you think I want to live my life exactly like my mother? She immediately said, "No."

I asked for an example of one way I am different from my mother. Without too much thinking, she asserted that my mother was a packrat, but I wasn't. She knows I'm notorious for going around the house filling up a box for Goodwill; there's not much packratting allowed in our household. Even at a young age, this example seemed to make sense to her and opened up her mind to the possibility of picking and choosing what she wanted to emulate from each loved one in her life.

Another pitfall that rationalist parents often face is that sinking feeling that, by injecting critical thinking into a given situation, one might be robbing the child of that sense of wonder and magic that makes childhood — well, magical. We can feel like the big wet blanket-throwers, ready to poopoo all over whatever fun stuff is going on. Mikayla, the youngest, has a firm love of ghost stories right now, as do half the girls in her class. She has notions of being a paranormal researcher when she's older, and she thoroughly enjoys the rather badly acted ghost shows on the sci-fi channel that tout themselves as telling stories of "real" hauntings. I personally can remember being an eleven-year-old girl, fascinated by **Leonard Nimoy** talking about Bigfoot and the Bermuda Triangle on "In Search Of," or **Jack Palance** rasping on about bleeding statues or other oddities in "Ripley's Believe It or Not."

So I am very careful about stomping on any child's favorite shows just because I think they're spreading a bunch

of BS to gullible masses.

Instead, I've sat down with her and watched episodes, asking questions about this or that. I often say, "Do you think these actors believe in ghosts themselves, or are they just imagining what it might be like to see one?" Or, "Why is the ghost hunter using that device and what is it?"

I tell Patrick and Mikayla that I wonder if the device picks up electrical signals from things like television sets and radios, or even static electricity in the air. Mikayla did not find my questions bothersome; she thought about them and actually decided it would be a good idea to test out the EM device in some homes that weren't supposed to be haunted, to see if it picked up signals there too. She even started saying that she was really surprised no one had ever done that on the ghost-hunting shows.

Watching the early signs of critical thinking sprout up is a wonderful thing, and cultivating it doesn't require much effort — just throw out a few carefully chosen questions as seed. I realized that, without forcibly trying to, my husband and I had been giving little lessons on critical thinking at our dinner table now and again. The kids know who **James Randi** is and I've explained that he has a million dollar reward for anyone who can demonstrate they have psychic abilities.

While we ate one evening, they told me they had heard about someone who knew someone who was a psychic; I of course said, well, I hope they enjoy that million dollars once they win it! But, I asked, "If it was YOUR million dollars, what kind of proof would you require before giving out that prize?"

I asked the kids to name any kind of supernatural power they could think of. Patrick quickly said "shooting flames out of your fingertips!"

I then asked if they would give out the million dollars to someone who had a video of themselves shooting fire out of their fingertips. All three were quick to say "NOOO way, it could be special effects!"

"Okay," I said. "How about if they got ten people to swear that they'd seen the person shoot fire out of their fingers, and they signed letters saying so? Would you give them the million dollars?"

"NOOOO way, those people could be his friends, or he could have told them to lie and promised to share the million dollars with them!"

The kids were having fun, they were engaged, and, in the true spirit of sibling rivalry, they each tried to beat one another to the punch, answering my challenges as quick as they could. I asked, "What if the guy just walked in and poof — he had little flames coming from his fingers right there, and you saw it with your own eyes?"

"NOOOO way! First I'd have some magicians check him for trick stuff, like wires and flame powder and stuff."

"Okay, what if it's not fire — what if there was a lady who said she could tell whether a card was hearts, spades, diamonds, or clubs, when the card was face down? And what if you laid out a card on the table and she guessed what it was?"

"NOOOO way, it could be a lucky guess."

I quizzed them further, "What if she guessed right twice in a row?"

"You could have two lucky guesses in a row," they exclaimed.

"How many times would she have to guess right before you gave her the million dollars?"

"Um, at least like a thousand, or maybe more times," was their response.

Wow, I thought, these kids are very protective of their imaginary million dollars.

On another night we started discussing urban legends during dinner; the kids had obviously heard some, but weren't familiar with the term. So we explained what urban legends are and also told them about Snopes.com, where researchers look into which legends are false, or verified, or inconclusive. Out came the laptop, and for the better part of that night, the kids were eagerly scouring the urban legends concerning Disneyland and reading them aloud to us.

Other dinner-table conversations have been about *deja-vu* and how your own brain can play tricks on you — tricks that make some people think they had a premonition in a dream. A credit card commercial that shows objects grouped together to look like happy faces led to a conversation on *pareidolia*, or the brain's tendency to see faces in random patterns, and how some people don't know their brain is doing this and actually believe they see Jesus or Elvis in burnt toast.

I just heard **Brian Dunning's** "Skeptoid" podcast that focuses on backward-played speech and audio *pareidolia*, and he has some fantastic examples of non-language mechanical tones that sound completely random until your brain is told otherwise — then it is physically impossible to not hear the random tones as English sentences! My first thought as I heard this podcast was wow, I need to play this during dinner! The kids are going to get a kick out of this, it's just like magic — except real.

And, speaking of magic, once they were old enough, I took each kid to see **Penn & Teller**; I figured enough of my amateur efforts, let's see how they fare with professional skeptic entertainers. They fared well indeed, sitting amazed and laughing along with me at the clever way Penn & Teller infuse their show with atheist and skeptical thinking.

More recently, "Mythbusters" has become the new favorite TV show in our house — and the kids introduced it to ME, not the other way around! They now regularly choose to subject themselves to critical thinking and skepticism, and they view Jamie and Adam — two somewhat nerdy guys who build things and perform experiments — as ersatz rock stars (adulation which they totally deserve, in my opinion).

I remember this long-ago experiment we studied in college, in which toddlers who were severely deficient in vitamin D were offered different foods: they surprised the scientists by voluntarily choosing cod liver oil, rich in vitamin D, over other, sweeter, more appealing foods, thereby staving off Rickets.

I cannot remember the scientist or time period, but it must have been long, long ago, when making babies dangerously vitamin-deficient was not deemed inhumane. Nevertheless,

results are results!

I think children are capable of the same kind of surprisingly wise mental choices if we just lay the right variety of logic and reasoning methods out for them. Alongside the syrupy, woo-ish appeal of ghost stories or UFO movies, just make sure to set out some nutritional critical thinking and try to have fun with it. When it really matters, kids will know what thinking tools are best to use.



Celestia Ward lives in Las Vegas, Nevada, and is currently not using her expensive writing degree from Johns Hopkins University. Instead she works as a caricature artist at Planet Hollywood resort on the Strip and runs a small illustration company with her husband. Their drawings can be found at:

www.2headsstudios.com

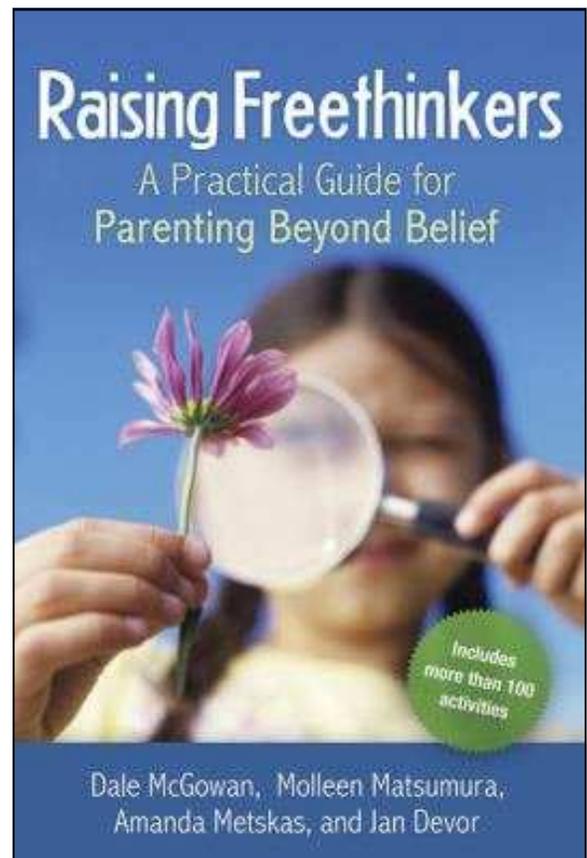
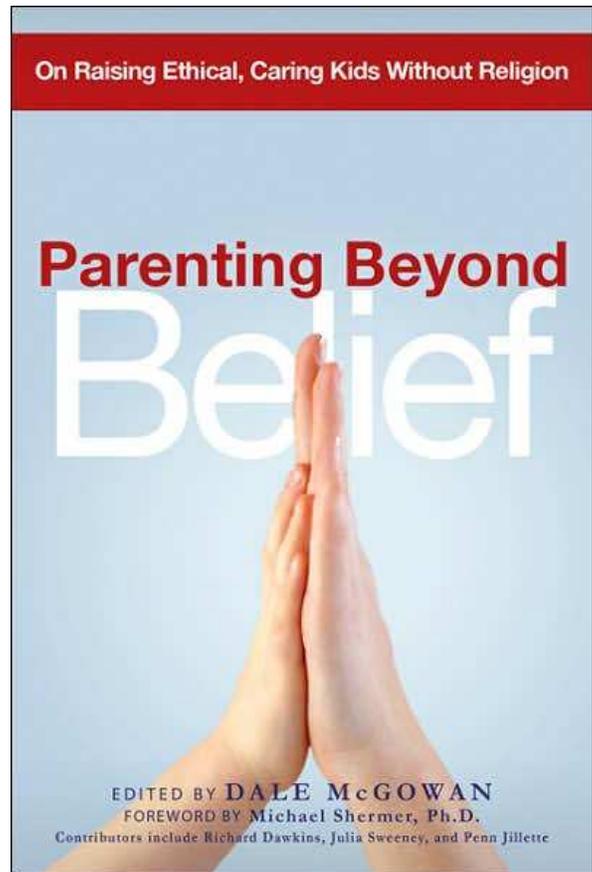
Secular Parenting

Do you want to chat online with other parents about the challenges and rewards of being a nontheist family? Below are links to online discussion groups:

About Atheist Parents: www.cafemom.com/group/412
This group is not for religious debate. This group is for advice, problems and concerns with raising children in an atheist home.

AtheistParents.org: www.atheistparents.org/forum/
Discuss issues you have run into while rearing your children. Participants are welcome to express worries about parenting in the future.

Recommended Reading for Nontheist Parents



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 the Freethought Society (valued at \$1,000).

Below are tag lines that are also being considered. The messages may inspire your imagination and cause you to create artwork to go along with the sentiments expressed. The Freethought Society is:

A philosophical home for the open-minded thinker

Promoting freedom of thought, freedom of choice and freedom of expression

Advocating freedom from religious intrusions

Advancing secular freedoms for all

A welcoming non-religious community

Questioning everything to insure individual freedom

Advancing acceptance and understanding of the nontheist world view

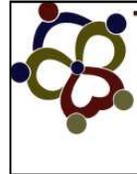
A community of, by and for freethinkers

Here are a few new logo entries from **Derek Colanduno**:



The Freethought Society News
January/February 2010 Newsletter, Vol. 1, No. 1
Editor: Margaret Downey / Various Volunteers
Published By: The Freethought Society (FS)
P.O. Box 242, Pocopson, PA 19366-0242
Phone: (610) 793-2737
Fax: (610) 793-2569
E-Mail: Margaret@FISociety.org
Website: www.FISociety.org

*Encouraging education,
investigation and
understanding*



The Freethought Society News
January/February 2010 Newsletter, Vol. 1, No. 1
Editor: Margaret Downey / Various Volunteers
Published By: The Freethought Society (FS)
P.O. Box 242, Pocopson, PA 19366-0242
Phone: (610) 793-2737
Fax: (610) 793-2569
E-Mail: Margaret@FISociety.org
Website: www.FISociety.org

*Encouraging education,
investigation and
understanding*

The Freethought Society News



January/February 2010 Newsletter, Vol. 1, No. 1
Editor: Margaret Downey / Various Volunteers
Published By: The Freethought Society (FS)
P.O. Box 242, Pocopson, PA 19366-0242
Phone: (610) 793-2737
Fax: (610) 793-2569
E-Mail: Margaret@FISociety.org
Website: www.FISociety.org

*Questioning everything
to insure
individual freedom*

Freethought Society Logo Submission

Name: _____

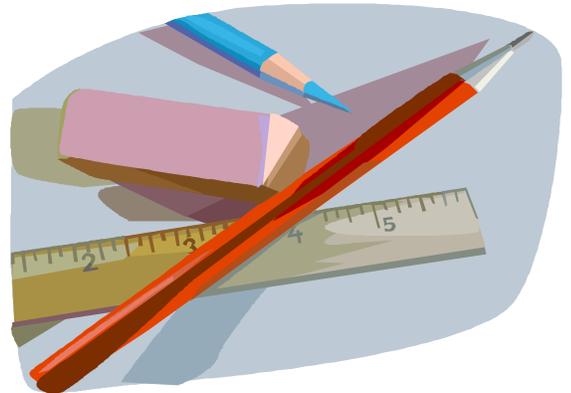
Email Address: _____ Phone: _____

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: downey1@downey1.cnc.net

Fax designs to: (610) 793-2569





The Freethought Society's 2010 Four-Month Activities Calendar



April

The Freethought Society (FS) is pleased to host **M. Kelly Tillery** as the April speaker. Please attend the **Monday, April 26, 2010**, meeting at the **Norristown Public Library** (1001 Powell Street, Norristown, PA 19401). All FS meetings are free and open-to-the-public. The meeting will begin promptly at **7:00 PM** in the large community meeting room.



Tillery's speech "You Can Fight City Hall" will highlight the lawsuit *Gilfillan v City of Philadelphia*, 480 F.Supp. 1161 (E.D.PA. 1979) affirmed 637 F.2d 924 (3rd Cir. 1980). The legality of using taxpayer money to design, build and maintain a large platform from which Pope John Paul II performed Mass on October 3, 1979 was called to question in the lawsuit.

Tillery was a young soon-to-be lawyer at the time. He was the first to complain of this unconstitutional activity to the ACLU beginning the process which ultimately lead to the U. S. Supreme Court. Attend this presentation to learn legal details of fighting City Hall.

Tillery is a partner in the Intellectual Property Group at Pepper Hamilton, LLP in Philadelphia. Pennsylvania. His presentation to FS will be filmed and made available through a link at the FS website.

May

Please attend the Monday, **May 24, 2010 Roy Zimmerman** concert at **Maggie O'Neill's Pub**. The address is 1062 Pontiac Road, Drexel Hill (behind JB Dawkins in the Pilgrim Gardens Shopping Center), Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The show starts at **7:00 PM**. The suggested donation is \$10. Zimmerman's humorous and entertaining songs are about ignorance, war and greed. CDs can be purchased at: royzimmerman.com/store.php



The *Los Angeles Times* says, "Zimmerman displays a lacerating wit and keen awareness of society's foibles that bring to mind a latter-day **Tom Lehrer**."

Lehrer himself says, "I congratulate Roy Zimmerman on reintroducing literacy to comedy songs. And the rhymes actually rhyme, they don't just 'rhyme.'"

Joni Mitchell says, "Roy's lyrics move beyond poetry and achieve perfection."

There's a decidedly "Lefty" slant to his lyrics. "We used to have a name for Right Wing satire," Zimmerman says. "We called it 'cruelty.'"

June

Abby Hafer will present "Un-Intelligent Design: Why Evolution Explains the Human Body and Intelligent Design Does Not" at the **Norristown Public Library** (1001 Powell Street, Norristown, PA 19401). The meeting time is **7:00 PM**. The meeting will take place in the large community meeting room on **Wednesday, June 2, 2010**.

Hafer will look at five parts of the human body that are designed very poorly, and show other animals that got better body parts, leading one to ask "So who does the Creator like better — us, or squid?" Hafer will also explain vestigial organs, and dispose of irreducible complexity by showing eyes in the rest of the animal kingdom at many different levels of complexity, all of which work.



Hafer eared a doctorate in zoology from Oxford University. She has taught human anatomy and physiology at Curry College for the last fifteen years. Hear Hafer interviewed at:

<http://www.hereandnow.org/2009/02/unintelligent-design/>

In preparation for the June FS meeting, you can see Hafer on YouTube at the following link:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p_u4yEUvPJ0

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 suggested.

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



Supporters Added and Renewed

Christopher J. Dunn, Esq.	Cherry Hill, New Jersey
Bob Hoffman	Long Beach, California
Paul Kurtz	Amherst, New York
Dennis Middlebrooks	Brooklyn, New York
Richard A. Mott	Limerick, Pennsylvania
Calvin A. Newnam	Bismarck, North Dakota
Bill Paci	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Nan Rachel Peel	Manorville, New York
Levin Thilghman	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

General Donations

Robert and Kimberly Brown	\$50
Bob Hoffman	\$200
Dan Hoffman	\$20
Aimee Kass	\$60
Bob Kay	\$25
Paul Kurtz	\$200
Susan O'Connell	\$10

Donations to Helping Hands

Marshall Martin	\$200
------------------------	-------

Donations to Unity Events

Paul Grosswald	\$25
Marshall Martin	\$200

Tribute to Leonard Amada

Leonard Amada was a Founding Member of the Freethought Society (FS) and contributed often. He was born on January 28, 1926, in Newark, New Jersey. Leonard died on December 22, 2009 at the age of 83.

Leonard enlisted in the Army at age 18, serving as staff sergeant in Hawaii during WWII. He was an atheist in a foxhole!

After the war, Amada attended New York University earning a BA in clinical psychology, followed by an MS at the New School for Social Research. He is survived by his wife Rena who continues to be a supporter of FS. They were married almost 60 years.

Leonard once submitted the following original quotation for use in the FS newsletter. It expresses his sentiments regarding the Bible:

“Thumping the Bible only requires a detachment from reality. Whereas defending the Bill of Rights demands a passion for reason and the fortitude to defend the right to sustain that passion.”

Leonard will be missed by many. A year prior to his death he founded the Jersey Shore Freethought Society. The photo of Len was taken on the day the group officially formed.

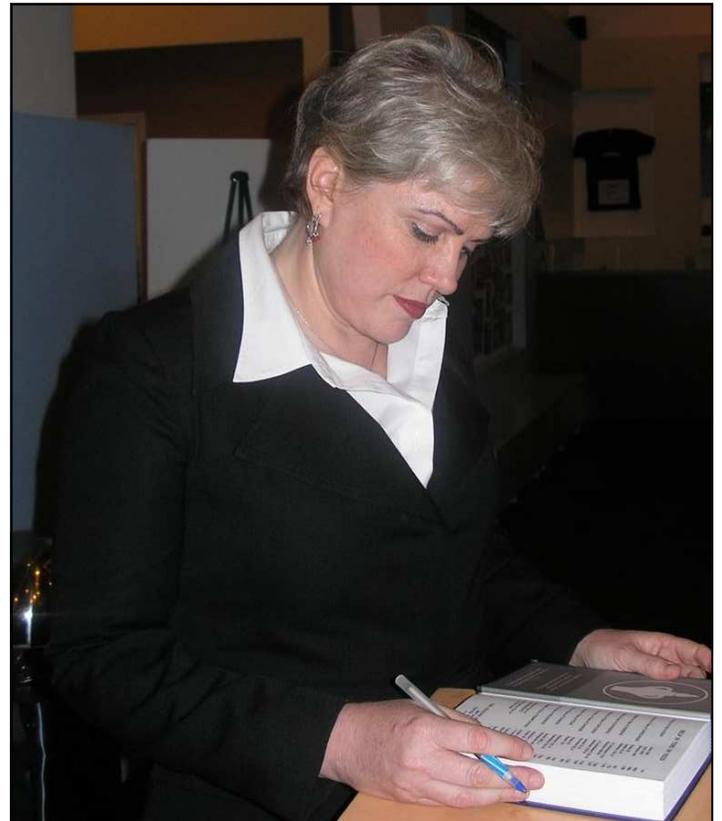


Autographed Bible Give Away

A Bible autographed by **Julia Sweeney** will be given to the next person who becomes a Life Member of FS. The title of “Life Member” is given to anyone donating \$1,000 or more to FS. The Sweeney inscription states:

“Read this! Serously. Just try; you’ll see it’s hogwash. Some good STORIES!!! Fiction! Historical!”

Below is a photo of Sweeney signing the collectible Bible. This photo and others will be included with the Bible “Thank You for Your Life Membership” gift.



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. FS members are committed to the advancement of Freethought and issues of state/church 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.

Yes, I want to:

- become a supporter of FS (includes 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 keep in touch:

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

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

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

Freethought Society

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

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

Special Quote

"The goodness of Jesus Christ has been highly overrated. Jesus was essentially a small time politician who sought a social following by appealing to those least inclined to judge him — the poor and uneducated of his time."

Deepak Doraiswamy, April 10, 1961 is an engineering consultant, academic and freelance writer. He has been a practical atheist since a very young age although he has a strong affinity for Hindu culture.

Print and Place First-Class Postage Here
