

## Letters

continued

young people in science and mathematics can be discharged simply for his or her strong conviction that religion and education should not become entangled, as our forefathers opined.

Keep church and state separate forever.

Barry A. Rowe  
Indianapolis

**A**

## Coalition

continued from page 1

The Coalition, as yet unnamed, hopes to bring together such diverse "single issue" organizations as Atheists, Humanists, mainstream religious, education, labor, civil rights, civil liberties, free speech, reproductive freedom, gay/lesbian and environmental groups and empower each other with strength in numbers and presence.

Our goal is to educate the public regarding the truth about the so-called Christian Coalition and to block the Religious Right in its quest to govern these United States.

The first meeting of prospective participants in the Tampa Bay area was held November 12 and generated a very positive response. A follow-up meeting in December will establish where the Coalition will head and we will continue to report to you.

**A**

I hope to attend, but I can't be sure yet.

I definitely plan to attend.

I can be a workshop presenter/panelist on this topic.

Please attach outline of material to be covered.

I can give an informative speech on this topic.

Attach description

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Return to **A of F, Miami** by  
**December 15**

## Historic First Annual Atheist Alliance Convention Set

We want you at the

First Annual Atheist Alliance Convention

April 14, 15 and 16, 1995

Universal City (Los Angeles)

At the beautiful Beverly Garland Hotel near Universal Studios, Citywalk and many other L.A. attractions.

A first class convention is planned including multi-media theater and conference rooms. Banquets will be served in an elegant ballroom.

Atheists United of Los Angeles, will host the convention. Plans are being laid for an exciting weekend of speakers, workshops and socializing. The theme will be "The Atheist Role in Society - A Conference to Foster Growth and Empowerment".

The convention will be a working conference with debates, videos, contests, and all the fun and games of being in a hotel filled with atheists.

Early estimates of costs indicate the convention fee will be about \$60, with dinners and other activities added on at convention-goers' discretion.

Schedule your time and start making travel plans now to be in attendance at this ungodly good convention-vacation!

Send form at right to *Atheists of Florida* at Miami address below.



P.O. Box 530102  
Miami, FL 33153-0102

ADDRESS CORRECTION  
REQUESTED

6 October, November 1994

*Atheists of Florida*

Volume III Number 7

October / November, 1994

Dedicated to the absolute separation of State and church

## Coalition Seeks to Preserve Freedoms

*"Eternal vigilance is the price of Liberty"* — by Flo Morgenroth

NEVER WAS THIS STATEMENT TRUER than today when the Religious Right is bent on destroying our first amendment freedoms of speech, the press, expression and freedom of, or from, religion.

Against an unprecedented onslaught of intolerance and hate-mongering by the Religious Right, organizations all over the country are joining together to counteract the damage already inflicted on many communities and to prevent further erosion of our hard-won civil rights and liberties. Experience has shown that organizations, working independently, often fail to achieve their objectives. Working together for a common goal, a Tampa Bay coalition of organizations will help bring our community together to develop collaborative strategies to counter the agenda and activities of those who would destroy the principle of separation of state and church to which this nation is and has been committed.

(continued on back page)



### Alliance Members

Atheists United  
Los Angeles

Atheist Coalition  
San Diego

Atheist Network  
Houston

Minnesota  
Atheists

Atheists of  
Florida

Atheists of San  
Francisco Region

Atheists and  
Agnostics of  
Wisconsin

Atheist Centre  
Vijayawada,  
India

Atheist and Other  
Freethinkers  
Sacramento CA

Freethought  
Society of Greater  
Philadelphia

Pocopson PA



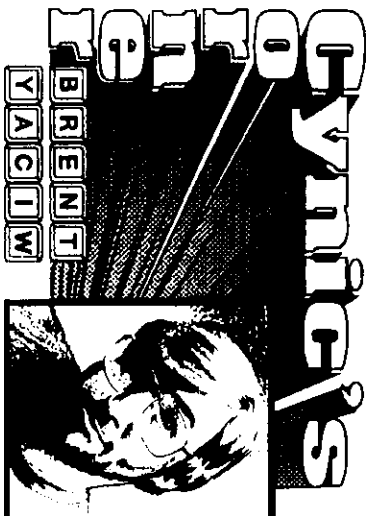
### Atheists of Florida Board Meets

Members of the A of F Board met in Miami Nov 6. Details next month. Seated, from left: Vice-President Ed Golly, Chairman Albert Lyngzeitson, President Christos Tzanetakos, Treasurer Charles Ross, Secretary Brent Yaciw, Standing, from left: Nan Owens, Louis Miller, Steven Miles, Ed McDougall, Flo Morgenroth, Dr. John Xanthopoulos, Ceila Glantz, Jim Strayer, Daniel Streit, Michael Sturgulewski, and Anthony Schliefsien.

*"You don't suppose something like this is ever finished, someone else will try."* — Darrow

*With minor modifications, this was a talk delivered to the Unitarian-Universalist Church in Clearwater, Florida, July 3, 1994*

Most of the discussion last month only mentioned parents who have their children's best interests in mind, at least in their own views, and hold somewhat orthodox viewpoints. But what of parents who happen to have peculiar ideas that don't jive with reality, that doom their children to ridicule in the face of modern science? What about parents who hold spiritual beliefs, racist beliefs, homophobic beliefs, none of which have a basis in fact? Should those parents be allowed to teach their children that certain beliefs are the "right" beliefs, that certain races are the "chosen" races, that certain sexual orientations are "immoral" simply because these prejudices have been passed from generation to generation and are now hidden under the mantle of "cultural traditions?"



## Who Owns the Children?

Part Two

I happen to be a strong proponent of multicultural education. I think it is important to recognize that this planet, and this country, contain a variety of cultures that have all made contributions to our development as a human race, even those based on erroneous concepts. On the other hand, I deplore the idea that multicultural teachings often become either a game of one-upmanship where students play "my ancestors accomplished more than your ancestors" games. I agree with a talk show host named Jack Cole who says, "All history is black history," because as far as our current scientific knowledge goes we all descended from Africans, and I agree that there's no need to segregate history, but there is a need to make sure that children get more than the whitewashed version - both meanings apply - they often received in the past. We don't need Disney's

America spreading sanitized history at fifty dollars a day.

Even worse is the other option, where school lessons devolve into simplistic "everything's okay" pablum which teaches nothing but makes the teachers seem like fools. In attacking this misguided educational concept, the conservatives are one hundred percent correct: part of learning is being able to make evaluations and judgements, and you cannot do that if the teacher tells you that "two plus two equals five" is an "acceptable effort." Such teachings say there's nothing wrong with letting people believe in astrology or tarot or seances or similar hogwash because it's all a matter of connecting with a source of cosmic power or receiving information that their "inner self" can use to make decisions with.

I say, "Garbage in, Garbage out!" The methodology and reliability of the information one uses to make a decision is crucial, because only by purest accident can someone make good decisions based on bad knowledge or irrational procedures. It's important for children to learn how to evaluate sources of information, and what to do with that information once it's ingested, and if they put some voodoo practitioner's guesses on a par with years of medical research they just might kill someone! If they decide that a temporary remission in a disease or a placebo effect on pain is a sign from god that they're cured they might be committing suicide!

How can we best protect the children. We have laws preventing physical child abuse, although even as clear-cut as that subject seems to be the public is nervous over enforcing the laws, or how they are interpreted. Mental child abuse is ten times as controversial and equally harder to prove. Regardless, I think it's time that controlled, secular, public education become mandatory. For the moment, I'll ignore secular private schools.

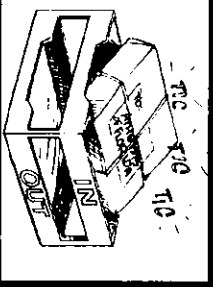
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**Ed Golly**

Atheists of Florida, Inc. is a non-profit, educational organization designed to heighten public awareness about atheism and to provide intellectually stimulating contacts for the membership.  
 Membership dues should be sent to the chapter of interest. Direct general correspondence to:  
 Miami Chapter / P.O. Box 530102 / Miami, FL 33153-0102. Contact phone is (305) 936-0210.  
 Annual dues are:  
 Sustaining \$ 50.00  
 Couple 30.00  
 Individual 25.00  
 Student (under 25 yrs.) 5.00

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 Tampa Bay Chapter / P.O. Box 130753 / Tampa, FL 33661-0753.  
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 Atheists of Florida, Inc. is affiliated with the national Atheist Alliance for purposes of information exchange.

# Letters



## Lame blame

**Dear Editor:**  
 If Adolf Hitler and his high-ranking officers can be held responsible for the murder of Jews during WWII, despite the fact that this was not done on a personal level, I think it's about time we apply this same culpability to those who encourage anti-abortion fanaticism that results in murder.

Randall Terry, David Caton, Carole Griffin, the pope, and all of the other religionists who have either directly encouraged or given tacit support to fanatics like Michael Griffin and Paul Hill should be treated as criminally as Hitler and his minions. The message must be sent: terrorism will not be tolerated!

Brent Yaciv  
Seminole

## Let these 'truths' be self evident...

*An article in the September 22 St. Petersburg Times addressed psychic powers and generated this response by A of F member Greg Simpson*

I am stunned! How could Tom Zucco still remain skeptical of the sheer power of psychic ability after attending the recent gathering of psychics at Jannus Landing? After all, he directly experienced the cosmic power and wonderment of this most majestic of human abilities.

The tarot card master he engaged for a mere \$10 surely must have convinced him of the reality of this transcendental, ancient power. He would be taking a trip in the near future (amazing!); he would see conflict but not be involved in it (stunning!); and, perhaps most fantastically, he was told that he sometimes likes to stand back and act as an observer. Incredible! How could the psychic possibly determine such stunning truths? Why, it must be psychic power at work!

If this didn't erode Mr. Zucco's skepticism, then his encounter with the organizer of the event, the Brillo-haired psychic wizard Gary Spivey, surely must have. After telling a woman who had misplaced "something" that the "something" was simply gone (wonderful!), he told Mr. Zucco that the Hotel Detroit is haunted. If this revelation isn't proof positive of the reality of psychic ability, I don't know what is!

And don't forget, Mr. Zucco, as quoted in your article, Tampa Bay has more psychics

than almost anywhere else — further proof of the power of psychic ability. After all, according to Gary Spivey, "The money is very good here." Oops! My mistake. He said, "The energy is very good here."  
 Greg Simpson  
Clearwater

## Circus of the absurd

*Let's face it — the Simpson trial is here for a while. Yaciv dropped this note to The Suncoast News:*

**Editor:**  
 This O.J. Simpson situation is reminding me more every day of religious squabbles. On one side you have the believers in his innocence — let's call them the Protestants, since Billy Graham is among them. The other side we'll call the Catholics, though you may substitute any other non-Protestant group. Neither group has the complete story; there are insufficient facts, and of those some are of questionable origin. Yet both sides are vehemently pronouncing or denouncing, calling for exoneration or a hanging, jumping to the belief without sufficient evidence.

Of course, there are also the atheists: those few who are saying we shouldn't jump to any conclusions, that there isn't enough known to make a rational judgment, that fairness requires waiting until the facts are known and basing judgment on them along. Faith, whether in Simpson's guilt or innocence, is simply illogical.

Once again, I'm proud to be a member of the latter group and am shaking my head at the circus of the absurd.

Brent Yaciv  
Seminole

## Keep church, state separate forever

*Published September 4 in Florida Today:*

I stand in gratitude to Brian Brown, the Alabama schoolteacher who has been suspended from teaching for his refusal to follow his school district's directive to observe a moment of silence during class.

Brown believes that this nonsense has a religious connotation. I concur. Indeed, the word "silence" is actually a euphemism for prayer.

Given the fact that Pat Robertson's Christian Coalition has taken over 1,200 school boards nationwide, it should come as no surprise that this incident has occurred.

The Christian Coalition will not stop short of anything but mandatory prayer and Bible reading in public schools, despite the fact that this is a clear violation of the First Amendment.

The American people should be outraged that a competent, sincere, and successful teacher who cares deeply about educating

(next page)

# Atheists of Florida CHAPTER MEETINGS:

## MIAMI

Sunday, November 27 at 2:00 pm in rooms A and B of the Ft. Lauderdale Main Library. Dr. John Xanthopoulos will present a talk on multiculturalism.

Atheist Hotline: (305) 936-0210.

## TAMPA

The Tampa Bay Chapter will meet Saturday, November 26 at the Clearwater East Public Library from 10:00 am to noon. Flo Morgenroth will discuss the formation of the Coalition and time permitting we will view a Forum program.

For more information: Ed Golly 839-7567.

## MANA-SOTA

Mana-Sota Chapter will meet on Sunday, November 27th from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. at the Marie Selby Public Library, 1001 Boulevard of the Arts, Sarasota. Guest speaker Ed Golly will tell about the history and future of Atheists of Florida.

## Cynic *continued*

Next month I'll discuss religious private schools, which on the standardized test level may appear to be doing well. I just wonder what else they are or are not teaching.

Continued in next month's  
*Cynic's Corner.*

A

## Bushwacked in the streets

*Ed McDougall, Sr., Board Member and  
Muna-Sota Chapter Director*



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**M**EMBERS OF THE MANA-SOTA CHAPTER Atheists of Florida attended the recent Jeb Bush rally in downtown Sarasota on Nov. 2, 1994. The basis of our demonstration was Bush's stand on women's rights, school prayer and school vouchers. Bush had as his attendants none other than U.S. Senator Connie Mack and former Education Secretary Bill Bennett. This was my first introduction to public demonstration. I was accompanied by chapter secretary Fred D. Poplin and member Sibyl Gordon.

*I have never, in my 59 years, ever experienced the fright of that day.*

Although I am 6'3" tall and weigh 265 pounds, I felt reduced to a 5'5" 150 pound Warsaw Jew. The young children (teenagers) were banded together as if Brown Shirts. They were assigned the task of surrounding us with their Jeb Bush signs so that our presence should not be seen by the candidate or his entourage. We were jeered, cursed, and insulted. Our parents were insulted. We were told that "we did not belong there". Outnumbered with odds of about 100 to 1, we were effectively obscured in entirety.

Yet there were still those in the crowd (with less fortitude than we) who came to us and whispered, "We agree with you." I looked into the eyes of many Bush supporters who were obviously embarrassed by the treatment we were receiving. The entire scenario reminded me of the pictures of those who stood by in Warsaw and whispered their support to those poor bastards who were herded away to be slaughtered by another tyrant bent on ethnic cleansing on that crystal night.

Jeb Bush wallowed in his support. Bill Bennett bragged that Rush Limbaugh had sent a supporting message. They strutted, so like those misleaders of 50 years ago.

I do not attempt to side here with one or another in this gubernatorial campaign. I speak here only of my personal feelings and fears. If this thought train continues to permeate our political structure and process, we are in serious, serious trouble. The hate that oozes from the Republican Religious Right is like a hideous malignant growth that, unless stopped, will overcome all that we have established in more than 200 years.

A

*We spotted a letter to Marilyn Vos Savant in Parade Magazine which she could not answer:*

**In the Garden of Eden, after God created Adam and before Eve was created, did Adam have sex organs? If he did, what for? And if he didn't, did God have to go back and "fix" Adam?**

## Protests forecast

No sooner had Planned Parenthood of Northern New England announced that it would take part in clinical trials of abortion pill RU-486, Operation Rescue began laying plans for a series of protests over the coming Easter weekend. Clinics in Pensacola, FL and New Orleans are also on the hit list.

## NEWS FILES

### One bad apple...

The Supreme Court last month refused to hear the appeal of an Anchorage, Alaska rental agent who cites his religious beliefs in refusing to rent to unmarried couples. The justices, over the single dissenting vote of

Clarence Thomas, left intact an Alaska Supreme Court ruling that said Tom Swanner violated state and local laws by refusing to rent to such couples.

Also, the court ordered a California court to reconsider an order that keeps anti-abortion protesters away from an abortion clinic in Vallejo, CA.

And the court set the stage for a potentially far-reaching ruling on freedom of religion as it agreed to review a state university's refusal to subsidize a student-run Christian magazine. The justices voted to review rulings that said



*And in a five-to-four decision today the U.S. Supreme court ruled that atheists may not be barred from foxholes*

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the University of Virginia's refusal complied with the constitutionally required separation of church and state.

But probably the biggest triumph for state church separation came when the court rejected an appeal by the City of San Diego to preserve a 43-foot Christian cross on the Mt. Soledad public park. Two citizens and a group had filed suit opposing the cross which had become known as the "Easter cross". Erected in 1953 by a group of private citizens as a memorial to veterans, a federal judge recognized that some public funds had been used to maintain the cross and issued an order barring it from public property. An appeals court upheld the ruling, saying the cross had clear religious connotations and was unconstitutional under the First Amendment and the California Constitution.

The city's appeal to the court was rejected without comment or dissent.

### School prayer

With Clinton waffling on his particular stand on the issue, we can only hope it's just an attempt to retain his office in the '96 election. But his words deserve careful scrutiny, as he emphasizes that he believes the nation's schools ought to be teaching "basic values of citizenship, including valuing the right of people to have and express their faith." He's literally defining the correct aspects of citizenship to include religious superstition! Not only does this exceed his authority as a public servant, it is a slap in the face of the non-superstitious members of our citizenry.

He goes on to say, "Indeed, the schools, perhaps today more than ever before, need to be the instrument by which we transfer important values of citizenship." With this statement, he contradicts the "family values" concept of parents guiding the child's ethics and concedes it to the schools, who have never rightfully had that responsibility.

But as Clinton rescinds only to muddle his message, Republican House leader Gingrich endorses in no uncertain terms the link between patriotism and superstition. "Re-establishing the legitimate right of praying is at the core of being American. It will have surprising impact within a year on the quality of life in the schools."

No lawmaker in the history of these United States was ever assigned the task or given the power of determining for the citizens what constitutes "being American." Many have, however, abused their political power to assume that responsibility by advancing the notion that acceptance of the Christian religion is tantamount to being a proper citizen. It's McCarthy all over again...just replace "communist" with "non-Christian".

Next month some "Insight" on the background of the school prayer issue in America.

A