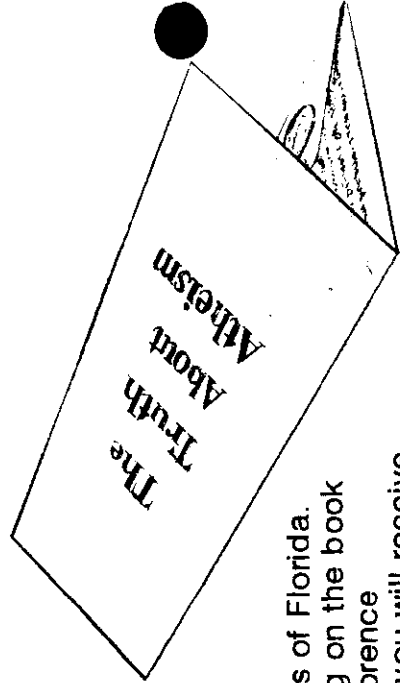


Our newest publication, *The Truth About Atheism*, is designed to expand on atheism and tell about our organization. It will be sent along with a newsletter to any and all inquirers about Atheists of Florida.

We are also, at present, working on the book *Women; Religion and Power* by Florence Morgenroth. Upon its completion, you will receive both publications along with your newsletter, probably about September, 1993. If you would like a few of the *Truth* pamphlets in the meantime, write to either Atheists of Florida address and we will gladly send what you need at no charge.

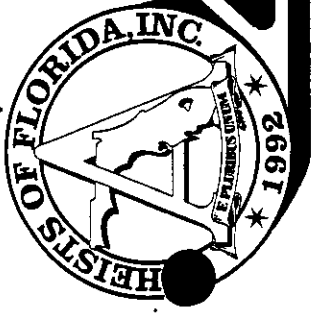


You may fax letters or comments to the newsletter. Our fax is open weekdays during normal business hours. (813)839-7567. Tell the operator you have a newsletter fax.

8 June 1993 Atheists of Florida

Atheists of Florida, Inc.
P.O. Box 530102
Miami, FL 33153-0102

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED



ATHEISTS of FLORIDA

Member of ATHEIST ALLIANCE, the Democratic Alliance of Autonomous Atheist Societies
Chapters in Miami and Tampa Bay
June, 1993
Volume II Number 06

Sherman vows to continue fight

TAMPA — DESPITE A CRUSHING LOSS earlier this month from the U.S. Supreme Court, atheist crusader Robert Sherman has vowed to continue his fight in stopping teacher-led recitations of the Pledge of the Allegiance in public elementary schools.



Rob Sherman

Court decision ruled that states may not compel students in reciting the pledge, it disturbed Sherman that schools are allowed to lead the pledge under any circumstance.

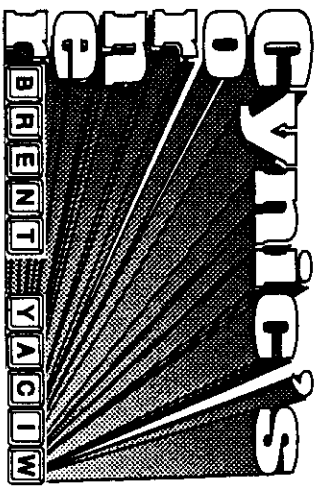
Both a federal judge and the 7th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled against Sherman, noting that "the reference to God contained in the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag can best be understood...as a form of 'ceremonial deism' protected from (being unconstitutional) chiefly because it has lost through rote repetition any significant content."

"In effect, the court has said the pledge doesn't mean anything, that it has lost its significance," Sherman said. "If that's the case, why do we even bother with it?"

In the flurry of publicity following the June 1 decision, Sherman has been featured on more than a dozen talk shows around the country. He's been encouraged by the "nearly unanimous" support against the Court's ruling. "Even Christians don't like the idea of the justices ignoring the prohibition on mandatory speech laws," he said.

(see Sherman, page 6)

You have not converted a man because you have silenced him.
— John, Viscount Morley



The True Agenda of the Religious Right

FINALLY, I HAVE IT ALL figured out! What the Religious Right really wants! It's so simple! They want less belief in religion, more "pornography," more "illicit" sex,

Atheists Of Florida, Inc., is a non-profit, educational organization designed to heighten public awareness about atheism and atheism, and to provide intellectually stimulating contacts for the membership.

Membership dues should be sent to the chapter of interest. General correspondence should be directed to the Miami Chapter, P.O. Box 530102, Miami, FL 33153-0102. Contact: Phone is (305) 936-0210. Annual dues are: \$50.00 - Sustaining; \$30.00 - Couple; \$25.00 - Individual; \$5.00 - Student (under 25 yrs.). Dues are pro-rated quarterly, with annual renewals due by January 1.

Newsletter correspondence and chapter inquiries should be sent to the Tampa Bay Chapter, P.O. Box 130753, Tampa, FL 33681-0753. Deadline for newsletter items is the 15th of each month. The A.O.F. newsletter is provided free of charge to our members as a medium of exchange. Letters are published from members on a space-available basis. In general accord with guidelines set out in Vol. 1, No. 6, national Atheists Of Florida, Inc., is affiliated with the national Atheist Alliance for purposes of information exchange.

- Chairman Albert E. Lyngzeidson
- President Christine Tsanetacos
- Vice President Ed Golly
- Secretary Ceia Ghantz
- Treasurer Charles A. Ross
- State Board of Directors
 - Kyoko Brogdon
 - John J. Diamond
 - Steven Miller
 - Louis Miller
 - Florence Montgomery
 - Daniel Strel
 - Brent Yaciw
- Newsletter Editor Ed Golly
- Assistant/Leaders Editor Brent Yaciw

more death from AIDS, more starving and uneducated children, and more abortions!

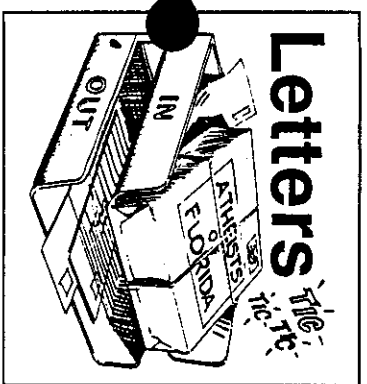
Obviously, this is not what they claim to want, quite the opposite. They claim to want more people to believe in religion, and on the surface, this is what they try to accomplish by inundating us with religious moralizing messages and attempts to force public (government) endorsement of religion through prayer in schools, etc. However, a look at other countries with official religions shows that religion is more often ignored or diminished by that country's citizens. Many European countries have state religions, yet the people are far less religious, both in practice and belief, than Americans. Thus, the effect Religious Right's efforts will likely reduce the influence and position of religion in our society.

Let's look at pornography and other "immoral, sexual" subjects. One record company executive recently stated that the effect of "Parental Advisory" labels, concerning "bad words" on albums, has resulted in many hands specifically including four-letter words (and I don't mean "pray") to get the advisory label, thus making their records more attractive to minors. Similarly, despite school programs which stress abstinence (thanks to religious influences on school boards) as the preferred method of avoiding AIDS, teens are having more sex, and more unprotected sex, than ever before.

Now we can easily recognize that besides disease, having unprotected sex also results in pregnancies. The Religious Right discourages birth control education, and encourages these ill-prepared "parents" to keep their offspring, resulting in a permanent underclass of poor breeders. I know that some of these "parents" will actually put their children together enough to raise their children in a semi-decent environment, if you ignore the religious brainwashing, but they are the exception not the rule.

But let's not forget about abortions. A small article tucked away in the *St. Petersburg Times* noted that in countries with strong anti-abortion laws, the incidence of abortion actually INCREASES, presumably due to the aforementioned lack of general sex/birth control education received.

I realize that none of this is what the Religious Right claims to want. Unfortunately, their ignorance of cause-and-effect means it's what we'll get, unless we put a stop to their agenda.



Clinton's policies refreshing change

Published in Florida Today
May 15, 1993

President Clinton deserves accolades for his rational, humane treatment of social issues. After 12 years of repressive rule under Bush and Reagan, it is very refreshing indeed to witness a marked reversal of suppression of individual rights.

I applaud Clinton's decision to lift the ban of gays in the military, his lifting of restrictions on abortion, the focus on drug treatment and prevention rather than increased interdiction and incarceration, and his firm stance in support of church/state separation.

Despite my disapproval of his tax-increase plan, I am nonetheless elated with his commitment to individual freedom and support of self-determination.

I take great comfort in knowing that the exclusionary agendas of the previous administrations now are defunct.

Barry A. Rowe
Indianatic
(Brevard County, FL)

Plenty of religion in this country

Published in Florida Today May 21, 1993

Regarding the recent letter by John Jalonski in which he stated, "It has become apparent that there is no freedom of religion in our democracy," what a ludicrous assertion. Churches of every denomination abound, tax-free, in every city and town. Christmas, Easter and Hanukkah are observed and celebrated and treated as national holidays.

"God Bless America" is a song of devotion to our nation. All currency is embellished with "In God We Trust".

The Christian Broadcasting Corp. broadcasts 24 hours a day on every major cable service. Numerous sermons are televised and broadcast on radio every Sunday. Many secular news reporters refer to praying for survivors of tragedies. Clearly, it would be more accurate to state that there is little freedom from religion in our democracy.

Barry A. Rowe
Indianatic

...This little piggy went to church...

Printed May 25th in the Largo-Seminole Times
Re: "Of pig farmers and prayer lines," 5/13/93
Dear Editor,

I must thank Dr. Guterman for providing the perfect metaphor. Yes, churches are like pigs, they've been feeding at the public trough for centuries. I agree there is a difference between the "runts" like the 1-900 dial-a-prayer line and his own big porker: at least the "runts" callers are paying a greater proportion of their own way!

Extending the metaphor even further, while there may be differences in baby pigs, one still cannot make silk purses out of any of their ears. The basic nature of religion an dial-a-prayer lines is offering false hope and faith instead of encouraging productive action and rational solutions. Yes, there are many ignorant testimonials from people who swear that their prayers saved them from some terrible tragedy. Of course, those whose prayers did nothing, a far greater number, seldom are heard from. The newspaper never reports anyone who says, "I prayed and prayed, but he died anyway!" That is so common it is not news. Nor are there, obviously, reports from the dead who played for life in their final moments. Many of the prayerly have selective memory failures, remembering only the times that it "works" (when random chances or human efforts provide favorable outcomes) and forgetting when prayer is ineffectual. Even worse, they ignore statistical evidence of prayer's uselessness by (ir)rationalizing about "God's will."

I hope this so-called "guest column" was charged the usual rates for advertising religious services. If we can't prevent our tax dollars from supporting these pigs, at least our newspaper subscriptions shouldn't help fill the troughs!

Brent Yaciw
Seminole

Commentary Losing Touch

It was quite a while ago that I wrote a dissertation of JOB in the Bible for a Humanities study in college and going through some old papers I came across it. I viewed it with curiosity and renewed interest while thumbing through the aged yellow pages. I was not yet an atheist at the young tender age I wrote it. I remembered the Bible perplexed me at the time with its inconsistencies and prejudices all printed "by the inspiration of God."

It was obvious that the premise of the Christian religions of life after death was glaringly missing in JOB and that the conversations of Satan and God were too friendly, too stereotyped and too clumsy to be believable. The reaction of Job was so typical of a stone age premise that illness was the result of sin and that God punished with terrible illness. It permeated the book of JOB in particular and the entire OLD TESTAMENT in general. The gifts of riches and good health were the only "reward" God first denied and then gave back manifold to Job and his family for the just life he had lived. This flies in the face of today's Religious Right who usually are eager to discuss life after death and the "patience" of Job but not the Biblical omission of the sainthood of Job.

Now that I am an atheist I look at the book of JOB and see cartoon characters who

make illogical and outdated arguments. It is unabashedly a book of ancient Greek mythology so intrinsically un-Jewish that it embarrasses our Judeo-Christian logic. It is inherently too long, too redundant and too boring for modern day thought. It doesn't explore the religious issues that bombard the television airways every Sunday while offering us everlasting life after death for monetary donations now.

The Reagan Doctrine was curiously similar in that it offered the "Trickle Down" theory and the idea that the rich, if made richer, would, in a god-like gesture, benevolently rain down in the future the necessities which would take care of the poor. Reading other people's speeches, he lied to us about his determination to balance the budget and reduce the deficit by "growing out" of it as we kept sliding deeper into debt. We now see it was a failed theory which has plunged our economy into imminent bankruptcy unless measures to change course are taken. In the long run, lies and quick fixes never work out like JOB, the Reagan Doctrine was built upon a false premise.

see cartoon characters who

Sherman continued

Sherman estimated the long court battle cost about \$20,000. Although he has no immediate plans to pursue a different legal avenue, Sherman will not let the issue die.

"I will continue to embarrass the government by pointing out what the Supreme Court is saying. Just like we embarrass the Christians when we point out what the Bible really says," he noted.

This latest decision joins an "overwhelming body of examples" where atheists are being discriminated against, Sherman said. In his estimation, the courts have repeatedly sacrificed the Constitution, and in particular, the First Amendment, rather than afford atheists equal protection under law.

"All these losses are building up to one thing," he said. "It's helping demonstrate that discrimination against atheists is pervasive. I've been pleading with Congress to enact civil rights for atheists, and this decision just adds to the track record why such a law is needed." **A**

Atheists of Florida CHAPTER MEETINGS:

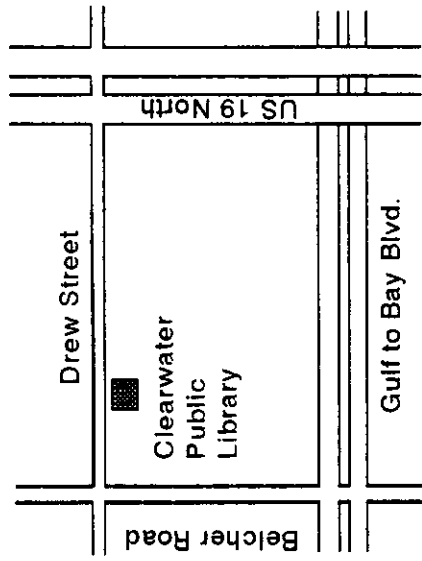
MIAMI

The Miami Chapter will meet Sunday, June 13 in the Board Room of the Ft. Lauderdale Main Library, 100 South Andrews, beginning at 2:00. One of the Forum programs will be shown. For more information, call the Atheist Hotline at (305) 936-0210.

TAMPA

The Tampa Bay Chapter will meet Saturday, June 19 from 1:00 to 2:30 at the Clearwater Public Library, 2521 Drew Street. One of the Forum programs will be shown, followed by our

business meeting. For more information: Brent Yaciv, 393-6321.



Religious belief internationally

Here's an item we spotted in a Catholic publication which claims to have interviewed 10,000 people in 12 countries. Do you think they were all interviewed while coming out of church?

Several of the figures make it obvious that the poll is biased and incorrect. Example: USA, Norway and probably W. Germany. We know, for example, if we took an unbiased poll in the United States, we would probably find about 10 to 20% either atheist or agnostic and this would probably be rivaled only by Ireland, Poland, and maybe New Zealand. But what is most obvious is the noted absence of several other countries: China, India, France, Finland, Denmark, Sweden, and Russia. These countries collectively contain a huge percentage of the world's population and while many of them may have large percentages of believers, they do not all embrace the Christian god, thus they are ignored in the poll. It's just interesting to see how slanted some journals can be.

	Believe In God	Atheist	Believe In afterlife
W. Germany	67%	13%	53%
E. Germany	26%	61%	12%
Britain	70%	12%	51%
USA	94%	2%	78%
Netherlands	50%	22%	53%
Hungary	64%	19%	26%
Italy	85%	4%	66%
Ireland	92%	2%	80%
N. Ireland	94%	2%	78%
Poland	88%	12%	61%
Norway	59%	16%	60%
Israel	71%	18%	42%
Slovenia	61%	27%	33%
N. Zealand	70%	8%	70%

Forum completes first season

Production expected to continue in Tampa

WTTN 12 PROGRAMS IN THE can, the *Forum* has concluded its production for this year at the WTRN facilities in Dade County. But due to interest expressed by the Jones Intercable Public Access facilities in Tampa, we are giving serious consideration to continuation of the series in about two months.

The Tampa Bay area contains a wealth of potential guests available and by utilizing the Jones studios we could maintain the quality of the production.

Those of you who have not yet seen one of the productions may do so at a local chapter meeting or you may order a set of four programs from Brent Yaciw (next month's newsletter will contain details).

Current Forum Broadcast Schedule

Miami-Dade Cable-TAP Channel 35:
 Mondays, 10:00 a.m.
 Wednesdays, 9:30 p.m.
 Thursdays, noon.
 Tampa, Jones Intercable:
 Time Channel
 Monday, 3:30 p.m. 24
 Tuesday, 5:30 p.m. 23*
 Wednesday, 8:30 p.m. 24
 *Simulcast on Paragon Channel 16 or 17 for Hillsborough County

Forum on the move

Brent Yaciw, frequent panelist on the *Forum*, has been contacting other potential sources to utilize the program. Here is a response he received from Madison, Wisconsin. It speaks for itself:

May 26, 1993

Dear Brent:

Your sample copy of the Atheists of Florida Forum arrived safely and I was very impressed. As Ken Poulsen probably mentioned, one of the hats I wear is that of Chairman of the Board of Directors of WYOU-TV (the public access serving Madison and the surrounding communities of Dane County, WI -- 87,000+ subscriber households).

I have turned over the particular episode you sent me to my station manager for inclusion into next months cable-casting schedule.

I am also having our own little club, Atheists & Agnostics of Wisconsin, show this episode at our next monthly club meeting.

As WYOU Board Chair, I would like to make arrangements to have the ATHEISTS OF FLORIDA FORUM series given a regular weekly slot on our cablecast schedule. Let me know if your club would like to avail themselves of my offer.

If so, I need to be sent four episodes at a time (for scheduling and publicity purposes in our station's monthly program guide). All "out of state" programming needs a local sponsor. In your case, the sponsor would be the AAW.

I would take responsibility for returning each month's worth of episodes to you by UPS.

Let me know if ATHEISTS OF FLORIDA FORUM would like a regular Wisconsin audience. I'd be more than happy to oblige. Incidentally, this being public access television, it is all free and without charge.

Best regards,
 James A. Cox
 WYOU Board Chairman

Forum Topics

Pgm No. Topic

- 9 "The Psychology of Religious Belief: Mental Illness or Addiction?"
 Guests: Jim Strayer, natural science lecturer; Brent Yaciw, English professor; Dr. Peter Hargitai, literature professor.
- 10 "Effects of Religious Schools upon our Public School System"
 Guests: Dr. Peter Hargitai, literature professor; Ms. Marilyn Schneider, retired teacher; Brent Yaciw, English professor.
- 11 "Invidious Influence of Religion in Public Education"
 Guest: Jim Strayer, natural science lecturer and retired educator.
- 12 "The Big Bang: Cosmology vs Creationism"
 Guests: Dr. Martin K. Solomon, Computer science professor, FAU University; Mr. Michael Sturgulewski, Physics instructor/science department chair, New World School of the Arts; Jim Strayer, natural science lecturer.

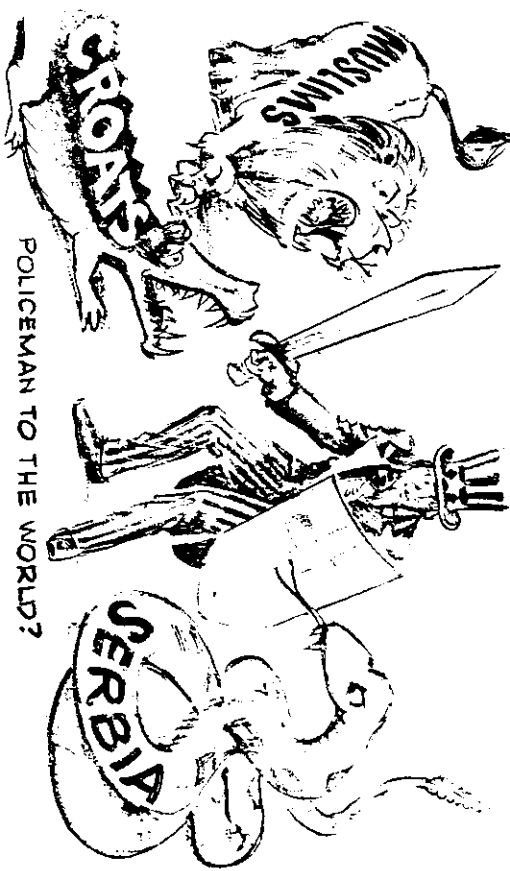
Insight: Bosnia

Ignoring the truth, many Western leaders and journalists advocate the idea that what is going on in Bosnia is "ethnic cleansing." In reality, it is "religious cleansing." The news broadcasts being received by the American public are totally confusing. The implication is that these are different peoples at war. In fact, they are the same people engaged in a tug-of-war over different religions preaching

Bosnians -- Croats, Serbs, and Muslims -- belong to the same ethnic group; they are Europeans of Slavic background. The three religious groups speak the same language, Serbian-Croat; in fact, Bosnian Muslims speak a purer Serbian than even the Serbs.

The problem is centuries of religious hatred. It dates back to when the Muslim Turks occupied the Balkans and imposed Islam on many Slavic peoples.
 For many centuries the Serbs

Here are the topics for the most recently produced *Forum* programs. All are hosted by Dr. Albert Lyngzeitson, Ph.D.



POLICEMAN TO THE WORLD?

have been mistreated, abused, and massacred by Turks, Bosnian Muslims, and Roman Catholic Croats. This does not excuse the Serbs for their atrocities in Bosnia, but the Croats and the Muslims are guilty, too.

This religious conflict has the potential to spread all over the Balkans, Central Asia, and Africa. Naturally, it is unpopular in this nation to suggest a religious-based holocaust is occurring since we always want to promote the idea that any god-belief is wholesome and healthy and even patriotic. But this of course is the history of religion...accept a given superstition and succumb to its control or off with your head! Unfortunately, not only is the end nowhere in sight, but we see the seeds of this basis for conflict expanding in this country. We should look and learn...we may be seeing our own future.