

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion ..."
The first words of the Bill of Rights of the United States Constitution

San Francisco Atheists

April 2010 Newsletter

April meeting program

Indoctrination from the Bible Belt



This month **Timothy Trowbridge**, the son of a Bible Belt youth minister, will speak about the indoctrination he received as a child, how it affected him then and how it continues to affect him. He will cover some of the stories dealing with corruption in the church and the hypocrisy in his own family. He will focus on how money was seemingly the number one priority of everyone on the staff of the church. He will also speak about common misconceptions that some non-believers have about the religious. For example, some Atheists seem to think that Christians don't actually be-

lieve in god or the stories in the bible. But most Christians he was in contact with believed wholeheartedly. He will also talk about the positive effects Atheism has had in his life and that of his family. Tim will discuss some of the difficulties he has encountered with old friends and family members because of his new beliefs.



To quote Tim: "Overall, I will focus on things I've witnessed firsthand that other Atheists may have never encountered and offer a different perspective so others can better understand the opposing opinion on belief in god."

The talk will include a PowerPoint presentation and a discussion afterwards.

Please join us.

**Meeting at Schroeder's Restaurant
Saturday 24 at 6:00pm**

Schroeder's Restaurant, rear dining room,
240 Front St San Francisco, CA 94111

Schroeder's Restaurant is two blocks north of Market Street, between California and Sacramento Streets. Use California Street cable car, or BART/MUNI Embarcadero stop. Parking on street or at nearby Embarcadero garage.

Mark you calendars! S.F. Atheists will once again host a booth at the How Weird Street Fair on May 9. Put on your feathers and sequins and party for peace. More info @ www.howweird.org.

Texas State Board of Education

Ignorance, mysticism, illusion, and claptrap

We atheists are fast to call people of faith in imaginary gods stupid. From our point of view we see belief in invisible deities, unsubstantiated nonsense. And most of us feel that organized religion is ultimately bad for our societies, because of the draconian laws created when religious people get in power. However, religious people are not as stupid as they might first appear. They all too often get into powerful positions. Take the case of Mr. Don McElroy who leads the Texas State Board of Education. From my perspective this guy's faith makes him a real nut-job, but he is certainly not stupid. What better place to put yourself, if you wish to influence children, than leader of a board

of education for a state. He has a ridiculous belief in a fairytale god, but he gets to direct the education of our next generation. He is delusional, but he is not stupid.

One could argue that we atheists are the stupid ones. If you consider how few of us ever run for office or seek positions of power or influence. We sit back enjoying our rational insight and feel content that we have the high-ground. All the while nut-jobs like McElroy mold the future of our children with their nonsense and delusions. Ignorance, mysticism, illusion, and claptrap will continue to drive the world while we keep this subdued stance. If you do not believe me read this [article](#).

David Millett

March meeting catch up

Evolutionary Theory Today

We had a bumper and diverse turn out at this meeting; forty seven members attended requiring us to get extra chairs. Quite unusually there were several non-atheists in attendance just to see the lecture on evolution.

Seaborg's presentation was on topic and covered: socio-biology, sexual attraction, altruism, mass extinctions, and punctuated equilibrium. There was a lively discus-

sion and Q&A session afterwards which went on beyond 9pm. Folks seemed to have a lot of interest and questions. The topics ranged from climate change to the evolutionary advantages of self-deception.

Thanks for making this a fantastic meeting.

[See the photos](#)



"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion ..."
The first words of the Bill of Rights of the United States Constitution

San Francisco Atheists

April 2010 Newsletter

The Newdow court decision

Dave Kong

Larry Hicok's Speech at the protest

Retires from American Atheists

"Under God" is not religious.

"In God We Trust" is not religious.

The Christian Cross is not religious.

The recent Newdow court decision is only the continuation of the proud legacy of Orwellian Newspeak that so characterizes much of the judiciary's position on entanglement of religion and government. In many ways I find this outrageous sophistry far more frightening than the entanglement it so transparently seeks to conceal. Are these judges so petty that they can cynically issue such surreal decisions? Possibly worse yet, what does it mean if these judges actually believe this stuff?

I think the Religious Right knows only too well that Christian symbols and phrases are — well, Christian symbols and phrases. When they fight to maintain those symbols, they do so in the

name of their religion. When the opposition points out in court that religion and government are supposed to be separate, suddenly they claim the secular nature of their symbols and phrases. But I think they are lying for what they see as the greater good.

Judges are supposed to be above this.

I think we need to learn that we cannot rely on the Courts to protect our rights. The Courts will speak the truth about these issues, just as they were forced to speak the truth about blatant racial discrimination, when we become politically powerful enough to force them to do so. And we are not going to accomplish that by sitting around complaining about how outrageous things are. We need to come out of the closet and fight for our rights.

Thank you for doing that today.

Larry Hicok

See our protest video



After 19 years of service, Dave Kong is retiring from American Atheists as national board member and Director of State Operations.

Dave began working for the organization in 1991 as San Francisco chapter director. In 1995, he joined the national board of American Atheists, just months before Madalyn O'Hair and her family were kidnapped and murdered. He then became California State Director, serving in that position for 13 years. Since 2008, he has been American Atheists' Director of State Operations.

As California director, Dave organized over two dozen protests relating to Atheist civil rights and state/church separation. He hosted two national conventions, in San Francisco in 2000 and San Diego in 2004. He was plaintiff in two lawsuits: challenging the transfer of San Francisco's Mt. Davidson cross and objecting to Medicare/Medicaid payments to Christian Science sanatoria. In 1998, he was instrumental in defeating California's Religious Freedom Protection Act, which would have shielded religiously based conduct from generally applicable laws. In 1998, he also co-founded San Francisco Atheists with Jim Heldberg.

Dave says his motivation for retiring is personal. "As former Supreme Court Justice David Souter said, 'I want to retire while I still have something to retire to,'" Dave told SFA. "I have given the best years of my life to American Atheists and have loved every moment of it, but as an Atheist I am aware that I have only one life to live. I am looking forward to having more time for myself but also continuing to support the Atheist movement and other important causes."

Dave was especially appreciative of California's god-free community. "The support of the members and others from the very start has been tremendous. I could not have worked so hard for 19 years had they not been behind me. In fact, I often felt that I was simply riding on a wave of their enthusiasm. Whatever successes I may have had would not have been possible without the California Atheists. They are the best!"

We congratulate Dave on his retirement and thank him for his many years of selfless service.

Join us on June 19 at Pine Lake Park for our annual Summer Solstice potluck picnic. More info on our [website calendar](#).

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion ..."
The first words of the Bill of Rights of the United States Constitution

Atheist News

Catholic Church Gay Prostitution Ring

(CBS) The Vatican is facing allegations that one of Pope Benedict's ceremonial ushers, as well as a member of the Vatican choir, were involved in a gay prostitution ring.

"The latest shadow on the church's image," reports CBS News Correspondent Richard Roth, "comes from leaked police reports (on) wiretaps in a separate corruption case. The Vatican wasn't a target, but it's taken a hit." [Read the full story](#)

Vandals Destroy 2 More Atheist Billboards

SACRAMENTO COUNTY - Someone has vandalized two more billboards that were put up by a group of Atheists and Agnostics. The Sacramento Area Coalition for Reason put up 10 billboard that say "Are you good without God? Millions are."

[Read the full story](#)

Court upholds 'under God' in Pledge of Allegiance

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — A federal appeals court in San Francisco upheld the use of the words "under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance and "In God We Trust" on U.S. currency, rejecting arguments on Thursday that the phrases violate the separation of church and state.

The 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals panel rejected two legal challenges by Sacramento atheist Michael Newdow, who claimed the references to God disrespect his religious beliefs. [Read the full story](#)

U.S. history textbooks could soon be flavored heavily with Texas conservatism

Thomas Jefferson no longer included among writers influencing the nation's intellectual origins. Jefferson, a deist who helped pioneer the legal theory of the separation of church and state, is not a model founder in the board's judgment. Among the intellectual forerunners to be highlighted in Jefferson's place: medieval Catholic philosopher St. Thomas Aquinas, Puritan theologian John Calvin and conservative British law scholar William Blackstone. Heavy emphasis is also to be placed on the founding fathers having been guided by strict Christian beliefs. [Read the full story](#)

Contribution to SFA

A big Thank You to Bert and Lucy!

We would like to thank Lucy and Bert Steinberg for their generous contribution this month to San Francisco Atheists for a new sound system. Our old system needed to be retired years ago. We now have a new NADY PA system which includes a wireless hand-held microphone as well as lavalier microphone (attach to shirt)

for our speakers. The PA system can even run on batteries which will allow us to use it outdoors at our summer solstice picnic and other events. SFA is run totally by volunteers and our costs are covered by your generous donations.

Please join me in giving a big Thank You to Bert and Lucy!

Larry Kaufman

Pope Benedict XVI

World-wide moral leader

Pope Benedict XVI has continued his excellent acting performance throughout his tenure as Pope, pretending to be profoundly "shocked" and deeply "disturbed" by the ever mounting pedophile priest and sex scandals that have rocked the Church for the past several years.

More and more evidence has been coming forwarded that both when Joseph Ratzinger was the archbishop of Munich and while he was

a Cardinal at the Vatican, he was instrumental in covering up various sexual abuse scandals by numerous priests. Clearly, the only honorable path for the Pope is to immediately resign his Papacy. This is not at all unprecedented in Catholic Church history. Can we finally expect a modicum of proper morality from the world-wide moral leader of the Catholic Church?

Don Havis

Do imaginary gods have a future? See the video



"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion ..."
The first words of the Bill of Rights of the United States Constitution

East Bay Atheists

Meeting program

This month Dr. Richard Carrier will speak on "Why Everyone Says Medieval Christians Invented Science."

Dr. Carrier summarizes and expands on one of his chapters in the new, controversial book, The Christian Delusion (edited by John Loftus), which addresses the new argument going around that we have Christianity to thank for modern science. We all know it's closer to the other way around. So how on earth do they think the opposite? What are their arguments? What is their evidence? How can they be so mistaken? Dr. Carrier tells all.



Dr. Carrier will have for sale several of his books, although his new book is not yet available.

Dr. Carrier holds a Ph.D. from Columbia University in ancient history, specializing in the intellectual history of Greece and Rome, particularly ancient philosophy, religion, and science, with emphasis on the origins of Christianity and the use and progress of science under the Roman empire.

Don't miss this one!

Sunday, April 18, 1:30 - 3:30 PM
Berkeley Main Library, 3rd Floor Meeting Room 2090 Kittredge St., One Block From Downtown Berkeley BART
BART Access: From the downtown Berkeley BART Station, walk 1.5 blocks south on Shattuck Avenue, then turn right on Kittredge. The library is a half block down the street on the left.
Parking: The city parking lot at Allston & Harold Way, a short block from the library, is \$5 for the entire day on Sunday. If you don't mind walking, take University to MLK, turn right and then instead of proceeding left on Allston to the parking lot, turn right. In several blocks you will see parking on the side streets.
Larry Hicok, Coordinator: 510-222-7580
Ski Grabowski, Treasurer: 510-652-8350
info@eastbayatheists.org

Quote of the month

Doris Egan script writer for the TV show: House M.D., The Right Stuff, 2007

Rational arguments don't usually work on religious people. Otherwise, there wouldn't be religious people.

What's on

Calendar of events



Joke of the month

