

## Atheists of Florida

**DADE&BROWARD:** Third Sunday of each month, 2:00 alternating between Broward County Main Library, 100 S. Andrews Ave. Ft. Lauderdale, or Biscayne Cafeteria, 147 Miracle Mile, Coral Gables. Specific meeting information and activities published in **NEWSNOTES**, included in all newsletters. FMI: Patrick Bens, 305/940-0442 or 954/929-0441. atheist1@bellsouth.net

The following is a statement signed by 108 Nobel Laureates. It can be found at: [www.sciencemag.org/feature/date/nobel.shtml](http://www.sciencemag.org/feature/date/nobel.shtml)

**T**HE MOST PROFOUND DANGER to world peace in the coming years will stem not from the irrational acts of states or individuals but from the legitimate demands of the world's dispossessed. Of these poor and disenfranchised

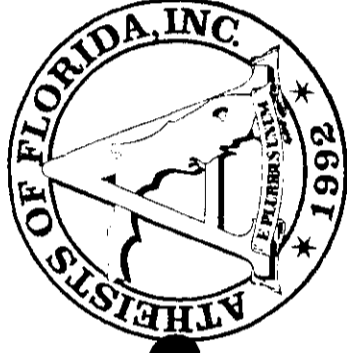
## The next hundred years

the majority live a marginal existence in equatorial climates. Global warming, not of their making but originating with the wealthy few, will affect their fragile ecologies most. Their situation will be desperate, and manifestly unjust. It cannot be expected, therefore, that in all cases they will be content to await

the beneficence of the rich. If, then, we permit the devastating power of modern weaponry to spread through this combustible human landscape, we invite a conflagration that can engulf both rich and poor. The only hope for the future lies in cooperative international action, legitimized by democracy. It is **time to turn our backs on the unilateral search for security, in which we seek to shelter behind walls.** Instead we must persist in the quest for united action to counter both global warming and a weaponized world. These twin goals will constitute vital components of stability as we move toward the wider degree of social justice that alone gives hope of peace. Some of the needed legal instruments are already at hand, such as the Anti Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, the Convention on Climate Change, the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaties (START), and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. **As concerned citizens we urge all governments to commit to these goals which constitute steps on the way to the replacement of war by law.** To survive in the world we have transformed we must learn to think in a new way. As never before, the future of each depends on the good of all.

## CHAPTER EVENTS

**TAMPA BAY: Pinellas County**—First Sunday of each even-numbered month (Feb., Apr., etc.), 1:00-3:30 at the Pinellas Park Library, 78th Ave N & 52nd Street.  
**Tampa**—First Sunday of each odd-numbered month, 1:00-3:30, Platt Library, 3910 S. Manhattan Ave., Tampa.  
**Pot-luck dinners**—Monthly by postcard and e-mail notice. FMI: Ed Golly, 813/839-7567, AthALFLE@aol.com.



Volume XI No. 1  
April, 2002

# Atheists of Florida

Sponsor of the MARK TWAIN SCHOLARSHIP FUND, Incorporated  
A Member Society of the Atheist Alliance International, the Democratic Alliance of Autonomous Atheist Societies  
[www.atheistalliance.org/florida](http://www.atheistalliance.org/florida)

Dedicated to the absolute separation of State and church

## Success!

### DMV reverses its position on ATHEIST license plate

**GAINESVILLE**—What can atheists do when they're organized? They can shout back at the state when it assumes the absurd.

Atheists of Florida Vice-president Steve Miles did not need to stand alone when the State of Florida Department of Motor Vehicles demanded he return a license plate he had been sporting for some 16 years. Upon receipt of a letter declaring the plate offensive, and ostensibly signed by ten "undecipherable" signatures, the DMV sent Miles a letter demanding he return his plate and be issued another. The contents of Miles' "obscene and offensive" plate: the letters "ATHEIST."



Miles

Atheists wasted no time in responding. The State of Florida government had declared us "obscene." That's right. If you are an atheist, you are obscene simply because you publicly declare that you are not superstitious. Being Miles, according to Florida, is obscene.

Most likely what happened is that the letter arrived at the DMV and, since the social norm is to be religious, it was accepted by rote as a legitimate complaint about a plate. The stooge clerk issued the recall letter assuming it would be uncontested. But Miles and his fellow rationalists would not stand down.

The *St. Petersburg Times'* Kathryn Wexler wrote about Miles' case and soon the incident became a national story.

A flood of letters hit the Director of the DMV explaining the term "atheist" and its lack of offensive intent. Miles, besieged by requests for interviews, never even got his letter to the DMV before the director had realized the absurdity of his department's stand and reversed his decision.

The interview requests poured in. Miles ended up conducting about 30 to 35 interviews. One was on the local Gainesville TV/20, one

## Forum returns

**TAMPA**—We're baaaaack! Thanks again to Joe Redner, the **Atheist Forum** has been resurrected on Hillsborough County Public Access cable TV.

Redner, outspoken atheist and host for the past eight years of *The Voice of Freedom* seen on the same system, offered to provide producer and crew for the Forum. We didn't hesitate to accept. Beginning the second season of 2002, the Forum debuted on April 2, co-hosted by Atheists of Florida Chairman Ed Golly and

on Fox network news (Hennity and Colmes) live, six or seven were with newspapers (*Gainesville Sun*, *St. Petersburg Times*, the *Altigator*, an editorial in *The Sarasota Herald Tribune*, and newspapers in Miami, Orlando and Jacksonville). The rest were with radio stations all over the country.

"Stations from Miami, Tampa, Orlando, Gainesville, Jacksonville, Raleigh, N.C., Washington D.C., Detroit, St. Louis, Kansas City, Minneapolis, Wisconsin, Idaho, Seattle and Los Angeles all called," said Miles. "These were only the ones that I remember or had written down. The day of the St. Pete article (Thurs.), which I happen to have taken off from work, was the most hectic. I was getting a call of inquiry or interview every 15 to 30 minutes.

"My last interview was on April 9th. Most radio interviews were talk shows with wide syndication. Most interviewers were very cordial with some hosts claiming publicly that they were atheists."

Miles' final interview was April 9. Most radio interviews were talk shows with wide syndication. "Most interviewers were very cordial (some hosts claiming publicly that they were atheists) inquiring about details of the tag recall and my personal feelings and reasons for having the tag," explained Miles. "A few of the interviewers, especially the last ones (one in Birmingham), were very belligerent. The hosts would claim that I only wanted to cause trouble with the tag, or that I was egotistical. They would give me complex theological questions (where did the universe or humans come from?) and expect me to answer in a single sentence. They would cut me off in mid sentence to make some stupid remark. When I said how rude and belligerent they were, they would deny it."

Miles attended the Atheist Alliance International convention in Dallas over the Easter weekend to tell his story. "From what I heard at the convention, the news was all over the country," he reported.

Board Member Brent Yaciv.

The one-hour program is produced live on Tuesday night at 10:30 seen on Channel 20. The entire show is re-run on Friday evening at 5:00 on Channel 19. Producer Kevin Hoag has concocted the most remarkable introduction we've ever seen on any public access program. The season will comprise twelve shows.

*If you don't pray in my school, I won't think in your church.*

Twain Scholarship Fund		1st, 2002 by our members:	
Here is the list of Donors to the Mark Twain Scholarship Fund, Inc., as of April 5, 2002. This is the only fund drive for the year, although contributions are accepted throughout the year.			\$1,857.00.
Ben Akerly	10.00	Irvin Weinberg	5.00
Jack Basart	25.00	Harold Widdemann	25.00
Michael Brannon	35.00	Irving Yablon	100.00
Kyoko Brogdon	500.00	Frederick Zekowski	10.00
Peter Castelvecchi	25.00	TOTAL:	\$1,622.00
Edwin Cori	50.00	In addition to the above we had three donations in response to last year's appeal. They are:	\$1,500.00.
Charles Coryn	25.00	1. Olympia Wood	200.00
		2. Frank Dohmann	10.00
		3. Lori Katz	25.00
		TOTAL:	235.00
		Total donations as of January	
		Total donations as of April 5, 2002—	\$3,357.00.
		In addition to the above, we should receive a donation from the 2001 CFC which should be distributed shortly.	

8 April 2002



P.O. Box 130753  
Tampa, FL 33681

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Non-Profit Organization  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Tampa, Florida  
PERMIT No. 2020

Atheists of Florida

## Set for life

Greetings to all at A of F:

Just a short note to thank you for publishing my essay *The Curse of Humanity* in the Nov./Dec. issue of the newsletter.

In addition, I'd very much like to become a life member of A of F. Enclosed is my check for \$500.

Looking forward, with great anticipation, to being a

# LETTERS

*It nearly got out of hand. Following the first two letters, all correspondence was in regards to the ATHEIST license plate issue. Most arrived by e-mail.*

Life Member of Atheists of Florida.

—Norman B. LeClair  
Navarre, FL

## Winner says 'thanks'

My name is Gilberto Martinez and I recently received the package informing me that I was selected as the 1st place winner for your [Mark Twain] scholarship competition. I wish to thank you and the other Trustees of the Mark Twain Scholarship Fund for the generous contribution towards my education. I cannot express to you the excitement I feel for being recognized by your organization. The funds you have provided me could not have come at a better time and will be well spent.

The Digital Media major I am pursuing at the art school I am attending has the opportunity for communicating to a wide audience. I am including my contact information in case you are interested in information regarding our curriculum, my continuing academic development both as a student and as an intern, or any other questions. I welcome any correspondence from your organization.

—Gilberto Martinez  
9852 Palais Rd.  
Anaheim, CA 92804  
Gilbertomartinezfei@hotmail.com

## Good for you!

I'm glad you're not giving up your vanity late—I'm sure you know that you are not alone and that this is a fine example of this society's oppression of atheists and other minorities. Good for you!

—reiko@gbllinc.com

Is Steven Miles your Vice President? If he is, please pass this message on to him...

I hope you get to keep your license plate. Stick to your guns and fight those idiots—there are people standing behind you on this.

—Marti Brauer me.brauer@verizon.net

Hi,—I read about the issue one of your members is facing regarding his license plate and that the Florida DMV pulled it because of complaints. PLEASE do not let this go unchallenged! The word Atheist to my knowledge is not a derogatory word.....except to those who practice various religions and

those individuals should not be allowed to impose their will on people who may not follow their religious beliefs. Fight this one in court!

—wfrili@aol.com

I don't necessarily agree with your beliefs, but I do agree with your freedom of expression. Reference the guy in Gainesville that is having his license plate yanked: you all need to send DMV a petition to leave it alone or they should yank any and all religious plates. DMV got a petition signed by only 10 people who said the word "atheist" was offensive to them.

Quoted in the *St. Petersburg Times* was a pastor in the Tampa area whose tags are "ALL4GOD and GOD4ALL". That sounds offensive to an atheist. Where will it end?

—Tim Grundmann tgrundma@co.pinellas.fl.us

Dear members of Atheists of Florida.

After reading "Fla. Division of Motor Vehicles declares 'Atheist' obscene" in your March newsletter, I wanted to express my support of Steven Miles. It seems to me he has every right to keep his "ATHEIST" license plate. He should only have to surrender it if all religious plates in Florida are also surrendered.

I also read Kathryn Wexler's article on the same issue in today's *St. Petersburg Times* Online. Best of luck fighting the DMV on this matter.

—John S. Dearing, President  
CORVALLIS SECULAR SOCIETY  
126 NW 21st Street / Corvallis OR 97330-5531  
president@css.peak.org/  
http://css.peak.org/

Hi,—I recently read about Steven Miles' clash with the State of Florida over his license plate in the *St. Petersburg Times*. As a Florida atheist myself, I'd like to keep an eye on the developments in this situation, so I'm writing to request that I be added to your mailing list.

I'm especially interested in seeing whether the fellow with the Christian (GOD4ALL) expression on his plate gets to keep his while the state tries to deny Steven his right to expression. It seems to me this conflict will open a can of worms similar to the issues that have arisen since Bush established the office of faith-based initiatives at the White House.

So again, add me to your mailing list. Thanks!

—Kevin McLeod deatscribe@deatscribe.com

Hello,—I'm interested in any information about the status of the revocation of the "ATHEIST" license plate: [http://www.sptimes.com/2002/03/14/State/\\_ATHEIST\\_plate\\_raise.shtml](http://www.sptimes.com/2002/03/14/State/_ATHEIST_plate_raise.shtml). We (an e-list group of atheists) have e-mailed the Tallahassee DMV in protest, and received a response from someone who claims that there is no longer the need to write as the revocation has been rescinded. Strangely enough, the DMV has not responded to any of our emails... I was wondering if this newer information regarding the retraction of revocation is correct.

We feel quite strongly that protest and solidarity is extremely important and I would like to keep the letters heading to the Fla. DMV if they have not rescinded the revocation.

Any direction you can give us on the matter would be helpful. Thanks for your time. —Allison Schmitt OneAtheist@aol.com

November, 1998. Atheists of Florida was manning the kiosk at the Miami Book Fair International. A passerby stopped and filed in our sign-up sheet. Duffly, the intro kit was sent to a Mr. Louis Appignani who filled out the membership application and joined.

Four years later we spotted a story in the Miami Herald describing a philanthropist who had decided to establish an endowment fund to support the promotion of atheism. It turned out to be none other than Appignani. Here is the story of this quite remarkable atheist.

## Tycoon's foundation to fund atheism projects

From an article published January 1, 2002 by Elinor J. Brecher

At home in the New York slums of the New Guinea bush, Louis Appignani is a Catholic school graduate convinced that organized religion will ultimately destroy the human species.

At 68, Appignani—retired modeling-school tycoon and world traveler—has some unconventional notions, and he's about to put his money where his beliefs are. A foundation in his name that he plans to run himself will support projects that promote atheism as an ethical alternative to organized religion and innovative learning strategies. "Religion is getting too much into our lives," he said. "In the guise of fostering love it creates hate and separates people. We're all citizens of the planet."

Appignani would personally manage the dispersal of the trust. "I'm only interested in doing a niche that hasn't been filled," he said. "Philanthropy will be my last career." He expects to give away \$1 million next year and at least that much every year thereafter.

"There's too much greed in the world," said the twice-divorced father of three adult sons. "My children are taken care of. I want to give away half of my estate to the foundation, something that will survive me and exist for generations... If I find something I'm really interested in, I might fund one major project a year."

Appignani's résumé looks like a flowchart of the American Dream. The son of blue-collar Italian immigrants, he earned degrees in fi-

nance and accounting from City University of New York and Columbia University before completing a doctorate in economics at Indiana University in 1961. His father, a garment-district worker of limited ambitions, wanted Appignani to become a mechanic—"it's a steady job," he used to say—and could never understand the value of post-graduate degrees.

Initially a management consultant, Appignani parlayed a few thousand dollars and a hunch about the future of technology into a string of computer schools in the Northeast nearly 40 years ago: Computer Education Inc. Curiously, he has only recently begun to use e-mail. In 1965, he bought the venerable but barely profitable modeling school, Barbizon International Inc. retooling it as a worldwide franchise operation before selling it in 2000. The Boynton Beach-based company posted \$8 million in revenues in 1998, according to Information Access Company, a business database. Appignani owns and manages commercial real estate in Palm Beach and Broward counties, properties including the old National Enquirer building in Lantana for which he paid \$1.35 million in cash last year.

Business made Appignani rich, enabling him to indulge his true passion, adventure travel, a pastime that tends to lure wealthy people with "giant egos" who share "an extreme desire to see what's on the other side of the hill," according to Col. Gerry Bass, a fellow member of the New York-based Explorers Club, which has a South Florida chapter. The 98-year-old association of globe-trotters and researchers is "the greatest collection of weirdoes you've never seen," joked Bass. "Lou never talked to me about atheism, but people who are members of the Explorers Club never surprise me."

Hardly an inch of wall space in Appignani's penthouse isn't covered with oversize photographs he's shot in exotic locales. An alcove off the only bedroom houses

a gallery showcasing dozens of hand-carved African masks and statues. "I'm fascinated with primitive art and primitive cultures," Appignani said. "Other people collect antiques. These artifacts are my antiques. The people who made them are not going to be here very much longer."

Appignani has been pursuing experiences and ideas outside the mainstream since he decided after high school that God didn't exist.

"My first week at City U, I realized that I could really think for myself," he said. "You can't do that in a parochial school."

Influenced by 20th Century Nobel Prize-winning mathematician and rationalist philosopher Bertrand Russell, Appignani became convinced that people accountable to their own consciences meet a higher moral standard than those who uncritically embrace religious dogma. "When I was a kid and used to go to confession, it was always the same thing," Appignani recalls: "I disobeyed my parents. 'I lied.' So you say 10 Hail Marys and 10 Our Fathers. It's the easy way out."

Retired New Jersey investor Saul Skoler, also of Grove Isle, says Appignani's conduct proves the point. They met more than a quarter-century ago in the Young Presidents Organization and have since undertaken "a couple of small business ventures together," Skoler said.

"I know he is not a believer but is a highly ethical person. You learn a lot when you're a business partner. I've often said that with him, all you need is an OK and handshake on a deal."

Ada Samuelsson, senior project officer for the Department of Economic and Social Affairs at the United Nations, met Appignani a decade ago through the New York Explorers Club. They found they shared a common view "that life is evolving and one should believe in good and bad and not judge," she said. "He can afford expensive hotels but he wants to discover the roots of a-culture and have his own opinion about what it is."

A

## El escritor y luchador por los derechos humanos Shahriar Kabir es encarcelado

El escritor, columnista y luchador por los derechos humanos de Bangladesh, Shahriar Kabir fue arrestado en Dacca por "realizar actividades en contra del estado". Shahriar Kabir es un miembro del **Comité de Defensa del Dr. Shaikh** en Bangladesh, y es uno de los cuarenta firmantes prominentes del Memorandum del Comité para el Primer Ministro de Bangladesh. Fue arrestado por una rama especial de la policía en el Aeropuerto Internacional Zia de Dacca, cuando regresaba de la India. Había dado una entrevista a BBC Radio en Calcuta, hablando acerca de la actual ola de violencia contra las minorías Hindúes en su país.

Después de 20 horas de confinamiento en la estación de policía del aeropuerto y en los cuarteles generales de la rama especial en Malibagh, durante las cuales Kabir fue interrogado sobre su opinión política, sus contactos, su razón para visitar la India y la entrevista de la BBC, la policía confirmó oficialmente su arresto bajo la sección 54 del Código Criminal (CrPC). Se llevó ante el magistrado M.M. Mumunur Rashid y fue enviado a la Cárcel Central de Dacca, para esperar una orden de detención definitiva por parte de la corte del distrito. Su pasaporte fue decomisado y se retuvieron varias cintas de vídeo y audio, al igual que su cámara, para un examen posterior.

Durante su visita a la India, Shahriar Kabir se reunió con colegas luchadores por los Derechos Humanos para discutir la situación actual en Bangladesh. En su entrevista con la BBC Radio, afirmó que luego de la reciente oleada de atrocidades contra las minorías Hindúes, cientos de Hindúes de Bangladesh huyeron del país a través de la frontera con India.

[www.RacionalistInternational.net](http://www.RacionalistInternational.net)

Hay mas ATEISMO EN ESPAÑOL en: [ateismo.ws](http://ateismo.ws)

## FRAGMENTOS DE LA AUTOBIOGRAFIA ESCRITA POR EL CIENTIFICO NATURALISTA INGLES **CHARLES DARWIN** **(1809-1882)** RELATIVOS A SUS IDEAS **SOBRE LA RELIGIÓN**

Parte final

Versión al Español de LEANDRO PERDOMO

### MORALIDAD

Un hombre que no esté seguro de la existencia de un dios personal o de una vida futura de recompensas y castigos, o que nunca haya creído en ellos, puede tener, hasta donde yo alcanzo a comprender, su propia regla de vida, consistente en seguir aquellos impulsos e instintos que para él son los mejores. Un perro actúa de esa manera, pero lo hace a ciegas. Un hombre, en cambio, mira hacia adelante y hacia atrás, comparando sus diversos deseos, sentimientos y recuerdos; y encuentra entonces que, de acuerdo al veredicto de los hombres más sabios y juiciosos, la mayor satisfacción es la que se obtiene de ciertos impulsos denominados "instintos sociales".

Si actúa por y para el bien de los demás, el hombre recibirá la aprobación de sus compañeros y se ganará el aprecio de aquellos con quienes él convive; y este beneficio es, indudablemente, el mayor placer que hay en esta tierra.

Poco a poco se le hará intolerable seguir sus pasiones sensuales antes que obedecer a sus impulsos superiores, los cuales cuando proporcionan hábitos casi pueden ser considerados instintos o inclinaciones. Su mente puede llevarle en ocasiones a actuar en oposición a otros, cuya aprobación él entonces no recibirá, pero aún así tendrá la sólida complacencia de saber que ha seguido su guía más profunda, su conciencia.

En cuanto a mi persona, estimo que he actuado por mí mismo y con rectitud, y que mi vida ha seguido a la ciencia firme y fielmente. No siento remordimientos de haber cometido ningún gran pecado; lo que lamento, una y otra vez, es no haber dado más bienes directos a mis semejantes. Mi única y pobre excusa es la de mis enfermedades y mala salud que han hecho muy difícil para mí pasar de un tema u ocupación a otro. Con mucho agrado puedo imaginarme entregando mi vida entera, no una parte de ella, a la filantropía: esto habría sido para mí una mejor línea de conducta. Por lo demás, aunque no pretendo rechazar ni la más mínima luz que ayude a aclarar los más oscuros problemas que el hombre tiene ante sí, lo cierto es que el principio de todas las cosas es un misterio insoluble para nosotros y, por ello, me siento satisfecho, contento, de permanecer y ser considerado un agnóstico.

# NEWSNOTES

Monthly Bulletin for the members of  
ATHEISTS of FLORIDA Inc. Chapter DADE&BROWARD

# Our next meeting is planned for



May 19, 2002

2 pm

Broward County Main Library

8th Floor

100 S. Andrews Ave.

Ft. Lauderdale

Topic:

We will view and discuss the latest  
public access cable TV video made by our  
Tampa members for the  
ATHEIST FORUM

### Non-Prayer Breakfast

Every third Tuesday of the month,  
our chapter is holding a hearty  
non-prayer breakfast at 8 am at

Denny's Restaurant #1338

(For directions: 305-821-7032)

16751 NW 67 Ave, HIALEAH/Miami Lakes

(Entrance at New Testament Boulevard)

FMI: Patrick 305-940-0442 or Carlos 954-730-2141.

# NOOSENOTES

EXPOSING THE DANGERS OF RELIGION

## IT TAKES A WORRIED MAN TO SING A WORRIED SONG

By Patrick Bens, Chapter Director

The pope joins the Platters and Brenda Lee in singing an apologetic song.

Never could I make up my mind whether *I'm sorry* by Brenda Lee or *I'm sorry* by the Platters was the best tune to ask for an apology. This time, the pope may have issued the best lyrics yet for his version of *I'm sorry*, probably to be put to a polka rhythm.

The Flemish Newspaper

"Het Nieuwsblad"

posted on 11.23.01 on its website  
([www.hetnieuwsblad.be](http://www.hetnieuwsblad.be))

an apology by the head of the Church of Rome for "the pain and suffering afflicted by priests and

(Continued on page 2)

# "Alleluia"

25 Brook Street, off Park Lane, the London home of composer **George Friedrich Händel** lived from 1723 until his death in 1759 has just been opened to the public and is now a museum, after a reported ghost was exorcised by a priest. **Händel** lived next door in the late 1960s.)

[ujnews.com](http://ujnews.com)

Ann Landers p3