

FREETHOUGHT

TODAY



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FFRF sues over city's reciting of prayer

A new lawsuit by the FFRF and two of its local members seeks to ensure that the city of Parkersburg, W.Va., complies with the First Amendment by halting its unconstitutional city prayer practice.

The federal lawsuit was filed July 31 in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of West Virginia, Charleston Division.

The lawsuit challenges Parkersburg City Council's adoption of the "Lord's Prayer" as the official Christian prayer, which opens every City Council meeting. The recited version is a biblical translation of Matthew 6:9-13 and concludes with a Christian doxology. Council members lead the prayer and are joined by city residents at each meeting in reciting it. FFRF charges that the prayers violate well-established law and exclude residents who are non-Christian.

Local plaintiffs include Daryl Co-branchi, who has frequently attended meetings and been directed to stand for the Lord's Prayer, a practice, he notes, which has made him conspicuous by his nonparticipation and which "assigns to second-class status anyone who is not Christian." Likewise, Eric Engle, also a Parkersburg resident, follows city matters and has felt uncomfortable and pressured to participate in the Christian prayer during public meetings.

At least one member of the City Council has been openly hostile to nonparticipants, the legal complaint charges. Councilman Eric Barber glared at attendees who sat during the prayer at a meeting in September. At the end of that prayer, Barber positioned himself near his microphone, pressed the button, and shouted, "Amen."

See Prayer on page 9

Major victory for FFRF!

Appeals court votes against prayer

'Policy lacks a secular legislative purpose,' 9th Circuit Court rules

FFRF, with 22 parents, students and employees of the Chino Valley (Calif.) School District, on July 25 won a major victory before the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals against prayer at public school board meetings.

FFRF's lawsuit challenged the practice of prayer at Chino Valley School Board's meetings, which resembled church revivals more than public meetings. These meetings opened with prayer and regularly included board members reading from the bible and proselytizing.

"The board's prayer policy and practice violate the Establishment Clause," a three-judge panel of the 9th Circuit ruled unanimously. "We hold that the Chino Valley Board's prayer policy lacks a secular legislative purpose and therefore . . . violates the Establishment Clause. Accordingly, we uphold the district court's grant of summary judgment to the Foundation on this claim," ruled M. Margaret McKeown, Kim McLane Wardlaw, circuit judges, and Wiley Y. Daniel, district judge for Colorado, sitting by designation.

Then-School Board President James Na injected Christianity into many of his official statements to parents and students at meetings. For instance, at one meeting, Na "urged everyone who does not know Jesus Christ to go and find Him," after which another board member closed with a reading of Psalm 143.



Photo by John Valenzuela of the Inland Valley Daily Bulletin

Supporters of prayer at school board meetings hold signs while they listen to public comments during the Chino Valley Unified School District's special meeting in 2015.

"These prayers typically take place before groups of schoolchildren whose attendance is not truly voluntary and whose relationship to school district officials, including the board, is not one of full parity," the appeals court ruled. "Because prayer at the Chino Valley Board meeting falls outside the legislative-prayer tradition, we apply the three-pronged test first articulated in *Lemon v. Kurtzman* for determining whether a governmental policy or action is an impermissible establishment of religion."

The court differentiated school board

See Victory on page 3



Plaintiffs Michael Anderson and Larry Maldonado and attorney J.P. Kaloyanides, along with FFRF and 20 other plaintiffs, won at the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

Unabashed, indeed!



New Hampshire state Rep. Brandon Phinney was a recent weekly winner of FFRF's Unabashed Atheist virtual billboard contest. Phinney founded the Libertarian Party's Secular Caucus, the first of its kind for any political party.

Religious Liberty Task Force endangers wall of separation

Attorney General Jeff Sessions' announcement July 31 of a "Religious Liberty Task Force" to enforce his theocratic "religious liberty" agenda is cause for grave concern.

The task force will be charged with carrying out Sessions' 20-page Principles of Religious Liberty memo, which FFRF sounded the alarm on when it was released last October. The memo signaled an acceleration of the Trump Administration's partnership with the Religious Right to redefine and weaponize the concept of "religious liberty" to allow religiously motivated discrimination and privilege Christianity.

During his announcement, Sessions, flanked by a Catholic archbishop and the Colorado baker who refused to bake a cake for a gay couple in the Supreme Court's *Masterpiece Cake* case, portrayed

religious Americans as victims who are treated like second-class citizens:

"Under this administration, the federal government is not just reacting — we are actively seeking, carefully, thoughtfully and lawfully, to accommodate people of faith. Religious Americans are no longer an afterthought."

Jeff Sessions

"We will take potential burdens on one's conscience into consideration before we issue regulations or new policies."

"And this Department of Justice is going to court across America to defend

See Task Force on page 9

Signs from above

Egger drives message home with billboards

Name: Jack G. Egger
Where I live: Marietta, Ga.
Born: North Tonawanda, N.Y., in 1940.
Family: Wife with one stepchild and family, one younger brother with large family, and two sisters.
Education: Associate of science degree.

How I got where I am today: I left home after I graduated from Niagara Falls High School and went on the road with a rock & roll band and worked around the eastern U.S. for most of my 20s before settling in Atlanta. In my 30s, I went back to school and got my degree and went to work for the U.S. Postal Service as a maintenance mechanic for 26 years and worked part time as a musician on the weekends. I have been married twice and have been married 34 years to my second wife, who is a respiratory therapist. We have never spent more than we made and invested our extra money in stocks and bonds.

Person in history I admire and why: Albert Einstein, because he saw what was real about our universe. $E=MC^2$.
These are a few of my favorite things: Music, science, swimming, camping and Jet Skis.
These are not: Myth religions.
My favorite quotation: “Truth is the foundation of all knowledge and the cement of all societies.” — John Dryden.
My doubts about religion started: When I was a teenager, it started not to make sense to me.
What have you done for the freethought movement? I am a member of



Jack Egger
American Humanist Association, life-time member of Atlanta Freethought Society and served on its board for a year, Secular Coalition, Center for Inquiry and the Freedom From Religion Foundation. Also, I’m working on getting AHA and FFRF chapters in this area.

I am sponsoring a billboard campaign for FFRF this year in the Marietta, Ga., area. A large billboard with the message, “Supernatural belief — the enemy of humanity” has recently gone up in Marietta. Previous billboards that we have placed this year in the vicinity include one telling people to “Enjoy life — there is no afterlife,” another showing an astronaut in space with the slogan “In Science We Trust,” and one proclaiming “The only wall we need is



Throughout 2018, Marietta, Ga., resident Jack Egger has generously under-written monthly billboards for FFRF promoting freethought, science and the separation of state and church.



between church-state.”
What’s your dream for freethought? I would hope there are some billionaires out there who feel that believing in the supernatural is a scourge on humanity and would be willing to help establish this institution I talk about in my essay, “The Conflict Between Science and Religion.”
In it, I write, “When religions that incorporate the supernatural are taken as the truth, this fuels climate change deniers, create wars, and promotes human rights violations. It’s also a major source of discrimination, creates most of the political divide in the world, and it takes away focus on the things that really matter to improve our lives here and now. If this isn’t bad enough, our governments give these religions tax exemptions, which violates the separation of the church and state clause as stated in the Constitution.”
“What if all the true and good things of all the existing religions of today could be incorporated into one universal theology? This new theology will have its foundation based on science and humanism without any supernaturalism and would be called ‘humantology’ (or any other appropriate name).”
To read the full essay, go to jackegger-blog.wordpress.com.



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The only freethought newspaper in the United States

FFRF welcomes new Life Members

FFRF is excited to announce our seven newest Lifetime and After-Life Members and two Immortals.
FFRF’s newest Lifetime Members are Howard Bostock, Jeff Gipson, David Hamer, Vincent Landis, Dennis McCurdy and Rob McMullen. States represented are Alabama, California, Texas and Ohio. Individual Lifetime Memberships are \$1,000, designated as membership or membership renewal, and are deductible for income-tax purposes.
Our new After-Life Member is Emory E. Lynn. An After-Life Membership is a \$5,000 donation for those who want their donation to “live on” after them.
Our two new Immortals are Sue Mandeville and Mike Koivula. The

Immortals category is a donation designation for those members who have contacted FFRF to report they have made provisions for FFRF in their estate planning.

Lead Us Not Into Penn Station:
Provocative Pieces

LEAD US NOT INTO PENN STATION

By Anne Gaylor

A must-have for any freethinker, this gracefully readable book contains Gaylor’s classic writings.

Published by FFRF

Buy it from FFRF online
shop.ffrf.org

HEADS UP

A Poetry Column By Philip Appleman

PARABLE OF THE PERFIDIOUS PROVERBS

How better is it to get wisdom than gold.
Money buys prophets and teachers, poems and art,
So listen, if you're so rich, why aren't you smart?

He that spareth his rod hateth his son.
That line gives you a perfect way of testing
Your inner feelings about child molesting.

He that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent.
But here at the parish we don't find it overly hard
To accept his dirty cash or credit card.

Hope deferred maketh the heart sick.
That's just why the good Lord made it mandatory
To eat your heart out down in Purgatory.

Wisdom is better than rubies.
Among the jeweled bishops and other boobies
It's also a whole lot rarer than rubies.

He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool.
Trusting your heart may not be awfully bright,
But trusting Proverbs is an idiot's delight.

From *Karma, Dharma, Pudding & Pie*



© Philip Appleman.

Philip Appleman is a Distinguished Professor Emeritus at Indiana University. He is editor of the Norton Critical Edition of *Darwin*. He and his playwright wife, Marjorie Appleman, are both "After-Life" Members of FFRF.

Phil's books: ffrf.org/shop.

OVERHEARD

The bond between America's Christian nationalists and the Russian government goes back a long way, long before anyone conceived of the possibility of a Trump administration. . . The Religious Right thinks that it's using Mr. Putin to advance its aims. But a far more plausible interpretation is that he is using them — to infiltrate, divide and weaken our country.

Katherine Stewart, in her column "What Was Maria Butina Doing at the National Prayer Breakfast?"
New York Times, 7-18-18



Consider this your semi-regular reminder that Jeffress, Fox News' go-to religious authority, is among the city's most divisive voices.

Robert Wilonsky, being quoted in a Dallas News article about how a Dallas billboard proclaiming "America is a Christian nation" by Robert Jeffress was taken down after drawing criticism and being labeled divisive.
Dallas Morning News, 6-21-18

According to Michael D'Antonio's book [*The Shadow President: The Truth About Mike Pence*], Pence sees himself and fellow Christian warriors as a blessed but oppressed group, and his "hope for the future resided in his faith that, as chosen people, conservative evangelicals would eventually be served by a leader whom God would enable to de-

feat their enemies and create a Christian nation." . . . Heaven help us.

Frank Bruni, in his column, "Mike Pence, Holy Terror."
New York Times, 7-28-18

With its relative lack of diplomatic protocols and press coverage, the prayer breakfast setting is ideal for foreign figures who might not otherwise be able to easily get face time with top American officials, because of unsavory reputations or a lack of an official government perch.

Journalists Kenneth P. Vogel and Elizabeth Dias in the article, "At Prayer Breakfast, guests seek access to a different higher power."
New York Times, 7-27-18

All bishops resign.

Banner unfurled during Mass at the Cathedral of Santiago in late July in front of Cardinal Ricardo Ezzati, who's denied covering up accusations of abuse in Chile under congressional investigations into 104 potential victims of the church's "culture of abuse."
New York Times, 8/1/18

Have you any idea of what Christianity has tolerated in this country? Supporting Vladimir Putin's puppet is a trifle compared to the enormous mechanism of horror that religion in America has enthusiastically endorsed, not for a few years, but for centuries.

Neil Steinberg, in his column, "Frederick Douglass reminds us: Christians supported far worse than Donald Trump."
Chicago Sun-Times, 8-7-18

FFRF hands out more freethought badges

In an ongoing program, FFRF is giving out atheist badges for those in (or formerly in) Boy Scouts or Girls Scouts. Scouts who wish to earn the badge are asked to write an essay that addresses the Boy Scouts of America claim that nonbelievers can't be good citizens. To apply for a badge, submit a brief essay, which should include your full name, age, mailing address, and contact information to: freethoughtbadge@ffrf.org.

Here are excerpted essays from the two newest badge earners.

...



Tarrah Henri

I was raised in the LDS Church (Mormon Church). Both of my parents were Boy Scout leaders for my brother, so I went on the camp-outs, attended the weekly activities, and did all of the activities and work for many of the merit badges. My mom even asked me to teach the knot-tying and swimming merit badges.

I attended the award ceremonies and watched the boys get merit badges for the same things that I had done. I could not get any merit badges because I am female. As you can imagine, this was a painful experience. It pointed out to me the blatant sexism in the Mormon Church. That is one of the reasons that I left the church at age 17 and became an atheist-leaning agnostic. As you may already be aware, the Mormon Church recently decided that it would rather get rid of its

scouting program than include girls.

Since leaving the church, I have continued to help my communities through active volunteerism. I would be incredibly honored to become a freethought merit badge recipient.

Tarrah Henrie (FFRF Member)

...

I was a Brownie and then a Girl Scout in the late 1950s to early 1960s. I started school just after they inserted "under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance and we were still reading aloud psalms at the start of each school day. (I still know a couple by memory.)

I had no idea until several years ago that the Boy Scouts required fealty to an imaginary being (the Girls Scouts do not. Yay, girls!), or that they prohibited gay scouts and leaders. I think it's rather remarkable/inscrutable that they've made progress on the gay issue but not on the God thing. Until they do, I'm hoping girls will continue to stick with the Girl Scouts instead of the newly co-ed Scouts — and maybe one day boys will be able to join the distaff organization rather than give a God nod.

Of course, we all officially agree to things we don't agree with, whether it's lip service to supernatural beings in order to be part of a group that ties cool knots, or clicking on all those boxes we have to click to get credit cards or access to the cloud. But that doesn't make it right, just a necessary evil that would be better if it were unnecessary.

It's been a long time since I've been any kind of scout, but for decades I've been working on earning my merit badge as a freethinker, through support of FFRF and other kindred organizations (I write a weekly column for the American Humanist Association), and by trying to be a good person, as well as one who is up front about her atheism.

I don't recall if I stayed in the Girl Scouts long enough to get any proficiency badges, as they were called. So this one from FFRF would be especially meaningful to me.

Joan Resiman-Brill (FFRF Life Member)

**Women Without Superstition:
"No Gods — No Masters"**

Collected writings of 50 women freethinkers of the 19th & 20th centuries (51 photographs).

Edited by Annie Laurie Gaylor

Published by FFRF

**Buy it from FFRF online
shop.ffrf.org**

**American Infidel:
Robert G. Ingersoll**

By Orvin Larsen

Prof. Larsen writes with affection and respect of this illustrious 19th century freethinker.

Published by FFRF

**Buy it from FFRF online
shop.ffrf.org**

What Is a Freethinker?

freethinker *n.*

A person who forms opinions about religion on the basis of reason, independently of tradition, authority, or established belief.

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Freedom depends upon freethinkers

Subjugation of women entirely based on religion

By Barbara G. Walker

According to Genesis 3:16, God told Eve, “Thy husband shall rule over thee,” in revenge for her sin of apple-eating, and laid on her the curse of painful childbearing, to be endured as frequently as possible. All three Abrahamic religions made lavish use of this text, as we shall see.



Barbara G. Walker

Tertullian insisted that every woman is another Eve, “the devil’s gateway,” and women are responsible for bringing death into the world. On account of woman’s sin, he said, “even the son of God had to die.” Apparently, he regarded woman as more powerful than God, who should have had the power to eliminate death if he really wanted to. And he certainly should have had the power to protect his son, but instead, God actually arranged for this cruel death. As a child in Sunday school, I marveled at this. What kind of a father would kill his son to induce himself to forgive people that he knew in advance would be sinful, since he had made them that way? And what’s so wrong about wanting to eat fruit from the Tree of Knowledge? Aren’t we supposed to seek knowledge? And what kind of a god would create a hell in the first place? And this is a god who has such a hugely hungry ego that he wants continual praise from absolutely everybody for this kind of behavior? I tried to ask questions like these, but the Sunday school teacher simply told me that to ask questions was a sin.

Genesis myth

St. Augustine based the entire doctrine of original sin on the Genesis myth, and went on to claim that evil is transmitted into every child because of its birth passage through the female body, which carries the taint of sin, even in the womb. That is why they say baptism of the child is necessary. The Catholic baptism ceremony still involves a verbal exorcism to cast out the demon within the child. The church allowed baptism of a male infant 40 days after birth, but a female infant could not be brought into a church until 80 days after birth. Any child that died before this time was forbidden burial in consecrated ground and automatically relegated to eternal torture in hell, until Renaissance times, when the church finally responded to public outrage and invented “limbo,” where unbaptized infants could spend enough time to be purged of the sin they inherited from their mothers.

Over the centuries, male authorities have repeated again and again their conviction that, as St. Peter said, according to the Gospel of Thomas, “Women are not worthy of life.”

St. Paul said, in 1 Tim. 2:14: “Adam



“The Fall of Man,” by Dutch artist Hendrick Goltzius in 1616.

was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was the transgressor.” This seems to indicate that the original sin was gullibility.

In the Gospel According to the Egyptians, one of the apocrypha, Jesus said: “I have come to destroy the works of the female.” Clement of Alexandria quoted this and added: “Every woman should be filled with shame at the thought that she is a woman.” St. Odo of Cluny identified woman as “no more than a sack of dung.” Bishop John Aylmer continued this theme in 1590: “Woman is the dregs of the devil’s dung hill.” John Scotus Erigena explained that “When the heavens finally open in glory, woman will be no more, because God embodied the sinless part of humanity in man and the sinful part in woman.” St. John Chrysostom commanded every Christian father to instill into his son “a resolute spirit against womankind.”

The Malleus Maleficarum, official handbook of the Inquisition, stated that women should be thoroughly tortured, because “all wickedness is but little to the wickedness of a woman.” According to Henry Charles Lea, author of the definitive History of the Inquisition, over nine million women were slaughtered on false convictions of witchcraft in the five centuries during which the Inquisition dominated Europe. In some towns, nearly all the women were killed, only one or two left alive. Lea also said that while he was working from authentic documents in the Vatican Library in the early 1900s, monks were already beginning to destroy those documents in order to conceal the church’s horrendous history.

‘Lower than a slave’

St. Thomas Aquinas wrote: “Every woman is birth-defective, an imperfect male, begotten because her father was

ill, weakened or in a state of sin when she was conceived.” As for a wife, Aquinas opined that she is “lower than a slave, wholly in subjection to her husband.” This opinion was echoed even today by Pat Robertson, who said, “I know this is painful for the ladies to hear, but if you get married, you have accepted the leadership of a man. The husband is the head of the wife, and that’s the way it is, period.”

A 15th-century ecclesiastical publication, The Rules of Marriage, stated that a husband has every right to scold and bully his wife, and if that didn’t work, then he must “beat her soundly, to punish the body and correct the soul; so readily beat her, out of concern for her soul, so that the beating will redound to your credit.”

In the old Russian Orthodox wedding ceremony, the bride had to kneel and place her husband’s foot on her head, and accept a token stroke from a small jeweled whip. Wedding cakes sometimes bore the toy figures of a man beating his wife. All the way up to the 1950s, American law upheld the so-called “doctrine of immunity,” which forbade police to invade a home to arrest a husband for wife-beating, because (this is a literal quote!) “it might destroy the peace of the home.” Only in 1962 did a judge rule that there was already a certain lack of peace in such a home.

Bear the children

Martin Luther regarded himself as an unusually kind husband because he didn’t beat his wife with a stick, but only punched her in the head “to keep her from getting saucy.” His opinion of women was that their duty is simply to serve the husband and bear the children. He said, “If women get tired and die of bearing, there is no harm in that; let them die as long as they bear; they were made for that.”

Of course, it has always been very clear to patriarchal men that motherhood has a strongly immobilizing influence on women, making them unwilling or unable to break away from a financially supportive marriage, no matter how abusive it may be in other respects. Laws against abortion are a direct result of ecclesiastical deprivation of women’s rights, and the greed of churches for more and more adherents. When Pope John II visited overpopulated and impoverished areas in

South America, where desperate family planning often turned to infanticide, he lectured against contraception, saying “any woman who uses a birth control device commits a sin worse than murder.”

When chloroform and ether began to be used as anesthetics in the 19th century, English and American clergy loudly forbade their use in childbirth, because it was “a sinful denial” of the pleasure God took in hearing women’s screams, pursuant to his curse. A New England minister wrote that chloroform for women is “a decoy of Satan.” However, when Queen Victoria allowed her doctor to give her chloroform during the birth of her eighth child and hailed it as a great blessing, the clergymen were silenced. Queens, it seems, could overrule God.

‘An incarnate demon’

At the beginning of the women’s emancipation movement, the Rev. Peter Easton described the emancipated woman as “an incarnate demon, a creature of unbounded lust and merciless cruelty.”

An Episcopalian bishop wrote in 1971: “The sexuality of Christ is no accident, nor is his masculinity incidental. This is the divine choice.”

Elizabeth Cady Stanton wrote: “The church has done more to degrade women than all other adverse influences together. Out of the doctrine of original sin grew the crimes and miseries of asceticism, celibacy and witchcraft, woman becoming the helpless victims of all the delusions in the brain of man. . . There is nothing more pathetic in all history than the hopeless resignation of women to the outrages she has been taught to believe are ordained by God.”

In many areas today dominated by fundamentalist Islam, the enslavement of wives goes on under a virtually medieval Allah. Women can’t leave home without a male escort, have no right to education, and may be executed for the “crime” of being raped, yet rape is all too common in Islamic countries. Highly patriarchal rules can be found even among Muslims who have emigrated to Western countries. In Atlanta, a 25-year-old Muslim woman was killed by her father for the “crime” of seeking a divorce from the husband who had been forced on her without her consent.

Theologian Rosemary Radford Ruether notes: “The task of suppressing women into dependence on males is a never-ending struggle. It must be reiterated generation after generation, by repeating the myths of woman’s original sin to the young, both male and female, and by marginalizing women from power roles in society. Religion is relied on as both the foundation and the daily aid in this project.”

Were it not for religion — specifically the male god that replaced the original neolithic goddess — there would be no sexism. It is an invention of and a mechanism of religion, and should also go the way of unicorns, satyrs, dragons, witches, archangels and demons alike. Men, as well as women, need to play their part in this process. One of the first steps seems to be a realization that, in spite of all the virgins he seems to have impregnated during Roman times, God does not necessarily have a penis. The true life source for all of us is Mother Earth.

FFRF Life Member Barbara G. Walker is the author of *Belief and Unbelief, Man Made God, Feminist Fairy Tales* and many other books.

**Woe to the Women:
The Bible Tells Me So**

By Annie Laurie Gaylor

A concise, easy-to-read book that will challenge your concept of the bible as “a good book.” Illustrated. 264 pages.

Published by FFRF

**Buy it from FFRF online
shop.ffrf.org**

**The Born Again Skeptic’s
Guide to the Bible**

By Ruth Hurmence Green

A Missouri grandmother debunks the bible as no one has debunked it since Thomas Paine.

Published by FFRF

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IN THE NEWS

White evangelicals: U.S. diversity a negative

More than half — 52 percent — of white evangelical Protestants say a majority of the U.S. population being nonwhite will be a negative development, according to the Public Religion Research Institute and the Atlantic.

According to the latest census projections, white Americans will be in the minority by 2045, in part due to the aging white population. By that time, Latinos are expected to be about 25 percent of the population, while black Americans will make up just over 13 percent of the population. The Asian population will be nearly 8 percent. Multiracial people will make up nearly 4 percent of the population.

Pompeo to world: Defend religious freedom

On July 26, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo sent out a declaration urging governments around the world to prioritize religious freedom.

The Potomac Declaration and an accompanying plan of action were released at the inaugural Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom conference in Washington, D.C.

The declaration states that “religious freedom is a far-reaching, universal and profound human right that all peoples and nations of good will must defend around the globe.”

Pompeo touted it as an effort to make good on President Trump’s promise to make religious freedom a “key priority” of his foreign policy. But critics have expressed concern about whether his administration has sought to help certain religious groups over others.

Nuns denounce their abuse by priests

About half a dozen sisters in a small religious congregation in Chile went public on national television with their stories of abuse by priests and other nuns — and how their superiors did nothing to stop it.

The Associated Press has found that cases of Catholic nuns being sexually abused have emerged in Europe, Africa, South America and Asia, demonstrating that the problem is global and pervasive, thanks to the universal tradition of sisters’ second-class status in the Catholic Church and their ingrained subservience to the men who run it.

Some nuns are now finding their voices, buoyed by the #MeToo movement and the growing recognition that adults can be victims of sexual abuse when there is an imbalance of power in a relationship.

Ark park visitors less than projected

Ken Ham’s Ark Encounter park in Kentucky sold about 860,000 tickets between July 2017 and June 2018, according to open records obtained by FFRF’s chapter, FFRF Kentucky. That is significantly less than the initial estimates of 1.4 million to 2.4 million yearly visitors.

A spokesman for the park said the foundation’s figures for ticket sales are accurate but noted that it doesn’t represent how many people actually

Burning for you



Lifetime Member Bill Schneider saw this hanging from a church in Montpelier, Vt. “It seems to indicate that God is a murderous arsonist, demonstrating this with a depiction of a bird on fire about to crash to its death!” he writes.

visited the park. Children, members with lifetime passes or annual memberships do not come up in the final ticket sales, the spokesman said.

The park won more than \$18 million in tax incentives from the state, and after its first year, the state of Kentucky sent Ark Encounter a rebate check for \$1.8 million.

Study: U.S. the most religious wealthy country

America is the most religious wealthy country in the world, according to a recent Pew survey.

Fifty-five percent of Americans report praying at least once daily, 6 percentage points higher than the international average. America is an extreme statistical outlier when it comes to countries with at least a \$30,000 per person GDP. In this category, the global average hovers around 40 percent. In Canada, just 25 percent of people pray daily. In Great Britain, it’s only 6 percent.

The United States was the only country out of the 102 surveyed to score higher-than-average on both religiosity (based on daily prayer) and national wealth (based on GDP per capita). By contrast, countries that report daily prayer rate comparable to the United States tend to be poorer, such as Bolivia (56 percent) and Bangladesh (57 percent).

Catholic hospitals on rise; services down

Because of mergers and consolidations that have been reshaping the U.S. health care system, Catholic hospitals are playing a bigger role in pa-

tient care, which can be unfortunate for those who many need reproductive care or contraceptives, or have death with dignity directives. One-sixth of hospital beds nationwide are now in Catholic facilities.

Catholic hospitals are committed to a set of religious guidelines, the Ethical and Religious Directives, which include a blanket ban on abortion and restrictions on contraception, both of which are opposed by the Catholic Church.

However, insurance can push patients into those institutions without informing them about the limitations on the services they can receive.

Atheist firefighter can proceed with lawsuit

Jeffrey Queen, an atheist firefighter, filed a lawsuit against the city of Bowling Green (Ky.) for a long list of anti-atheist comments he was subjected to while working for the fire department.

After his complaints were ignored, he took a leave of absence and then resigned. The lawsuit followed.

The city tried to get the courts to throw it out, claiming “that jokes, pranks, and teasing are all part of the fraternal environment at the Fire Department that Queen enjoyed and participated in,” according to Hemant Mehta in his “Friendly Atheist” blog.

However, a judge ruled that the case can move forward.

Christian nationalism, authoritarianism linked

New research has found a link between Christian nationalism and authoritarian attitudes toward crime.

The study provides evidence that

the Christian nationalist ideology — rather than religious commitment or traditional values — is associated with the belief that troublemakers should be harshly punished.

In his study, Joshua Davis of the University of Oklahoma found that people who believed that the federal government should declare the United States a Christian nation and advocate Christian values were more likely to support the death penalty, approve of harsher punishments for criminals, and believe it was necessary to “crack down on troublemakers to save our moral standards.”

Roe v. Wade support has never been higher

Support for *Roe v. Wade*, the landmark 1973 Supreme Court decision that decriminalized abortion access, has reached an all-time high in the latest poll from NBC News and the Wall Street Journal.

Seventy-one percent of U.S. voters, including 52 percent of Republicans, do not believe the ruling should be reversed. Only 23 percent of respondents say *Roe v. Wade* should be overturned. Support for the ruling has risen six percentage points since 2005 and 13 percentage points since 1989.

The increased focus on abortion access follows President Donald Trump’s nomination of Brett Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court. Kavanaugh has a history of controversial rulings and remarks about reproductive rights, raising fears that Kavanaugh could join the other four conservative justices to overturn *Roe v. Wade* if confirmed.

GOP school candidates: Teaching creationism OK

Four out of the five Republican candidates running for state superintendent of public instruction said they believe Arizona students should be taught creationism and intelligent design as part of science learning requirements. The candidates’ comments came during a debate.

Jonathan Gelbart was the sole Republican candidate who opposed teaching students creationism and intelligent design. He is joined by Democrats Kathy Hoffman and David Schapira.

The four others — Bob Branch, Frank Riggs, Tracy Livingston and incumbent Diane Douglas — each said they believed students should be taught those topics in some capacity.

The state will likely decide on new science standards later this year.

Correction

In the August issue, in the “They Said What?” section, a description of Paige Patterson incorrectly stated allegations against him. He was removed as president of the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary because of sexist remarks he allegedly made to women and charges of downplaying the seriousness of rape and domestic abuse.

Pennsylvania’s grand jury report

Massive clergy pedophilia, cover-up exposed

For 70 years, Catholic Church has protected more than 300 priests

Shocking, yet not wholly unexpected, revelations of massive clergy pedophilia and its broad organized cover-up by the Catholic Church over a period of 70 years has been exposed in a 1,400-page report by a grand jury in Pennsylvania.

The horrifying report, released Aug. 15, shows that at least 300 priests had sexually abused more than 1,000 victims, many of them numerous times, during that period. Church leaders persuaded victims not to report the abuse and law enforcement not to investigate it, the report states.

“Priests were raping little boys and girls, and the men of God who were responsible for them not only did nothing; they hid it all. For decades,” the report states. “Monsignors, auxiliary bishops, bishops, archbishops, cardinals have mostly been protected; many, including some named in this report, have been promoted.”

Six of the state’s eight Catholic dioceses were involved in the report.

“We believe that the real number of children whose records were lost or who were afraid ever to come forward is in the thousands,” the report says.

This comes on the heels of the resignation of Cardinal Theodore E. McCarrick, the former archbishop of Washington, who is accused of sexually abusing young priests and seminarians, as well as minors.

Unfortunately, the report is unlikely to lead to new criminal charges or civil lawsuits under the current law because the statute of limitations has expired. The grand jury and the state’s attorney general strongly recommended that the statute of limitations be extended in civil and criminal cases. They recommended opening a temporary “window” that would permit older victims to file civil lawsuits against perpetrators, and the church. The church, of course, has lobbied against any change to the statute. (FFRF is asking Pennsylvania residents to contact their lawmakers to change the rules for reporting clergy abuse.)

The cover-up was so well organized that church officials had a “playbook

for concealing the truth,” the grand jury said. (See accompanying story on this page.)

“They protected their institution at all costs,” Pennsylvania Attorney General Josh Shapiro said in the news conference announcing the release of the report. “As the grand jury found, the church showed a complete disdain for victims.” He added that the cover-up “stretched in some cases all the way up to the Vatican.”

“There are two words that can express these horrible crimes: shame and sorrow,” Vatican spokesman Greg Burke said, in a statement.

The Pennsylvania grand jury met for two years, reviewed 500,000 documents from dioceses’ secret archives, and heard testimony from dozens of victims and the bishop of Erie. The report covers the dioceses of Allentown, Erie, Greensburg, Harrisburg, Pittsburgh and Scranton.

The report was finally released after what Shapiro called an “intense legal battle” that played out over the last several months as some people named in the report appealed to the Pennsylvania Supreme Court to block its release.

“They wanted to cover up the cover-up,” Shapiro said.

Pennsylvania’s two other dioceses, Philadelphia and Altoona-Johnstown, have been the subjects of earlier grand jury reports, which also found damaging information about clergy and bishops

in those dioceses.

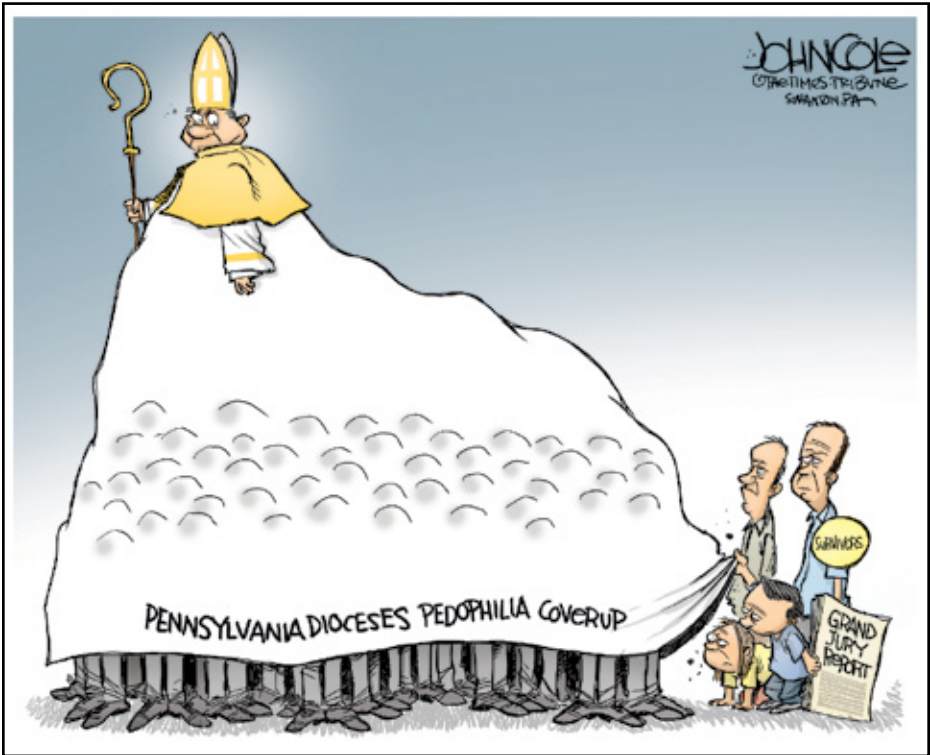
“For many of us, those earlier stories happened someplace else, someplace away. Now we know the truth: it happened everywhere,” it said in the report. “But all of them were brushed aside, in every part of the state, by church leaders who preferred to protect the abusers and their institution above all.”

The report described some of the alleged abuse in disturbing detail:

- In Erie, a 7-year-old boy was sexually abused by a priest who then told him he should go to confession and confess his “sins” to that same priest.

- Another boy was repeatedly raped from ages 13 to 15 by a priest who bore down so hard on the boy’s back that it caused severe spine injuries. He became addicted to painkillers and later died of an overdose.

- A priest raped a girl, got her pregnant, and arranged an abortion. The



‘Playbook’ for covering up abuse

The following bullet points are quoted directly from the grand jury’s description of the Catholic Church’s methods for covering up abuse and protecting priests.

- First, make sure to use euphemisms rather than real words to describe the sexual assaults in diocese documents. Never say “rape”; say “inappropriate contact” or “boundary issues.”
- Second, don’t conduct genuine investigations with properly trained personnel. Instead, assign fellow clergy members to ask inadequate questions and then make credibility determinations about the colleagues with whom they live and work.
- Third, for an appearance of integrity, send priests for “evaluation” at church-run psychiatric treatment centers. Allow these experts to “diagnose” whether the priest was a pedophile, based largely on the priest’s “self-reports,” and regardless of whether the priest had

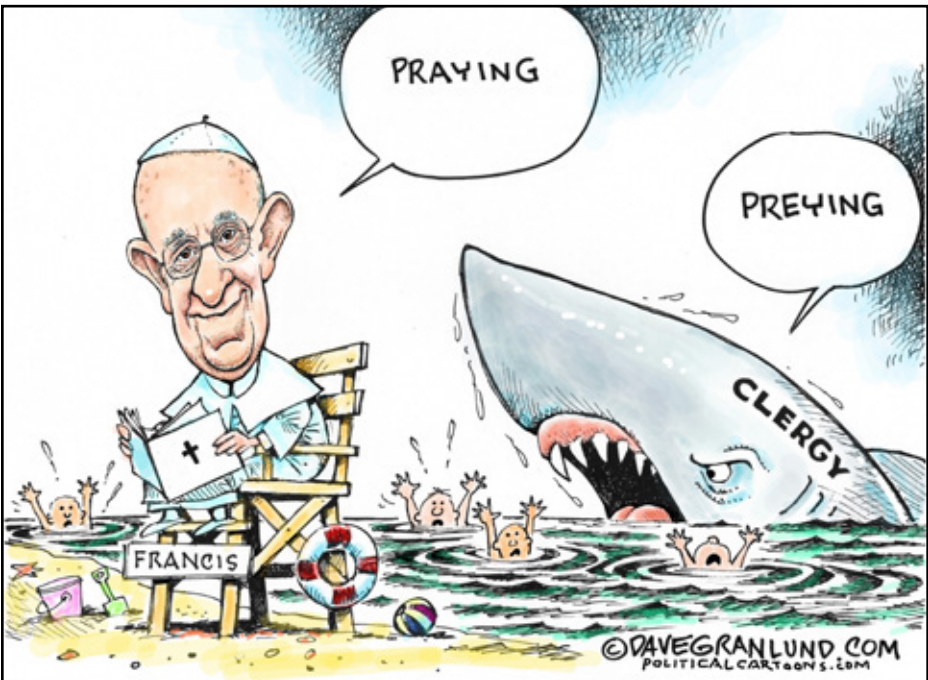
actually engaged in sexual contact with a child.

- Fourth, when a priest does have to be removed, don’t say why. Tell his parishioners that he is on “sick leave,” or suffering from “nervous exhaustion.” Or say nothing at all.

- Fifth, even if a priest is raping children, keep providing him housing and living expenses, although he may be using these resources to facilitate more sexual assaults.

- Sixth, if a predator’s conduct becomes known to the community, don’t remove him from the priesthood to ensure that no more children will be victimized. Instead, transfer him to a new location where no one will know he is a child abuser.

- Finally and above all, don’t tell the police. Child sexual abuse, even short of actual penetration, is and has for all relevant times been a crime. But don’t treat it that way; handle it like a personnel matter, “in house.”



bishop expressed his feelings in a letter: ‘This is a very difficult time in your life, and I realize how upset you are. I too share your grief.’ But the letter was not for the girl. It was addressed to the rapist.

- In the Pittsburgh diocese, the priests shared information on victims. The priests would give their altar boys gold crosses. These crosses were a visible sign that these children had been victims of sexual abuse and were a “signal to other predators that the children had been desensitized to sexual abuse and were optimal targets for further victimization.”

“There are many gut-wrenching, heartbreaking details in the report, but the consistent theme underlying the analysis is authority. Unquestionable, unassailable authority,” writes Andrew Seidel, director of strategic response for FFRF, in FFRF’s blog, Freethought Now, about the report. “Divine authority. In my opinion, that is the biggest contributor to the depth, breadth and severity of this menace.

“If the Catholic Church were a chain of private schools or a secular, multinational corporation, it could never get away with raping children on an industrial scale and covering it up. The dif-

ference is that these young victims are taught by everyone in their orbit that their tormentors are divine. They are the representatives of God on Earth. The abuse is so bad in the church because it is a church.

“It’s time to ask any observant Catholic you know: ‘Why haven’t you quit the Catholic Church?’”

Anthea Butler, associate professor of religious studies and Africana studies at the University of Pennsylvania, minced no words in her column posted on *NBC News.com*.

She writes, “It is time to face the horrible truth: The Catholic Church is a pedophile ring . . . What the now-multiple Pennsylvania grand jury reports show clearly is that the Roman Catholic Church has treated the protection of its pedophiles, rapists and sexual abusers as their highest priority. They have been unwilling and unable to police clergy sexual abuse while determined to keep responsibility for doing so within the Church — but they don’t want to be held accountable for mishandling it. Like a criminal syndicate, it is time for the Church to be broken apart and cleaned out.” — P.J. Slinger

FFRF NEWS

‘Freethought Matters’ goes national

FFRF’s weekly TV show to be aired in 9 cities beginning in September

The Freedom From Religion Foundation’s new weekly TV show, “Freethought Matters,” begins airing in September in eight major cities, plus Madison, Wis., covering more than 22 percent of the United States TV market. The show will begin airing Sunday, Sept. 2, for 26 weeks, including in four of the top 10 markets.

As an antidote to religion on the airwaves and Sunday morning sermonizing, the half-hour talk show will air Sunday mornings in eight cities.

“You can turn on the TV and be preached at 24/7, especially on Sunday mornings. We not only want to provide sympathetic programming for the ‘unmassed masses,’ but offer an alternative, so that religious programming does not win by default,” says Annie Laurie Gaylor, FFRF co-president and co-host.

The intent is to introduce communities to leading freethought authors, thinkers and activists in a non-threat-



Julia Sweeney, left, chats with FFRF Co-Presidents Annie Laurie Gaylor and Dan Barker on the set of “Freethought Matters,” which will air in nine cities, including New York City and Los Angeles, beginning in September.

- ening and positive way, adds FFRF co-president and co-host Dan Barker.
- In addition to airing in Madison, Wis., at 11 p.m. Sundays on WISC-TV 3 (the CBS affiliate), “Freethought Matters” will air in:
- Chicago, WPWR-CW (Ch. 50), Sundays at 9 a.m.
 - Los Angeles, KCOP-MY (Ch. 13), Sundays at 8:30 a.m.
 - New York City, WPIX-IND (Ch. 11), Sundays at 9 a.m.
 - Phoenix, KASW-CW (Ch. 61), Sundays at 8:30 a.m.
 - Portland, KRCW-CW (Ch. 32), Sundays at 9 a.m.
 - Sacramento, KQCA-MY (Ch. 58), Sundays at 8:30 a.m.
 - Seattle, KONG-IND (Ch. 16), Sundays at 8:30 a.m.
 - Washington, DC, WDCW-CW (Ch. 50, digital 15), Sundays at 8 a.m.

In September, look for these well-known guests in the above eight new markets: comedian and actress **Julia Sweeney**; Harvard Professor **Steven Pinker**, FFRF’s honorary president — whose latest book is *Enlightenment Now: The Case for Reason, Science, Humanism and Progress*; science communicator and journalist **Cara Santa Maria** — who appears on Neil deGrasse Tyson’s “StarTalk,” and biologist **Jerry Coyne**, author of *Why Evolution Is True*.

“Freethought Matters” is typically co-hosted by Barker and Gaylor, with occasional guest-hosting by other staff. The show is produced by FFRF’s videographer Bruce Johnson, a veteran of many years in public television. Crew includes staff members Monica Schwartz, Kristina Daleiden, Lauryn Seering and Chris Line, plus various floor managers, with sound production provided by Audio for the Arts.

Following a 13-show debut in Madison on WISC-TV 3 this spring, “Freethought Matters” will begin airing an all-new season of guests on Sunday, Sept. 2 at 11 p.m.

Please tune in to “Freethought Matters” . . . because freethought matters.

Housing allowance challenge

FFRF backed by 22 tax law experts, CFI

FFRF’s challenge of a special tax break for clergy, now before the 7th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, has unleashed a long list of legal adversaries, all loudly insisting that clergy deserve and must be given a unique housing tax privilege.

Most of the numerous signers of nine briefs against FFRF’s lawsuit are Religious Right legal groups and religious denominations.

This group of indignant clergy tax break defenders has, however, mischaracterized the tax code and the nature of the clergy housing allowance, according to 22 tax law professors. They and the Center For Inquiry (CFI), a leading national humanist group, have filed briefs in support of FFRF’s “David vs. Goliath” challenge.

The housing allowance was passed by Congress in 1954 with a stated intent by its sponsor to reward “ministers of the gospel” for fighting “godlessness.”

Church employers may designate part of ministerial salaries as “housing allowances,” which may then be subtracted from the minister’s taxable income. The generous provision permits ministers to exempt rent, mortgage interest, utilities, repairs and many other expenses for their homes.

The tax professors contend that the housing allowance is a subsidy for ministers, is not an appropriate accommodation for religion, ignores important differences in ministerial income and entangles church and state.

The tax break “provides a significant financial benefit available only to certain employees based purely on their religious status,” states the Center for Inquiry brief. “Religious organizations which do not employ ‘ministers of the gospel,’ may not offer this benefit. Nonreligious employers, even if identical in every other way to a church, may not offer this benefit. The law therefore discriminates

Tell Us About Your Clergy Housing

Enter your **parsonage** or housing allowance and qualifying expenses as noted below.

Parsonage or Housing Allowance

\$

Qualifying Expenses Explain This

\$

This screen shot from the TurboTax website shows where clergy members can enter the allowance for their residence.

‘between religion and religion, and between religion and nonreligion,’” to quote the U.S. Supreme Court.

Both legal documents make strong points for abolishing this tax allowance.

“It defies reason to claim that requiring ministers to obey the same rules as other employees could be seen as discriminatory,” states the CFI brief, adding: “It is hard to see how the government could send a clearer message of endorsement than the grant of billions of dollars of tax benefits to ministers of the gospel alone.

FFRF has designated a housing allowance for its executive directors, Annie Laurie Gaylor and Dan Barker, arguing they are similarly situated to clergy as leaders of a nontheistic organization. Contending the housing allowance is both unconstitutional and discriminatory, FFRF went to court, winning a resounding victory at the district court level in 2013.

The 7th Circuit threw out the case the following year, contending Barker and Gaylor first needed to apply for a refund and be denied one before being able to sue. When the couple actually applied and were refused the refund, they and

ministers.

The housing allowance statute results in substantial entanglement between the government and churches, such as requiring the IRS and courts to determine which beliefs or purported beliefs should count as a religion for tax purposes, what constitutes a church or a minister, and ministerial functions, whether an ordained minister working for a secular nonprofit counts as a minister if she gives one sermon a year, and similar quandaries.

The brief persuasively clarifies the financial and constitutional damage to citizens due to this unjustified tax handout.

The tax brief, written by Adam Chodorow, associate dean of academic affairs at Sandra Day O’Connor College of Law, Arizona State University, is joined by tax experts from a variety of public law schools and even religious schools of law, such as Saint Mary’s College of Law and Loyola University of Chicago School of Law.

FFRF went back to court, again winning a firm ruling in federal court last year. Once again, the Treasury Department and IRS have appealed the lower court ruling.

Singles out ministers

The tax law professors note that Section 107(2) “indisputably singles out ministers for a tax benefit” that has nothing to do with convenience of the employer.

Ministers cannot be compared to seamen or lighthouse keepers or other employees who must live on-site to do their jobs. “It is hard to imagine how living in one’s own home can be for the employer’s convenience,” they write, particularly when ministers may receive tax-free housing in retirement.

Further, the housing allowance is an outright subsidy. Exempting something from taxation is no less a benefit than sending a check, the experts remind the appeals court. Even the government has conceded that targeted tax breaks — and the parsonage exemption in particular — are equivalent to direct government spending. The tax brief points out that ministers with higher incomes receive a greater tax subsidy than lower-income

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Freedom depends on freethinkers

Texas governor appeals FFRF’s constitutional win

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott has decided to appeal the FFRF’s recent constitutional triumph.

In June, FFRF won in federal court against Abbott, who had ordered the removal of its winter solstice Bill of Rights “nativity from the state Capitol in December 2015. U.S. District Judge Sam Sparks, for the Western District of Texas, declared on June 19 that Abbott violated FFRF’s free speech rights.



Sam Grover

The Texas governor and the executive director of the Texas State Preservation Board have filed notice that they’re appealing the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

FFRF had placed a duly permitted display celebrating the winter solstice

and Bill of Rights at the Texas Capitol in response to a Christian nativity there. The whimsical exhibit, depicting the Founding Fathers and the Statue of Liberty honoring the “birth” of the Bill of Rights (adopted Dec. 15, 1791), had the requisite sponsorship from a Texas legislator. Abbott, as chair of the Texas State Preservation Board, ordered FFRF’s display taken down only three days after it was erected, lambasting it as indecent, mocking and contributing to public immorality.

The district court judge noted that Abbott’s move was a textbook example of illegal viewpoint discrimination. “Defendants violated FFRF’s First Amendment rights and engaged in viewpoint discrimination as a matter of law when the FFRF exhibit was removed from the Texas Capitol building under the circumstances of this case,” Sparks ruled.

FFRF is disappointed but not surprised at the governor’s decision to prolong the case.

Not only is this a constitutionally

wrongheaded and futile quest, it also means a further waste of tax resources that could be put to productive use in the service of the good citizens of Texas.

“This is a settled area of law,” says FFRF Associate Counsel Sam Grover. “By appealing this decision, Gov. Abbott is costing Texas taxpayers more money — in a case that will already cost the state more than \$200,000 — in an attempt to undermine one of the most foundational rights in our Constitution. Whether they agree with FFRF’s message or not, all citizens who value the right to free speech should be outraged by the governor’s decision to appeal this ruling.”

Back in October 2017, FFRF received an initial ruling in its favor that Abbott and the State Preservation Board had violated its free speech rights. Two claims were subsequently dismissed, clearing the path for FFRF’s victorious final judgment.

The case is *Freedom From Religion*



Foundation v. Gov. Greg Abbott, Case No. A-16-CA-00233-SS. FFRF is represented by Attorney Richard L. Bolton with FFRF attorneys Sam Grover and Patrick Elliott serving as co-counsel.

Task force

Continued from page 1

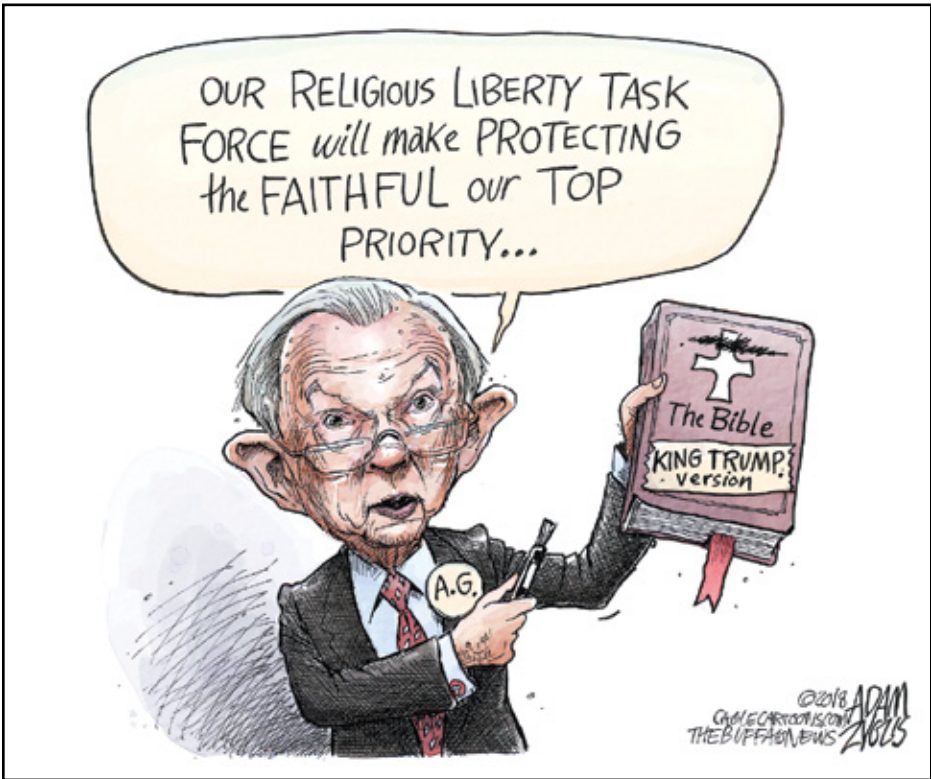
the rights of people of faith.”

After boasting that the Justice Department had filed a brief on behalf of Jack Phillips, the cake baker who denied equal accommodation under Colorado civil rights law to a gay couple, Sessions ironically added: “We are aggressively and appropriately enforcing our civil rights laws, our hate crimes laws, and laws protecting churches and faith groups.”

The “religious liberty” memo that the new task force will be carrying out has the primary goal of exempting Christians and other religionists from the rules and regulations of civil society, especially including rules that prevent discrimination against others.

Sessions also claimed during the announcement that he has “seen nuns ordered to buy contraceptives,” which is untrue. Sessions was referring to a ministry run by nuns, which argued that filling out a five-line opt-out form in order to be exempted from the Obamacare contraceptive mandate was “a substantial burden on religious liberty.”

“The creation of this so-called Religious Liberty Task Force is an affront to the secular heritage of the United States,” says FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor. “It’s especially dangerous when combined with the Trump administration’s relentless packing of the judiciary with judges



handpicked by the Federalist Society to legislate religious dogma into our laws and policies.”

During his announcement, Sessions also said “free exercise means a right to act — or to abstain from action.” In fact, citizens may believe as they like, but the right to act on those beliefs is by no means absolute. “Laws are made for the government of actions, and while they cannot interfere with mere

religious belief and opinions, they may with practices,” the Supreme Court ruled 130 years ago. The Court asked: “Suppose one believed that human sacrifices were a necessary part of religious worship; would it be seriously contended that the civil government under which he lived could not interfere to prevent a sacrifice?”

Sessions believes that Christians can violate the rights of others, in-

cluding their rights to equal justice under the law, as long as those Christians are acting with “sincerely held religious beliefs.”

FFRF warned the Senate about confirming Sessions as attorney general, writing that he would tear down the wall of separation between state and church, which he called “a recent thing that is unhistorical and unconstitutional.” Sessions was open about his belief that “free exercise also includes the freedom to act as one’s religion demands, even if such actions might curtail the civil rights of others, or run contrary to the law.”

“The Department of Justice doesn’t need a Religious Liberty Task Force, it needs a State-Church Separation Task Force,” says FFRF’s Director of Strategic Response Andrew L. Seidel. “Until we get a president and attorney general who understand the Constitution and are willing to defend it against religious privilege, the Freedom From Religion Foundation will continue to guard the wall of separation that is so vital to our secular republic.”

FFRF urges lawmakers to stand up for the secular Constitution they have sworn to uphold by telling the Department of Justice, loudly and clearly, that the DOJ should be protecting the religious freedom of all Americans, rather than granting special privileges to largely fundamentalist Christians.

NOTHING FAILS LIKE PRAYER
CONTEST

Our goal is to see secular citizens flood government meetings with secular invocations that demonstrate why government prayers are unnecessary, ineffective, embarrassing, exclusionary, divisive or just plain silly.

The person who gives the best secular invocation will be invited to open FFRF’s annual convention in 2019, receiving an all-expenses-paid trip to Madison, Wis. Oct. 18-20, 2019, along with a plaque and an honorarium of \$500.

MORE INFO AT:

ffrf.org/outreach/nothing-fails-like-prayer

Prayer

Continued from page 1

Last year, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit held that sectarian legislator-led prayers were unconstitutional in the case *Lund v. Rowan County, N.C.* The Fourth Circuit opinion said, “The principle at stake here may be a profound one, but it is also simple. The Establishment Clause does not permit a seat of government to wrap itself in a single faith.”

The complaint on behalf of the plaintiffs states, “The City Council’s recitation of the Lord’s Prayer has the primary effect of both advancing religion and expressing defendant’s preference for Christianity above all other religions and

nonreligion.”

FFRF also is seeking a preliminary injunction, which would prohibit the City Council from continuing to open its meetings with Christian prayers led by council members. The plaintiffs’ brief says, “Given the similarities between this case and *Lund*, Parkersburg’s Christian invocation practice cannot stand. Plaintiffs’ right to relief under *Lund* is so clear that defendant’s practice must be enjoined on a preliminary basis.”

Marcus B. Schneider, Kristina Thomas Whiteaker, and FFRF Attorneys Patrick C. Elliott and Christopher Line are co-counsel on the case.

FFRF VICTORIES

FFRF gets ‘spirituality’ off foster parent video

FFRF has persuaded a Tennessee state department to end its promotion of belief in a god.

FFRF wrote to the state’s Department of Children’s Services (DCS) warning it against endorsing religion to those wishing to become foster parents.

A concerned Tennessee resident who had gone through such training reported to FFRF that the department required aspiring foster parents to watch a video called “Characteristics of Resource Parents” that included a segment called “Spirituality.” The segment opened by explaining that “a belief in something greater than you that you can go to for peace and comfort” is necessary to face “the challenges of adding additional children to your family.” The introduction was followed by clips of foster parents discussing the importance of religion and reliance on God in foster care.

“By requiring potential foster parents to watch a video advocating for religious belief, the Department of Children’s Services is impermissibly endorsing religion and violating the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment,” wrote FFRF’s Patrick O’Reiley Legal Fellow Christopher Line.

The required video conveyed a discriminatory preference by Department of Children’s Services for foster parents with religious beliefs by implying that a belief in a higher power is required to be a foster parent. This misguided assertion is alienating to the nearly one-quarter of Americans who are not religious.

FFRF requested that the DCS discontinue using the portion of its training video that endorses religion. The department responded on July 23, informing FFRF that it had removed the video segment on “spirituality” from its foster parent training.

FFRF applauds the decision.

“A reliance on God is certainly not a prerequisite to good parenting,” says FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor. “The Tennessee Department of Children’s Services has done the right thing by tossing the segment from its training.”

Tennessee district stops assembly proselytizing

FFRF has convinced a Tennessee school district to implement a corrective plan barring proselytizing assemblies from taking place.

A concerned student of the Oneida High School in Huntsville, Tenn., reported to FFRF that the school had allowed a local pastor to preach and evangelize to students at a mandatory assembly this past fall. Students at the school are required to attend monthly “character assemblies,” which are typically secular in nature. Last November, however, FFRF was informed that a local pastor began an assembly that was supposed to be on the secular topic of “friendship” by asking students to repeat the phrase, “God is good all the time, and all the time God is good.” He went on to instruct the students to turn to the person seated next to him or her to inform each other that Jesus loves them.

Religious activity halted in Ohio courthouse

FFRF applauds a Knox County, Ohio, judge for halting religious activity in his courtroom after its unconstitutionality was called to his attention.

FFRF received a report from a concerned Mount Vernon citizen that Judge Richard Wetzel regularly invited a prayer group to use the courthouse for religious activities — even involving them in legal proceedings that he felt “have a particular need for prayer.”

“An opportunity to have the churches directly engage in what the court is doing is very important to me,” Judge Wetzel has been quoted saying.

FFRF Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel sent a letter on July 25 to the judge, noting why this practice is unconstitutional, and asking him to end the practice of providing the courtroom free of charge to host bible studies and prayer.

In a July 30 letter, the judge thanked FFRF for bringing its concerns to his attention and said he had given the letter



FFRF was able to convince the Lincoln-Way West High School in New Lenox, Ill., to stop performing at churches.

Illinois school chorus ends church performances

FFRF has successfully harmonized an Illinois public high school chorus with the Constitution.

Earlier this year, FFRF was informed that a public school madrigal chorus at Lincoln-Way West High School in New Lenox, Ill., performed at a Catholic church in Manhattan in December. The concert was part of the church’s Sunday morning worship services. Additionally, the chorus performed at other churches in 2014 and 2015. Online videos of the 2014 presentation show that prominent religious iconography was clearly visible, including a massive Latin cross just behind the chorus. In 2015, the chorus performed as part of an event that a church described as “a service in song.”

FFRF Staff Attorney Ryan Jayne sent a letter to Lincoln Way Community High School District 210 Superintendent R. Scott Tingley informing the district that the use of churches for public school programming is inappropriate and unconstitutional. Jayne pointed out that the 7th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals — which has jurisdiction over Illinois — struck down another school district’s use of a church for school functions.

Other federal courts around the country have also struck down similar practices.

On July 12, Tingley responded, writing to FFRF that “Lincoln-Way Community High School District 210 madrigal groups will no longer perform at churches.”

FFRF is tipping its hat to the district for agreeing to stay within the bounds of our secular Constitution from now on.

“Religion is inherently divisive and the district made the right decision to end its church performances to become more inclusive of students of varying beliefs in its chorus program,” says FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor.

City ends Day of Prayer sponsorship

FFRF has persuaded the city of North Miami Beach, Fla., to cease its sponsorship of National Day of Prayer events.

FFRF’s Patrick O’Reiley Legal Fellow Christopher Line sent a letter to the mayor of North Miami Beach on June 26, illuminating the unconstitutionality of the city’s sponsorship of National Day of Prayer events. The city’s sponsorship included promotion of the event on the city’s official social media pages and website, which directed citizens to RSVP to the event through the city’s Division of Public Affairs.

In a July 31 letter, the North Miami Beach Mayor’s Office confirmed it would cease further city sponsorship of National Day of Prayer events: “The city’s intent was not to be divisive nor portray the belief that the city prefers religion over nonreligion, or Christianity over all other faiths,” the mayor’s office stated. “Nonetheless, the city is aware of the constitutional limitations regarding its involvement in organized religious activities and the separation of church and state. Therefore, the City of North Beach Miami will refrain from further organization and promotion of the National Day of Prayer events.”

“thoughtful consideration.”

“Please be advised that, in response to your letter, the Court will discontinue the practice of allowing the prayer group use of the Courthouse,” Wetzel wrote.

FFRF commends Judge Wetzel.

“Religion has no place in the court system where justice should be blind to a citizen’s religious or nonreligious views,” says FFRF Co-President Dan Barker.



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By Paul Epland

No more ‘testimony’ at Oklahoma football camp

FFRF reminded an Oklahoma public school that proselytizing to student athletes is unconstitutional. On July 2, FFRF Patrick O’Reiley Legal Fellow Christopher Line wrote to Gore Public Schools Superintendent Lucky McCrary to request that the district not allow its football program members to be used as a captive audience for evangelists. On June 5, Gore High School football players had attended a camp that included a religious “testimony” by evangelist Tyson Simon, an area representative for the Western Arkansas Fellowship of Christian Athletes. According to the Resident Press, “Simon was the vehicle, and God was definitely the focus, the message and the reason” for the high school football team camp at Hackett High School in Arkansas.

McCrary wrote to FFRF on July 7 to confirm that he has “informed our coach that any time a situation arises that may infringe upon any student’s rights, he has authority to remove our students from the situation.”

Texas school stops religious art project



FFRF has ensured that one Texas school district will no longer ask students to decorate their own school with crosses. A concerned district community member contacted FFRF to report that students at West Oso High School appear to have been given an assignment through their art class related to constructing and decorating a Christian cross. FFRF Associate Counsel Sam Grover wrote to West Oso Superintendent Conrado Garcia to notify the district of this constitutional violation.

On July 18, legal representative for the district, Tony Resendez, wrote to FFRF to confirm that “the district has reviewed and analyzed the matter and will handle it,” including by “providing training on this topic to all district administrators to ensure that the laws regarding religion and school are being followed.”

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Ohio police won’t endorse religious service

FFRF has ensured the Columbus Division of Police (CDP) will no longer request department employees attend religious worship services. A concerned employee of the Ohio police department contacted FFRF to report that Deputy Chief Michael Woods emailed all CDP personnel requesting that CDP employees attend a religious worship service at St. Paul’s Church scheduled to take place on June 24. The email said, “As a sign of our appreciation please join our Central Ohio law enforcement family at the June 24, 10:30 Mass.” The email also requested a “strong showing of uniformed officers and a full collection plate.”

FFRF Legal Fellow Christopher Line wrote to Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein about the constitutional violation. On July 5, Jeff Furbee, legal counsel for the CPD, called FFRF to confirm that CDP chief sent out a clarifying email letting employees know that the church service is a strictly off-duty event, and that attendance was not required.

Cross removed from sign in California

FFRF has taken action to keep religion out of a California city’s public park. A concerned resident of Avalon, Calif., notified FFRF that the city had placed a sign on display in Avalon Veterans Memorial Park that features a Latin cross. On June 11, FFRF Associate Council Elizabeth Cavell wrote to Avalon City Attorney Scott Campbell to ask the city to remove the cross.

On July 6, Gregg Kettles, legal representative for Avalon, called to notify FFRF that the city recognizes that they cannot maintain a cross on city property and will be removing the Latin cross from the sign. On July 13, Kettles followed up by providing FFRF with a photograph of the sign after the cross had been removed.

Tennessee school ends baccalaureate promotion

FFRF has reminded a Tennessee public school that promoting religious services to students is unconstitutional. A concerned area resident of Roane County, Tenn., notified FFRF that Roane County Schools advertises and promotes baccalaureate services for all of its high schools. On May 17, FFRF Legal Fellow Christopher Line wrote to Roane County Director of Schools Leah Rice Watkins to stop the district from sponsoring or advertising baccalaureate programs for its students.

On July 18, Interim Director of Schools Gary Aytes wrote to FFRF explaining that a new employee “was

unaware of the rules for promoting this activity” and “now knows not to post on our district calendar.”

Louisiana sheriff removes commandments display



A resident of Washington Parish, La., contacted FFRF to report an unconstitutional Ten Commandments display in the Sheriff’s Office. The Sheriff’s Office reportedly displayed the commandments on two, hand carved wooden tablets in the waiting area. On Jan. 22, FFRF Senior Counsel Patrick C. Elliott wrote to a representative for the Washington Parish Sheriff’s Office, Rachel Catalanotto, pointing out that Ten Commandments displays violate the Establishment Clause, and that by placing the display in its office, the Washington Parish is unmistakably issuing an endorsement of religion. FFRF requested the Sheriff’s Office remove the display.

On July 23, after FFRF sent several follow-up letters, Catalinotto called FFRF and said, “I’m sure your concerned local complainant informed you that the Ten Commandments have been removed.”

Wisconsin school to stop hosting Christian speaker

A concerned local resident contacted FFRF to report that Chequamegon High School, Wis., hosted motivational speaker Kristen Anderson during the school day on March 12. FFRF Staff Attorney Ryan Jayne wrote to Superintendent Mark Weddig to report that Anderson’s presentation on mental health culminated in a religious message: that students suffering from depression should seek a “connection to God.”

Weddig responded on July 19, writing that “Chequamegon School District actively supports the Constitution in regard to not endorsing religious messages. Regarding the future, I will instruct my leadership team to do whatever is prudent to avoid an occurrence such as the one you described and was reported in the newspaper.”

South Carolina school moves prayer breakfast

FFRF has stopped a South Carolina public school district from hosting prayer services on school grounds. Clinton High School and Clinton Middle School in the Laurens County School District recently hosted a week-long event titled, “40th Annual Community Prayer Breakfast.” The religious programming at these breakfasts, which took place before school, involved numerous outside adult speakers and attendees.

The Laurens County School District appears to have been directly involved in putting on these religious events. On May 17, FFRF Senior Council Patrick Elliott wrote to Superintendent David O’Shields to request that the district refrain from coordinating or permitting similar community-wide religious programs during the school day.

On July 30, O’Shields responded to FFRF saying, “It was decided to move the prayer breakfast off school grounds to a local church in order to maintain separation of church and state.”

Alabama school cancels prayer service

FFRF has put a stop to a community prayer service planned on Randolph County, Ala., school system grounds. Woodland High School and Woodland Elementary School planned on hosting a “community prayer service” on Aug. 5. A Facebook post by a counselor at Woodland High School invited all “parents, students and community members” to attend this religious event.

On July 20, FFRF Legal Fellow Christopher Line wrote to Superintendent John Jacobs to ensure that this prayer service is privately organized, not endorsed by the school district, and that the district was not providing any preferential treatment to the event’s organizers.

On July 31, Donald Sweeney, attorney for Randolph County Schools, wrote to FFRF to announce that, “The community prayer meeting . . . will not be held at the Woodland Schools.”

Georgia removes cross from county property

FFRF has ensured the removal of a Latin cross display from the property of Catoosa County (Ga.) Fire Station No. 3. According to a complaint, a large cross was displayed on county property off of Highway US-41. The cross was clearly visible from the highway and included a Christian message about being saved. On June 27, FFRF Legal Director Rebecca Markert wrote to the county, asking it to remove the cross immediately and to ensure no religious iconography or messages are displayed on public property.

On Aug. 6, legal representative for the county, C. Chad Young, wrote to FFRF to confirm that “Catoosa County is the owner of the tract of land in question” and that “based upon these findings, the cross has been removed from the county’s property.”



FREEDOM FROM RELIGION FOUNDATION
P.O. Box 750 • Madison, WI 53701 • (608) 256-8900 • FFRF.org

What is the Freedom From Religion Foundation?

Founded in 1978 as a national organization of freethinkers (atheists and agnostics), the Freedom From Religion Foundation, Inc., works to keep state and church separate and to educate the public about the views of nontheists. FFRF has more than 32,000 members. FFRF is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit and donations are tax deductible for income tax purposes.

FFRF’s email address is info@ffrf.org. Please include your name and physical mailing address with all email correspondence.

FFRF members wishing to receive online news releases, “action alerts” and “Freethought of the Day” should contact info@ffrf.org.

FFRF awards \$10,550

2018 Students of Color Essay Contest winners

The Freedom From Religion Foundation is proud to announce the 15 winners of the 2018 David Hudak Memorial Students of Color Essay Competition for College Students.

College students of color were asked to write a personal persuasive essay about the “Challenges of being a student of color who rejects religion.”

Winners are listed below and include the award amount and the college or university they will be attending. FFRF has paid out a total of \$10,550 in award money for this contest this year. FFRF thanks Dean and Dorea Schramm of Florida for providing a \$100 bonus to students who are members of a secular student club or the Secular Student Alliance. The total reflects those bonuses.

First place
MiKaelah Freeman, New York University (\$3,000)



Second place
Michael Brown, Dartmouth College (\$2,000)

Third place
Noemi Rosario, University at Albany (SUNY) (\$1,000)

Fourth place
Johann Rucker, University of Nevada-Las Vegas (\$750)

Fifth place

Alondra Vega Rivera, Escuela de Artes Plasticas y Diseno de Puerto Rico (\$600)

Sixth place
Azarius Williams, Syracuse University (\$500)

Seventh place
Jesica Maldonado Matias, San Francisco State University (\$400)

Honorable mentions (\$200 each)
Joseph Florida, Southern University A&M College
Anissa Foster, Stanford University
Kelvin Martinez Gomez, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
Alexandra Harmon, Howard University
Shejan Heaven, University of Georgia
Evan Malcolm, University of South Florida
Tatem Rios, Inver Hills Community College
Therrin Wilson, University of Tennessee

FFRF has offered essay competitions to college students since 1979. This is FFRF’s third annual student of color contest. Its other three essay contests are open to students of all backgrounds.

The general college student essay winners will be announced in the October issue and the grad student essay winners will be announced in the November issue.

FIRST PLACE

African-Americans still plagued by Christianity

FFRF awarded MiKaelah \$3,000.

By MiKaelah Freeman

Alabama is, and has traditionally been, the most religious state in America, with a whopping 82 percent of people identifying as Christians, according to the U.S. World News database. Alabama is arguably the most racist state, as well, despite having one of the largest populations of African-Americans in the nation. That may seem contradictory: How can the state be racist when it has more African-Americans living in it than most? Just as with the other states in America’s southeast region, Alabama’s high African-American population (27 percent) can be attributed to slavery that took place more than 250 years ago . . . slavery that was made possible through Christianity.

African-American slaves were physically oppressed by the use of whips and shackles against them; however, it was the bible that oppressed them mentally. This was done first by renaming slaves, forcing them to give up their African names and identities and take on Christian ones. Following the renaming process, African-American slaves were forced to listen to their oppressors justify their actions as being God’s plan. God permitted slavery, as various forms of slavery and servitude are mentioned throughout the bible, and Christianity



MiKaelah Freeman

encouraged the treatment of human beings as worthless objects. Slave masters also forced their African-American slaves to convert to the Christian faith, the same faith that allowed them to be kept as property and treated so poorly to the point where dying seemed like the only way to find peace. Alabama was not only home to such travesty, it was also the only slave state that African-Americans could not escape from. The most religious state in America was the only slave state that had no Underground Railroad route, with the presence and power of slave catchers being too overbearing for any slave to consider an escape attempt.

Slavery was eventually abolished, thanks to the 13th Amendment and the Emancipation Proclamation, yet, most of

Alabama’s African-American population is still indoctrinated with the Christian values that were forced on their shackled ancestors.

The idea of the “black church” being the center of the African-American community has unfortunately poisoned the ideologies of most African-Americans living in the “most religious state,” which has given the southern African-American community a reputation of being homophobic, transphobic and misogynistic. African-Americans in Alabama use the bible as an outlet for discrimination, prejudice and mistreatment toward the non-racial marginalization of others.

It’s the same book that allowed for our ancestors to be stolen from their homeland, eaten, raped, displaced and murdered. I had called attention to this many times in my predominantly African-American school — an underfunded, underperforming public school, thanks to the institutionalized racism and classism that has plagued the African-American community since the Reconstruction. I am struck down as someone who is “in need of the

church” or “in need of Christ.” I have had my African-American AP environmental sciences teacher mark points off of a class discussion because I pointed out that the bible cannot be used as scientific evidence. Unfortunately, the attitudes of the African-American students and teachers at my school are extremely common among African-Americans throughout my state, the “most religious state” in America. I, on the other hand, cannot accept this same attitude and I will not accept it, even if it gets me into a bit of trouble at times.

So, while I might be criticized for my refusal to have my intellect colonized by religion, I realize that I am more free than others surrounding me could ever be. I hope that one day, my community — southern African-Americans — will no longer be controlled by an ancient book and will be instead influenced by collaborative learners and freethinkers.

MiKaelah, 18, from Birmingham, Ala., attends New York University. She plans to major in global studies to eventually pursue a career as an international human rights attorney. She volunteers with the Suicide Prevention and Crisis lines.

“While I might be criticized for my refusal to have my intellect colonized by religion, I realize that I am more free than others surrounding me could ever be.”
— MiKaela Freeman

SECOND PLACE

Free of thought, but not free of color

FFRF awarded Michael \$2,000.

By Michael Brown

I’m an atheist.

I’ve never been totally convinced by religion. At age 6, I wanted to know where God had come from. At 10, I wondered why we had to ask forgiveness for being born “short of the glory of god.” At 16, I rejected the cycle of fear, ignorance and shame that religion depends on

and decided to leave the church, and unexpectedly, a large part of my cultural identity.

As the child of a single Latina mother, I grew up depending on the Catholic Church. When my mom was paid so little that she could hardly keep the lights on, the church provided free babysitting services so she could work more. When my extended family was targeted with deportations, it insured we had basic necessities and helped us pay for lawyers.

When our community experienced racism, xenophobia or violence, the church was our refuge center.

As I rejected religion, I faced rejection in turn. My family, friends and community leaders saw my rejection of the church as a way for me to try and embody whiteness. They were deeply hurt and saw my intellectual freedom as my way of saying I was too good to be Mexican. I was not invited to participate in quinceaneras and other communi-



Michael Brown

ty events. I was ostracized from my culture for rejecting a colonial imposition on my ancestors, yet I also struggled to find a place in atheist communities, as well.

The freethought movement often doesn't understand the social conditions of why religion is so intertwined with identities of color, and this understanding is critical to making the movement open to people of color. In the wake of racism and tragedy, communities of color cannot find solace in the justice system. As I type this, Mexican toddlers are representing themselves in immigration court, and another unarmed black teen has been killed while running away. The

“Religion was a way to strip our indigenous identities away.

— Michael Brown

violence and racism our communities face is often senseless, unpredictable and unrectified.

Church has historically been a place of refuge in the absence of equality, and the false assurance of God's plan and an afterlife helps our communities mitigate the injustices we face. If the freethought community has any interest in being open and

welcoming of people of color, it must advocate to address the social issues that allow religion to become the cornerstone of minority identities.

Within our own communities, we have to educate ourselves about the origins of our religious roots. Religion was a way to strip our indigenous identities away. Religion was a way to hold us down, and, even today, in the face of gross injustice, we are often told to hold our tongues because “it's all part of God's plan.” There may be no God, but there is definitely humanity, and white people benefit from our pious complacency.

I am Mexican. I am an atheist. Those identities are not exclusive

commitments. I believe in the beauty of my language and culture. I have seen it in my mother's hands, heard it in her voice and lived each day of my life. But I have neither seen nor heard from God, and until such a time that I do, I will not mask the very real needs of my community with religious teachings. I will live not for some future reward, or settle for the comfort the church may provide in the wake of injustice, but rather I will proactively fight for the justice communities of color deserve.

Michael, 24, is from Boston and attends Dartmouth College. He has donated his time to scholar organizations and college preparedness programs.

THIRD PLACE

Place your bets at the divine casino

FFRF awarded Noemi \$1,000.

By Noemi Rosario

My mother is a gambler. Most of the members of the Hispanic community are gamblers. As a child, I watched them, one by one, file into a casino of divine winnings. In a casino, thousands march in to try to win big in an arbitrary game rigged beforehand by the people that founded it. There are big promises of a better life — everyone is happy, everyone is free.

Here on Earth, however, that is not the case. Religious people don't gamble with the real and tangible; no, they gamble with their lives, their life choices, their autonomy, and yes, their freedom. Some people give up everything in the hope that they will be the one to score big in the existential lottery. Belief in God is very much like that.

I am acutely aware of how intense this fervor is with minorities. Hispanics and blacks are hit especially hard, and their vulnerability is in clear view of the world. This makes it especially tough to watch people's sense of reality fade while their religious fanaticism grows.

For an atheist of color, choosing not



Noemi Rosario

to participate in this gamble has its own social consequences. People may not outright disown you, but your former preacher may choose to ignore your existence, your community may whisper behind closed doors, and you will be seen as an “other.” A classmate of mine exemplifies a mentality about atheists I fear is present in the community as a whole. When asked if she would feel guilty in heaven while some are in hell simply for

not believing in God, she explained that their memories would be erased so it wouldn't matter. This is just one example of many where, when asked about the “sin” of atheism, not one person thought twice of their punishment.

It is difficult to deal with knowing you will never be seen on the same level as the rest of the people in your community. Even in a supposedly progressive community, the shift in opinion is felt deeply, and it is hurtful.

For me, I find religion too costly to place my bets on the table. It is never a good idea to assume that you know the outcome of something you know nothing about, and on a cosmic scale the odds are impossible to determine. In addition, with no clear factual evidence to back this assumption, you'd end up looking like a gambling addict assuring his friends that “Lucky 23 is going to hit this time!”

People are caused to suffer unnecessarily for going against this system, and in some parts of the world, they face death. To rally under a belief system that only encourages division and fanatical thinking is counterproductive toward my goal of trying to be a levelheaded thinker. We are part of the modern world, where we

“Some people give up everything in the hope that they will be the one to score big in the existential lottery.

— Noemi Rosario

ought to understand the difference between blind emotional reactions and a logical solution. It is the only way that we can fix this broken world we've built for ourselves. When taking all that into account, I feel that the odds are not in my favor to stay in the world of the religious, and have chosen to embrace my atheism.

We need to let other minorities know that their doubts and criticisms are natural and human. Other people shouldn't feel ashamed and ostracized because they don't want to get sucked into this corrupt and all-consuming Leviathan. In the end, we just want a space where we feel comforted and respected equally, free of judgement for our identity. Most of all, we need to show other minorities that there are others like them, those unwilling to sell their souls for the thrill of a divine casino.

Noemi, 18, is from Maspeth, N.Y., and attends the University at Albany (SUNY). She would like to study abroad at some point and eventually earn a master's degree in education.

FOURTH PLACE

Thank you, Tio Carlos

FFRF awarded Johann \$750.

By Johann Rucker

I did not meet another Mexican atheist until I was 20, and he happened to be my Tio Carlos.

I spent the majority of my childhood idolizing him, as he was a bleeding-heart activist and a renowned artist in the Bay Area. My effort was spent working toward the ideal he represented to me, and I hoped to grow to be a man like he was. I always assumed, considering he was raised by my maternal grandparents, that he was a traditional Roman Catholic, like most of the population of Durango, Mexico, in the 1950s. When I finally found out he was an ardent atheist — on a trip to Sausalito during spring break — my entire perception of him was inverted; the man that I thought I had known was suddenly a complete stranger. I had never once told anyone about my nonbelief, but as soon as the confession casually left my Tio Carlos' lips, they stumbled out of mine.

I had said it — finally! I felt incomparably free. Funnily enough, this

happened as we were hiking down the mossed-over steps of an abandoned monastery. The air was still, the rain gently fell, and everything was OK.

Seeing my tio (uncle) as confident in his nonbelief as he seemed was so reaffirming, but it was also disheartening to know that Mexican atheists are seemingly few and far between. Any lapse in faith was always met by eye rolls and punishment from my family, and I never once considered it as a way of life. I was always assured that I could live my life as best as I could, but it would all be in vain if I did not believe in God. Every bad thing that happened to me was because I was not pious enough. I was never a good Catholic.

In hindsight, one of the most ardent Catholics in my early life was my father, a lifetime abuser and all-around awful individual who wore his Catholicism on his sleeve. It always seemed so wrong to me, the idea that a man could be so evil but be absolved simply by his religious beliefs. This is part of the reason why I looked up to my Tio Carlos so much, as I had no positive male role models in my life. He was the antithesis of my



Johann Rucker

father, someone who rejected these antiquated notions of machismo and Catholic guilt. Tio Carlos was a good man who believed in no supernatural being, while my father was a heathen who believed in God. My father was a hypocrite and utilized Catholicism as a means to guilt his children into submission. The manner in which he weaponized faith without hesitation turned me off completely, even at an early age. I saw how disingenuous religion inherently is, and chose to opt out completely. I could be a good man without God.

I have not spoken to my father in

“I saw how disingenuous religion inherently is, and chose to opt out completely.

— Johann Rucker

almost a decade. I want to remain in healthy contact with the rest of my immediate family, so I keep my nonbelief to myself. I do not think they would go as far as disowning me, but I do not want to be perceived as a deviant and be ostracized. I realize how foolish this secrecy is, but I also realize how necessary it is. Whenever the subject of religion rears its head — be it at dinner, a holiday, etc. — I know to keep my head down. It is a sad reality, but it is reality. I take solace in knowing that there are other young people of color who reject religion, wherever they may be; feeling connected to them through our shared nonbelief is enough to keep me going whenever I'm feeling down. I wish I had known that sooner, as I cannot imagine how many young people struggle with their nonbelief and have nowhere to turn.

Johann, 22, is from Las Vegas and attends the University of Nevada-Las Vegas. He is pursuing a degree in film studies and cultural anthropology.

FIFTH PLACE

Spanish-speaking heathen

FFRF awarded Alondra \$600.

By Alondra Vega Rivera

In Hispanic and Latin American cultures, day-to-day life is permeated with religion. For most Hispanics in particular, the Catholic Church is ever-present in their lives. Growing up Puerto Rican, I was baptized before I could walk or talk, and from then on my life was constantly submersed in the Catholic Church. I spent a great majority of the first eight years of my life with my maternal grandparents. My grandfather got ordained as a deacon when I was 4, and my grandmother led a prayer group that met up every first Friday of the month. Coincidentally, I always had those days off from school, so I would spend it with them, the only child among a sea of old ladies and some of their husbands, sitting around one of their houses praying over a rosary for hours.

I began catechism at the age of 5, and weekends since then were spent at church. At the time, I didn't understand what I was doing, but it seemed to make my family proud, so I did it with-

out question. I sang the hymns, read the psalms, participated actively in my church for the next few years, doing my first communion at age 7. That's also when I started questioning whether the church actually meant anything. Did prayer have any effect? Did God truly exist? I remember asking my grandmother, and her getting increasingly agitated until she told me I was too young to be thinking that, and to stop asking questions. So I kept quiet — for years.

As time went on, I found myself straying further and further from religion. I kept attending church, but while I had been raised in it, the rites all seemed alien to me. I felt distanced and cast aside, alienated by my lack of faith. During high school, I found friends that felt similarly, with similar experiences, having been raised religious and yet being nonbelievers themselves. It was there where I was able to have the most in-depth discussions about religion with my nonreligious and religious peers alike, from a position of respect. There, I was able to formulate my own views. I came to understand religion as a coping mechanism for many, a way to give meaning and purpose to



Alondra Vega Rivera

their lives and establish control over the unknown, despite having developed into a system of hierarchy and oppression.

Of course, I could tell none of this to my family. There was a night when I had a project coming up and still had more than half the work to do when my father decided he would take me to church. I told him I couldn't go because I had to work, and he got angry and left. My mother came by my room a few minutes later to ask if I believed in God, to which I replied "no." She got extremely angry and began shouting at me, telling me I was bound for nothing but hell, and that I was going to lose everything I had. It hurt, and I was still forced to go to church,

“ I came to understand religion as a coping mechanism for many, a way to give meaning and purpose to their lives and establish control over the unknown.

— Alondra Vega Rivera

crying during the car ride with my father and lying all the way, telling him I did believe — just differently. I don't think he believed me. My grandmother caught on and constantly told me I should believe in God, and blamed my generation for not doing so.

Being a non-religious Hispanic person has meant being alienated not only from my family, but from my culture. I have been sent to camps and counselors to try and “correct” me, to get me to see God, and yet it doesn't work. I understand why people need religion, but I don't want it. It's just not right for me.

Alondra, 18, from Carolina, Puerto Rico, attends Ecuslea de Artes Plasticas y Diseno de Puerto Rico. She would like to get a degree in graphic design and become an illustrator for movies, games books and other media.

SIXTH PLACE

My journey to secularism

FFRF awarded Azarius \$500.

By Azarius Williams

When I was growing up, my mother would take my siblings and me to a popular church called Redeeming Word Christian Center International. We were the typical “Sunday saints,” attending the bare minimum Sunday service to appease our Christian-valued extended family. My mother felt this immense pressure to conform to Christianity due to her black-sheep status during her own upbringing. This status was bestowed upon her by her grandmother, who was her guardian as a child, for being dark-skinned. The reasoning changed when my mother came out as a lesbian during her mid-20s. The sermons always included heteronormative speech, an insinuation that heterosexuality was the only acceptable partnership. Church folk and family members would coat their homophobia with cherry-picked bible scriptures to “turn her straight.” We stopped going to church.

During my adolescence, I struggled with depression and suicidal thoughts. This was linked to the emotionally abusive relationship I had with my father, coupled with the grueling process of discovering my identity as a transgender man. I repressed my identity out

of a learned fear that God would hate me if I transitioned to male. This led to self-hatred and embarrassment, feelings I soon affixed toward my mother's lifestyle. Soon, I formulated a plan to cease existing due to the severity of my internal conflict. Fortunately, I chose to live as I intended, not to the approval of oppressive interpretations of some outdated novel that remains unverifiable. Thus began my rejection of religion.

The anti-liberating nature of black religious institutions has strengthened my position as a secularist. As I grew intellectually and consciously of my black identity, so did my skepticism. The same book that was used to justify the institution of slavery in the United States is the same book that much of the black community subscribes to. Slave capturers and plantation owners used religion to subjugate slaves into believing that their slave status was their divine duty. This problematic indoctrination of religion into the black community has been used as a foundation of the immense black subscription to religious institutions. Often, in my experience, these churches promote behaviors and ideologies that directly contrast with the liberation of marginalized groups. It encourages the community to rely on a deity for liberation from oppression rather than to object to the creators of the oppression. Children are



Azarius Williams

scorned if they question what is being taught to them, which is oppressive and detrimental.

Mental health is hardly regarded as an issue that necessitates counseling and treatment, but as an issue that can be remedied by strengthening one's faith. Women are taught and expected to conform to the patriarchy. The LGBTQIA community is vehemently demonized. All of this has aided the formulation and persistence of a social hierarchy within the black community, which is stalling our liberation.

The overwhelming presence of religion in the black community has made me a minority within a minority. It is very difficult to have conversations about religion with most black people I know due to their strong religious beliefs. Multiple people have attempted to convert me

“ The anti-liberating nature of black religious institutions has strengthened my position as a secularist.

— Azarius Williams

to their religion upon discovering that I am nonreligious. My religion, or lack thereof, is a topic that I do not feel comfortable discussing due to the negative response I have gotten from strangers and loved ones. I've quickly learned that discussions based on my rejection of religion are unwelcomed, but discussions of discovering Christ are encouraged. I have had more than my share of sit-downs with devout individuals “concerned” about my rejection of religion, often ending with prayers for my discovery of their deity. An essential feat of black religion for a lot of black people is the “hope” and sense of community that it provides to people who have been disenfranchised for centuries. Perhaps the freethought movement could utilize this knowledge as an opportunity to provide spaces and advocacy for black individuals.

Azarius 20, is from Port St. Lucie, Fla., and attends Syracuse University, but will be studying in Hong Kong in the fall 2018 semester. He wants to study global markets and would also like to found a nonprofit that focuses on the school-to-prison pipeline and LGBTQ+ youth of color.

SEVENTH PLACE

I said goodbye to the god that failed me

FFRF awarded Jesica \$400.

By Jesica Maldonado Matias

I grew up in a Hispanic household with austere traditions to be followed, where religion has always been a high and mighty law to comply with and follow without fault. This included the tedious ritual of church on Saturday mornings, two bewildering prayers before bed every night,

and the frankly discouraging sessions of Sunday school required for a first communion. These activities deemed themselves vastly colorless and excruciating for me to complete as I began to form ideas and beliefs for myself and realized that there is no such thing as God.

As I began to grow up with the silent idea that challenged my family's religion, I began to exhibit it, especially through TV shows and music,

and they immediately began to bestow judgment and distaste for my alienation from their ideal white-picket-fence beliefs. Soon, at the tender age of 12, I decided to finally remove any religious jewelry or decorations that stripped me of my true identify and molded me to their senseless beliefs. Although I experienced their scoffs of judgment frequently, the worst ensued from my distant family and community in Mexico. My mom, who



Jesica Maldonado Matias

ultimately accepted my beliefs, would tell me about the inveterate and foolish gossip that my family spread. I was called many things, some of which included satanist, witch, uneducated, devil’s child, stupid and several other equivalent terms. When I visited my family, they would look down upon me as if I were — as sorrowful as it makes me to say it — scum. The pure disappointment on their faces was louder than any silence I’d ever heard. It would be reasonable to conclude that I would try to please them to feel accepted again, but, instead, I finally felt like an individual rather than one defined by the wishes of my family. I felt free as I liberated myself from the suffocating beliefs of Catholicism and decided that it is not my job to sculpt myself to anyone’s

“ I felt free as I liberated myself from the suffocating beliefs of Catholicism and decided that it is not my job to sculpt myself to anyone’s standards but my own.

— Jessica Maldonado Matias

standards but my own.

The one individual I could always trust not to elude my personal beliefs has been my mom, who began to question why I reject religion. First and foremost, I find the idea of an invisible, almighty man in the sky downright ridiculous and not scientifically possible. Growing up surrounded by

Catholic individuals, I learned that one vacuous factor they share is their rejection of scientific facts. I have always been profoundly fascinated by science, especially biology and evolution. They simply label evolution and the big bang theory as shams. The nasty attitudes of many religious followers have also been another reason I chose to reject religion. Isn’t their religion based on freewill and acceptance of those different from them? More importantly, if God created the whole universe, which is vast and beyond comprehension, who are we to say that we’re the only ones important to him and not just an insignificant occurrence within the universe? The bible does not provide answers for this, only assumptions gathered from different beliefs and viewpoints that

do not serve as reliable. It is ridiculous to simply accept a 2,700-year-old book as a factual manual to live by. For me, the biggest factor contributing to my freedom from religion is the truly delusional idea of a god who cares, who fixes it when you pray to him and who is good despite the cruel fact that the bible paints him multiple times as a non-intervening God who sees everything before it happens and allows it. If he didn’t stop the fall of humanity, he won’t be stopping tragedies anytime soon. I mean, would you really want to believe in a God who doesn’t believe in you? Jessica, 18, is from Palm Springs, Calif., and attends San Francisco State University. Her goal is to earn a master’s degree in business administration and to become a horror novel author.

FFRF student essay honorable mentions

FFRF selected eight essays from the students of color college essay competition that were worthy of honorable mention status. Each of the following students received \$200 (plus an additional \$100 for those who are a member of a secular student club). To read each of the honorable mention essays in full, go to freethoughttoday.com. Here are edited excerpts from each one (in no particular order).

A matter of perception

By Evan Malcolm

My rejection of religion stems from growing up in the church, specifically that of the Baptist denomination. During this time, around the age of 10 or 11, I began asking questions about the bible and God to my grandmother and the pastor at our church. Questions and contradictions arose, such as, “Why does God let people suffer if he is all-knowing?” and “Wouldn’t that just make him a cruel father who has favorite children?” I continued to ask questions like this to the point where I was called a heathen and nonbeliever and was accused of having a lack of faith. I decided to seek the answers myself and see if the bible held any of them. For many religions, there is the unyielding insistence that their deity and/or beliefs are the one true way to salvation/heaven/nirvana, which leads to the theory that they are either all wrong or all right. Either way, someone in the group is wrong, which makes it more



Evan Malcolm

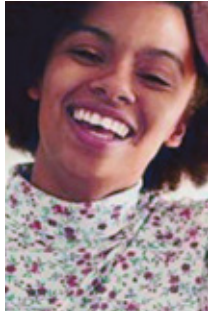
plausible that religion is completely a human-made concept that is used as a tool used to divide and control, not unite, and is inherently against the progression of humanity. Many struggles come from being a triple minority (black, atheist, gay), and most of them come to light when interacting with people of my own race and my family. It is automatically assumed that I am Christian and straight when I walk into the room as a black male. Having to navigate social interactions as the opposite of those assumptions is an exhausting and daunting task, but one I am intimately familiar with. Evan, 21, is from Plantation, Fla., and attends the University of South Florida. He is a political activist, especially when it comes to mental health advocacy and LGBT rights. He plans to obtain a juris doctorate degree after his undergraduate years and hopes to become a legislator or lobbyist.

A wolf in black sheep’s clothing

By Alexandra Harmon

Although my mom is a Christian and doesn’t believe in abortion, she thought about having one with me. When I found this out, I was angry, but I remembered my older brother, who will be turning 38, was going in and out of prison ever since he was in high school. I would never want that for my kid. Maybe, aborting me in my mom’s mind would’ve been her version of saving me from some ill fate. But she didn’t, because she feared suffering in hell if she went through with it. I’m grateful to be alive, but I wish that the threat of burning in hell wasn’t the reason. I wonder if anything positive, like love, can be built off of something negative?

I want to believe that somehow all of the evil and cruelty in the world made sense, to believe that everything happens for a reason and that the world isn’t chaos. I wish I felt that my mom kept me solely because she loved me, not because of her fear of burning in hell. But I can’t and I won’t. Christianity is so intertwined with blackness in America that a black athe-



Alexandra Harmon

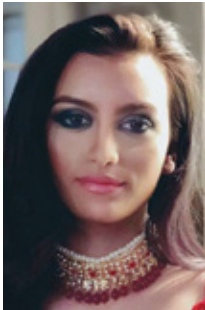
ist sounds like an oxymoron. Atheism is almost never a choice for black kids, no matter how we feel. At least, that’s what we are led to believe. But, it shouldn’t matter what we are led to believe. We should be able to choose what to believe. There’s nothing freer than that. Alexandra, 19, is from Salisbury, Md., and attends Howard University. She volunteers to help Hispanic students learn English and also works 30 hours a week during school to pay for her rent and bills.

Dangerous woman

By Anissa Foster

Nawal El Saadawi planted these wild seeds when I first tasted her tropical elixir on a lazy Sunday, with *Woman At Point Zero* propped on my knees and the moonlight resting on my face. She led me through Egypt’s prisons of pain and broths of beasts. I witnessed daughters become women: their rape, their genital mutilation, their oppression. The way women sell their bodies at a price or how they accept marriage as an alternative form of payment. All women are prostitutes of one kind or another.

Their objectification is justified by “religion.” Faith is the acceptance of what we imagine to be true, but that which we can never prove. God is a perfect scapegoat, a perfect motivator. No one can prove he doesn’t exist and no one can question his intentions. These men whisper the word of God into their female victim’s ears while they pillage and destroy their innocence, their purity. They cut off their female pleasure and ostracize their joy. They use God to justify their own power, their own thrones. Nawal El Saadawi professed that she is a dangerous woman because she is “speaking the truth. And the truth is savage and dangerous.” I have seen what it means to suffer and I have felt what it means to be female. We are not at liberty to play dress-up anymore. As her characters raise their bloody fists in revolt, as Saadawi raises her pen, I raise my head because, like them, I am be-



Anissa Foster

coming a dangerous woman. Anissa, 18, is from Union City, Calif., and attends Stanford University. She plans to be the first in her family to graduate from college. She has been a volunteer for Woof Animal Rescue and has helped clean coastal beaches.

False prophets

By Therrin Wilson

I’m one of the extremely rare African-Americans who decided to reject traditional belief, and this is a substantial issue because the African-American community integrates Christianity into the black foundation and identity so much that anything different is extremely taboo. Therefore, being an African-American atheist yields to a unique and powerful burden of adversity. The black community has shown that they’re more accepting of drug dealers, murderers and criminals than they are of black, college-bound atheists. I have lost multiple friends, been physically abused and my community disclaims me in all aspects. In essence, I have lost most of the love that I needed at many points of my life due to my beliefs.

The short answer as to why I reject both religion and a supreme deity is that there is absolutely no reason or evidence whatsoever to believe in either. Of course, some would appeal to universal origins or the beauty of life, but to those I would refer to the words of Friedrich Nietzsche, “There is not enough love and goodness in the world to permit giving any of it away to imaginary beings.” So, yes, I am an African-American atheist and I am proud to identify as such. Once I first became an atheist, I felt very friendless and alone but thanks to organizations such as FFRF, Black Nonbelievers, the Secular Student Alliance, American Humanist Association and many other organizations, I know that I am not alone. Therrin, 21, is from Knoxville, Tenn., and attends the University of Tennessee. He is a senior who is seeking a biochemistry degree and eventually wants to pursue a career in optometry.

See Honorable mentions on page 16

Losing Faith in Faith: From Preacher to Atheist

By Dan Barker

How Dan “threw out the bathwater and discovered there is no baby there.”

Published by FFRF

Buy it from FFRF online shop.ffrf.org

Honorable mentions

Continued from page 15

My experience as a skeptic of color

By Joseph Florida

Growing up as a black male who was incapable of swallowing the religion pill in the heart of the Bible Belt oftentimes made things uncomfortable. When I look back at my youth, I was always an atheist. I was just forced to remain silent due to societal pressure. I believe this is the reason many individuals lie to themselves, but I realized the only thing worse than experiencing more discrimination would be to continue living a lie.

I learned that religion, especially Christianity, was simply a tactic employed by imperialist colonizers and tyrants. It was an excuse for absolutist monarchs to rule with ruthless indifference and for European explorers to murder and enslave foreign peoples.

It is ironic that atheism is seen as a “white man’s movement” when no individuals have been harmed more so by Christianity than minorities.

It is very ironic that Christianity, which claims to be a religion of love, is often used as an implement of suppression. The bible is just a deceptive medium that has been used throughout history to subjugate and deny human rights; as is the current case with women’s reproductive rights being attacked and members of the LGBTQ community not having been permitted to marry. I embraced truth by studying historical facts and reality. I implore anyone living in silence, especially of a minority background, to research for themselves. Do not be afraid to start down your own path towards reason.

Joseph, 21, from Zachary, La., is attending Southern University A&M College. He enjoys history and studying languages and calls himself an enthusiastic volunteer.

Have pride in freethought

By Kelvin Martinez Gomez

You could replace God with anyone in Greek mythology, and it would make the same amount of sense. If the beliefs of the Greeks were false, what made Christianity true? The answer — nothing. All I saw were appeals to emotion, circular logic, fallacies and bad arguments. Why should I believe? Why was something told to be a fundamental fact so hard to prove?

Now, I am an unabashed atheist. I am not afraid to speak up or to debate. Being an atheist to me is evidence that I can think critically, that I was able to escape the grip of indoctrination, that I can assess truth from fiction. It means I am intellectually honest. When confronted with a question that I cannot answer, I am unafraid to say “I don’t know” rather

A custody battle looms



Dave Bennett of California saw this marquee and commented, “So, God wants us to all live in the church? Also, is ‘partime’ when you finally start to play decent golf?”



Kelvin Martinez Gomez

than presume to know an answer. Being Hispanic and an atheist is honestly an awful situation. I hate to give credit to stereotype, but many Hispanics are very religious. This causes many freethinking Hispanics to be completely alienated from their community, despite their familial bonds. I encourage all minorities to question their own beliefs and not be afraid of the actions of their community. The freethought movement only needs to have welcoming arms to minority atheists. Giving people a community they feel comfortable in goes a long way. Most importantly, talking to others about how to walk within a religiously dominated world, how to be a good person without religion, and to have pride in freethought.

Kelvin, 18, is from Portland, Ore., and attends Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. He hopes to see the world and use it to gain perspective on how others live.

Discovering the unknown

By Shejan Heaven

The biggest wall that stood between my dreams as a doctor was my family’s Islamic faith. Like most monotheistic religions, Is-

lam is seen to have all of the answers. Our existence, our purpose and everything that makes up our reality is published in the Quran and we are not allowed to question it.

Many do not realize religion is so powerful to individuals because naturally we fear the unknown. While afraid and unsure, we seek solace by relying on a higher power that promises us answers in exchange for following a life role. There are many issues with this mindset; this skews followers to relieve themselves of their responsibilities because they are centered around “God’s plan.” What sets me aside from people tied to religious ideologies is I do not seek comfort in the unknown nor do I fear it. Instead I want to explore and research this empty space around us.

The challenges I face from my family and community consist of fear rhetoric. The Muslim community consistently tells me my views are haram (sinful) and I will burn in eternal suffering. I am told Islam is the only way to heaven and I need to accept the faith into my life before I get married and have children.

Religion was created because we fear death. The tips I have to offer for the freethought movement is to always encourage freethinkers to research and question everything you see. This world has more to offer than what you are settled to believe. Religion can be beautiful, but reason



Shejan Heaven

and logic will always prevail. Shejan, 19, is from Atlanta and attends the University of Georgia. He enjoys playing the violin and tutoring children to become musicians. He also volunteers at a local library and a food bank. Shejan hopes to attend medical school after graduation.

Stand up for your beliefs, yourself

By Tatem Rios

I was not raised in a religious household. I never attended church, prayed or worshipped. My parents never mentioned religion, nor did I really know what religion was. I eventually decided to take action to see what all the fuss was about.

I ended up going to church multiple times to try and fit in. I did this because everyone made me feel like an outcast. Well, I absolutely hated it. None of it makes sense! The stuff they preach contradicts scientific discoveries, yet people still continue to believe it. I really don’t understand how people have become so brainwashed. They believe in this fantasy story so they can give their lives meaning. I believe individuals themselves have the power to choose the meaning of their own lives.

Here is some advice to those who are minorities within this minority, just like me. Don’t let others treat you differently because of your beliefs. If they don’t like it, they don’t have to be in your life. Yes, this world can be a cruel place and we have all experienced it, however, stand up for yourself. There is a whole community of people just like you here to support you. Always remember that you are not alone. We together have what it takes to thrive and prosper in this world.

Tatem, 18, is from Woodbury, Minn., and attends Inver Hills Community College. She was able to take college courses while in high school and will graduate from Inver Hills in the spring of 2019 and then plans to attend the University of Minnesota for her senior year, getting a degree in chemical engineering and chemistry.



Tatem Rios

Marquee madness



Member Linda Josheff of Wisconsin provided FFRF with these two photos featuring strange marquee statements. The “Fall for Jesus” sign was taken in Gettysburg, Pa., and the “Key to Heaven” sign was taken in Waunakee, Wis.

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Taking a sharp left after leaving Religious Right

By Luke Douglas

I remember a muggy southern Alabama afternoon in Fair Hope at a small clam chowder shop overlooking Mobile Bay. I was at the peak of my law school career with Liberty Law, spending my summer in a prestigious clerkship with the state Supreme Court, and sitting to my left was Chief Justice Roy Moore. His chief of staff was across the table, engaging the judge with intriguing conversation about their place in the conservative movement and my role as a future legal advocate for God’s America.

Impressed by the gravity of my place in the culture war, I turned to Moore to ask him about a mutual acquaintance of ours. Doug Philips was a pastor, author and major thought leader of the homeschooling movement, whose impassioned religious advocacy for patriarchy and family values had inspired my family and motivated me, in part, to pursue law.

The immediate reason for my bringing him up was his unfortunate falling out with the evangelical movement after a years-long sex scandal broke. It revealed Philips’ affair with his family’s underage nanny and had disastrous implications for the thousands of families within his sphere of influence, specifically the cancellation of his ministry’s signature annual event: the Witherspoon School of Law and Public Policy.

The Witherspoon School was an event hosted by Philips and keynoteed by Moore. It sported the talents of a range of attorneys and legal scholars geared toward training a generation of young men how to “stand in the gates” (borrowing the Old Testament term) in positions of civic influence. The speakers taught us that the history of American law was lifted from the Torah, that conservative leaders of God-fearing states had the duty to interpose and nullify the unconstitutional actions of federal judges and lawmakers, and that it was a sin for women to seek public office.

I told the chief justice that I was sorry to see the end of this conference, in which he had had a vested interest and at which he had spoken several years running, and I mentioned that I had heard some talk of resurrecting it under new leadership after Philips had fallen into sin.

“I know,” said the chief justice. “It’s tragic when the devil can bring leadership into sin and bring godly organizations and movements with them.”

Saving us from Satan

I was chosen by God.

Not in any vague or subjective way, though. The creator of the universe revealed his inerrant word in the bible, laying out the literal historical and scientific truth of the cosmos and then called me — a foot soldier of the homeschooling movement — to conquer the social and political institutions of America and save Western civilization from Satan and the left, virtually identical though they were.

The simplicity of the whole thing was airtight with its internal consistency to the point that questioning any one part of it was nonsensical under the weight of the rest. The universe was 6,000 years old. All living things existed within unchanging created “kinds,” and the history of the ancient world all took place af-



Shutterstock

ter a worldwide flood sometime around 2300 B.C.

We didn’t just tacitly acquiesce to this reality in the absence of contrary evidence; my family devoured creationism from conferences to books to alternative guidebooks and tours of the national parks to interpret geological and paleontological features in light of Noah’s flood.

It may be easy for an outsider to imagine these ideas on some survivalist compound in Wyoming or the trailer parks of Mississippi, but they weren’t. I grew up in deep blue Oregon, less than an hour’s drive from the Portland International Airport. If the recent national election hasn’t tipped you off, fundamentalists aren’t only necessarily out there in the hill country of eastern Kentucky or the small towns of the Oklahoma panhandle. They’re sitting beside you at Chili’s. They’re your co-workers and neighbors, and many of them live in a subculture you might not even know how to see.

Plugged into the right political machine, the zeal of God’s commission to take dominion over society has enabled the hostile takeover of nearly every institution of American democracy. With the stakes so high, I showed an early knack for public speaking and writing, activism, politics and the culture war. I fell in love with politics from the first time I volunteered for a campaign. When I was 15, I went down to California to volunteer for the Proposition 8 campaign, which amended the state Constitution to define marriage as one man and one woman. It passed.

When I was 16, I approached my pastor and told him I was interested in teaching and eventually preaching the word of God, so he coached me on how to study the bible in depth and preach it according to the strictures of its original meaning. When I was 17, I had made my rounds in conservative circles and started getting invited to speak at rallies and conferences as a sort of rising star for the new Tea Party movement that was sweeping the nation’s politics.

At 18, I moved to northern Virginia for my first full-time job at a consulting firm, where I raised money for major Republican organizations and campaigns. At 19, I earned my bachelor’s degree and went to a conservative Christian law school on a full-ride scholarship and worked as a legal advocate for theocratic values.

I’ve seen exactly what’s on the inside of the Religious Right because I was there. I know exactly what they want to

accomplish in this country because I helped them implement it. I have felt the fire to take dominion over this wicked world in the name of Christ, because that fire burned in my heart as much as it has burned in anyone’s.

But now, here I am. How does a person escape this black hole of cognitive dissonance and self-reinforcement? How can you teach yourself to doubt, to question and ultimately to look your own identity in the face and say, “I was wrong”?

You might think I saw right through the propaganda, and I’d like to say that I did. But it wasn’t so simple. The process of reorganizing everything you think you know and eliminating the many things you believe when you discover they are false is a very long and gradual process. It’s hard to pinpoint a moment when the doubts began, but in many ways it began in the very core of who I always was — a questioner.

Questioning everything

So, I visited churches of different Christian denominations in search of some core version of Christianity from which I could amputate all the baggage I had grown to doubt, and eventually explored the services of entirely other religions.

I dropped out of my part-time seminary program to shift that academic energy into philosophy. I explored the great thinkers of the world’s intellectual history and quickly found myself discovering real science.

All this left me living a troubling double life. On my own time, I soaked up the challenge of self-teaching science, philosophy and history in a way that brought the world around me into focus.

It came to a head in the summer of

2016. Organized hatred and bigotry were so deafening in our society that I couldn’t live with myself, knowing that I was actively a part of it. My own sampling of comparative religions had left me cynical that any of them had “the one true” answer, or even that such a search was meaningful at all. My reading had taken me to Stephen Hawking and Richard Dawkins, the final nails in the coffin of my longtime struggle to hold onto faith. I finally snapped.

I was in a Chick-fil-A in central Texas while I worked for a Republican state-house campaign at the time. I remember vividly the instrumental-only Christian music that the restaurant was playing, so cleverly that a nonbeliever needn’t be offended by the cultural tropes of Christianity, but a believer would immediately know the songs. So the songs played, and my head filled in the words as they did, drudging up every memory I had of fundamentalist sermons, pseudo-scientific talking points, and the thousands of King James Bible verses I had committed to memory.

I lost it.

I dropped my book, went into the men’s room, sat on the toilet, and bawled my eyes out for an hour and a half. I was, as I finally admitted to myself, an atheist, a humanist and a progressive in soon to be more ways than I was prepared to understand. Everything that my old worldview had made clear to me about my place in the universe and the purpose of my life was gone. My family and friends would be devastated.

And the fire that I felt for the triumph of the gospel burns again, because I feel that fire for human progress and dignity. I channel it today into helping people like me who are still finding their way out, and advancing the message of curiosity and critical thinking that our world so desperately needs.

With all the skills and insights I gained as a professional conservative activist, I now lend my time as a full-time progressive activist. From that pathetic breaking point in a bathroom stall, I decided that my honor was not for sale, whatever the price may be. I know that for this wave of totalitarian fundamentalism there is no compromise, and as such we have no recourse but to defend our democracy against all the fear and hatemongering of the dark ages. And if they insist on declaring war upon all humanity, then we will stand beside our fellow human beings and cast at the feet of the tyrant the mandate of all nature: evolve or die.

FFRF Member Luke Douglas is a political consultant, progressive activist and writer. Since leaving fundamentalism and a political career in the Religious Right, he has been outspoken about his journey to secular humanism.

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FFRF awards \$10,000 in partnership with BSLA

Four earn Catherine Fahringer scholarships

FFRF is pleased to announce that it has awarded \$10,000 in scholarship awards in memory of Catherine Fahringer to four students chosen by the Black Skeptics of Los Angeles, an African-American atheist community-based group.

The scholarship is part of the First in the Family Humanist Scholarship program, which focuses on undocumented, foster care, homeless or LGBTQ youth who will be the first in their families to go to college.

According to BSLA founder Sikivu Hutchinson, “Secular African American youth disproportionately come from religious backgrounds and communities. These youth are often marginalized in K-12 and higher education due to their non-conformity. This scholarship program provides a platform for their voices and experiences.”

Fahringer was a San Antonio feminist and freethinking activist who ran a long-lived FFRF chapter and served on FFRF’s executive board for many years. She was especially interested in nurturing the next generation of freethinkers. She died in 2008.

Here are excerpts from the winners’ essays.

By Huanchun Xu

As an undocumented immigrant who will be the first in my family to go to college, I have met more barriers than other college applicants. I know how hard and stressful the application process can be. I spent so much time wondering how I can pay for everything. Can I apply for any financial aid or scholarships? These kinds of questions always bothered me because it took so long to find answers. I knew there must be others in the same situation, and I wondered how I might be able to help them.

I participated in the Freedom and Citizenship program, a summer-intensive project in political philosophy at Columbia University. Through the year-long civic action project, I wanted to do research to provide more information to undocumented students, especially about scholarships and college financial aid.

Our group made two goals: to educate others about undocumented immigrants and to inform undocumented immigrants about the college application process. We hoped more undocumented students could achieve their college dreams with our help.

For my part, specifically, I told my high school guidance counselor what I felt as an undocumented student when I applied to college. I explained our project to her, and even though my counselor was busy, I convinced her to help. At first, she decided to give me about 15 minutes for an interview to share my experience. After the interview, she decided to help. Between the two of us, we divided work in order to gather more information in a short time. The process was hard, tiring and complicated, but if people can understand the difficulties undocumented students face, then our hard work was worth it. The work we did is now available online at freedomandcitizenship.columbia.edu/immigration for free

access.

Through the Freedom and Citizenship project, I hoped to make social change. Through the project, we tried to encourage people to think from different point of views, to think about why undocumented students must work so hard in order to enroll in college.

Xu, 20, graduated from Liberty High School Academy for Newcomers, in New York City. She is attending the Borough of Manhattan Community College with an emphasis in communication.

By Shalvit Grimes

The issue of access to education for girls of color is among the greatest social justice issues of our time. As of 2017, research shows that 130 million school-aged girls of color worldwide do not attend school. To put that number in perspective, that is just shy of the entire population of Russia. Can you imagine if all of the inhabitants of Russia were denied a basic elementary education? I firmly believe that, as a society, we are each responsible for standing up for human rights and for creating social change.

Humanism is the belief that all people, regardless of race, gender, socioeconomic standing or geography, should be treated equally. Through my research, I’ve learned that the inequality in access to education for girls is often rooted in social values that dictate that men are superior to women, religious beliefs about the proper role of a woman, and poverty, which demands that young girls stay home and take care of their siblings.

I was first exposed to the global girls’ education crisis in the seventh grade. At the suggestion of one of my teachers, my friends and I started a chapter of Girl Up at my middle school. Girl Up is sponsored by the United Nations and encourages students to create local clubs/chapters to raise awareness about the issue, to advocate for the rights of girls globally, and to raise funds to send girls to school.

Over the past six years I’ve served as president of my local chapter of Girl Up and have successfully sent 179 girls in the Republic of Congo to school.

In 2016, I was afforded the distinct opportunity to attend a conference with global leaders sponsored by the Let Girls Learn campaign, which is an initiative championed by Michelle Obama to bring US resources to assist in the fight to get girls of color educated. Being in a room with leaders from around the world to discuss strategies to reverse gender inequities showed me that social change is possible. I observed that while the world leaders present clearly had different religious and cultural world views, religion and politics did not enter the conversations. My intention is to one day be among those world leaders strategizing ways to reverse gender- and race-based inequalities.

Shalvit, 18, graduated from St. John’s High School in Washington, D.C. She is attending St. John’s University, with plans to major in criminal justice with a minor in social justice.

By Mike Grimes

In 2011, my family experienced the sudden and tragic death of my father. To say that the loss was heart-rending would be an understatement. It was my father who taught me the principles of humanism.

My father was on his way home from work when he was struck by a commercial truck. According to testimony, the truck driver had fallen asleep at the wheel. He woke up and tried to brake but they did not operate effectively. We later learned that the brake failure was attributable to deferred maintenance on the truck.

Despite the obvious fault of the trucking company, it put my family through hell in the following months. The irony of this was that the company’s website proudly proclaimed that they were a “Christian company” with deep “family values.” I learned quickly that their stated family values did not extend to my family.

My mother had to move quickly from mourning the loss of her husband to engaging in a brutal lawsuit with the company, which refused to admit fault. Our finances were already heavily dependent on my father’s income, and the added legal bills resulted in us losing our home. In the aftermath of my father’s death, I was overwhelmed by the generosity of family, friends and strangers who offered us shelter, meals, comfort and understanding during our period of homelessness.

The accident ignited a passion within me to care for the homeless and underfed and to practice the principles of humanism in all my affairs, specifically “to lead a meaningful, ethical life capable of adding to the greater good of humanity.”

I decided to dedicate my life to paying homage to my father’s legacy as a good humanist. I channel his spirit of giving and have made it a point to always look for new ways to give to those in need. I believe that the issue of homelessness could be eradicated if everyone took on a humanist belief.

My life before the loss of my father is one that I often dream of having back. However, in the time after the accident, I have grown to be a giving and charitable person, I have seen humanity at its best and I’ve gained a greater appreciation for humanism and the potential for positive social change that it offers.

Mike, 19, graduated from The Potomac School in McLean, Va.. He is attending



Mike Grimes

Honors College of Charleston where he is majoring in finance with a concentration in entrepreneurship and a minor in German.

By Desmyon Jones

In the seventh grade, I realized that I was different. The fear that my family would hate me encouraged me to conceal this information. The guilt that I felt transformed me from a bubbly child into a recluse who barely uttered a word. One day, my mother decided she’d seen enough of this behavior and confronted me, “Why do you look sad every time I see you?” Usually, I would just mumble “nothing” and quickly scurry off to my bedroom. However, this time I’d made the mistake of crying when she asked the question. I planned on repeating the phrase “nothing’s wrong” until she gave up and left me alone, but, for some reason, my body decided to betray me and did the exact opposite of what I told it not to do. With my head hanging low and my eyes blinded by wetness, I blurted out, “I think I’m gay.” She accused me of being possessed by the devil and left me with a lingering message: “The devil comes to steal, kill and destroy. He wants to tear you away from God.”

Many LGBTQ+ youth suffer from emotional distress that comes from being gay while also being a member of a faith that teaches its followers that homosexuals deserve to spend eternity in hell. Some people go as far as kicking their own children out of their homes or making them feel so unloved that they resort to taking their life. In fact, suicide has become the second-leading cause of death among young people. It sickens me to think that people who cause LGBTQ+ youth to live their lives in fear and shame believe they deserve a reward when they die.

As a non-white, non-straight, nonreligious female, I’ve gotten to experience firsthand how frightening it can be to try being yourself in a society that expects you to be like everyone else. Getting rid of religion in favor of humanism would ultimately lead to healthier family dynamics between LGBTQ+ youth and their relatives. It will create a society in which people aren’t acting self-righteous to appease some imaginary man in the sky, but doing their very best to let everyone know that they belong.


Desmyon, 18, graduated from the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science in Columbus, Miss. She is attending the University of Memphis with plans to major in civil engineering.



Desmyon Jones

Yip Harburg,
from his book:

Rhymes for the Irreverent



Lead Kindly Light
Where Bishop Patrick crossed the street
An “X” now marks the spot.
The light of God was with him,
but the traffic light was not.

Published by the Freedom From Religion Foundation
Buy it from FFRF online - shop.ffrf.org

LETTERBOX

Push to keep religion out of politics, science

In online political surveys, we are prompted to check off what we think is most important for our representatives to work on. For the “Other” category, I have gotten into the habit of adding: “Get religion out of politics, education and science!”

I don’t believe in miracles, but who knows, if we all do that, it might eventually have an impact.

Jorg Aadahl
California

Lennon’s ‘Imagine’ not as atheistic as it seems

I think the newspaper is the best part of being an FFRF member.

I’d like to issue a counterpoint to Caren Campbell’s proposal (June/July 2018) that “Imagine” be our “anthem.”

Lennon was not an atheist. The song was inspired by a poem from Yoko Ono’s s book *Grapefruit*, and he told Playboy magazine he wrote the song as a prayer to god. The lyrics ask us to “imagine” there is no heaven, which assumes we all believe there is one. Two years before he wrote the song, he said “Whatever they celebrate, God and Christ, I don’t think it matters as long as they’re aware of Him and His message.” (eek!) He did take a lot of heat for the “no possessions” part, given his wealth.

Other wrongly interpreted songs adopted as anthems include “Born in the USA,” “This Land is Your Land” and “American Woman.”

People are free to take from lyrics whatever they choose, of course. We don’t need an anthem (we have lots of terrific slogans!), but there are some fine songs about atheism/secularism (Dan Barker knows this).

I particularly like these lyrics from James Taylor’s “Up from your Life:” “So much for your moment of prayer; God’s not at home, there is no there

there; lost in the stars, that’s what you are . . . left here on your own. You can only hope to live on this Earth, this here is it, no second birth, no starry crown.”

Lane Browning
Oregon

FFRF bumper sticker gets positive responses



With much apprehension, I placed my new FFRF bumper sticker (“Religion: The Original Fake News”) on my car. To my surprise, it has gendered nothing but gratifying responses.

One day, I noticed, as I approached my car in a parking lot, a white napkin tucked under my wiper blade. It read, “Have a blessed day.”

A week later, again in a parking lot, I was momentarily annoyed to see a car stopped directly behind me, blocking my exit. The driver lowered the window and asked where I bought the sticker. I gave her a brief sales pitch on the merits of FFRF. She said, before driving off, “My husband has a sticker that reads, ‘I evolved, you didn’t.’”

Another plus: Now I am very patient in Starbucks drive-throughs, knowing the person in the car behind me is getting a thought-provoking message.

I am now into my 90th year and would like to become a Life Member. Enclosed is my check. Does a Life Membership come with any guarantees? If I die, do I get a refund?

Howard K. Bostock
Texas

Many thanks to FFRF for student activist scholarship

I would like to thank the anonymous couple from the Northwest who provided the money to make possible the Thomas Jefferson Student Activist Award scholarship I received. Thanks to everyone at the FFRF for believing in me enough to offer me the award.

I cannot express the amount of appreciation and gratefulness I have toward FFRF. Your organization provides thousands of people a chance to safely resolve and/or pursue challenges of state/church separation, allowing ordinary citizens the opportunity to be powerful influencers in their local, state and federal governments. Everyone deserves an equal chance to express their faith or lack thereof. Everyone deserves the right to be free from intrusions that poison our governments and communities with bias and hate. The power of the people rather than the forces of religion should inspire the government. I hope you know that you made a profound impact on my life and will continue to do so. Thank you for all of your help, support and kindness.

Daniel Roe
Tennessee

Longtime member now FFRF Lifetime Member

I have no idea how long I’ve been a FFRF member! I suppose it has something to do with my age — 82. I’ve done a lot and seen a lot. The best thing I did was having a career in the Marines. Running a close second was joining FFRF.

I’m still a foxhole atheist defending our Constitution from enemies both foreign and domestic.

Enclosed please find my check for Life Membership.

Peter J. Viviano
New Mexico

‘Harry Potter’ phrase on shirt an ironic twist

I couldn’t help but laugh after reading the entry in the “Black Collar Crime” section (June/July issue) about Suzanne Owen, accused of seducing one of her students, because of the T-shirt she is portrayed in.

As any fan of the “Harry Potter” series knows, the phrase “I solemnly swear that I am up to no good” comes straight from the works of J.K. Rowling, whom evangelicals have castigated as promoting witchcraft, demonism and who knows what else. What is a teacher at an evangelical school doing wearing such a thing?

The irony of the whole thing is that, in the end, Harry is portrayed as a Christ-like figure, dying and returning to life in order to save all that is good. These people don’t seem to be able to face up to their own contradictions.

Dean Christensen
California

Seeing the world as more than black and white

Here’s an impious exhortation for your Letterbox, should you deem it worthy. It’s titled “Against Color Blindness.”

(The affront)
Either/or, now or never!
What’s it for if not forever?
Christ or else! Choose this day!
No to this, in hell you pay!
(The rejoinder)
When you must, by all means choose,
But your reason do not lose.
“Christ or else” an odious lie.
Keep integrity ’til you die.
Either/or is black and white,
Think in color without fright.
Complex the world appears to be.
Yes this truth will set you free.

Tommy Moore
Florida

CRANKMAIL

While FFRF gets plenty of fan mail, we also get plenty of religiously fanatic mail. So in every issue we publish some of the more interesting, shall we say, criticisms. Printed as received.

Zealots!: I read an article today about you zealots becoming involved in a high school devotional in Arkansas. I would think you had better things to do with your tiny brains. Maybe you could all take up a hobby like bungee jumping in the Grand Canyon and stay out of other peoples affairs that do not concern you. Obviously leftards insanity influences your every action. Do the country a favor, close up your little shop of horrors, go start a commune in the desert far from civilization so as not to pollute society with your Marxist thinking. Actually a commune in Russia should make you quite happy. — Mike Lencioni

Ashamed: I am ashamed to say I was born in Wisconsin because of all the hate you create. I pray God will forgive you when you are standing in front

of him explaining why you have spread such hate of God. — Shirley McKay

FFRF: Like all crazy terrified control freak Liberals you would rather teach people WHAT to think instead of HOW to think. It wont work. It didn’t work for Hitler or any of the other monster maniacs. Get a job, you’ll be happier. — Luke Van Horne

FU!: I DONT THINK YOU CORRUPT PUSSIES HAVE THE BALLS TO GO AGAINST THE DEMOCRATIC AGENDA.. CONSIDERING THE FACT THAT ALL OF YOU LEFT WING LIBERAL BITCHES ARE SING THE SAME SONGS ALL THE TIME, LIKE A BROKEN RECORD.. SO IN CLOSING, I WOULD LIKE TO SAY, “GO FUCK YOURSELFS, AND ALL THE HOMO’S AND PEDOPHILES THAT YOU LOVE SO MUCH, ALONG WITH ALL THE ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS AND MUSLIM LOVING FAGGOTS THAT YOU ARE SO CLOSELY PLAYING PUSSY WITH... UNTIL NEXT TIME... HAVE A NICE DAY !!! — John Flores

You guys suck: Assholes like you are destroy-

ing this country by trying to force your views on others instead of just letting people believe what they will. Bunch of self serving self important jerks. I do not care that you are athiest. does not bother me one bit what you believe or don’t believe. But what makes your views more correct than the other guys? I only care that assholes like you create fear and division by taking from others based on your beliefs or theirs. — JB Taylor

Hell is calling: Such an asshole group you have, enjoy hell, and quit ruining our country. Satan is the biggest loser, quit worshipping that pile of crap. God is in control despite you idiots. Every school shooting, the blood is on your hands... — John Smith

What about my rights?: ok, you have your rights with the first amendment. but now you are infringing on my rights. Your located in WI. I don’t come and protest you, don’t come down here and stick your nose where it doesn’t belong. — David Williams

atheists: Police Officers lip-syncing to a song from God’s Not Dead? Oh, the absolute horror of it all. I encourage all you atheists to rethink your beliefs. Does the theory of evolution really hold up? Not in a billion years....not in 100 billion years. Evolutionists have no explanation whatsoever for the human eye. That is just one of thousands of examples. — Charley Larson

Terrible sign: Your public sign ON THE OUTSIDE OF YOUR BUILDING stating “FFRFProudly Professional pains in the a\$\$ since 1978” is both offensive to me and my family and if not removed from the public’s view- having such offensive language... your organization will be notified of the actions that will follow. — Kenneth Cannon

Go to hell: Why cannot you people just stick your heads up your asses — Gary Jung

Discount: A church bulletin discount, that’s a

problem to you imbeciles? You sensitive little not anywhere near as smart as you think you are morons see the RELIGION angle and it’s Katy bar the freaking door! Why can’t you just leave people alone? It’s not that hard. Especially when you realize just how fundamentally wrong on a subject as you are. Please just read the damn Constitution, will you? It’s pretty self explanatory. — Rob Collins

Assholes: You can go fuck yourself you atheist piles of shit! Go jump off a bridge. Satan is waiting for your pathetic worthless soul to torture for eternity. Before you are tormented for all of time stop fighting restaurants that give Sunday discounts to people who aren’t inbred trash like you — Jason Contreras

Go away!: Drop dead you sick assholes and may your filthy hoes suffer — Joe Turek

FFRF: you are a good example of a very stupid person i wonder about your parents sad !!!!! — John Riley

You are bad!!!!: Disband your terrible, horrible organization. You are bad bad people — Graham Rogers

Burn in hell!: Freedom From Religion Foundation---regarding your bitching about the 10% church discount that you had a fit over...go fuck yourself you worthless atheist cocksuckers. I hope you and your POS of shit organization burn in fucking hell. — Ed Rylant

You can’t stop me: On a personal business decision, I have no problem with giving advice at a discounted rate, or at no cost to Christians. In fact I will take full advantage of the stupidity of atheists to separate them from their money. This is how the real world works. Your attorneys mean absolutely nothing to me. To stop my business activity you are going to have to kill me. Now, do what you need to do. — Richard Brisson

Your weekly antidote to the Religious Right

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FFRF.ORG

FREEDOM FROM RELIGION FOUNDATION

BLACK COLLAR CRIME

Compiled by Bill Dunn

Arrested / Charged

Norman Abernathy, 58, Conway, SC: 3 counts of assault and battery and 2 counts of criminal sexual conduct with a minor. Abernathy, youth pastor at Langston Baptist Church, allegedly fondled the private parts of 4 girls who were friends of his step-daughter 4-5 years ago. At the time they were 15, 14 and 12. *Source: WBTW, 7-19-18*

Nison Y. Lemus-Alvarez, 37, Greeley, CO: Sexual assault on a child by a person in a position of trust and sexual assault on a child with a pattern of abuse. Lemus-Alvarez, the married congregation leader of La Iglesia de Restauracion, is accused of seducing a 16-year-old girl from the church in 2017. The girl alleges they engaged in foreplay and other sexual activity in his car but didn't have intercourse. *Source: Greeley Tribune, 7-19-18*

Eric M. Zurheide, 31, Granite City, IL: Attempting to persuade or coerce a minor to engage in sexual activity. Zurheide, who worked as a youth pastor at Tri-City Assembly of God from 2013-16 and is a foster parent, was arrested at a McDonald's after meeting with an undercover detective he believed to be the mother of a 14-year-old girl he wanted to have sex with. Police allegedly found a sex toy, lubricant and condoms in his car. *Source: Post-Dispatch, 7-19-18*

Don L. Dickerson, 57, Yukon, OK: Rape by instrumentation. Dickerson, chaplain at Kate Barnard Correctional Center, is accused of "intimate physical contact" with a female inmate between January and July. He has resigned. *Source: The Oklahoman, 7-17-18*

Kenneth S. Marshall, 36, Mathews, VA: Aggravated sexual battery of a minor and forcible sodomy of a minor through the use of mental incapacity or physical helplessness. Marshall, a volunteer youth mentor at Cornerstone Fellowship Church, is accused of molesting a 15-year-old boy. The alleged incidents didn't occur at the church. *Source: 13 News Now, 7-17-18*

Kathryn M. Goff, 46, Beverly Hills, FL: Scheming to defraud less than \$20,000 and grand theft of between \$10,000 and \$20,000. Goff, secretary of Beverly Hills Community Church, allegedly wrote 38 checks to herself for \$19,426.59 in 2017-18. *Source: Citrus County Chronicle, 7-16-18*

Sean T. Jones, 42, Springfield, OR: Multiple counts of aggravated theft, forgery and computer crime. Jones, advancement director for O'Hara Catholic School in Eugene, is accused of embezzling \$3,900 from the school and \$50,800 from the Open Door Foundation, which provides school scholarships, during a 3-year period. *Source: KEZI, 7-16-18*

Kevin A. Berry, 32, Sedgwick, KS: Aggravated indecent liberties with a child aged 14 or 15 on Sept. 17. Berry is lead pastor at First Christian Church. A church board statement said the board has accepted Berry's request for administrative leave "to give him time to work through the charges he is facing." *Source: Wichita Eagle, 7-14-18*

Mark E. Aderholt, 46, Columbia, SC: Sexual assault against a child under 17 and 2 counts of indecency with a child. Aderholt is accused of assaulting a 16-year-old girl in 1997 in Arlington, TX, while he was a 25-year-old student at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Ft. Worth. Though he didn't contest the findings of an internal investigation that he had likely assaulted the girl and resigned as a missionary, he went on to serve churches in Texas and Arkansas and as associate executive director of the South Carolina Baptist Convention before resigning in June. *Source: Star-Telegram, 7-13-18*

Oscar Munoz Toledo, 56, Rancagua, Chile: Abuse and statutory rape of at least 7 minors. Toledo, former chancellor of Santiago's archbishopric, is the first active priest in Chile to be arrested for sexual abuse since a report ordered by Pope Francis revealed a culture of abuse and cover-ups for decades. *Source: AP, 7-13-18*

Brian "Rick" Kenyon Jr., 31, Lakeland, FL: Video voyeurism. Kenyon, pastor of the Church of Christ in Deltona, is accused of taking an upskirt photo in April of a 41-year-old woman who was putting his youngest child in a car seat in Kenyon's church office at his request.

The woman told investigators that as she bent over to do so, she felt skin against her leg and turned to see Kenyon directly behind her pointing his cellphone under her. The church has fired him. *Source: News-Journal, 7-13-18*

James R. Messer, 46, Morristown, TN: Aggravated statutory rape and sexual battery by an authority figure. Messer, pastor at Cross Way Worship Center, is charged with raping a 17-year-old girl in the men's bathroom at the church. He allegedly told police the sex was consensual. *Source: WVLT, 7-12-18*

Stephen Kilpatrick, 63, Forest, VA: 3 counts each of indecent liberties of a child younger than 15 and using a communications systems to facilitate offenses involving children. Kilpatrick, an associate math professor at Jerry Falwell's Liberty University, often communicated with a person he believed to be a 13-year-old female "while at work in his office," a search warrant alleged.

Jeremy C. Whorley, 29, Lynchburg, who works for the university while enrolled in a master's program, is charged with 10 counts of possessing child pornography. *Source: WSET, 7-11-18*

Jonathan Young, 34, Benson, NC: 6 counts of rape of a child, 3 counts of statutory rape and 2 counts each of sexual offense and indecent liberties with a child. Young is a Sunday school teacher at Firstborn Baptist Church, where some of the incidents allegedly occurred between 2003-14. The youngest of 3 alleged victims, all girls, was 7. *Source: WRAL, 7-3-18*

Marcin Garbacz, 39, Rapid City, SD: Theft. Garbacz, chaplain at St. Thomas More High School, "was caught stealing money from the weekend collections" at St. Therese the Little Flower Parish, said a statement from Bishop Robert Gruss. Garbacz, a Polish immigrant ordained in Rapid City, is undergoing a psychiatric evaluation at a treatment center. *Source: KOTA, 7-2-18*

Michael Wallace, 25, St. Louis: False impersonation of a police officer. Wallace, former pastor of Abyssinian Baptist Church, is suspected of using flashing red and blue lights to clear traffic "so that he could get where he [was] going faster," said police Sgt. David Horton. *Source: KTVI, 6-28-18*

Krzysztof T. Bauta, Port Aransas, TX: 2nd-degree felony theft. Bauta, removed in October 2017 as parish administrator at St. Joseph's Catholic Church, is suspected of stealing over \$150,000 from the church, including depositing checks designated for Hurricane Harvey relief into personal accounts. *Source: KZTV, 6-28-18*

David R. Fisher, 63, Huntingdon County, PA: Endangering the welfare of a child. It's alleged that Fisher, pastor at an unidentified church, was told about the 2007 sexual abuse of a 14-year-old girl several times but failed to contact authorities. *Source: Altoona Mirror, 6-28-18*

Randy A. Westmoreland, 52, Valparaiso, IN: 2 counts of failure to report. Westmoreland, pastor of the Church of Jesus Christ, is accused of covering up alleged sexual abuse by his youth pastor son-in-law **Jeffrey M. McGehee**, 30, who is charged with sexual misconduct with a minor, vicarious sexual gratification, child solicitation and possession of child pornography. Westmoreland allegedly tried to cover up the incidents and told victims and church members to say nothing.

McGehee is accused of sending naked images of himself to a 15-year-old boy in 2017 and engaging in inappropriate physical contact. Westmoreland is also charged with failure to report alleged abuse of another 15-year-old boy by church member **Valerie Clabaugh**, 29. She's charged with sexual misconduct with a minor. *Source: nwitimes.com, 6-23-18*

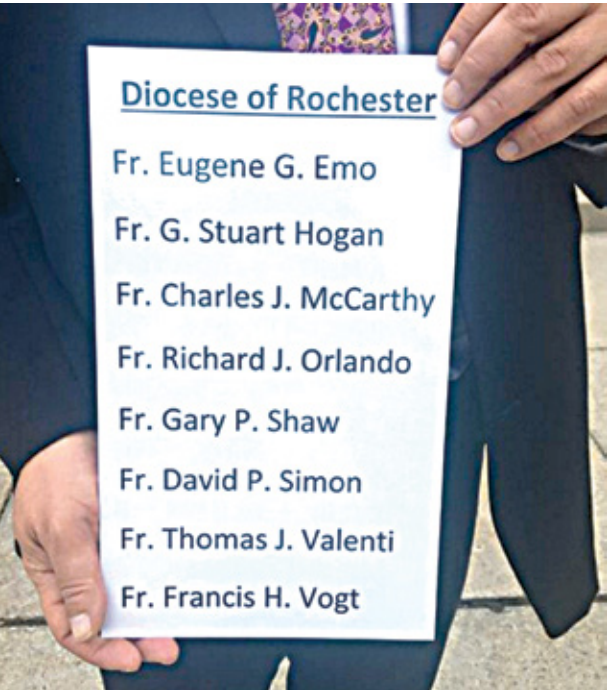
Leslie Kelly, 36, Chapmanville, W.VA: 3 counts each of attempted murder and domestic battery and 2 counts of child abuse creating risk of serious injury. The police report said Kelly tried to drown his wife and children, ages 6 and 3, while baptizing them in the bathtub at God's command. Deputy Barry Mynes Jr. said Kelly told him, "I held them under water because I want them to go to heaven." *Source: WMAZ, 6-21-18*

Sean D. Sound, 45, West Jordan, UT: 5 counts of aggravated child sexual abuse. Sound, a Mormon missionary, is accused of assaulting an 8-year-old girl. He served a church branch for natives of the Marshall Islands and hosted sleepovers at his home. *Source: Salt Lake Tribune, 6-15-18*

Michael M. Guidry, 75, Whiteville, LA: Molestation of a juvenile or a person with a physical or mental disability and contributing to the delinquency of a juvenile. Guidry, pastor at 2 Catholic parishes, is accused of assaulting a 16-year-old parishioner "several years ago" after giving him alcohol. The boy is now an adult. *Source: KLFY, 6-14-18*

Timothy Jeltema, 28, Tomball, TX: Online solicitation. Jeltema, Champions Forest Baptist Church youth pastor, is accused of sending nude photos of himself to an 18-year-old girl from the church and asking for nude photos of her. Since his arrest, several other juvenile girls have come forward. *Source: Woodlands Patch, 6-13-18*

Douglas Edwards, 59, Ketchikan, AL: 3 counts of sexual abuse of a minor. Edwards, pastor at First Baptist Church and a culinary arts teacher at Ketchikan High School, is charged with molesting a 14-year-old girl by groping her bare breasts inside her shirt on 3 occasions, once at the church when she was playing the piano. *Source: KRBD, 6-12-18*



Attorney Mitchell Garabedian, who represents 17 alleged victims of sexual abuse in the Catholic Diocese of Rochester, NY, released the names of 8 priests accused of abuse between 1950-78. Standing on the steps of Sacred Heart Cathedral in Rochester with members of the Road to Recovery victims group, Garabedian called for release of all the priests' records.

Miguel Luna, 68, El Paso, TX: Aggravated sexual assault of a child. The alleged abuse spanned several years in the 1990s, ending only after the girl moved away. Luna was removed from the Catholic ministry after an inquiry by the Diocesan Review Board into other sexual misconduct allegations involving a girl in the 1980s. *Source: El Paso Times, 6-11-18*

Daniel J. Curran, 68, Newcastle, Ireland: Indecent assault of a male between August 1989 and August 1991. Curran, a former Catholic priest, has been convicted 5 times since 1995 of molesting children. *Source: Belfast Telegraph, 6-11-18*

Cynthia L. Heaney, 51, Round Rock, TX: Theft. Heaney is accused of stealing almost \$4,000 in 2017 from an early childhood school operated by Lifepointe Fellowship Church in Hutto, where she handled financial matters. *Source: American-Statesman, 6-11-18*

Stephen M. Ward, 69, DeLand, FL: Using an electronic device to seduce/solicit/lure a child. Ward, a physical education teacher and volleyball coach at Stetson Baptist Christian School, is charged with sending sexually suggestive text messages to a 14-year-old girl that mentioned specific acts he could perform

on her. The girl's mother discovered the texts. *Source: WKMB, 6-10-18*

Kent Covington, 63, Rutherfordton, NC: Conspiracy to commit wire fraud. Covington, pastor at Word of Faith Fellowship Church, is accused of filing more than \$250,000 in phony unemployment claims since 2008 for employees of companies owned by Word of Faith members, including his own plastics manufacturing firm.

Word of Faith member **Diane McKinny**, 65, is also accused of filing fraudulent claims. Church members **Brooke Covington**, **Sarah Covington Anderson**, **Adam C. Bartley**, **Robert L. Walker Jr.** and **Justin Brock Covington** are scheduled to stand trial on accusations they repeatedly beat a former congregant to drive the "gay demon" out of him. *Source: Charlotte Observer, 6-8-18*

Matthew E. Mellerson, 29, Richmond, VA: 6 counts of carnal knowledge of an inmate and 2 counts of sexually abusing an inmate. Mellerson, a sheriff's deputy and chaplain at the Richmond Justice Center, is accused of assaults in September 2017 against male inmates. *Source: WSET, 6-8-18*

Douglas E. Harper, 39, Gandeeville, W.VA: Solicitation of a minor by use of electronic device. Harper, pastor at Living Water Church, allegedly sent sexually explicit text messages to a boy, 15, after they'd been on a church field trip. *Source: WSAZ, 6-4-18*

Douglas Parker, 57, Shawnee, OK: Felony child abuse. Parker, pastor at Dale Baptist Church and the "newly retired" principal at Virginia Smith Elementary School, is accused in a March 2 incident recorded on video involving a 6-year-old student who was brought to the principal's office for misbehaving.

He allegedly wrapped his hands around the girl's neck and tried to "place her against a door with the toes of her feet and nose touching the door," the affidavit said: "The student was only witnessed resisting the force applied by Mr. Parker and not attempting to harm him or anyone else." She sustained bruising on her nose. *Source: The Oklahoman, 6-2-18*

David J. Keener, 36, Fresno, CA: 3 counts of rape. Keener, pastor at Mt. Pleasant Missionary Baptist Church, is charged in Arkansas with sodomizing a relative starting in about 2000 when she was 9 and ending when she was 13 and both lived in Texarkana.

The girl gave investigators a copy of a Facebook message string between another female relative and Keener. "I saw where David confessed to the rapes and stated that he was sorry for what he had done but was in a dark place at the time," a detective stated in the affidavit. *Source: Texarkana Gazette, 6-1-18*

Pleaded / Convicted

Chauncey Walker, 48, Wichita, KS: Pleaded guilty to aggravated indecent liberties with a child and aggravated indecent solicitation of a child. Walker, a youth pastor, teacher and soccer coach at Word of Life Church, admitted assaults on a girl in 2012-13. "She was 15 when it started, and it progressed from there," Walker said on a recording made without his knowledge by a relative of the girl.

A plea deal calls for a sentence of 95 months in prison. He was initially charged with aggravated indecent liberties and 2 counts of criminal sodomy. According to the girl, they had sex at Ground Zero, in the church's youth building, in Walker's car and home and in several hotels. *Source: Wichita Eagle, 7-20-18*

Vitaly Korchevsky, 53, Glen Mills, PA: Guilty by jury of wire fraud, computer intrusion, money laundering and securities fraud. Korchevsky, pastor at Slavic Evangelical Baptist Church and a former Morgan Stanley vice president, was convicted of pocketing at least \$14 million from 2011-15 by trading securities on information he gleaned from information stolen by Ukrainian hackers before being publicly released. *Source: Bloomberg, 7-6-18*

Deborah Marcellus, 63, Turtle Lake, WI: Pleaded guilty to wire fraud and filing a false income tax return, charges stemming from her embezzlement of \$818,000 from St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Rice Lake, where she was director of development from 2011-17. *Source: Sawyer County Record, 7-3-18*

Luke W. Reese, 50, Indianapolis: Guilty by jury of criminal confinement with bodily injury, domestic battery and battery resulting in bodily injury. Reese, a Catholic priest allowed to be married due to a dispensation given former Anglican priests, allegedly slammed his wife into a wall at Holy Rosary Church, then forced her to have sex at home after tearing up her "slutty" clothes. *Source: WXIN, 6-30-18*

John M. Scheline, 41, Richland, WA: Pleaded guilty to attempted rape of a child. Scheline, former executive director of Ignite Youth Mentoring and pastor at Faith Assembly, was caught in a 2017 online sting in which agents posed as children as young as 11 or as parents offering their children for sex.

He answered an ad in July and discussed in detail what he would do with the 13-year-old boy. He was arrested trying to leave the apartment complex after a detective answered the door. *Source: Tri-City Herald, 6-29-18*

Allen Lehmann, 80, Louisville, KY: Entered an Alford plea to 5 counts of sexual abuse and 3rd-degree rape and sodomy for molesting 3 sisters under age 12 at his home from 1992-2001 when he was pastor at Trinity Chapel Assembly of God. The sisters have filed a civil suit against Lehmann and several church groups, alleging he was transferred when allegations surfaced. *Source: Courier-Journal, 6-21-18*

Raul Diaz Moreno, 54, Merced, CA: Guilty by jury of attempted murder, assault, aggravated sexual assault, sodomy by force, lewd acts and oral copulation with minors. Diaz Moreno, pastor of Victory Outreach Church, was accused of raping his 2 adopted daughters, who are sisters, and then trying to kill them and one sister's boyfriend in 2016. The sisters were allegedly abused starting as early as kindergarten. *Source: Sun-Star, 6-4-18*

Sentenced

Harry Thomas, 75, Medford, NJ: 18 years in prison after a judge denied his request to withdraw his guilty plea. Thomas, pastor of Come Alive New Testament Church, was charged with a 2005 sexual assault on a 9-year-old, sexual contact with 3 girls aged 7 to 9 in 2000 and 2010 and exposing himself and endangering the welfare of a minor girl between 2008-2010. Prosecutor Stephen Eife called Thomas "a devil in disguise." *Source: NY Post, 7-29-18*

Che Abdul Karim, 41, Kelantan state, Malaysia: 6 months in jail and fined \$450 for marrying an 11-year-old girl in Thailand. Karim, an imam and rubber scrap dealer, was sentenced by a Malaysian sharia court and the marriage was invalidated. He already had 2 wives and 6 children. It's suspected the girl's parents were motivated to marry her off due to poverty. *Source: Time, 7-10-18*

Sarah E. Mitchell, 25, and **Travis L. Mitchell**, 22, Oregon City, OR: 6 years and 8 months in prison, with credit for 13 months already served, after pleading guilty to negligent homicide and criminal mistreatment. They failed to provide medical care to their newborn twin daughter Ginnifer, who died at her grandparents' home last year of respiratory distress. They belong to Followers of Christ Church. Sarah didn't know she was bearing twins, having had no prenatal care. The other twin survived. They were born 2 months early.

Three hours after Ginnifer was born, Travis Mitchell "laid on hands" while the family prayed as she labored to breathe and changed colors. "I knew she was dead when she didn't cry out anymore," her father said. The Mitchells had medical insurance through Travis' job but chose not to use it. Prosecutors contrasted that with the regular veterinary visits the couple provided for their dog and cat. *Source: The Oregonian, 7-9-18*

Philip Wilson, 67, Adelaide, Australia: 12 months' imprisonment with assessment for home detention after 6 months. Wilson, the archbishop of Adelaide, was found guilty of failure to report child sexual abuse. He's the highest-ranking Catholic cleric in the world to be convicted of such an offense.

Wilson denied under oath that 2 altar boys told him they were molested in 1971 and 1976 by James Fletcher, a pedophile priest who died in prison in 2006. As Wilson left court, a bystander yelled "Can I spit on him?" *Source: news.com.au, 7-3-18*

Carlo A. Capella, 51, Vatican City: 5 years in prison and a \$5,830 fine after pleading guilty before a Vatican court to distribution and possession of child pornography while serving as a diplomat for the Holy See in the U.S. and Canada. Further hearings will determine if he'll be defrocked as a priest. *Source: USA Today, 6-23-18*

Jody Hilliard, 73, Duncan, OK: 25 years in prison with all but 7 years suspended after pleading guilty to 5 counts of lewd or indecent acts with a child under 12 while serving as assistant pastor at First Baptist Church. The 10-year-old victim alleged he touched her private parts and made her touch his. *Source: KFOR, 6-21-18*

Amanda M. Haumont, 36, Lincoln, NE: 2 years' probation and restitution after pleading no contest to theft by unlawful taking while working as director of Little Lambs Child Development Center at Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church. She was accused of keeping at least 1 client's cash payments for tuition and altering clock-in times so she was paid overtime for hours she never worked. The theft was estimated at over \$21,000. *Source: AP, 6-20-18*

Michael LaVenture, 47, Roberts, WI: 3 years' probation and restitution after pleading no contest to 3 counts of theft from New Centerville United Methodist Church in Baldwin, where his wife was volunteer treasurer. He'll also spend 1 month in jail with work release during each of the next 3 years. **Kara Amundson-LaVenture**, 44, pleaded guilty earlier to stealing at least \$203,000 over about 10 years and was sentenced to 2 years in prison.

"It was simple greed," Circuit Judge Scott Needham said, adding that their combined annual income exceeded \$300,000. *Source: New Richmond News, 6-12-18*

William C. Turner III, 28, Toledo, OH: 60 days in jail and a \$600 fine after pleading no contest to unlawful restraint and public indecency.

Turner, former assistant pastor at Bethel Baptist Church, exposed himself several times in 2016-17 to a juvenile at the church. *Source: Record-Courier, 6-7-18*

Mohammed Rabani, 61, Sneinton, UK: 5 years in prison after being found guilty of 3 counts of indecent assault on a boy starting when he was 12 in 1990 and continuing for 2 years while Rabani was imam at an unidentified mosque. It wasn't reported to police until 2015. *Source: Metro UK, 6-1-18*

Tadhg Ó Dálaigh, 74, Blackrock, Ireland: 12 months' incarceration for indecent assault of a boy at a Catholic boarding school 4 decades ago. Ó Dálaigh, a member of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart religious order, had previous convictions in 1999 and 2014 for molesting 2 boys while teaching in the 1980s. *Source: Irish Times, 6-13-18*

Danielle K. Farley, 33, Willmar, MN: A year and a day in jail suspended, 2 years' probation and restitution of \$16,759.42 to the United Church of Christ and its insurer after pleading guilty to theft while she was church secretary. The court also ordered her to complete a problem gamblers assessment. *Source: West Central Tribune, 5-19-18*

Civil Lawsuits Filed

Melvin K. Johnson, 81, Lehi, UT, is being sued by his daughter, Kristy Johnson, 55, who alleges he started molesting her when she was 6 and he worked for Mormon educational institutions and taught religion at Brigham Young University.

A documentary film includes corroboration from her siblings, who also allege abuse. Melvin Johnson says on camera at his home, "Years ago, I molested my daughters. All three of them. I knew it was wrong, but I did it. I was selfish."

Church officials would counsel him or treat the case as an internal discipline matter, it's alleged, but abuse was never reported to police. *Source: Salt Lake Tribune, 6-29-18*

Francis Nave, pastor of Sacred Heart Catholic Parish in Bath, PA, the **Diocese of Allentown** and **Bishop Alfred Schlert** are defendants in a suit in which the alleged victim says Nave orchestrated sexually explicit video sessions from the rectory while the boy was in his Virginia home in 2011, when he was 16 and 17. It's alleged Nave had the boy masturbate on camera and engage in other sexual conduct under the guise of counseling to deal with his "issues." *Source: Morning Call, 6-26-18*

A New Jersey plaintiff alleges **Gittie Sheinkopf**, a counselor she met at an ultra-Orthodox summer camp in 2010, seduced her that fall and started a year-long relationship that turned abusive. Leah Sokolovsky's suit says she was 15 and Sheinkopf was 20 when the relationship started. They met at TheZone, a camp run



by Oorah Inc., where Sheinkopf was assistant head counselor. About the camp, Oorah's website says "the warmth of TheZone continues even after the summer ends. Campers enjoy meeting with their friends and keeping up with their counselors and staff members."

Sokolovsky alleges she tried taking her to rabbinical court but Sheinkopf didn't show up, so she posted a video on YouTube. Sokolovsky says in the video that Sheinkopf forced her to engage in sexual activity, eventually "digitally penetrating Ms. Sokolovsky's vagina" in a manner "intended to cause her extra pain." *Source: The Forward, 6-6-18*

Civil Lawsuits Settled

Delbarton School in Morristown, NJ — operated by the **Order of St. Benedict of New Jersey** and **St. Mary's Abbey** — and the now-closed **St. Elizabeth of Hungary School** in Linden, entered a confidential settlement with 5 men alleging sexual abuse as children in the 1970s and 1980s. Three of the cases and 5 of 6 pending cases involve Catholic priest **Timothy Brennan**, convicted in 1987 of molesting a 15-year-old boy at Delbarton.

After news of the settlement became public, about 30 people came forward to accuse **13 abbey monks** and a **retired lay faculty member** of abuse from 1968-99, according to a letter to alumni signed by abbey and Delbarton leaders. The accused were not named in the letter, which stated that "no restrictions have been placed on the victims' ability to discuss their experiences."

But Bill Wolfe, whose accusations resulted in Brennan's conviction, said the school locked him into a nondisclosure agreement for decades. He's still not allowed to speak about the amount of a 1988 settlement. "They fought me every step of the way. They attacked my family. They attacked my parents and they attacked me. They sued my attorney for representing me," Wolfe said. "So the idea they've been open and honest and compassionate, that's not been my experience." *Source: New Jersey Advance Media, 7-25-18*

The **Church of Scientology** and former member and plaintiff Laura Ann DeCrescenzo settled a decade-old suit in Los Angeles for undisclosed terms alleging she was forced to work long hours as a preteen and was coerced into having an abortion at 17. DeCrescenzo alleged she was initially required to work daily from 8:30 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. for the church entity called Sea Org, which she didn't leave until 2004 when she was 25. She further claimed she had an abortion in 1996 to show her loyalty to Sea Org, supposedly composed of the church's most dedicated members. *Source: Washington Post, 7-23-18*

The **Order of St. Augustine** paid a total of \$1 million to 5 men and 3 women who alleged sexual abuse by Massachusetts Catholic priests **John Gallagher** and **Robert Turnbull** in the 1970s and early 1980s. Both priests are dead. The victims were from 9 to 12 years old at the time. *Source: Boston Globe, 7-17-18*

St. Paul's School in Concord, NH, affiliated with the Episcopal Church, agreed to a confidential settlement with former student William Foley, who alleged he was molested by teachers **Robert Degouey** and **Steven Ball** in the early 1970s. Foley's abuse was documented in a 2017 report compiled by attorneys hired by St. Paul's, which faces multiple lawsuits over sexual assault. *Source: NHPR, 6-23-18*

The **Anglican Church of Tasmania** will pay \$15.2 million to about 200 victims of child sexual abuse. The church plans to sell 108 properties in order to make the payments with the remainder funded by individual parishes. *Source: BBC, 6-5-18*

Legal Developments

Daniel McCormack, 49, a defrocked Chicago Catholic priest who's served all of his 2007 sentence for molesting 5 boys, will not be released because a judge agrees with prosecutors he is a sexually violent person likely to reoffend. "I can't disregard the fact that he has never been of the belief that he has a problem," said Judge Dennis Porter. "The first [step] of treatment here is recognizing there's a problem that has to be treated."

He will be reevaluated annually. At least 25 boys and young men have accused McCormack of abuse. *Source: Chicago Tribune, 7-18-18*

Augustine M. Giella, a Pennsylvania Catholic priest who died in 1993 at age 72 while facing criminal charges, kept a collection of girls' underwear that, according to investigators, he labeled with their names, along with photos of him in clerical garb with naked girls as young as 2 in sexual stances, including oral sex. Two sisters whose 2 other sisters were among his alleged victims are asking a judge to invalidate confidentiality agreements other family members made with the Diocese of Harrisburg in a suit involving

a settlement with their sisters. They want to speak publicly about Giella. *Source: AP, 7-2-18*

Thomas Sullivan, a Massachusetts Catholic priest who Jim Graham believes is his father, stopped resting in peace in June as his corpse was exhumed for DNA tests to take place. After years of trying, Graham, 72, finally got permission from the Oblates of Mary Immaculate to dig up the grave. Sullivan died of melanoma in 1993.

Dr. Ann Marie Mires said the remains were so well-preserved that she could recognize Sullivan from photos she'd seen. The exhumation cost Graham about \$10,000. *Source: Boston Globe, 6-18-18*

Allegations

Former members of **Twelves Tribes**, a New York religious group that's been called a cult, alleged on CBS "Inside Edition" that the fundamentalist group led by **Gene Spriggs** forces children as young as 9 to work in its factory packaging fancy soaps and other goods sold by Amazon, Whole Foods, Target and Walmart. It paid fines in 2001 and 2006 for labor-law violations.

Ex-member Sarah Williams, 34, "rejoined" the group to record hidden-camera footage of children, ages 9 and 10, working on an assembly line. Footage from its nearby farm showed a 6-year-old boy struggling with a heavy wheelbarrow. "It takes them being disciplined and spanked when they're not obedient," a man says on camera. *Source: NY Post, 6-1-18*

Removed / Resigned

Theodore McCarrick, 88, a Catholic cardinal and former archbishop of Washington, was removed from the ministry and allowed to resign by Pope Francis due to "credible" allegations he molested an altar boy in New York in the early 1970s, starting when the boy was 11. Several men studying to be priests have also accused him of sexual misconduct.

The church paid settlements to 2 alleged victims in 2004 and 2007. McCarrick, the highest-ranking Catholic official to be removed, retired in 2006. A Virginia man identified only by his first name James, who recently filed a police report, told a reporter McCarrick molested him for about 20 years. "I was the first guy he baptized. I was his little boy. I was his special kid. I was the kid he always sought out." *Source: nj.com/AP, 7-20-18*

Dean Curry, 50, Tacoma, WA, pastor at Life Center Assembly of God, was dismissed after accusations were made publicly of misconduct with 4 women, which Curry denies, saying he's always been faithful to his wife.

Complaints to the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the state Human Rights Commission came from church board member Julee Dille, who with her husband left the church in 2016 over concerns about Curry's conduct and the church's response. *Source: News-Tribune, 7-10-18*

John Finley, 62, resigned as pastor of Bartlett Hills Baptist Church, Bartlett, TN, after admitting to inappropriate behavior with young females. The alleged incidents started 37 years ago at Travis Avenue Baptist Church in Ft. Worth, TX, where Finley served as youth minister for five years. "I made some poor choices and was involved with two females in inappropriate behavior," Finley said. "There was no sex. Both ladies were over 18."

The women who sent a letter that spurred his resignation say that's not true, that they were 15 and 17 at the time and while it's true he didn't have sex with them, he'd touched one's breasts and put the other's hand on his naked erection. A third alleged victim

also came forward. "Sarah Beth," a pseudonym, alleged her abuse occurred from 1981-83.

Finley's wife told a reporter, "I can tell you for certain it was no more than kissing." Referring to Sarah Beth, she added, "She should be over this. She cannot live her life trying to destroy my husband." *Source: Star-Telegram, 7-9-18*

James W. Clark, parochial vicar at 5 Pennsylvania parishes and chaplain at Uniontown Hospital, was removed by the Catholic Diocese of Greensburg, which issued a statement: "An allegation was received . . . against Father James W. Clark, which dates to events five decades ago, prior to his entrance into the seminary and ordination as a priest, while working as a janitor at the former St. James School in Apollo." *Source: Tribune-Review, 6-30-18*

Pope Francis accepted the resignations of Chilean bishops **Alejandro Goic Karmelic**, 78, and **Horacio del Carmen Valenzuela Abarca**, 64. The pope earlier in June accepted resignations of **3 other bishops** over allegations of a cover-up of sexual abuse. *Source: Reuters, 6-28-18*

C. Frank Phillips, 68, Chicago, was removed as pastor of St. John Cantius Catholic Parish due to allegations of improper conduct with adult men, said a letter from Phillips' religious order. *Source: AP, 6-25-18*

Brad Waller, Savannah, GA, was removed as senior pastor at Grace Church of the Islands. In a public statement, he said: "I, Brad Waller, confess to the sin of abuse of authority in my role as a pastor. I have been rubbing the feet of men and youth in my care. There was a sexual element to this, however, physically it never went past foot-rubbing."

Waller worked at Tates Creek Presbyterian Church from 1995-2006 in Lexington, KY. In a statement, pastor Robert Cunningham said that after interviewing people in Lexington, "other acts of abuse have been uncovered as well," noting that "evidence is also beginning to emerge that conflicts with Brad's statement that 'it never went past foot-rubbing.'" *Source: lex18.com, 6-25-18*

Jacques Lacroix, 89, retired from the Catholic ministry after a video showed him slapping a crying 2-year-old during the boy's baptism at the Collegiate Church of Champeaux in France. The video showed him loudly telling the boy to calm down and be quiet before squeezing his face and slapping him on the cheek. The parents then grabbed the boy away from Lacroix. *Source: Metro UK, 6-23-18*

Email: blackcollar@ffrf.org

Francine Bellet Indio City Council Indio, Calif.

Good Evening, Honorable Mayor and members of the Indio City Council.

My name is Francine Bellet, and I represent the over 400 members of the Free-thinkers of the Coachella Valley and Desert Atheists Community, which include many residents of Indio.

I want to thank this body for honoring, respecting, and upholding rights of citizens under the United States Constitution, its First Amendment in the US Bill of Rights and amendments to International Religious Freedom Act, also known as the Frank R. Wolf International Religious Freedom Act, enacted by the US Congress and signed into law by our President last

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week. I want to thank this body for continuing the exercise of these rights, which respect the non-entanglement of government and religion, the separation of church and state, the recognition of not just freedom of religion, but also equal freedoms and equal protection under the laws for non-theists and theists alike, for believers and non-believers alike.

My being here tonight and addressing you for these secular comments is an example of the exercise of those same rights just mentioned [guaranteed by the US Constitution, First Amendment in the Bill of Rights, and the amendments to the International Religious Freedom Act], for which opportunity, I and many other citizens thank you.

May this body, the Indio City Council, continue to demonstrate respect, tolerance, inclusiveness, reason, and kindness, while it works in the best inter-



Francine Bellet

ests of all the citizens of Indio, non-theists and theists alike, for believers and non-believers alike.

Thank you, Honorable Mayor and members of the Indio City Council.

FFRF Member Bellett sent us this description of herself: “Francine Bellet has run afoul of those blurring the lines between church and state, and government insertion of religion into public education, ever since

her kindergarten trip to visit Santa Claus at a local de-

partment store resulted in her defying a teacher who insisted it was OK to sit on the lap and talk to a fat, bearded stranger in a red suit, despite her parents’ warning never to talk to a stranger that they had not properly introduced her to. And she had never even heard of Santa Claus before, let alone been introduced to him by her parents. Since then, she has been motivated by interest in First Amendment rights, while a demonstrating student during the Sixties, to become a lawyer. After practicing for several years in Washington, D.C., as counsel to a joint congressional committee, and a couple of industry trade associations, she was recruited to the San Francisco Bay Area by a client company. She remained there, winding up practicing in Silicon Valley and starting and directing legal departments for high-technology companies. She recently semi-retired to the southern California desert.”

Dr. George Meyer was accomplished radiologist

FFRF Lifetime Member Dr. George John Meyer, 91, died July 4, in hospice care at John Knox Village in Pompano Beach, Fla.

George was born in Bristol, Conn., on May 25, 1927. He was salutatorian of his graduating class at Bristol High School, where he was an outstanding scholar, athlete and student leader. Near the end of World War II, George volunteered to

serve in the U.S. Navy Hospital Corps. In 1948 George graduated magna cum laude and Phi Beta Kappa from Tufts College. Af-

ter he received his M.D. degree from the University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry in 1952, he fulfilled a one-year internship at North Carolina Baptist Hospital, Bowman Gray School of Medicine, Winston-Salem, N.C., followed by five years of family medical practice in and near High Point, N.C. He then spent three years of further training as a resident physician in radiology at the University of Miami, Jackson Memorial Hospital. In 1961, he joined the staff of Holy Cross

Hospital in Fort Lauderdale where he worked for 30 years and was chairman of the radiology department for several years. Along with Dr. Robert Conti, he founded and presided over Meyer and Conti, which later became Radiologists of North Fort Lauderdale, a 13-man group providing expert care to the patients of Holy Cross Hospital.

Dr. Meyer was a diplomat of the American Board of Radiology and a life member of the American College of Radiology. In 1969, he initiated, organized and chaired the Stop Smoking! clinics in Broward County.

In the 1980s, he worked with Physicians for Social Responsibility (PSR) to help spread awareness of the worldwide catastrophic dangers of nuclear weapons. In 1985 International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW) received the Nobel Peace Prize, and PSR was the USA affiliate of IPPNW. That achievement was probably his most cherished professional accomplishment.

Although raised in a fundamentalist Lutheran household, his extensive scientific studies and readings directed him, in later life, to abandon the tenets and myths of organized religions and to adopt rational secular humanistic principles. He was a life member of the Freedom From Religion Foundation and American Humanist Association.



George Meyer

IN MEMORIAM

Questions get the ball rolling

By Jim Diedrich

For the past 10 years I’ve lived in a small town of about 5,000 people on Cape Ann in Massachusetts called Manchester-by-the-Sea. The town was established in 1644 and originally named Jeffery’s Creek.

About a year ago, I wrote to FFRF requesting advice on how to approach government regarding sectarian invocations. Following your suggestion, I approached Massachusetts’ secretary of state, asking why invocations are always secular. I was referred to our town clerk, who advised me that she thought invocations were the purview of our town moderator.

I then asked our town moderator why, for over 370 years, our annual town meeting has always begun with an invocation given by a clergy person. The moderator’s initial reply was to challenge why I asked. When I replied that I was an atheist, or, if he preferred, a secular humanist, that seemed to put him off a bit. But, to his credit, he said he’d get back with me to discuss the issue.

That conversation took place in early summer of 2017, and I finally did hear back in December of that year when he asked me to join him for a coffee. After speaking for more than an hour, our moderator said he really had no idea what people who are atheists or secular humanists actually believe, or don’t believe. He told me after speaking with me that he thought I was a rea-

IT PAYS TO COMPLAIN

sonable person and he would think about allowing a nonsectarian invocation at some point. Then, in early winter, he approached me to review a letter he was proposing to publish in our town newspaper, advising that the upcoming town meeting would include a nonsectarian invocation. He also asked if I would be interested in giving it. For his letter to the town, I suggested he describe me as a secular humanist, since I thought it might be less offensive term to some rather than the word “atheist.”

I did give my invocation as planned and the response was mostly favorable — and certainly not hostile. To prepare, I read a ton of nonsectarian invocations from a wide variety of sources and used some of the material along with my own thoughts. I can’t say my version was totally original, but I didn’t actively steal from others (other than the words about Carl Sagan).

Jim Diedrich Manchester-by-the-Sea, Mass. Annual town meeting April 2, 2018

Mr. Moderator, distinguished Town Officials, my fellow citizens of Manchester-by-the-Sea. I’m honored to have been asked to deliver a nonsectarian invocation to begin our town meeting.

Most invocations start by asking to bow your heads. Instead, I would ask that you take a moment to look around

the room at all the men

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and women here, in this moment, who have come together to share in this extraordinary and unique New England experience, and to dedicate ourselves to working toward the betterment of our town and its residents.

Tonight, in this place, there may be moments of tension, of ideological division, of frustration. But, this also a place where by the very fact of being human we have much more in common than we have differences. We share the same spectrum of potential for care, for compassion, for fear, for joy and for love.

Let us give thanks for all that we have, all that we cherish, and all that we possess — especially for the capacity to care and love, to improve our families, our community and ourselves. Whatever one’s viewpoint, either derived from faith or



Jim Diedrich

from reason and science, having the capacity to appreciate and thank others is ingrained in the DNA of the human psyche.

Let us also give thanks to our unpaid elected and/or appointed town leaders, and to the many volunteers, who are the heart and soul of our community. These people donate their time and talents to help all. Let us recognize and laud the sacrifices made by our town employees, especially our first responders — our police, firefighters and emergency medical technicians who risk their lives to safeguard all of us.

Carl Sagan once wrote, “For small creatures such as we, the vastness is bearable only through love.” I would add the word “understanding,” as well. In this room tonight, let us cherish our shared humanness, our shared capacity for reason and celebrate our shared respect for all the people of our town, for our Constitution, and for our democracy. And let us root our decision-making process in these values that are relevant to all Americans, regardless of our individual belief or nonbelief. Let us all commit to working together for a better Manchester-by-the-Sea.

Thank you.

FFRF Convention Nov. 2-4, 2018

And the award goes to . . .

FFRF will be handing out 10 awards at this year’s convention in San Francisco the weekend of Nov. 2-4. Two of them are new this year, including the Clarence Darrow Award and the Avijit Roy Courage Award.

- **Emperor Has No Clothes Award** is an honor celebrating “plain speaking” on the shortcomings of religion by public figures.
- **Forward Award** is a statuette created for FFRF by sculptor Zenos Frudakis and is given to those freethinkers who have moved society forward.
- **Henry Zumach Freedom From Religious Fundamentalism Award** goes

- to an organization or individual who is judged to have done the most to diminish the influence of fundamentalist religion. Zumach, a Life Member of FFRF, has endowed the award. The awardee earns a \$10,000 prize.
- **Avijit Roy Courage Award** is in honor of the Bangladeshi-American atheist and author who was assassinated in 2015 by Islamists. The awardee earns a \$5,000 prize.
- **Honorable Culbert Olson Courage Award** is a special honor to be given to Debra Olson on behalf of her grandfather, the first out atheist governor of California.

- **Freethought Heroine Award** recognizes the special contributions of women to freethought and the battle to keep state and church separate.
- **Beverly and Richard Herman Student Activist Award** of \$5,000 recognizes outstanding activism for freethought or the separation of church and state by students.
- **Clarence Darrow Award** is a miniature replica of the 7-foot Darrow statue sculpted for FFRF by Frudakis that now stands outside the Rhea County Courthouse in Dayton, Tenn. The statuette is given to an activist in freethought, civil liberties or science.



John de Lancie

John de Lancie, actor, director, producer and activist, is best-known for portraying “Q” in the TV series “Star Trek: The Next Generation.” He has appeared in dozens of movies and television shows. John has performed with most of the major symphony orchestras in America, Canada and Australia. He was co-owner, with Leonard Nimoy, of Alien Voices; a production company devoted to the dramatization of classic sci-fi. John has also directed a number of operas.

He will be receiving the Clarence Darrow Award.



Bailey Harris

Bailey Harris, 12, is co-author with her father, Douglas. The first book of the Stardust series, *My Name Is Stardust*, was released in 2017 and has sold thousands of copies worldwide, enabling Bailey and Douglas to help spread their passion for science to families across the globe.

The second book in the series, *Stardust Explores the Solar System*, which will be published this fall, explains how our solar system came to be, starting with the Big Bang.

Bailey will be receiving FFRF’s Beverly and Richard Herman Student Activist Award.



Ensaf Haidar

Ensaf Haidar has been fighting to free her husband, Raif Badawi, who has been imprisoned and flogged for founding an internet forum that “violates Islamic values and propagates liberal thought.” In January 2015, Raif was flogged 50 times before hundreds of spectators, creating an international outcry. Ensaf and their three children escaped from Saudi Arabia and were granted asylum in Canada. She is the president and co-founder of the Raif Badawi Foundation for Freedom.

Ensaf will receive the Henry Zumach Freedom From Religious Fundamentalism Award.



Sarah Haider

Sarah Haider is a writer, speaker and activist who spent her early youth as a practicing Muslim. She left her faith in her late teens, and later co-founded Ex-Muslims of North America (EXMNA), which advocates for the acceptance of religious dissent and works to create local support communities for those who have left Islam. Sarah directs EXMNA’s Life Beyond Faith mini-documentaries and also heads EXMNA’s Normalizing Dissent tour. She is a columnist for Free Inquiry.

Sarah will be receiving the Freethought Heroine Award.



Jared Huffman

U.S. Rep. Jared Huffman, D-Calif., is one of the founders of the new Congressional Freethought Caucus, which will center on fostering “science- and reason-based solutions” and “defending the secular character of our government.”

“There currently is no forum focused on these important issues, and with this Administration and certain members of Congress constantly working to erode the separation of church and state, this new caucus is both important and timely,” Huffman said in a statement.

Huffman will receive the Emperor Has No Clothes Award.



Debra Deanne Olson

Debra Olson, along with Dr. Craig West Wilkinson, is author of a new book about her atheist grandfather, *The Honorable Culbert Levy Olson: Governor of California 1939-1943*. She is a political, environmental and peace activist and held volunteer positions on both of Hillary Clinton’s presidential campaigns. She was an advisor and fundraising consultant for the Kucinich for President campaign in 2003. She is the Founder of Peace Solutions.

Olson will be accepting the special Honorable Culbert Olson Courage Award.



Cecile Richards

Cecile Richards is a national leader for women’s rights and social and economic justice, and the author of New York Times bestseller *Make Trouble*. She is the former president of Planned Parenthood Federation of America and Planned Parenthood Action Fund. In 2011 and 2012, she was named one of TIME Magazine’s 100 Most Influential People in the World.

Richards will be receiving the Forward Award. After her convention discussion, she will hold a Q&A and a book signing.



Avijit Roy Courage Award

Roopbaan, founded in 2014, is the first gay magazine published in Bangladesh. One of its founders was murdered by Islamists. Accepting FFRF’s premiere Avijit Roy Courage Award in the magazine’s honor will be a Roopbaan co-founder whose life also was threatened, and who is now in the United States applying for asylum.

On hand to announce the new award will be Rafida Bonya Ahmed, widow of Avijit Roy, who was critically wounded in the attack and has continued to help other threatened secular activists.



Salman Rushdie

Salman Rushdie has written several classic novels, influenced a generation of writers and received the Queen’s Knighthood for his “services to literature.”

His novels include *The Satanic Verses*, *The Moor’s Last Sigh*, *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* and 2008’s *The Enchantress of Florence*. His masterwork of magic realism, *Midnight’s Children*, won the prestigious Booker Prize, and later, the Best of the Booker.

Rushdie will be receiving the Emperor Has No Clothes Award. There will be a book signing after his speech.



Adam Savage

Adam Savage began his career in the special effects industry, working on such movies as “Star Wars Episode I: The Phantom Menace” and “Episode II: Attack of the Clones,” “Galaxy Quest” and the “Matrix” sequels. In 2002, Adam was chosen along with Jamie Hyneman to host MythBusters, which premiered on Discovery Channel in January 2003. Fourteen years, 1,015 myths, 2,950 experiments, eight Emmy nominations and 83 miles of duct tape later, the series ended in March 2016.

He will be receiving the Emperor Has No Clothes Award.

Don't delay! Sign up for FFRF's convention



Julia Sweeney



Leighann Lord

Join the Freedom From Religion Foundation in San Francisco for its 41st annual convention from Nov. 2-4 at the beautiful downtown Hyatt Regency.

The conference hotel features dramatic architecture, panoramic views and a waterfront setting, directly across from the iconic Ferry Building. If you've got some free time during the convention, you can explore the vibrant Embarcadero district, or head a bit further to explore famous attractions like Chinatown and Fisherman's Wharf, or ride the ferry to Alcatraz.

The Hyatt features the world's largest hotel lobby at 17 stories tall with 42,000 cubic feet of space. Each room features floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking cityscapes or the San Francisco Bay and comes with complimentary Wi-Fi and enhanced video streaming capabilities from mobile devices or tablets to the in-room 47-inch HDTV.

Speakers

We're gonna get serious about laughing! Julia Sweeney and Leighann Lord will bring their respective comedy routines to the convention. Sweeney will do a version of her stand-up show, "Julia Sweeney: Older and Wider" on Friday evening, and Lord will perform her "Real Women Doing It Standing Up" routine on Saturday night.

Other speakers include Salman Rushdie, Cecile Richards, Adam Savage, John de Lancie, Debra Deanne Olson, Ensaf Haidar, Bailey Harris, Dan Barker, FFRF attorneys, Sarah Haidar and Rep. Jared Huffman. (For information on who will be receiving FFRF's numerous awards at the convention, turn to page 23.)

Lord has been seen on Lifetime, VH-1, Comedy Central, HBO and The View. She is a contributor to the Huffington Post and the author of *Leighann Lord's Dict Jokes: Alternate Definitions for Words You've Probably Never Heard of But Will Definitely Never Forget* (2014) and *Real Women Do It Standing Up: Stories From the Career of a Very Funny Lady* (2016).

Leighann was New York City's face of the "African-Americans for Humanism" outreach campaign sponsored by the Center for Inquiry and its "Millions Living Happily Without Religion" campaign. Leighann was featured in author Chris Johnson's *The Atheist Book: A Better Life*.

Sweeney is a "Saturday Night Live" alum who created and portrayed the androgynous character "Pat," which spun off the feature film "It's Pat." She also created and performed several award-winning one-woman shows, including "God Said, Ha!," "In the Family Way" and "Let-

ting Go of God," which was about her journey from Roman Catholic schoolgirl to atheist. She has also been in several movies, including "Pulp Fiction." She has previously received FFRF's Emperor Has No Clothes Award.

Hotel reservations

Reserve rooms now! We've had to ask for more rooms after our first block filled quickly, but those are almost gone, too, with no guarantee there will be more. Rooms (at \$230) are being held for Friday and Saturday nights, and a slightly more limited number for Thursday early-birds. Phone directly to make your reservations: 1-888-421-1442 and use the code "Freedom From Religion Foundation." Or go online at ffrf.org/convention2018 for full convention information or reserve hotel rooms directly at bit.ly/FFRF2018.

Registration

FFRF registration is only \$60 per member, \$65 per companion, \$110 for non-members, and students and children get in free. Take advantage of FFRF's meal and registration package to save \$20. Friday night dinner and Saturday lunch are on your own.

Menus

The menus for the two Saturday meals (with veggie, vegan and gluten-free options) are:

Breakfast — Chef's bakery selection, scrambled eggs, Hobb's bacon, breakfast potatoes, juice and coffee.

Dinner — Potage Parmentier (potato leek soup), crispy shallots, chive crème fraiche, Champagne brown butter chicken, tarragon mushroom fond, Cipollini onion and Comte risotto, steamed broccolini, French pear tart, frangipane, vanilla cream.

General schedule

Arrange your travel schedule for the convention's expanded hours and to take in a little sightseeing as well. The official starting time is 1 p.m. Friday, Nov. 2, continuing through Saturday night. FFRF's membership and state representative meetings take place Sunday morning with a noon adjournment.

The convention will include irreverent music, complimentary appetizers on Friday afternoon and a complimentary Friday night dessert reception. On Saturday is the annual "Non-Prayer Breakfast," which includes the "moment of bedlam." On Saturday night there will be the popular drawing for "clean" (pre-"In God We Trust") currency.

Return the handy registration form on this page or sign up at: ffrf.org/convention2018.



FREEDOM FROM RELIGION FOUNDATION NATIONAL CONVENTION SAN FRANCISCO | NOVEMBER 2-4, 2018 2018 CONVENTION REGISTRATION FORM

Or register online: ffrf.org/convention2018

DISCOUNTED REGISTRATION & MEALS PACKAGE

Get a \$20 discount when you bundle two meals and registration. Includes Saturday breakfast and dinner.

	Number Registering	Cost
Member	___ \$190	\$ ___
Spouse or Companion <i>(Non-member accompanying member)</i>	___ \$195	\$ ___
Non-member	___ \$240	\$ ___
Child / Student with ID (Meals Only)	___ \$130	\$ ___

Please indicate number of meals

Saturday Non-Prayer Breakfast
___# Regular ___# Vegetarian ___# Vegan ___# Gluten Free

Saturday Banquet Dinner
___# Regular ___# Vegetarian ___# Vegan ___# Gluten Free

REGISTRATION - NO PACKAGE

Member	___ \$60	\$ ___
Spouse or Companion <i>(Non-member accompanying member)</i>	___ \$65	\$ ___
Non-member <i>Or join for \$40 and save \$10</i>	___ \$110	\$ ___
Child / Student with ID	___ Free	\$ ___

SELECT MEALS À LA CARTE

Please indicate number of meals

Saturday Non-Prayer Breakfast
___# Regular ___# Vegetarian ___# Vegan ___# Gluten Free

Saturday Banquet Dinner
___# Regular ___# Vegetarian ___# Vegan ___# Gluten Free

► Total \$ _____

☐ I am enclosing a donation to sponsor student convention travel costs. \$ _____

(Make checks payable to FFRF) Return with payment to:
FFRF, Attn: Convention | P.O. Box 750 | Madison, WI 53701

Names of all registrants (attach extra sheet as necessary)

Address

City State / ZIP

Phone* Email*

Credit Card Number Expiration Date / Security Code

Signature ***Contact information for in-house use only.**

☐ Please tell us about any concerns over accessibility or accommodations in order to fully participate in this convention: