

THE ATHEIST

Newsletter of the Atheist Community of Austin, a Nonprophet Organization

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"Thank You " From A Santa Fe Baptist Grandmother

What follows is a thank you e-mail for the demonstration from "Debbie." Debbie is a Santa Fe grandmother and American Baptist who supports the "Doe" families in the ACLU lawsuit. Her words give us invaluable insight into how this kind of controversy looks from the inside. You can see how difficult it is to stand-up for your Constitutional rights in an evangelical Texas town.

~Howard Thompson

[ed. note: A big Thank You to Jeff, Amanda and any one else who represented ACA at this important demonstration. This letter speaks volumes on why we need to be actively involved in state/church separation issues. The letter has been edited to save space. Contact Howard at gofreemind@aol.com for the complete version.]

I have been here from the beginning until now on this whole lawsuit. As many of you know I was a witness in the suit between the Does and SFISD. So I have seen a lot and heard a lot. And sat in the courtroom while it took place. I have, and still am being accused as being the Does in the suit. In fact I was accused of it last night in front of some of the police force that was at the protest. And by a friend no less. I told her what if I was. Then I told her no I was not. And it was no ones business who they were, until they and the court felt they could talk. And I was not speaking softly about it either. So I think many got a good dose of me last night on that issue.

When I was asked to be a witness I did not really even think about not doing it. I knew it was the right thing to do. There have been others who have stood up for them down here. They did not know who the plaintiffs were. And wrote letters in the paper saying they had the right to do what they believed in. But Friday was the best. This really showed them that there were people who really understood their right to do this, and their right not to have their children hurt any more by this school. Some of them cried when I told them. This made me know everything we did Friday was worth it. They have always believed in this,

and will always believe they have done the right thing. This to me is a true person. I will give them the pictures of the protest, and a copy of the video that was taken of the protest will be given to them. I know they would really love to see them. And they want all of you to know how much it meant to them.

I saw alot when I volunteered in the schools and also what some did to my own children when they would not accept the Gideons bibles or refused to follow the pack. That's what I call them, a pack. Thank goodness my children are not followers. They have very strong beliefs and they stand up for them. The girl on channel 2 news, the one telling what she went through, is my daughter. And she is not a plaintiff. I had children in school when this all took place. I watched the ACLU come down and ask the school to please stop. I sat in the board room and heard the ACLU ask them. To no avail.

When Go Free Mind [Howard Thompson] read my email, he sent me an email with your link. And from there, we all became one, on a great Constitutional adventure. No one here knew that I had any contact with all of you. When I called the school and asked about the paper work for Will you could have heard a pin drop, and the same when I called the police chief. I bet it did not take 5 minutes for word to spread through my town. And I bet they think I contacted you to come down. Little do they know, I had no idea who any of you were. Karma I say. I had told the police chief I wanted to let him know people from Santa Fe would be taking part in this, as well as many of you. And it would not only be Atheists, that I personally was a Baptist, "American Baptist," and there would be Catholics and other religions represented there as well as non-religions. He was also very quiet when I said this. . . .

When I saw the media down here was not printing that we from SF would be there also, I called them and informed them we would be there. See I know my town too well. And I am glad I do. I had already heard the rumors. The Atheists are coming, the Atheists are coming. By the bus loads. Some people are just so ignorant they do not even understand your way of thinking about your belief. And do

not take the time to find out. Ignorance is no excuse, on their part. We do have computers that would have taken them to a site to explain your belief as well as many others. . .

So to each of you who came, I tried to meet all of you. And did not get to. I wanted to personally shake your hands and look into your face and introduce myself, and thank all of you for coming. It meant a great deal to my family, the plaintiffs and many other people, whom we don't even know. Because there were many behind us and just would not speak out, because they were afraid to. Maybe now they won't be afraid to. Maybe we gave them courage to speak out.

And I am sorry about the ones who swore at you and treated you not very nicely. It was all uncalled for by them. I was never so proud to be with a group of people in all my life. Not one of us got out of line or was rude and nasty like they were. And they said they were the Christians. I think I would strongly disagree with them. I would gladly tell anyone you were true Americans and my friends. I would gladly walk your walk any day. At least you know how to walk it and talk it. And that is more than I can say for some of my community. I was totally embarrassed by their actions and attitudes. These were adults, not children. And some of the teens were not nice, but they were put up to it.

My daughters were so proud to be there with all of you who came to help protect their freedoms. And all of you taught them good lessons on how to be adults and good citizens. They said they would be proud to call all of you their friends. . .

The other two ladies said the same thing. They were very proud of all of you. None of them could believe all of you would come all the way down here to protest this, and were kind enough to ask us to join you. And not once did any of you do anything to make the other side act the way they did. We all were embarrassed how some in the town reacted to you. All of you made us proud to know all of you. And to join together as Christians and Atheist, Wiccans, etc to fight to keep our rights. We joined together as people, and our religion, sex, or color did not matter. And this is the way it should be. I think a lot of people could learn this lesson. And none of us down here knew any of you, until yesterday. And I think we all stood as one. . . .

I want to thank all of you for asking us down here to join you in your protest. I know all of you were more than kind to us. Even when it came to what you put on your signs and the papers you handed out. You were more than thoughtful of all of our feelings down here. And not just to us who joined all of you, but to the citizens in our town. You all took their feelings into consideration also. Even as the told you to get the F- - - out of Santa Fe. Or told you to get the hell out of Santa Fe, and also that we were going to hell. What goes

around comes around 3 fold, I say. And it always does.

And to the younger ones who were there, the young man in the nice black suit and the young men with him, and all the young ones. I want you to know you each just held a place in history yesterday. I don't know if you realize that. But you did, we all did. But I want you younger ones to know this, and write it down, in a journal. This will go into the history books if the Supreme Court hears it. In fact it will just because of the two rulings against them already. You are our new generation, that one day will lead us. And I would gladly be stand by you. Maybe you will be our next presidents or Senators, or the head of the ACLU. Or just a mom like me who wants to try and make sure your rights will be there, like they were for me. A person who never spoke out on anything, never even voted until I was in my middle 30s, was as shy as could be. Until I saw in the schools what some were really doing to the youth. And what so many of my Christian counter parts were doing to the youth. Do not ever think your generation is bad or evil. Its not. With young people like you and my daughters, and the other two young girls from here and even my grand kids, I know there is good in this world, and the world will be a better place with all of you running it. Just by watching all of you yesterday. I was so proud of all of you. And older adults should give you more credit, than you get.

So to each of you I say, thank you. I don't think you will ever know how much you helped us. Not just us in Santa Fe, but across the Nation. And to any that I did not get to meet yesterday, I am really sorry. I was not being rude. I really wanted to meet all of you. And I wanted to keep an eye on the other side. And even on the local high five's! I did not want any of them to start something so you would get arrested. That is what they wanted and prayed for. LOL. Looks like their prayers failed again. Just like their prayer at the game failed. Lost 50 to 0. Guess they are not praying hard enough, or are not strong enough in their faith. Or praying for the right thing. Maybe if they tried it silently it would work. . . .

All of you were very important yesterday, all of you. See what can happen when people are rational and put differences aside? Wonderful things can happen and wonderful friends are made. And for those who were not here, they would of made you proud yesterday. You could not of asked for a better group of people to represent you. They were wonderful.

It took 56 men to sign the Declaration of Independence. I would say we had that many yesterday. See what 56 people can do.

Here's to all of you
Debbie
Santa Fe Texas

And The Survey Says:

Q.What would you like to tell middle school kids about atheism?:

A. Try to pretend that you came from another planet and then look at each belief system as if it were something unknown to you. Remove the mysticism and emotional garbage associated with religion. Then take a good look at it.

Notes From Nov. 14 Board Meeting

Treasure's Report:

We have \$1231 in our general account, and \$1934 in our building fund.

New Member Packets:

John has been working on the packets. They should be ready next week.

TV Show:

The TV committee is always looking for volunteers on Sunday mornings. They also need donations to pay for tapes and training. ACA TV Tapes are now available for \$20.00 each and will be offered over the web soon.

Library:

The library is growing and needs a place to live. If you want to check out a book, contact Vic Farrow so he can be sure to bring it to the bagelry. The library needs a new keeper. If you are interested, please contact Vic Farrow.

Atheist/Humanist Texas get-together:

The board discussed the idea of hosting an informal get together for the various Texas atheist and humanist groups. Although there is general support for this, there was some concern expressed as to which groups would be appropriate to invite.

TV Show:

2 hour long tapes have been submitted to ACAC which can be played during idle hours or shown by us if we can't or don't want to do a live show.

New Sign:

Rodney is working on it.

Replace missing board member:

Paul Wilson was selected by the board. The general membership will have the opportunity to confirm Paul in an upcoming election. (see ballot in this newsletter)

Alliance News:

New groups are joining! The latest is a Secular Humanist group in Kansas City.

From the Editor



First of all, I want to apologize for not getting a newsletter out last month. I was very busy finishing off two new model books for my business Geoblox (www.geoblox.com). Unfortunately, the science teacher convention was held in Lubbock, and very few people showed up. I did, however, get a lot of repeat business, so things are looking good in the small business department.

I do have some bad news for any of you who think that evolution is being taught in public schools in Texas. It is not even being mentioned in most places. One teacher briefly considered buying one of my Hominid Evolution shirts, then remembered that her predominantly Catholic students might be offended. What bothered me was that the Catholic church itself claims to have no problem with evolution. Basically, the protestant fundies have been able to get support from the Catholics, of all people.

I gave my Teaching Evolution talk twice this year. I was assigned to the basement of the biology building at Texas Tech for the afternoon of the Saturday of the conference (*not* the best time). As I walked along the hall, I couldn't help but notice all of the graffiti on the bulletin boards. Every one was marked with a penciled in cross and a reminder that Jesus loves us and died for our sins. I hope one of those sins wasn't scribbling all over the taxpayers property. Anyway, only four people showed up for the first, and seven for the second. One woman at least seemed sincere in her desire to teach evolution well in her district, so maybe it was worth the trip

An interesting thing happened on the drive home, though. I was still in Lubbock when a car passed me along the highway. The driver saw my atheist bumper sticker, and at the next light must have felt the need to hold his bible up to the window of his car. I couldn't quite figure out what he was trying to prove. Only recently, did I begin to consider that maybe the bible is the most exciting book the poor guy ever read and he was trying to get me to read it too. If only I had had one of new Geoblox books within reach. I could have returned the favor by pointing out one of *my* favorites.

~John Koonz, Editor jknz@hotmail.com.

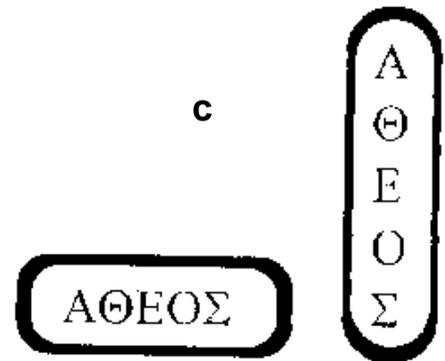
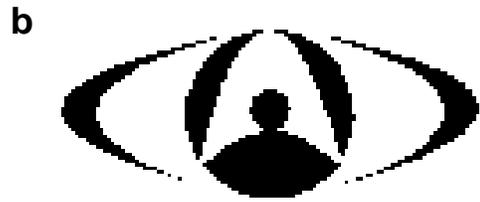
A Quote to put on your refrigerator

"It is as morally bad not to care whether a thing is true or not, so long as it makes you feel good, as it is not to care how you got your money as long as you have got it."

Edmund Way Teale, "Circle of the Seasons", 1950

Blood Drive and Party Photos

Atheist Symbol Contest:



HSH Workshop Needs Speakers

Bob Finch is organizing a convention tentatively to take place between late January to February. We are considering "Artificial Intelligence" as a workshop topic and would be interested to hear if you or anyone you know of is knowledgeable and/or qualified to speak on the topic.

Any assistance you can offer would be appreciated.

*Daniel Strain
(dts2000@flash.net)
Chair, Houstonians for Secular Humanism*

Your ACA board of directors:

Co-chairs:

Susan Brown

John Koonz

Treasurer:

Earle Beach

Secretary:

Don Rhoades

Board members:

Keith Berka

Sue Osborne

Michelle Gadush

Jim Hallamek

Arval Bohn

Ray Blevins

Vic Farrow

Jeff Dee

percentage of the money you spend there to the Atheist Community of Austin. To take advantage of this offer, contact the customer service department of your nearest Randalls. The ACA number is 5158.

□ **Life of Brian Party** Our sort-of annual "Life of Brian" party will be held the evening of January 8th at the Rhoades' house. Come at 7-ish, the movie will start at 8:00PM. Bring snacks and something to drink.

□ **Library** Vic is looking for someone to take over the library.

□ The next **blood drive** will be Jan 29th, and will be called the "Blood Bowl." Meet at the blood bank at 10:00AM.

Rapture Party!

what: A party to celebrate the non-ending of the world.

where: LoveJoys bar off sixth street.

when: 6:00 pm December 18th

how: Come dressed in your most outrageous millennial/rapture survival outfit. There will be a competition. More details to come . . .

□ **Weekly Meetings** Sunday Mornings at Hot Jumbo Bagelry, 307 West 5th Street at 10:30 a.m. on Sunday mornings when lectures are not scheduled at Furr's Cafeteria.

For more information about any of these coming events, call (512) 371-2911 or e-mail kellenvh@earthlink.net

Announcements

□ ACA Board meetings are on the second Sunday of the month at 12:00. Board meetings are open to all members.

□ **Guest Speakers** are Mark Loewe in December, and Arlo Pignotti in January. We will have a panel discussion in February with the topic, "Evangelistic Atheism; Should we try to Persuade Others? Lectures are held at Furr's Cafeteria in Northcross Mall, 11:00 am on the first Sunday of the month. Susan Brown (Liatris@mail.utexas.edu) is in charge of scheduling our lectures.

□ **Products** There are still t-shirts left. Our ACA t-shirts list a number of famous atheists. Godless dollars are available now for \$1.50. See Michelle Gadush (gadush@mail.utexas.edu) for more information on these and other exciting atheist products.

□ **Randalls Donations** Randalls will donate a

The Atheist is printed on somewhat recycled paper!

Ballot

As a member society of the Atheist Alliance, ACA has the opportunity to vote in the Atheist Symbol Contest. Please remember that this symbol is to represent all atheists, not just the member societies of AAI.

During the board meeting in November, Paul Wilson was selected to fill a vacancy on the board. This must be approved by the general membership, so please vote and return your ballot to:

ACA P.O. Box 3798, Austin, Texas 78764

Circle your choice for Atheist symbol:

a b c none of the above

I approve/ disapprove of Paul Wilson being on the ACA board of directors.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FOR THE ATHEIST COMMUNITY OF AUSTIN, INC.

Last name: _____ First name: _____

Companion's name (if family or couple membership)

Last name: _____ First name: _____

Address: _____ City/State/Zip: _____

Telephone : (_____) _____ e-mail address: _____

This is to certify that I am a non-theist, that I have read the "Purpose" of the Atheist Community of Austin, Inc. as stated in the Constitution (below), and that I am in agreement with the principles stated herein. I understand that membership is open only to non-theists.

Purpose

The Atheist Community of Austin is organized as a nonprofit educational corporation to develop and support atheist community; to provide opportunities for socializing and friendship, to promote atheist viewpoints, to encourage positive atheist culture, to defend the First Amendment principle of state/church separation, to oppose discrimination against atheists, and to work with other organizations in pursuit of common goals.

This organization shall operate in an open, democratic manner, without discrimination as to gender, race, age, sexual orientation, ethnic origin, nationality, or disability.

The Bylaws to this Constitution are intended to further define and explain the operating procedure of this organization. Changes may be made to the Bylaws when necessary to improve the operation of this organization. Changes to the Bylaws shall not alter the purpose of this organization as set forth in its Constitution.

Check all that apply

I wish to become a member of the Atheist Community of Austin, Inc. Membership fees are \$24.00 per year, but our membership year does not begin until the 1st of March. My prorated membership fee, at \$2.00 per month u n t i l next March, is enclosed.

- I wish to make a tax exempt donation to ACA .
- I only wish to participate in the e-mail group. My e-mail address is above. No fee is required.
- I wish to help ACA save money by receiving The Atheist by e-mail. No fee is required.
- I wish to receive a hard copy of The Atheist in the mail. \$10 is enclosed.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Please return this form to: Atheist Community of Austin, Inc., P.O. Box 3798, Austin, Texas 78764

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