

## Atheists of Florida CHAPTER EVENTS


**MIAMI:** Our Dade/Broward Chapter invites you to our "SUMMER SOLSTICE 99" meet & eat on **Sunday, June 20th** (Fathers Day) at **2pm** at *Chilango's Mexican Restaurant* located at 5859 SW 73rd Street in South Miami (East of US1 and across from Winn-Dixie). For directions call (305) 663-9333. The topic to be discussed is "The Lancet Report". RSVP (305) 940-0442 or (954) 929-0441.

**NORTHEAST FLORIDA:** Chapter Director C. W. Mitchell will soon be moving to Virginia. We'll need his shoes filled in St. Augustine. We are also working on the formation of chapters in the Jacksonville and Orlando areas.

### Prayer continued from page 2

that the Jacksonville case may send a chill through school districts that are trying to find a way for students to pray without offending their classmates or violating the law.

Thomas has read the 11th Circuit ruling in the Duval County case, and believes that the court thought that the Jacksonville district was actively trying to encourage prayer instead of leaving it up to the students.

Advocates on both sides of the issue predict the matter will eventually reach the U.S. Supreme Court. Neither side seems likely to concede what each believes to be bedrock principle. 

Hemlock Society of Florida, Inc.

P.O. Box 39561  
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33339-9561  
800/849-9349 954/563-7386

MARY BENNETT HUDSON

**TAMPA:** Saturday, June 26, (last Saturday of each month). 12:00—1:30 p.m. in meeting room B of the Clearwater East Public Library, 2251 Drew Street, Clearwater.

**Monthly Dinner** — **Wednesday, June 30th**, at 6:00pm. Dinner will be at Bridges Restaurant & Lounge located at 1999 Starkey (Keene) Road, Largo (just north of Ulmerton). If you have any questions or need directions, please contact Ed Golly (813) 839-7567 or Jerry Moore (727) 526-4223.

**PALM BEACH:** Meetings are held the third Sunday of each month at 2:30pm in Jupiter. Members are notified by postcard. For driving directions or more information, call Charles Schuster (561) 627-6340 or 624-9359.

### Letters continued from page 7

Coulter also should recognize that there is one common factor that all Neo-Nazi and white supremacists have in common. They are devout Christians.


Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold were fans of Hitler, and quite probably murdered to celebrate his birthday. Most people forget that Hitler was a Catholic.

Timothy McVeigh is a Christian, and the 11- and 13-year-old cousins who murdered students and a teacher in Jonesboro, Ark., attended church and Bible school. The Pearl, Miss., high school student who killed his mom and classmates believes in God.

CNBC theocratic commentator Jerry Falwell is fond of exhorting Marilyn Manson for singing songs that glorify death, thus contributing directly to kid violence. But, for approximately a half century, Falwell has promoted an ideology that teaches there is nothing more gratifying than death. It is only then, he espouses, that utopia becomes reality.

Unequivocally, there is no evidence that forced indoctrination deters crime. It seems to me that deeply rooted within the brains of a tiny minority of humans, there is an innate proclivity to kill innocent people.

And no amount of religion can cure insanity.

—*Barry Rowe, Melbourne* 

8 June 1999



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### Thanks, Kyoko...

The May '99 meeting of the Miami-Dade chapter was again a true success; there were 21 seats filled and a new member joined. Mr. James Challenger of Plantation

An A of F charter member, Kyoko Brogdon, responded to our request for membership donations of \$5.00 each to assist in the cost of participation in the Miami Bookfair International this coming November. The cost for the stand this year is \$450.

Brogdon donated 100 times our request! That's right, \$500.00.

Unbeknownst to Tampa Bay chapter member Ed Corl, he dropped another \$50 into the fund which means our budget is made before we even send out the solicitation to all you members.

The two titles we offered for sale at last year's Bookfair which both sold quite well were Twain's *Letters from Earth* and Ingalls's *Why I am not a Christian*. We still have an adequate supply of both titles, so we will have no additional overhead for this year. Kyoko, you've done it again!

Emmett F. Fields, whom we met at the Atheist Alliance convention in Austin, runs the Bank of Wisdom in Louisville, KY (efffields@theplanet.net). The Bank has produced a collection of freethought books on CD-ROM. One person has been so impressed with these CDs that he has contributed a considerable sum of money to see that this needed information is made available to the public.

The Bank will provide up to 25 CDs free to any National Freethought organization that will agree to sell them to the public through their publication or public events

such as the Bookfair or Circus McGerkin. There are now five titles produced and they sell for \$30.00 each. We have decided to request a set to sell at our public events and in our newsletter.

CD #1. The Works of Robert G. Ingersoll  
Religion of Freedom  
CD #3. An Appreciation of Thomas Paine  
CD #4. Facts of Freethought  
CD #5. Freethought and the Bible

Each of these CDs contains too many titles within to list here, but we will have means to let you know what's on specific CDs if you are interested.

**We now have** at least 15 confirmed and possibly up to 20 applicants for the board of directors election. As soon as all resumes are collected, we will compile them with photos and mail them with a ballot to all members of record at the end of June.

At the Tampa Bay chapter meeting of May 29, the Twain Scholarship Fund raffle drawing was held. Winner of the opal stone lady's ring with matching earrings is Terry Rockefeller of Sun City, Florida who had purchased five tickets.

Ed Corl and his crew have completed their 5th year at the University of South Florida Elm Street Flea Market with their Atheist Outreach operation. This past year a student group of humanists/atheists was formed under the leadership of George Giannakoulas and has been meeting every Wednesday possible throughout the school year. As usual with students they lack extra cash to join organizations such as A of F. Corl proposes that when the student group meets this fall semester, he will get the roster of participating students. For the other side of this equation, he needs "Veteran Atheists" willing to sponsor a student to be part of A of F.

Our September newsletter will explain how you can participate in this inexpensive but worthwhile project for a paltry \$10. Put away a dollar a week through the summer and by then you'll be all set!



*In the wake of the tragic Colorado School murders, the Christian Coalition has seized every opportunity to press lawmakers into unconstitutional and rash decisions regarding prayer in schools, religious memorials and a clearly opportunistic ad campaign.*

## Columbine killings fuel the fire of the Religious Right

### Senate passage of school prayer and religious memorial proposal unconstitutional

Americans United for Separation of Church and State has criticized the U.S. Senate for passing a measure designed to promote worship and religious symbols in public schools where slayings occur.

The proposal was offered in the form of an amendment to a juvenile justice bill by Sen. Wayne Allard (R-CO) and passed May 18<sup>th</sup> on an 85-13 vote. The measure, co-sponsored by Sens. Jesse Helms

(R-N.C.) and Michael B. Enzi (R-WY), states that the reading of scripture, prayers and religious music are permissible at memorial services held at public schools following slayings and that memorials erected at schools in honor of slain persons may contain religious symbols.

"Even great human tragedy does not permit suspension of the Constitution," said Barry Lynn, executive director of Americans United. "The Senate has gone down the wrong road. In a pluralistic society, this proposal would divide students, not bring them together."

Religious Right organizations have advocated for official religious worship in public schools in the wake of the shootings at Columbine High School in Jefferson County, CO, April 20<sup>th</sup>.

"Evidence indicates that the two students who killed their peers, and ultimately themselves, at Columbine High felt alienated and ostracized," said Lynn. "This proposal would only contribute to those feelings. We know from experience that school-sponsored religious displays and worship invariably make some students feel like second-class citizens."

Lynn noted that the memorial service organized by Colorado Gov. Bill Owens sparked complaints from rabbis and others who felt that the event was exclusionary and promoted fundamentalist Christianity. Meanwhile, Americans United issued a strong condemnation of the Christian Coalition's plan to air commercials calling for putting "God back in our schools." The ads will be broadcast on 65 low-area stations and 22 New Hampshire-area stations, states with early presidential campaign events.

"This is sheer exploitation of the Littleton tragedy," said Lynn. "Students already have the right to pray voluntarily, and teachers routinely discuss ethics and character. The Christian Coalition is shamelessly twisting the facts to advance its political agenda in presidential primary states."

Christian Coalition President Pat Robertson and other Religious Right leaders have worked for years to force their narrow sectarian views into public schools, and it is discouraging and disappointing to see them exploit this recent tragedy to advance a purely political goal," Lynn added. "Shame on them."

On a more local note, activists in Jacksonville are pushing for school prayer under the argument that removing God from the school system will lead to more shootings. According to John Ferguson, a researcher at Vanderbilt University's First Amendment Center, "A lot of people believe these shootings happened because we've taken God out of the schools. I believe that is an oversimplification, but it is a growing perception."

In May, board members voted 4-3 to appeal the ruling by the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Atlanta that held the district's policy of allowing student-led graduation "messages" was unconstitutional because it amounted to an official endorsement of prayer. Legal scholars believe many people — including school officials — have over-reacted to the ruling, believing wrongly that the court aimed to eradicate all traces of religion from the public schools.

Some districts, including Jacksonville, have tried to come up with legally acceptable forms of prayer by making the activities student led or voluntary. Critics say such approaches are often nothing more than bald attempts to circumnavigate the Supreme Court ruling and put officially sanctioned prayer of the dominant local religion (i.e. Christianity) back in the schools.

Said Oliver Thomas, special counsel for the National Council of Churches, "The key is the district has to be neutral. They can't wink and nod and set it up so the kids know they're being allowed to pray." He fears

**Science, not religion!**  
An article which appeared in the Tampa Tribune sought to compare science and religion. Yaciv's response, printed in the paper, corrected some of the glaring errors of the article.  
Re: Science and religion, April 4, 1999



Dear Editor:  
I find it most unfortunate that, in the quest for dwindling readership, newspapers find it palatable to print myth-informative articles on science and religion that expose their writers' misunderstandings of the former far more than enlightening the readers on either.

### Governor responds to school prayer

*A of F member Glen Law wrote to Jeb! regarding his efforts to shove prayer into the public school system. The response he received was so shocking he asked us to print it for you.*

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Law:  
Thank you for your recent letter indicating your views on school prayer.

I am troubled by the public controversy over prayer in public settings, because prayer is such a powerful expression of humility and inspiration that lifts the human spirit.

House Bill 1773 has been considered by the Legislature in the closing days of the session. The bill would allow student-led invocations at noncompulsory school assemblies and events. At this time, I am waiting for the Legislature to finalize its language before making judgments on its contents.

I respect the sacred status in which many people view divine prayer, indeed, my family and I pray regularly and reverently. To me, true respect requires that any public prayer be not only voluntary, nonsectarian, and nonproselytizing, but also acceptable to a consensus of Floridians from different religious faiths. My support for any legislation sanctioning a public invocation or prayer hinges on whether these criteria are satisfactorily met.

My encounters with many Floridians either supporting or opposing spoken acts of public prayer convince me that nearly all our citizens value prayer as a high act of devotion. We cannot all agree on the method of expressing such devotion in public, but we must support and uplift one another in our individual, private expressions of faith. As your Governor, I commit to this standard, and I will advocate policies that encourage all Floridians to pursue their most noble hopes and dreams.

Sincerely,  
Jeb Bush

Gregg Easterbrook's article was a case in point. I'd like to note just a few misstatements Easterbrook was guilty of.  
"Science was expected to disprove God but didn't."  
No reputable scientist would ever make this statement, because science cannot disprove the existence of a god, by whatever description, any more than it can disprove the existence of unicorns. You can't prove something doesn't exist.

"Until such time as the origin of life is explained, God remains as likely as any other contender." God is not an explanation, merely shorthand for no answer, because if a god existed and started life, we would then be faced with answering, "Where did this god come from?" In other words, we'd be back at square one.

Sadly, there are scientists contributing to this misunderstanding by playing semantics games with the word "god." When a scientist refers to a force that is not clearly defined as "god," it's a far cry from the anthropomorphized, "heavenly father" image portrayed by mainstream religion. In reality, there can be no reconciliation between science and religion because their basic structure is different. Science demands proof before accepting an idea, thus all claims are open to endless questioning, and nothing is accepted on faith. Religion takes the opposite approach, asking that its fundamental concepts be accepted without proof. Indeed, lack of proof is often cited as evidence! Throughout history, attempts to reconcile religion and science have been doomed to failure because religion is based on emotion, on what people would like to believe is true, where science restricts itself to that which can be proven. Someday, proof may be found of some of religion's claims, but the evidence so far shows that most of the claims are little more than childlike fantasies, given credibility only by virtue of age. While science has its limits, it is the self-correcting mechanism inherent in the scientific method that makes it a much more reliable guide than shamans of whatever stripe.

E-mail: AthAFLB@aol.com  
**Religion can't cure insanity**  
*Published in Florida Today, May 11, 1999*

Fox News commentator Ann Coulter recently stated that we need more religion in schools, which, in her view, would help to reduce or eliminate student violence. She believes that God in the classroom is a deterrent to crime.

As a born-again atheist, I was deeply offended by her comments. Her contention is that only non-believers are murderous. Frankly, there is nothing I abhor more than violence. Also, as a junior high and high school student, I strongly resented the imposition of prayer and Bible reading in class. There was nothing I detested more than bullies and proselytism.

(continued page 8)



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Membership dues  
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Send newsletter correspondence to:  
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The A of F newsletter is provided free to our members as a medium of exchange. Letters from our members are published on a space-available basis. Articles may be edited for clarity or length. Atheists of Florida, Inc. is affiliated with the national Atheist Alliance for purposes of information exchange.

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## Who chooses the Choose Life license plate?

According to the public records count on the *Choose Life* license plate, the responses read:

45 — for the license plates  
1121 — against the license plates  
If you have not written 'Jeb' on this issue, please take the time to do so. Talking points and a copy of the ACLU letter to the Governor urging a veto of the bill can be found at their web site which is located at <http://www.aclufl.org>. The opinions of constituents DO matter to the Governor.

## NEWSFILES

### 'Charitable Choice' funding of churches violates separation of Church and State

Vice President Al Gore's policy statement raises serious Constitutional concerns Gore expressed strong support for the concept of "charitable choice" aid to churches to conduct social service programs. However, Americans United for Separation of Church and State warned that the concept raises serious constitutional issues.

Said Americans United Executive Director Barry Lynn, "Charitable choice" is fatally flawed from a constitutional perspective. Taxpayer dollars should not be used to pay for programs that promote religion or allow discrimination in hiring. 'Charitable choice' does just that."

Americans United strongly opposed congressional efforts to include the charitable choice concept in the 1996 Welfare Reform Act. The group is currently considering legal action to challenge the legislation and is fighting attempts in Congress to extend charitable choice to other programs such as juvenile crime prevention and substance abuse treatment.

A press release from Vice President Gore's office said he favors extending the charitable choice concept in the Welfare Reform Act to government programs dealing with drug treatment, homelessness and youth violence prevention.

AU says the charitable choice provisions in the Welfare Reform Act and pending bills in Congress.

- Force taxpayers to place dollars in collection plates of houses of worship they don't believe in.
- Allow houses of worship to discriminate in hiring on religious grounds while running public services with tax dollars, and
- Undermine the in-

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tegrity and vitality of churches by subjecting them to government regulations and audits

### Justices reject public prayer case

WASHINGTON - The Supreme Court in March rejected the appeal of a Utah man whose request to give the opening prayer at a city council meeting was turned down because of its unusual content.

The court, without comment, refused to hear Tom Snyder's argument that the Murray City Council unlawfully favored one religion over another by rejecting his proposed prayer.

"The danger is we get government-approved prayers and we get government-censored prayers," commented Snyder's attorney, Brian Barnard.

Barnard said he plans to ask the court for a rehearing in light of a March 18 appeals court ruling in a Cleveland School Board case that he said contradicts the ruling the high court left intact.

The 10th Circuit Appeals Court ruled for the city, saying Snyder's planned prayer was more of a "political harangue" that fell outside this nation's "long-accepted genre of legislative prayer."

Snyder's proposed prayer was addressed to "our mother, who art in heaven (if, indeed there is a heaven and if there is a god that takes a woman's form)." It asked "that you deliver us from the evil of forced religious worship" and questioned "if in fact you had a son that visited Earth."

The Salt Lake City Council dropped its practice of opening meetings with an invocation rather than allow Snyder to offer his prayer. Later, in March 1994, he asked Murray officials to let him say the prayer to open a City Council meeting. The city attorney told him the prayer "is not a time to express political views (or) attack city policies or practices." City officials refused to let Snyder offer an invocation but said he could give the prayer during the council meeting's public comment period.

Snyder sued, saying the council's action violated the Constitution's First Amendment ban on government establishment of religion. A federal judge ruled against him, as did the 10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. The appeals court said traditional "legislative prayer" involves "nonsectarian requests for wisdom and solemnity, as well as calls for divine blessing on the work of the legislative body." Prayers that promote a particular religious creed or disparage another creed can be rejected without violating the Constitution, the appeals court said. In the appeal, Snyder's lawyers said the city cannot discriminate between religious ideas.

"It's sure not something that makes me happy," said Barnard of the ruling.

"The idea of separation of church and state is so government does not become the controller of people's prayers or the content of people's prayers and that's exactly what's happened here."

The effort by TV preacher Pat Robertson's Regent University to obtain \$54.5 million in state-issued bonds from the Virginia College Building Authority will be met with a legal challenge if approved, said Americans United for Separation of Church and State.

In a letter today to Building Authority Chairman Stephen Hartwell, Americans United Executive Director Barry W. Lynn said, "Public support for this

### Pat Robertson attempts to acquire state funds for Christian college

sectarian university would violate the separation of church and state... I urge the Authority to thoroughly examine Regent's publications and its policies. I believe any honest evaluation of this material will prove conclusively that the university does not qualify for state-issued bonds or other forms of state assistance."

While the state can consider bond issues with private universities, Virginia is forbidden from doing business with pervasively sectarian colleges.

"This is not just a school with a historical religious affiliation," Lynn said. "This is a fundamentalist school that teaches fundamentalist principles. There's no way the state of Virginia can drop over \$50 million in the school's collection plate; we will not let that happen."

To highlight the obvious religious nature of the school, Lynn pointed to the clear and unambiguous language of Regent's mission statement. It reads:

"Regent University is a graduate institution that exists to bring glory to God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit. Our mission is to provide an exemplary graduate education from biblical perspectives to aspiring servant leaders in pivotal professions and to be a leading center of Christian thought and action. Our vision is to provide Christian leadership in transforming society by affirming and teaching principles of truth, justice and love as described in the Holy Scriptures, embodied in the person of Jesus Christ, and enabled through the power of the Holy Spirit."

Despite this, Baxter Ennis, a spokesman for Regent, has been quoted in the media as saying the school is not "pervasively sectarian."

AU's Lynn said Regent's rhetoric doesn't match reality. "I'm shocked that Robertson would even try to play down his school's religious affiliation in the interest of getting money from the state," Lynn added. "Religious leaders shouldn't abandon their religious commitments for money, whether its 30 pieces of silver or \$54 million in state bonds."

To highlight the legal reasons why Regent's bond effort will likely lose a court challenge, Lynn pointed

to a similar matter considered by the state Supreme Court with Jerry Falwell's Liberty University.

In 1989, Liberty applied for \$60 million in tax-free bonds through the Lynchburg Industrial Development Authority. After the IDA voted to approve the bonds, Americans United sponsored litigation to block the funding. On Jan. 11, 1991, the Virginia Supreme Court unanimously agreed with AU's position and ruled that Liberty is ineligible for IDA funding.

"The court's unanimous ruling is definitive on this matter," Lynn concluded. "This outrageous stunt by Robertson will fail."

### Atheist's employee implicated in her death

AUSTIN, TX —Madalyn Murray O'Hair and two of her children were killed and the crime was orchestrated by her former office manager, officials say.

Former employee David Waters, a murder convict on probation for skimming \$54,000 from the O'Hair family's atheist organizations, pleaded guilty at the hearing held May 27th to two gun possession charges unrelated to the O'Hair case. He could get up to 10 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine on each count.

Waters was not charged in the disappearance of the O'Hairs. His attorney, Patrick Gamme, said "They don't have any direct evidence to link him. It's all speculation."

Authorities suspect that the family's remains were stored in barrels and buried on a ranch near San Antonio. Two searches by the FBI recently failed to find any evidence.

The sources told the government that Waters had expressed fantasies about killing O'Hair and written evidence of this was found in his Austin apartment.

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## SECTULAR NATION

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positive atheism.

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**N**EARLY 200 ATHEISTS AND HUMANISTS enjoyed an Easter weekend of ungodly conven-  
honoring in Austin, Texas. It was the 5th annual such  
event for the Atheist Alliance, which now boasts about  
16 member societies.

## 5th Annual Atheist Alliance convention:

**Coalition building advances**  
by AAI President Marie Castle

Alliance member societies take turns hosting the  
conventions. This year it was Atheist Community of  
Austin. Their theme was "Freethought Roundup" and  
the representational variety from many atheist and  
humanist organizations showed it was indeed a  
"roundup" of unbelievers of all flavors.

The Saturday night banquet speaker was the popular  
Dan Barker, public relations director for Freedom  
From Religion Foundation (FFRF), two of whose chap-  
ters are member societies of the Alliance. Adam Butler  
came from the Alabama Freethought Society to give a



A few of the Atheist Alliance board members: Seated: Joe Zemel, Jack Massen.  
Standing: Hank Kocol, Jon Nelson, Kellen von Houser, Ray Romano, Barb Stocker,  
Paul Putz, Bobbie Kirkhart, Jeff Dees, Richard Russell (non-member chairman),  
August Berkshlue, Marie Castle, Sandra Ferre, Charles Schisler, Shirley Moll, and  
Ed Golly.

## The Big Y2K Convention

The Sixth Annual Atheist Alliance convention will again be  
on Easter Weekend (as it always has been) next April 21-  
23, 2000, in Sacramento, California. The host member  
society will be Atheists & Other Freethinkers.

This very special convention will highlight rationality as  
religious millennial madness peaks. Many freethought  
groups will participate. Plan to be there! Anyone interested  
in giving a presentation, contact:

Hank Kocol, 916/920-7834; e-mail: hkocol@hotmail.com

compelling talk on his experiences dealing with reli-  
gious fanaticism in that state.

There was lighthearted and irreverent entertainment  
on Friday night when conventioners went to "Esther's  
Follies," a downtown Austin comedy club. On Satur-  
day, there was drama in Ray Romano's reading of  
Deathbird. There was atheist enlightenment nonstop  
with presentations such as "The Bible in the Bedroom"  
by Ben Akerley, "Teaching Evolution in a Hostile En-  
vironment" by John Koonz, "The Trillion Dollar  
Fraud" by author and editor of the Charleston (S.  
Carolina) *razette*, James A. Haught. And there was so  
much more!

**The Alliance presented** six member societies with  
awards. Four received framed "TV Outreach" awards  
"for producing television programs that provide the  
community with a voice of reason and rationality and  
defend the First Amendment rights of atheists." Recip-  
ients were Atheists United (Los Angeles), Atheist  
Community of Austin, Minnesota Atheists, and  
Atheists of Florida.

Two "Visible Atheist" awards were presented, one to  
the Rationalist Society of St. Louis "For attracting  
significant and positive media attention for the atheist  
viewpoint in protesting Vatican inter-  
ference in national and global family  
planning programs during the papal visit  
to St. Louis, January 26-27, 1999," and  
the other to Atheists United "For promo-  
ting significant and ongoing public  
awareness of atheism and the atheist  
viewpoint throughout the Los Angeles  
area with their Venice Beach outreach  
station week after week and year after  
year."

At the Atheist Alliance annual board  
meeting just before and after the conven-  
tion, a new policy was adopted to encourage  
dues from member societies to encourage  
more of the smaller groups to join. The  
primary purpose of the Alliance is to help  
establish strong atheist organizations in  
every state, the better to protect state-  
church separation and the rights of unbe-  
lievers to be free of religious coercion.

The Alliance seeks to build a coalition of  
democratic, autonomous atheist-oriented organizations  
that will work together at the national level and  
support each other locally for the common goal of  
achieving a truly secular nation. Member societies may  
belong to any other organization they wish because the  
Alliance is coalition building not turf building.

**Unlike other national organizations**, the  
Alliance is run completely by its member societies,  
whose representatives to the board elect the executive  
board and determine all policies and activities. Each  
member society contributes what it can in work or  
funds for Alliance operations.

*Florence Morgenroth was a charter member of  
Atheists of Florida. By this letter, she recently  
resigned because of her disagreement with  
Charles Schisler's political opinions. Schisler's  
pamphlet was mailed to all A of F board  
members. She responds to Schisler's letter,  
which appeared in our previous newsletter.*

## Conclusion of debate

Dear Editor:

After reading Charles Schisler's version of the  
founding of the state of Israel in his pamphlet "The  
Necessity of Atheism," I became deeply concerned that  
he was anti-semitic and his ideas were dangerous to  
the cause of Atheism as well as antagonistic to the  
Jews who belong to the organization.

I asked several members of AOF (Jewish and non-  
Jewish) for their reaction to several paragraphs on  
page 9 of the *Food for Thought* version. All of them  
agreed Schisler was anti-semitic. Not good news, since  
Schisler runs an atheist group in Jupiter and is also  
vice president of the state organization. He also is  
next-in-line for the presidency after Ed Golly.

Since this is an issue that goes to the heart as well as  
the intellect of member atheists, I ask that they judge  
whether Schisler presents a danger to the organization.  
The quotes cited here are all from Mr. Schisler's  
various versions of the pamphlet and his letters to me.

The following is the first version, page 9. I read it  
and was absolutely clueless. What was Schisler talking  
about? It finally dawned on me that he was spouting  
Arab propaganda regarding the formation of the state  
of Israel. He writes that:

*a huge foreign policy blunder of the U.S. in 1948  
was the underwriting of the concerted evictions of  
Palestinians from their country for the imposition  
of the theocratic ambitions of a tiny minority,  
reinforced since by a massive Zionist Crusade. As  
with the Cold War Crusade, this was instigated by  
narrow religious zealotry in gross indifference to  
the overwhelming majority of peoples who had  
lived there for centuries.*

Fact: Palestine has never been a state. It had been a  
part of the Ottoman Empire for 400 years until it was  
taken over by the British in 1918. In 1947, due to Arab  
unrest and terrorism, the British withdrew from  
Palestine and referred the problem to the United  
Nations, which created a special commission. The  
commission recommended that Palestine be divided  
into an Arab state and a Jewish state. Jerusalem would  
be placed under international control. The Jews accep-  
ted the U.N. recommendation; the Arabs rejected it.  
Fact: Far from evicting the Palestinians from their

homeland and accusing the Jews of gross indifference,  
the Jews begged the Palestinians to stay.

They promised them their safety and that they would  
play an equal role in the new state. The bitter truth is  
that Arab leaders used the most vicious of terrorist  
tactics—a constant barrage of threats that Palestinians  
would be killed if they stayed—to panic their people  
into a heart-breaking mass exodus for which there was  
no reasonable explanation.

Why did the Arab leaders urge their compatriots to  
flee? They knew there was no place these immigrants  
could go. It made for wonderful anti-semitic hatred,  
and it kept the pot boiling to raise money from sympa-  
thetic donors to purchase weapons with which to drive  
the Jews into the sea. The poor Arab who left his home  
and business was a sacrificial pawn. So was the poor  
Jew who was seeking a little peace to put together the  
remnants of his life.

The last quote I want to discuss is this:

*Since Israel became a state, U.S. politicians  
'expropriated' billions of dollars each year from  
our citizens to further enrich many criminals who  
confiscated the homes and property of Palles-  
tinitans.*

Somehow I feel it is highly discriminatory to call it  
expropriation when we send money to Israel, but there  
is no quarrel with giving money to other nations in  
need. Couldn't this be a subtle form of anti-semitism?

Mr. Schisler would have you believe that the Jews  
stole the land, evicted its citizens, and confiscated their  
possessions. There never was a choice of where the  
Jewish national homeland would be. It was where the  
U.N. designated it would be. Many thoughtful Jews did  
not wish to live in an area where they would be sur-  
rounded by hostile Arabs. But they accepted what they  
were offered by a legitimate, duly-constituted legal  
organization. The same opportunity was offered to the  
Arabs. Schisler never mentions that. Neither does he  
mention that a day after the announcement of state-  
hood, the Arabs attacked the Jews.

In Schisler's Jan. 10 letter to me he writes,  
"reasonable people insist that those who wish to invade  
wholesale into a country do so peacefully through vol-  
untary exchange of deeds and mortgages without  
waving their holy books and armaments." Shades of  
Joseph Goebbels! In the same letter he holds Israel  
responsible for the rise of fundamentalist Muslims.  
What else can he pin on Jews? On a personal note he  
says that as an atheist he has been more persecuted than  
Jews. Luckily he is alive to tell the tale.

He makes several other comments that whisper to  
me he is an atheist who can really harm the cause.

Beware!

*Florence Morgenroth*

May 19, 1999

*Schisler's pamphlet was never distributed as  
an official Atheists of Florida publication.*