

THE ATHEIST

Newsletter of the Atheist Community of Austin, a Nonprofit Organization

P.O. Box 3798, Austin, Texas 78764

512-371-2911

www.atheist-community.org

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Freethinkers Forum



Martin Wagner is the producer of Freethinkers Forum

Taping has begun for our new cable access television show Freethinkers Forum. Unlike The Atheist Experience, this will not be a call-in show. Freethinkers Forum will feature panels of atheists having intelligent discussions about important topics. Due to ACAC requirements, a minimum of three shows must be ready to air before a time slot is assigned. Hopefully, a prime time slot can be found for this exciting new project. The next show will be taped on May 30th at 6:00 at the ACAC studios.

There is a lot of work involved in the making of a cable access show. It is a lot of fun, however, and the producers invite anyone interested to come down and help out. Contact Martin (mw_director@yahoo.com).

Safe Place Walk a Success

On Sunday April 16, twelve of us from ACA took part in the annual Safe Place Walk. This triples the number of ACA participants from last year. We carried our new banner and wore our new t-shirts to show that atheists have a positive role to play in the community. We also raised \$200 that will benefit the Battered Womens shelter. A big thank you to all who showed up and especially to our team captain Ray Blevins for getting us involved in this important cause. ACA

Thank You 'Manda

Thanks for the generous donation. And thank you for entertaining the ACA kids during the last board meeting!

A Letter to the Editor

In the last issue of *The Atheist* I see (page 3) that Allan Parker made the usual mistake of identifying atheism and communism. I think this kind of confusion is one of the causes for the strong rejection of atheism and exaggerated support of religious manifestations in the US. Americans seem to think that Atheists are some sort of enemies of the country eager to change their values, historical traditions and way of life. To Mr. Parker's objection that "Atheists" made a lot of harm in the Soviet Union I would reply that the really harmful thing was not the soviet leaders' disbeliefs, but their beliefs. In a sense communism is just another religion, i.e., a system of "values" supported by a system of belief for which there is no empirical support. The fact that Communists are Atheists is sort of an historical accident. The only thing that makes them "Atheists" is the fact that their mythology, called "historical materialism", does not contain personal supernatural beings, but as just another mythology, it has no better empirical support than any recognized religion. The harm caused by communism and its eventual failure are consequences of intolerance and blind faith in a system lacking appropriate empirical support.

If Atheists in the US want to advance their cause, it is absolutely necessary that they fight the prejudices deeply rooted in Americans' collective mind about them. To identify Atheists with Communists is not better founded nor more appropriate than to identify blacks with rapists or Jews with some sort of world conspirators. It is necessary to denounce these kinds of ideas as unfounded and unacceptable prejudices. ACA

~ Miguel A. Lerma

A Quote to put on your refrigerator

“It is proper to be alarmed at the first experiment on our liberties.”

James Madison

Notes From the Board

ACA Board Meeting, May 14,2000:
Old Business:

Treasurer's report:

- Checking account balance, \$675
- Building Fund Balance, \$7,787.53
- Permanent Fund balance, \$5000 (This has not been invested yet, and Earle will look into this.)
- 'Manda has donated a ring valued at \$1500. The fate of this will be determined at the next board meeting.

Blood Drive:

- ☑ The next Blood Drive will be July 29th, 10 am, at the Regional Blood and Tissue Center on N. Lamar. The next blood drive after that will be on July 29th.

Signs:

- ☐ Jeff will finish of the artwork so that Rodney can get the new banner finished.

Products:

- ☐ Michelle would like to hand this over to someone else. Please see Michelle (gadush@mail.utexas.edu) if you would like to volunteer.

TV:

- ☑ Our new show, Freethinkers Forum was discussed. Martin is the producer.

Library:

- ☐ The question of what to do with our ever growing library has been put off until the next board meeting. A question about this problem was added to the survey.

Alliance Convention:

- ☑ John contacted FACT leaders to give them our vote at the convention, but none of them went either.

Texas Freethought Meeting:

- ☐ This was not discussed at this meeting.

New Business:

Hand over duties to new members

- ☑ Don and Earle switched roles.

Survey '00

- ☑ It was decided to put out a survey to everyone on our mailing list. This will be included in next issue of The Atheist. Results will be discussed at next board meeting.

Digital Camera:

- ☑ \$100 allotted for the purchase of a digital camera. This camera is will be used to document our activities for the newsletter and website. John graciously volunteered to bear this burden.

Membership Drive:

- ☐ At the next board meeting, a membership drive committee will be set up. This will allow for input from the survey.

Goals for the next year:

- ☐ To be set after a discussion of the survey results.

And The Survey Says:

Q. Why are you an Atheist?:

A. I could not reconcile the just, loving, omniscient, omnipotent god I was told existed with what I saw going on the world. "He works in mysterious ways"seemed a cop-out.

Freethought/ Thought Free Awards

January 4 marks the date of the signing of the Treaty of Tripoli. In this document, the earliest leaders of our country made it very clear that "America is in no sense a Christian nation." This treaty, ratified by congress, makes it clear that from the very start our government was meant to be secular.

To mark this historic occasion, ACA will award Freethought, as well as thought free awards to various individuals. The Freethought Award will go to someone who has helped advance the cause of freethinking. The Thought Free Award will be given to someone who has retarded it. Nominations are now being taken for both awards. You may nominate as many people as you like.



Ray Blevins

Please return your nominations to Ray Blevins (dusk_savage@hotmail.com). If you would like to help Ray organize this event, please contact him.

----- Cut here -----

My Freethought Award nomination:

My Thought Free Award nomination:

Announcements

- **Weekly Meetings** Sunday Mornings at Hot Jumbo Bagelry, 307 West 5th Street at 10:30 a.m. on Sunday mornings when lectures are not scheduled at Furr's Cafeteria.
- **ACA Board meetings** are on the second Sunday of the month at 12:00. Board meetings are open to all members.
- **Guest Speakers**
 - **June:** Our June 4 speaker will be Dr. Larry Brownstein of UT and the Center for Rational Living. His topic will be, "How to Communicate Rationally with Religious Family Members." Lectures are held at Furr's Cafeteria in Northcross Mall, 11:00 am on the first Sunday of the month. Susan Brown (liatris@mail.utexas.edu) is in charge of scheduling our lectures.
- The **TV committee** is always looking for volunteers on Sunday mornings. They also need donations to pay for tapes and training. ACA TV Tapes are now available for \$20.00 each and will be offered over the web soon.
- **Products** Our new t-shirts have arrived. We still have our original ACA t-shirts which list a number of famous atheists. See Michelle Gadush (gadush@mail.utexas.edu) for more information on these and other exciting atheist products.
- **Library** If you want to check out a book, contact Earle Beach (earleb@jumpnet.com) so he can be sure to bring it to the bagelry. If you would like to donate a book, please be sure to put your name in it so we know who to thank. See Rodney if you would like to check out the newsletters from other atheist groups.
- The next **blood drive** will be on July 29th. Meet at the blood bank at 10:00AM. Ray Blevins has taken of the role of blood drive coordinator. After you donate, be sure to give him your coupon so that our account can be credited.
- Annual Freethought and Thought-Free Awards Ray is heading up this effort. These awards will be given on January 4th, 2001, the anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Tripoli. Send nominations to Ray Blevins.
- **Randalls Donations** Randalls will donate a percentage of the money you spend there to the Atheist Community of Austin. To take advantage of this offer, contact the customer service department of your nearest Randalls. The ACA number is 5158.

For more information about any of these coming events, call (512) 371-2911 or e-mail liatris@mail.utexas.edu
The Atheist is printed on somewhat recycled paper!

Our annual elections were held at Furr's on May 7th. Your new ACA board of directors are:

Co-chairs:

Susan Brown
John Koonz

Treasurer:

Don Rhoades

Secretary:

Earle Beach

Board members:

Keith Berka
Paul Wilson
Michelle Gadush
Russell Glasser
Arval Bohn
Ray Blevins
Vic Farrow
Jeff Dee
Howard King

From The Editor

Last year, Susan Brown made the suggestion that we offer an informal class on atheism. You might have seen listings for informal classes in the mail lately. UT offers them. So does Austin ISD. I started thinking about it, and this is what I came up with. This course doesn't exist, but it could.

Let's all get more involved this year! Let's make things happen!

Atheism; It's Not Just For Commies!

Lesson 1. "America the Godless; What They Didn't Have the Balls to Teach You in School!" Learn what the founding fathers really meant by the First Amendment with Howard Thompson. (History)

Lesson 2. "Think! Go On, Give it a Try, You Might Like It!" Learn to think critically with Jeff Dee. (Critical Thinking)

Lesson 3. "Alternative Medicine, A Killer Idea!" Learn why many of the courses in this catalog are scams. Rhoan Wynar. (Applied Critical Thinking)

Lesson 4. "You Look Like a Monkey, and You Smell Like One Too!" Learn why men have nipples. John Koonz. (Evolution)

Lesson 5. "Dead Man on a Stick" Learn the truth about Christian mythology. Meet off campus for last dinner and viewing of the documistry 'Life of Brian'

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FOR THE ATHEIST COMMUNITY OF AUSTIN, INC.

Last name: _____ First name: _____

Companion's name (if family or couple membership)

Last name: _____ First name: _____

Address: _____ City/State/Zip: _____

Telephone : (_____) _____ e-mail address: _____

This is to certify that I am a non-theist, that I have read the "Purpose" of the Atheist Community of Austin, Inc. as stated in the Constitution (below), and that I am in agreement with the principles stated herein. I understand that membership is open only to non-theists.

Purpose

The Atheist Community of Austin is organized as a nonprofit educational corporation to develop and support atheist community; to provide opportunities for socializing and friendship, to promote atheist viewpoints, to encourage positive atheist culture, to defend the First Amendment principle of state/church separation, to oppose discrimination against atheists, and to work with other organizations in pursuit of common goals.

This organization shall operate in an open, democratic manner, without discrimination as to gender, race, age, sexual orientation, ethnic origin, nationality, or disability.

The Bylaws to this Constitution are intended to further define and explain the operating procedure of this organization. Changes may be made to the Bylaws when necessary to improve the operation of this organization. Changes to the Bylaws shall not alter the purpose of this organization as set forth in its Constitution.

Check all that apply

I wish to become a member of the Atheist Community of Austin, Inc. Membership fees are \$24.00 per year, but our membership year does not begin until the 1st of March. My prorated membership fee, at \$2.00 per month u n t i l next March, is enclosed.

I wish to make a tax exempt donation to ACA .Please direct my donation to the following fund:

General Fund Building Fund Permanent Fund

I only wish to participate in the e-mail group. My e-mail address is above. No fee is required.

I wish to help ACA save money by receiving The Atheist by e-mail. No fee is required.

I wish to receive a hard copy of The Atheist in the mail. \$10 is enclosed.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Please return this form to: Atheist Community of Austin, Inc., P.O. Box 3798, Austin, Texas 78764

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