

Atheists of Florida CHAPTER MEETINGS:

MIAMI:

Sunday, October 19, 2 p.m. in the 8th floor Boardroom of the Broward County Main Library, 10 S. Andrews Ave., Ft. Lauderdale. Speaker - Jim Mullins, former chairman of the ACLU and Board Member of the International Policy Assn. for the City of Miami. Topic: Disclosure on Theories of Political and Social Science. FMI: Atheist Hotline: (305) 936-0210.

TAMPA:

Saturday, October 25, 12:30 in meeting room B, Clearwater East Public Library, 2251 E. Drew Street, Clearwater. We will view a video of a report on Amish child rearing done by the ABC news program 20/20. Our quarterly meeting with area freethought groups will be **Saturday, October 18** from 1:00 to 4:00 in the Adler meeting room of the Clearwater Main Library, 100 N. Osceola Avenue in downtown Clearwater. Then our guest speaker will be Linda Bacon, president of the Pinellas Classroom Teachers Association who will speak on "Our Public Schools -- Under Siege." Light refreshments will be served.

PALM BEACH:

Sunday, October 19 at 3:30 p.m. at the Herb Watt Rec. Bldg., just north of the North Palm Beach Library. From I-95, exit 56 east on Northlake Blvd, nearly 3 miles to US#1 Federal Highway - then north one block to traffic light. Go west on Anchorage Drive one block, turning north behind the library. Turn into the parking lot north of the library near the small red building.

Letters

continued

with a lot of the most viciously and rabidly authoritarian and murderous reactionary dictators on the planet.

He likewise documented her rabidly medievalist, obscurantist, deeply anti-enlightenment attitudes on every question from the reproductive freedom of women to every backward pronouncement issuing from the Vatican, that center of planetary reaction, medievalism, anti-democratic thought, obscurantism, opposition to science, and center of authoritarian promulgations for two thousand years. Mother Teresa was a politician and a con artist aiming to get herself sainted by the Vatican, but to do that, she needed to be the total yes-woman for this reactionary institution, which took 500 years to finally own up to the fact that Galileo had possibly been right that the earth revolved around the sun and not vice versa.

But in today's world in which the bourgeo-

isie, including bourgeois editorial boards of capitalist newspapers, fall all over themselves to shed crocodile tears for dead scions of lords and monarchial families and who regularly denounce "moral relativism" much like the medievalist anti-Enlightenment theistic bigots did when the bourgeoisie was a revolutionary and ascendant social class defending science and progress rather than the senile, decrepit, archaic ruling class the bourgeoisie is now, it does not surprise me. Ruling classes overdue for leaving the stage of history require the very forces they once fought to prop up their decaying class rule. This law of history has been true of slaveowners and feudal lords and monarches in the past, and it's the operative principle in the case of the capitalist bourgeoisie now. There really is nothing new under the sun.

*Allan B. Greene
Dunedin, FL.*

I'm not really sure what all that means, either. But at least now I know how to spell "bourgeoisie." --Ed

A

8 August/September 1997

Atheists of Florida



P.O. Box 130753
Tampa, FL 33681-0753

ADDRESS CORRECTION
REQUESTED

Volume VI Number 6

August/September, 1997



Clarification

— *Christos Tzanetakos, President*

OUR LEAD STORY OF THE previous issue concerned the Atheists of Florida application to the James Hervey Johnson Charitable Educational Trust for \$50,000. We felt further clarification of that application was in order.

Our application was actually requested for two cases. One was the Tampa Airport chapel for whose litigation we requested only \$7,000. The other was Case No. 96-1776, Atheists of Florida, Inc. vs State of Florida, Department of Revenue, dealing with Florida Statute 212.08(7) which automatically provides tax exemption to churches. This case originated in May, 1995 when the Department denied our application for a tax exemption certificate.

After several depositions and court hearings which generated a transcript of over 240 pages, the case reached the Third District Court of Appeal. In January, 1997, although the court affirmed the Department's original denial order, the three-judge panel provided us with the opportunity to challenge the constitutionality of Statute 212.08(7) by stating:

In affirming the order, we do not foreclose the possibility of making a determination on the constitutional question on a properly developed record wherein both sides have had an opportunity to present competing evidence before an impartial tribunal.

For the above case, we requested \$37,000 for further litigation and the balance of \$6,000 for reserves.

Unfortunately, the Trustees of the Hervey Johnson Foundation failed to see the importance of this case, despite our strong plea and indication that the potential of this case to repeal the unconstitutional tax laws both on State and Federal levels is paramount.

Therefore, without a grant or other source of revenue, we are unable to continue this most important case. Of course, to expect our attorney, Mr. Mark Trop, to devote more of his time without compensation would be unreasonable since he already has donated many hours to reach this point in the case.

Meanwhile, the churches continue using the loophole of the tax-exemption to amass billions of untaxed revenues year after year.

We are proceeding with the Hillsborough County Aviation Authority chapel case.



Next issue: The Camp Quest story. Above (l to r) A of F counselors Strayer, Eisler and Golly with sponsored campers.

Mike Perdomo

To our President

may I suggest that our fellow brothers read what was published in the Miami Herald on its issue of Friday, Aug. 15, 1996 (chronicled below). The case was that the President of our United States of America suggested and/or encouraged some religious expressions in our public schools.

Did Mr. Clinton pretend that, instead of any class, our children may be allowed to manifest outputs about any religion they like; or did the President mean that those manifestations should take place only at school breaks, which has never been forbidden to anyone, anyhow? In other words, had our President just discovered a new heavenly item, for which there is not any scientific, nor constitutional base whatsoever, or has he just discovered the moon?

IS THERE REALITY A compelling need to define just exactly how far a worker can go in expressing his/her religious superstitions?

The government has decided that guidelines need to be spelled out to protect the religious freedom which is, according to President Clinton, "at the heart of what it means to be an American."

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Membership dues and general correspondence should be sent to:

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Ft. Pierce, FL 34948-3893
E-mail: AthAI.FL.C@aol.com
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Send newsletter correspondence to:
Tampa Bay Chapter
P.O. Box 130753
Tampa, FL 33681
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The A of F newsletter is provided free to our members as a medium of exchange. Letters from 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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Newsletter Editor: Ed Golly

As a corollary to what our President, Christos Tzanetakos, said in his letter of July 15, 1997.

instead of any class, our children may be allowed to manifest outputs about any religion they like; or did the President mean that those manifestations should take place only at school breaks, which has never been forbidden to anyone, anyhow? In other words, had our President just discovered a new heavenly item, for which there is not any scientific, nor constitutional base whatsoever, or has he just discovered the moon?

Not everyone agrees with the need for the guidelines. "Basically, although these guidelines are well intended, they go far beyond what the Constitution requires for religious expression," blurted Barry Lynn, executive director of Americans United.

Clinton's order requires federal agencies to allow workers to engage in personal religious expression and "reasonably accommodate" holy days, even if it creates some hardship for the agency. They also prohibit agencies from discriminating on the basis of religion and bar federal workers from using their official positions to campaign for or against religion. We assume this won't include Judge Roy Moore, the Alabama judge who holds Christian prayer in his courtroom during jury selection and displays a plaque of the Protestant Ten Commandments above his bench.

But a Muslim woman may wear a head scarf, or an Xian employee can keep a Bible on a desk and read it during a break. Workers would be able to discuss freely their faiths as long as the co-workers they are speaking to do not object. However, the guidelines stipulate that any rules already in place at federal agencies — such as a ban on posters — must still be followed.

In August, a ceremony including Clinton, representatives from the National Council of Churches, the Center for Law and Religious Freedom, People for the American Way and the American Jewish Congress was held to define the guidelines for federal employees' expression of their faith. The groups helped write the guidelines, which they claim were necessary to make clear the role of religion in the workplace and ensure that employers understand laws on religious freedom already on the books and how they apply.

These guidelines will ensure that

federal employers will respect the rights of those who engage in religious speech, as well as those who do not," quipped Clinton.

The guidelines apply to all executive-branch civilian agencies. They do not apply to uniformed military personnel.

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Mark Twain Scholarship Forum

The Mark Twain Scholarship Forum airs in the Metro-Dade area on Mondays at 12:00 p.m., Tuesdays at 5:00 p.m., and Wednesdays at 10:00 p.m. on Cable-TAP Community Station 36.

Our 1996 Forum "Gay/Lesbian Gender Identity" won the First place in the Educational category at the 1997 Sweetheart Festival-Metro Atlanta Chapter of Alliance For Community Media, and the "Mark Twain" Second place.

The "Gay/Lesbian Gender Identity" won the First place at the Greensboro, NC Conference of the Alliance For Community Media, Southern Region (This includes nine states: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee).

Cal Thomas and Gideon

A of F member Ed McDougall was suitably incensed to comment on a Cal Thomas article he spotted in the Tampa Tribune.

Cal Thomas' complaint about our government surrendering its role in children's moral development (Oct. 2, 1997) is typically "head

Letters



in the sand Cal Thomas." He should remember what his bible tells our children about what Noah's son did to him when he assumed that same position. He seems also to believe that Gideon should be some sort of guiding light for our children.

Cal needs to pick up his well-worn bible and read about this hero of the hotel room drawer. Judges 8:30, 31 tells that Gideon had three-score and ten sons and many wives. His concubine also bore him a son.

My, my, what a wonderful role model Cal has chosen for our youngsters.

Poor Gideon. Had he lived in our time, he could have availed himself of the condoms provided at no cost and could have read Cal's columns for moral guidance and, who knows, may have even joined with the Promise Keepers in Washington so that he could pledge allegiance to one wife.

And Cal I'm sorry that you believe that our government, and not our parents, has anything to do with our children's moral upbringing. Maybe you should have gone to Washington this past weekend, too.

Ed McDougall, Sr.
Spring Hill, FL
E-mail: stopstora@gate.net

Scientologists attack science

MARK ANDREW TROP
Attorney at Law

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Dear Atheists:

The church of Scientology, founded by L. Ron Hubbard, has been bombarding Channel 38 with promotions of his "New Book." In these promotions he attempts to satirize modern science by setting up straw men in an oversimplified way. Each ad uses ugly, aggressive, fanatical actors to represent various scientific theories. They can be summarized by the following: 1. The spiritual nature of man is false; man is an animal. 2. Man came from mud (i.e. the primordial soup). 3. Your personality and emotions are nothing; man is just a bunch of chemical reactions in the brain; man is just a brain. 4. You can't change; learn to accept your limitations. An orangutan is shown to represent what man is. Doctors are shown bowing before a brain, etc. Clearly, Hubbard's target is Atheistic Science contrasted with his crackpot, soul-based theism.

Scientific Materialism does have a flaw. There is a loophole that lets the theist indulge in this kind of irony. Some people have an overactive imagination and an inflated sense of self. I know. I was a Philosophical Idealist once. I used to go around saying, "The mind will never be explained by science." Well, now it looks like it's going to be explained.

The theists think that it is necessary to boost self-esteem with the notion of an egalitarian soul, but what did religion lead to but elites? Democracy is better served by the view that man is just an animal with various aptitudes. Then we can laugh at our celebrities and leaders for their human foibles rather than worship them as gods. Religion wants to make man special, but Atheism is more humble. In taking on established science, Hubbard shows his arrogance.

I was shocked that Clinton cozier up to Religion this week by allowing religious expression in Federal workplaces. This means that when I go to a Social Security Office some nut can display the ten commandments or the Twelve Steps in his office and intimidate me silently. I have had plenty of experience with religionists proselytizing during business and formal proceedings. The wearing of the cross in enough. This makes it worse. David Barrera Gulfport

Praise for Mother Teresa

An editorial which appeared in the Saint Petersburg Times following the death of Mother Teresa prompted this response

The editorial on Mother Teresa was, essentially, a lie, and its very title, "The humble healer," was particularly a lie.

Christopher Hitchens, in his very fascinating book, *The Missionary Position: Mother Teresa in Theory and Practice*, documented from interviews with former members of this woman's order and from others who'd been acquainted with her how she systematically withheld cures and treatments from the sick who had diseases which were curable and treatable.

Hitchens also documented her friendship

Take my wife...please!

Chuck Shepherd's syndicated column "News of the Weird," which appears in over 200 "alternative" newspapers and has resulted in imitators in major dailies and on the internet, is always a good source for religious weirdness. Recently Chuck reported on the Shiite Muslim organization Hezbollah's

embracing of temporary "pleasure marriages," little more than extended periods of prostitution where women become temporary wives for money. I guess when the hormones are interpreting, the Koran says anything they want it to — just like every other religion.

Court Turns Back Prayer Challenge

WASHINGTON—The Supreme Court this month rejected a challenge to Indiana University's custom of having a clergy member offer two prayers at the school's graduation ceremony each May.

The court, without comment, turned away arguments that the state school's custom violates the constitutionally required separation of religion and government.

For 35 years, the nation's highest court has banned officially sponsored worship in public schools. In 1992, the court ruled that clergy members cannot lead invocations and benedictions at public grade school or high school graduation ceremonies.

But that decision emphasized that the same rule might not apply to officially sponsored prayers at a public university or a city council meeting.

The 7th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, in upholding Indiana University's practice last January, drew a distinction between college graduates and younger students.

The appeals court added: "The university's practice ... has prevailed for 155 years and is widespread throughout the nation. Rather than being in violation of the (Constitution) it

is simply a tolerable acknowledgment of beliefs widely held among the people of this country."

The graduation prayers had been challenged by James Tanford, a law professor at the university, and Joseph Urbanski, a student.

Tanford, a Roman Catholic, objects to non-denominational public prayer because he believes they trivialize and desanctify communion with God. Urbanski, who expects to graduate in May 1999, is an atheist.

They sued in an attempt to ban prayers from the university's 1995 graduation ceremony. A federal trial judge and the 7th Circuit court ruled against them.

In the appeal, Tanford and Urbanski argued that "prayer has rarely been found to have a secular purpose because it is so quintessentially a religious activity."

"Such prayers should not be justified on the ground that they are voluntary, nonsectarian, traditional or merely used to solemnize a secular occasion," the appeal said.

Lawyers for the university urged the justices to reject the appeal.

"Under any realistic view, (Tanford and Urbanski) are not coerced to participate in a religious exercise," they said. "There is no evidence, and it is not credible to be believed, that Indiana University's 'real' purpose of intent is to promote religion."

The case is *Tanford vs. Brand*, 96-1894.

Gee, Catholic judges siding with their own Diocese? Go figure!

In an article in the June/July *Freethought Today*, the Wisconsin Supreme Court ruled 5-2 that churches cannot be held liable for sexual misconduct by their employees. The defendant was the Roman Catholic Diocese of Madison. Four of the five judges voting for the majority opinion just happen to be Catholics! Just imagine if four of seven judges in a case involving an atheist were also atheists: wouldn't the churches be screaming for the judges to recuse themselves? No such protest happened here, excepting the FFRF's actions. **A**

You have probably received notice of the Mark Twain Scholarship Fund raffle. To help meet our obligations for the '97-'98 scholarship grants of \$500 and \$800, we are raffling a European cut 7 karat donated diamond ring with an appraised value of \$700.00! Remember to send in your \$5 ticket to P.O. Box 3893 / Ft. Pierce, FL 349488. Send \$5 for each additional ticket you want and we will prepare the stubs for the drawing. If you have not received a ticket by separate mailing, contact Christos Tzanetakos at (561) 489-5505, e-mail AthAIFLC@aol.com. Drawing will be in December, 1977.

Scholarship Fund Raffle

Calling Christos Tzanetakos for jury duty is like bumping Ralph Nader off a confirmed airline reservation. The following letters tell the whole story.

(Written on Atheists of Florida stationery)

Squeaky wheel



The Honorable Paul Kanarek
Chief Judge of the Nineteenth
Judicial Circuit of Florida
2000 16th Ave. / Suite 375
Vero Beach, FL 32960

September 25, 1997

Dear Judge Kanarek,

Recently I was summoned to appear for jury duty. On Monday, September 15, 1997, I arrived at the Saint Lucie County Court in Ft. Pierce, eager to exercise my privilege as a United States Citizen and taxpayer.

Clerk JoAnne Holman administered two oaths reading them from a piece of paper attached to the podium.

They were:

You do solemnly swear or affirm that you will thoughtfully answers make to all questions which shall be put to you by the Court or its Authority regarding your competency to serve as a juror, SO HELP YOU GOD.

Do you solemnly swear or affirm that you will answer thoughtfully all questions asked of you as prospective jurors, SO HELP YOU GOD?

Your Honor, a juror or any other office holder in our country does not have to profess belief in any god or other supernatural religious superstition.

This issue was decided by the U.S. Supreme Court in the *Torcaso vs. Watkins*, 367 U.S. 488 (1961) case, which unequivocally established that such a test oath was clearly unconstitutional.

When I objected to these oaths, Clerk JoAnne Holman did not only refuse to ad-

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MARY BENNETT HUDSON

minister a secular oath, but very arrogantly stated, "I am administering these oaths for the past twenty years." She then told me to see Judge Bryan for whose court the jury pool was intended.

Unfortunately, I, along with several other prospective jurors, was dismissed without seeing Judge Bryan. (Legally, since I did not accept the oaths, I was deprived of my duty as juror).

Therefore, I respectfully petition your Honor to issue the proper instructions to remedy this most disturbing violation to our Constitution. Enclosed, please find other exhibits relevant to the above mentioned case.

Most respectfully,
Christos Tzanetakos
President, Atheists of Florida

October 1, 1997

Christos Tzanetakos
The Atheists of Florida, Inc.
Post Office Box 3893
Ft. Pierce, FL 34948-3893

Dear Mr. Tzanetakos:

I recently received your letter of September 25, 1997. Until I received your letter I was unaware of the nature of the oath used by the Clerk in St. Lucie County. I have since written to Mrs. Holman and requested that she use the oath prescribed in Section 90.605, Florida Statutes which states:

"Do you swear or affirm that the evidence you are about to give will be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?"

If you have any questions or other concerns please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,
Paul B. Kanarek

The Honorable Paul B. Kanarek
Chief Judge of the Nineteenth
Judicial Circuit of Florida
2000 16th Ave. / Suite 375
Vero Beach, FL 32960

October 5, 1997

Dear Judge Kanarek,

Thank you for your prompt response and action pertaining to the Juror's oath at the Ft. Pierce court.

Considering the current religious onslaught upon our Constitution, we depend on jurisprudence as exhibited by your Honor on turning our country to theocracy and the biblical dark age.

Most respectfully,
Christos Tzanetakos
President, Atheists of Florida **A**

"it is simply a tolerable acknowledgment of beliefs"

Wielding those Xian swords

"May God grant me the strength to always live by this creed."

Insight

FT. LAUDERDALE — That's the ending of the ROTC creed. Would you recite it?

A 17-year-old atheist student at Cocount Creek High School had the integrity to refuse as a pupil in the Junior ROTC program.

As a result, he was humiliated and ostracized, at least according to the suit he's filed against the teacher.

"There was a hostile reaction," said the student's attorney, Nova Southeastern University law professor Steven Wisotsky. "He was yelled at, kicked out of class, demoted and forced to endure behavior which eventually led him to leave the...program."

Wisotsky claimed the teacher's actions violated the student's First Amendment rights to free speech and exercise of religion.

When the student raised his objections to participating in the oath (prayer), the teacher shouted that the student would receive an F for each day that he refused to recite the creed, according to the suit.

"Well if you don't like this country, then get the hell out!"

Within days, the student was "stripped of his rank as a master sergeant," the suit says. "He frequently isolated plaintiff for negative treatment, including lowered grades, and made the plaintiff feel unwelcome and an outcast."

Guess what

It just so happens that the mother of the student is a member of Atheists of Florida. At this time, the student doesn't want to be identified and we respect that. She sent a copy of her complaint submitted to the ACLU to Atheists of Florida. Here is a synopsis of the

complaint:
(Plaintiff's name changed)

January 6, 1997

I am the single parent of a 17-year-old son who is pursuing a career in law enforcement. In keeping with this goal he joined the JROTC program at Cocount Creek High School and the Broward Sheriff's Office Explorer Post #202 about 18 months ago. Most police agencies require college and military service in order to be considered viable.

"Carl" quickly proved to have "the right stuff" and was promoted to Master Sergeant in JROTC and Lieutenant with BSO's Explorer's. Major Taylor was his teacher and frequently told Carl that his good attitude and conscientious care of the class supply room would result in timely promotions.

In early October, 1996 Major Taylor was succeeded by Sergeant Smith who worked together with Major Taylor during this transitional period. Smith announced to the class that he was handing out a printed assignment which required memorization. The document was titled, "The JROTC Creed." The last line of the *Creed* reads as follows: "May God grant me the strength to always live by this creed." My son and I are Atheists. Carl's dilemma was chronicled by me in a letter (see enclosed) which documents this and other related incidents to several officials of the Broward County School Board.

After many weeks with no response from any of the seven persons addressed, the following incidents occurred:

- 1) Sgt. Smith was angry with Carl for raising the issue and getting the "entire class in an uproar." Other students likewise objected to the introduction of this text in a public school/US Army setting. Sgt. Smith's open display of anger and chastisement of Carl was both damaging and humiliating.
- 2) My son was ordered to memorize and recite the text or receive and 'F' each day he refused to comply.
- 3) After becoming frustrated Sgt. Smith angrily told Carl, "Fine, then leave the last line out!" However, all the other students were still ordered to memorize and recite the *Creed* in open class.
- 4) My son and several other students also objected to the part *Creed* that refers to

THE JUNIOR ROTC CADET CREED

I am an Army Junior ROTC Cadet. I will always conduct myself to bring credit to my family, country, school and the Corps of Cadets.

I am loyal and patriotic. I am the future of the United States of America.

I do not lie, cheat or steal and will always be accountable for my actions and deeds.

I will always practice good citizenship and patriotism.

I will work hard to improve my mind and strengthen my body.

I will seek the mantle of leadership and stand prepared to uphold the Constitution and the American way of life.

May God grant me the strength to always live by this creed.

'citizens', stating that it seemed to discriminate and exclude persons of foreign origin.

5) Major Taylor (who was present) ordered Carl out of the class and took over the debate while other staff and students were within earshot. Major Taylor insisted that Carl should not object to the *Creed* while Carl continued to state his intent to refuse based on his right to reject the 'god concept' and 'American exclusionary concept.' When Carl inquired as to why 18 months into the program this was being thrust upon him he was interrupted by Mr. Milton (the Dean of boys) who easily overheard this debate. Mr. Milton yelled at Carl, "Well if you don't like this country, then get the hell out!" Major Taylor concurred with Mr. Milton

stating, "Exactly!"

6) Under the pretext of being open to feedback, Sgt. Smith asked the class to openly and honestly relay their true feelings about what problems they faced as students. When several students insisted that the number one problem they had was the JROTC's religious ideology and prejudice they were ordered back to their seats by Sgt. Smith and silenced. When Carl (who had returned to the class) objected to this, he was ordered out of the room with no pass, no instructions of where to report or when or if to return!

7) A few days after the *Creed* incident Carl was stripped of his rank as a Master Sergeant and a subordinate was given his title and responsibilities.

8) My son has been blacklisted by the 'adult Christian Brass' and the 'student Christian Brass' in the program. Carl is the only Atheist in the class.

9) My son is viewed by the JROTC program instructors as a pariah and their organized retaliatory methods (since learning of my complaints) include daily referrals, detentions and continued orders to, "Leave the room now!"

My son has been harmed by the JROTC Program and the Broward School Board. They have thrust a moral dilemma and punitive consequences upon someone they were duty and honour bound to educate, elevate and embrace. Carl has since refused to wear the US Army issue uniform to class as required, and continues to be a figure of conscientious objection. This has hurt his GPA which will in turn close college doors to him and effect his career. College ROTC students graduate as full Captains in the US Military. This issue left unchecked will result in either a refusal to accept him in future ROTC programs or his refusal to accept ROTC and end a law enforcement career before it even begins.

I hope the ACLU will consider handling this case on our behalf.

A

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