

# NOSHA NEWS

Newsletter of the New Orleans Secular Humanist Association  
Fall 2007

**New Orleans Secular  
Humanist Association**  
520 St. Louis St., Apt. 3  
New Orleans, LA 70130  
(a 501c3 corporation)

<http://nosha.secularhumanism.net>

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## NATIONAL AFFILIATIONS

Council for Secular Humanism  
American Humanist Association  
Atheist Alliance International  
American Atheists, Inc.

## MEETINGS

3rd Saturday of month, 2:00 pm  
New Orleans Public Library  
219 Loyola Avenue

N.O. COX CABLE TV  
CH 76 "Humanist Perspective"  
Sat. midnight; Sun. noon  
CH 78 "Atheist Viewpoint"  
Tues. 10:30 am; 10:30 pm

## A TRUE AMERICAN HERO VISITS NOSHA

NOSHA, joined by the Louisiana ACLU, was honored on September 15 to be addressed by a true American hero, Dr. Ellery Schempp. Dr. Schempp was a 16-year-old student in suburban Philadelphia in 1956 when he protested the mandatory Bible readings and prayers at his Pennsylvania high school. The lawsuit filed by his family became the basis for the Supreme Court's 1963 ruling, *Abington School District v. Schempp* which declared that public school-sanctioned Bible readings were unconstitutional. It was largely through the efforts of NOSHA's Dr. Barbara Forrest that Dr. Schempp addressed our meeting.

Dr. Schempp is the subject of the recently published book *Ellery's Protest: How One Young Man Defied Tradition and Sparked the Battle over School Prayer*, by Stephen D. Solomon. Now a retired physicist, he is traveling the country to support the book, and signed copies purchased at the September meeting.



In his address to the NOSHA and ACLU audience, Dr. Schempp retold the story of his daring protest. Following are excerpts from that talk and other addresses he has presented in the past:

"I had wonderful parents who had the good wisdom to be both Unitarians and members of the ACLU. And some wonderful teachers, some wonderful peers. In

English class we read Thoreau's essay on *Civil Disobedience*, and on my own I read Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* and C.S. Smith's *The Democratic Way of Life*. And then I read the Constitution and the First Amendment, 'Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion nor prohibiting the free exercise thereof...'"

"I had learned a deep admiration and reverence for the Founding Fathers and the separation of church and state. And in the UU tradition, tolerance and respect for others' views. Enforced Bible-reading and prayer seemed to me to violate these principles. So, it was in November 1956 that I first made a silent protest in school. I took a borrowed copy of the Qu'ran to school, and instead of putting away school work to listen to the Bible-reading and standing to recite the Lord's Prayer, I just sat quietly and read—nervously—I might add."

"It was a little scary when I made this protest. I mean, I knew I wasn't doing anything really bad—I wasn't hurting anybody. But I did not know what would happen when the Principal learned about this. I felt confident that the ideas I had were shared by some of my friends, and quite likely by very neat and thoughtful people, like at the UU Church and the ACLU. I had my thoughts prepared to answer criticisms. And I knew that some people would not agree. But my answer was always, what is fair to everyone? What does the Constitution mean?"

Following Dr. Schempp's address to NOSHA and the ACLU, he was made an honorary NOSHA member and presented a NOSHA T-shirt. Truly an American hero, his brave efforts in 1956 leading to the Supreme Court's 1963 ruling, are still the law of the land today, though tested with increasing regularity. But one young man stood up for fairness and the Constitution back then, and we continue to be grateful.

Pictured above are NOSHA president Harry Greenberger, Dr. Schempp, and Louisiana ACLU executive director Marjorie Esman. Thanks to Michael Malec for the photograph.

## MEMBERS' PUBLISHED LETTERS

The following letter by **Robert Carver** appeared in the *Times-Picayune* on September 25, 2007:

Re: "Vitter earmarks funds for religious group: Nonprofit supports creationist education," age 1, Sept. 23.

I was dismayed but not surprised to see that Sen. David Vitter had funneled \$100,000 to his close friends at the Louisiana Family Forum, an openly anti-science, pro-creationism activist organization.

Sen. Vitter obviously cares more about taking care of his political supporters than he does about making sure our children are taught sound science in the classroom.

Sen. Vitter blatantly ignores actual science and the Constitution in the same blasé manner he ignored his marriage vows.

Saying that he supports teaching all points of view in biology is a false claim.

Creationism is not a biological theory about the changes to life over time. Rather, it is clearly a religious belief that has no scientific evidence to support its supernatural claims.

I am very disappointed that Sen. Vitter would use our tax dollars to exploit our children for his own political gain.

Thanks to our secular Constitution, religious teaching belongs in the church of one's choice and science belongs in the classroom.

If Sen. Vitter truly wants to improve our children's education, he would be wise to support teaching the scientific method and to terminate his political pandering, which devalues the quality of learning in Louisiana schools.

The following letter by **Noah Reon** appeared in the *Hammond Star* on October 26, 2007:

While reading the Julia Wolf letter dated Sept. 26 I was surprised by her statement about the two major theories of how the world began and one of them is creationism.

The Bible according to those accepting religious beliefs is the inspired word of God and by no means is open to any change. A theory is a group of ideas subjected to thought and scrutiny by anyone and everyone. Prove your point or provide overwhelming evidence and the theory gets changed. Try questioning the Bible and see where that gets you. Religion is a "Belief" not a "Theory."

And then, would it be possible for a child to grow up in the world today and miss religion or the story of creationism completely. You cannot drive from anywhere in the US to any school without passing by numerous churches. You cannot surf channels on TV any time of day or night without seeing a religious channel. Subject children to religion at the earliest age possible, don't answer their questions and tell them that they just have to believe. "A FALSE BELIEF, MAINTAINED AND CHERISHED FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS, DOES NOT THEREBY BECOME ANY LESS FALSE."

Religion is alive and well in the US. Many churches should be challenged on their tax-free status for encroaching into commerce. Megachurches are becoming like small cities competing with all types of commerce while paying no taxes to support the community.

All children should be taught the basics and leave religion to the various churches. Science and Religion have been at odds for as long as man has used his brain. Religion has had to give

ground to science over the ages and will continue to so reluctantly.

Scientists will make advances on stem cell research and other fronts leaving religious leaders and politicians alike to accept change or be deserted by their constituents. Left to their own creativeness our scientists would do great things for mankind.

P.S. For all our sakes as Louisianans, I wish Bobby Jindal the greatest of success to turn this state around. Just don't use the bully pulpit as a religious pulpit. That should remain in the church, thank you.

The following letter by **Barbara Forrest** appeared in the *Baton Rouge Advocate* on October 27, 2007:

Regarding Sen. David Vitter's earmark of \$100,000 to promote creationism, I want to address comments by Sen. Vitter, Louisiana Family Forum Director Gene Mills and Ouachita Parish School Board Chairman Jack White in "Vitter redirects funds after creationism stir" (*The Advocate*, Oct. 20).

The earmark would ostensibly have enabled LFF "to develop a plan to promote better science education."

Sen. Vitter, R-La., asserts that these taxpayer dollars weren't intended to promote creationism. But if he had wanted to improve science education, he could have directed that money to many qualified organizations, rather than to LFF, a Focus on the Family affiliate.

LFF promotes both young-earth and intelligent design creationism on its Web site, as does former City Court Judge Darrell White (<http://www.judgewhite.com>), the LFF consultant who sold the Ouachita Parish School Board a creationist curriculum policy in November 2006.

As a member of the National Center for Science Education's board of directors, I would be happy to advise Sen. Vitter about where to direct the money. The idea that LFF is qualified to promote science education is ludicrous.

Mr. Mills commented that LFF "wasn't disappointed with the funding change and encouraged Vitter to redirect it." Given LFF's alliance with the Ouachita Parish School Board, we should take him at his word. No great leap is needed to imagine that Ouachita Parish was probably the beneficiary all along, given the board's Nov. 29, 2006, adoption of its "science curriculum policy (<http://www.opsb.net/downloads-file-a66.html>), which Darrell White wrote (as the document's electronic properties show).

Written in creationist code-talk, the policy permits teaching the "strengths and [non-existent] weaknesses" of evolution. Calling justifiable concern "vitriolic sensationalism," Mills predicts that "the battle" won't go away merely because the earmark was redirected.

The LFF will make sure this battle doesn't go away.

Jack White says that Ouachita Parish "does not have a program to promote the teaching of creationism." But Ouachita Parish's policy does precisely that, citing a 2001 congressional declaration (actually part of No Child Left Behind's legislative history) calling for science curricula to include "the full range of scientific views" concerning "topics," i.e., evolution, that "generate controversy."

Intelligent design creationist Phillip Johnson, who includes intelligent design in that range of views, wrote this language.

When I say I wrote the book on this, Sen. Vitter, LFF and the Ouachita Parish School Board should take that literally. My

book, “Creationism’s Trojan Horse: The Wedge of Intelligent Design” (2004, 2007), details not only the history of the creationist code-talk that LFF’s Darrell White included in the Ouachita Parish policy, but the intelligent design creationist movement itself.

The following letter, written by **Connie Gordon**, appeared in the Times-Picayune on December 5, 2007:

Re: “Parents fear where ‘Compass’ points: Christians take note of film’s atheist tone, Page 1, Dec. 2.)

It amazes me how a movie based on a children’s book of fantasy and fiction can cause so much hoopla, just because it might open young minds to the possibility that Judeo-Christian ideology might not be all it’s cracked up to be.

Bruce Nolan’s article about the movie version of “The Golden Compass” cites an e-mail that refers to the storyline as a “trap,” implying it will warp young minds to convert suddenly to atheism. I can tell you for a fact that the vast majority of atheists I know came to that view slowly over a long period of time through self-reflection, education, and having an open mind. Shouldn’t that be what we encourage our children to do?

Isn’t it the societal norm to indoctrinate impressionable young minds in whatever religious dogma or affiliation the parents hold? That is the trap. It breeds hatred, bigotry, ethnocentrism and very small minds.

The story also says that many atheists often prefer to be called humanists. I happen to be both an atheist and a humanist, but I can tell you that while the majority of humanists are probably atheists, a great many are agnostics, deists, naturalists and lapsed Catholics. Some are believers who simply eschew religious dogma and idolatry.

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“ ‘Creation Science’ has not entered the curriculum for a reason so simple and so basic that we often forget to mention it: because it is false, and because good teachers understand exactly why it is false. What could be more destructive of that most fragile yet most precious commodity in our intellectual heritage—good teaching—than a bill forcing honorable teachers to sully their sacred trust by granting equal treatment to a doctrine not only known to be false, but calculated to undermine any general understanding of science as an enterprise?”

-- Stephen Jay Gould, American paleontologist (1941-2002)

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**SLIDELL COURTHOUSE PORTRAITS**

**by Lucy Wells Tierney**

*(Earlier this year, citing the constitutionally mandated separation of church and state, the Louisiana ACLU brought suit against the city of Slidell regarding a portrait of Jesus which hung in the entrance of the courthouse. Weeks passed, and probably fearing the suit was going against them, there suddenly appeared an array of portraits in the courthouse entrance. Giving equal time to all religions was apparently the Slidell court’s defense mechanism. Following is one NOSHA members’ take on the new portrait gallery.)*

Today, September 17, 2007, I went to my courthouse to look at what was new. A Jesus portrait had caused a lawsuit when it was hung solo, being in clear violation of the separation of church and state. This portrait has subsequently been surrounded by a collection of other pictures.

Please bear with me while I critique the tout ensemble.

Our courthouse is a small modern building. On groundlevel outside it there is a lovely statue of a girl releasing a

dove. “How can this be in front of a courthouse where people will receive jail sentences,” you may wonder. There is a tale to this. The sculpture honors the child Lorin Easterling, who was murdered. The statue was originally set in a playground but a thief stole it. When it was eventually recovered the statue was moved here with the police station next door for safekeeping.

You have to mount some steps to enter the courthouse, so maybe it didn’t get much floodwater. After I entered, the guard sent my purse through a weapon detector, and then a large oil portrait of the inferior judge Fritchie greeted me.

But on the walls of the lobby, to the left and the right, are the newly hung pictures. They are hung at about ten feet up and are well lit at high noon since the whole front wall is glass. The pictures are all framed in simple black frames and are perfectly aligned. Although Slidell likes the cluttered look, arrangement is not in the least tacky, in my opinion.

I think the dignified display gives judges a great deal to aim for, and in fact the pictures could dignify this courthouse too much.

I was the only civilian in the lobby, so I can’t even imagine the effect of the atmosphere, the décor, on law-breakers. Personally, I think it increases my respect for laws. But not necessarily The Law per se.

After sitting down to absorb the atmosphere, I got up to take a closer look at the pictures. It was difficult for me to guess who most of the pictures were of; only a historian could know that. The guard and I spoke about them and he pointed to three more framed documents I had overlooked, at eye level, and they explained each portrait and the dates the person had lived.

In the middle of the pictures on the right wall, and elevated above them, is a framed yellowed page of the Constitution (probably fake parchment) and below it the gilded, raised words TO KNOW PEACE, OBEY THESE LAWS.

Under the Constitution is the double-glassed office where I routinely pay for my “failure to use seatbelt” fines.

Here are the portraits:

1. Hammurabi, photo of a clay sculpture with a gilded face
2. Moses looking very weird with his “horns,” light beams coming from his head
3. Solomon, a Doré in that fake Oriental style
4. Lycorgus, a Spartan I’d never heard of, a drawing from a sculpture
5. Solon
6. Confucius, a Chinese picture would have been better
7. Caesar Augustus, his hand on a globe (but did they know the earth was round?)
8. Jesus, the original picture that was rightly disputed. It is Greek Orthodox, Jesus with an open book containing Greek words. (The framed notes explain that Jesus said “Judge not according to the appearance, but judge with righteous judgment” and another such quote.)
9. Justinian with a huge feather pen
10. Muhammad, Doré’s occidental style drawing with a full white beard and curved dagger
11. Charlemagne in armor
12. King John, a simple portrait with elaborate surrounds
13. Louis IX in rustic dress with tri-corner type hat
14. John Marshall

15. Now here there is an empty frame with the note inside that a picture of Blackstone has been ordered. (I might have noted this picture out of order)
16. Napoleon, standing maybe in his library in Malmaison. His right hand is in his vest; a sword on a pretty red velvet gilded chair. This is one of the few colored pictures.

*Afterthoughts about the Slidell courthouse portraits:* I woke up in the wee hours of the night disturbed about the portraits. Why did Moses have to have supernatural light whereas Mohammed was not shown whited out or covered in a white veil? The Lawrence of Arabia curved dagger at Mohammed's waist is too horrid a weapon. It looks the size to curve around the neck. In partial balance, Jesus would have to be shown with a scourge to drive moneychangers out. Brute force. Also, it might have been mentioned in the explanatory frames that Hammurabi was from Iraq. We seem to have forgotten that that country had any culture at all. Maybe its culture (think libraries of cuneiform tablets) is now obliterated.

But for NOSHA purposes, I wonder if Jesus was given preferential treatment in the explanatory frames. Does he have more lines? What was his second quote? I'm beginning to wonder if there were quotes from any of the other men.

Why does the portrait of Judge Fritchie rule? That is plain tacky. In retrospect, I am again feeling that an empty room with an enlargement of the Bill of Rights, at eye level, would have been a more elegant solution. Of course.

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**ALSO OF INTEREST TO HUMANISTS . . .**

*AUSTIN, TX*—A majority of the State Board of Education in Texas have voted to keep intelligent design out of the science curriculum in public schools, for now. At least one member of the Board who described himself as a creationist said, "Creationism and intelligent design don't belong in our science classes. Anything taught in science has to have consensus in the science community and intelligent design does not." However, the board's vice chairman said he believes "God is responsible for our creation," and that their was "a large body of evidence unanswered by the theory of evolution." And so the fight continues across the country.

*FORT RILEY, KS*—A soldier whose superior prevented him from holding a meeting for atheists and other non-Christians is suing the Department of Defense, claiming it violated his right to religious freedom. While serving in Iraq, the soldier received permission to distribute fliers around his base for the meeting, but when he tried to convene the meeting, his commanding officer stepped in, threatening to file military charges and block the soldier's reenlistment. In filing the suit, the soldier said he was forced to "submit to a religious test as a qualification to his post as a soldier," a clear Constitutional violation.

*LINCOLN, NE*—Nebraska's longest-serving state senator, Ernie Chambers of Omaha, has sued God in a Country District Court. Chambers skips morning prayers during the legislative session and often criticizes Christians. He said he filed the lawsuit to show that anybody can file a lawsuit against anybody. He says in his lawsuit that "God has made terroristic threats against him and his constituents, inspired fear and caused 'wide-spread death, destruction and terrorization of millions upon millions of

the Earth's inhabitants.'" He is seeking a permanent injunction against God.

*STRASBOURG, FRANCE*—The Council of Europe, that continent's main human rights body, recently voted to urge schools across the continent to firmly oppose the teaching of creationist and intelligent design views in their science classes. The Council's Parliamentary Assembly approved a resolution saying attacks on the theory of evolution were rooted "in forms of religious extremism" and amounted to a dangerous assault on science and human rights. While the pressure to teach creationism is weaker in Europe than in the U.S., pressure has mounted in recent years with a higher influx of Islamic immigrants.

*VATICAN CITY*—In Pope Benedict's recently released second encyclical, he suggests that while atheism may be "understandable" when confronted with evil and suffering, that it has led to the greatest forms of cruelty and "violations of justice" (such as Marxism and the science that produced the atomic bomb). There is no indication that Robert Oppenheimer had evil motives for creating the bomb (nor did Harry Truman for using it), and Marxism certainly isn't the only oppressive political ideology the world has known. The Pope must have forgotten about the Spanish Inquisition, Gallileo's house arrest for suggesting that the sun was the center of the universe, or the Catholic missionaries in the Americas that wiped out entire populations with imposed Catholicism.

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**WHAT YOU MIGHT HAVE MISSED IN 2007  
Harry Greenberger**

In a recent survey of its members by American Atheists, they asked whether the member knew other atheists in their city or town. Almost half of the respondents said no, they didn't know another one! Here in the New Orleans area there's no need to be alone – that's a part of what NOSHA is here for. We follow each of our monthly meetings with some social time for tea, coffee, cold drinks and cookies, and getting to know other like-minded people.

That camaraderie comes along with interaction with the invited speakers who have consistently enlightened and entertained us. In this year, many of you have missed presentations by Dr. Robert Stewart, Associate Professor of Philosophy and Theology at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary; farewell talks by Joe Cook of the Louisiana ACLU and Dr. Robert Cashner of UNO; Ellery Schempp, the subject of a new book, *Ellery's Protest*; Dr. Trenton Holliday of Tulane University speaking on the relationship (or not) between Neandertals and humans; and Julie Mickelberry of Planned Parenthood of Louisiana and the Mississippi Delta. Still to come in 2007 is Dr. J. P. Lestrade from Mississippi State University whose topic is "Gamma-ray Bursts and Other Oddities from Space."

Those of you who receive Cox Cable in New Orleans had the opportunity during the year to see and hear guests on our "New Orleans Humanist Perspective" TV program, including: Dr. Barbara Forrest of Southeastern Louisiana University regarding "Intelligent Design;" Aaron Giles and Micah Walker Parkin on global warming; Lisa Kaichen on her "non-profit" groups meetings; Ronald Wilson, attorney on church/state

separation; Brad Ott regarding reopening Charity Hospital; Ellery Schempp; Dr. Mahmoud Sarmimi, Muslim Academy, regarding perceptions of Islam; Baty Landis with “Silence is Violence” organization; Dr. Walter Block, Loyola on the subject of Ayn Rand and “Atlas Shrugged;” George Andrews from MMACI; Bill Knecht and Kwanza Khaliq of “Erace;” and several shows with NOSHA members on the panel.

On December 1, NOSHA sponsored a performance of the Pulitzer Prize-winning drama, “J.B.” by Archibald MacLeish. Performed at Black Box Theater at NOCCA, the play was performed by the NOLA Project. “J.B.” was premiered in 1959, winning a Tony Award for Best Play in addition to the Pulitzer. It gives a post WWII and Cold War updated spin the the biblical story of Job.

It has been gratifying to know that the number of new names on our mailing list has more than replaced those that were lost following the flood and there has been no reduction in the numbers of those attending our meetings. As we look forward to 2008, let’s continue the momentum and be sure that no one in our area is left without an “atheist” friend.

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### **THE FALSE CLAIM THAT ATHEISTS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR MORE KILLING AND MURDER THAN THOSE WHO ARE RELIGIOUS**

*(The following article was published in the “Freethought Perspective” in January 2007. That publication’s editor, Leland W. Ruble, wrote it.)*

Occasionally we are exposed to examples of overly religious apologists who rejoice in sheer delight over the fiction that—in their confused thinking—all, as far as they are concerned, dictators, communists, fascists etc., have, because of their *atheism*, been responsible for killing millions during wars, or in other sadistic, brutal attempts to establish governments of suppression. This in spite of the fact—not fiction—that none of these religious spokespersons cannot, and will never admit, that there is NO, NONE, ZERO, Christian nation or any other religiously inclined nation that has not, at one time or the other, engaged in wars of aggression or committed other atrocities which involved the killing of others because of religious or political motives.

It’s a policy of the more extreme religious establishments to consistently claim that the former Soviet Union under communism was more likely to engage in the killing of others, because it was not constrained by disbelief in a supernatural god. In other words if a government is ideologically motivated by communism, it is because communist ideology is associated with atheism; therefore it follows that all atheists are capable of murder. Nonsense! This is a fiction perpetrated by the religious to manufacture the false argument that only believers in a mythical god are restrained from committing murder. How then, do the religious explain away the numerous crimes committed in the name of god, or criminal acts by clergy and god-obsessed individuals whose crimes of violence are inspired by delusions of a god instructing them to kill?

The religious also like to toss out the names of Stalin, Pol Pot, Enver Hoxha, Mao and others who they claim did what they did because of atheistic communist convictions.

In April 1998, Peter Symonds and Martin McLaughlin wrote an article, “The Death of Pol Pot;” in it they had this to

say: *“It is characteristic of the ideological falsification produced by Stalinism that the label of Marxism has been placed upon social and political phenomena which have nothing whatsoever to do with the ideas of Marx, Engels or Lenin.”*

Communist ideology, although it contains elements of atheism, is not so much motivated by atheism as it is by the creation of a strict political socialism opposed to any reasonable form of capitalism. It can, and continues to survive, without any need to place emphasis on atheism.

In fact, no where have I read that communistic governments forced the public to convert to atheism. Whereas one of the religious establishment’s main objectives is to compel, coerce, proselytize and convince the public that belief in a tyrannical god is preferable to no belief. Neither, as in some religious notions, is the public compelled to support State religious establishments, such as Catholic and Lutheran institutions in the form of taxation. There was no tax, confiscated from the public to support an institution based on atheism.

And, whether or not a nation is predominantly Christian, Islamic or some other belief, it does not follow that all members of a faith accept the ideology of its government. Certainly, some of the early settlers, although Christian, were opposed to the slaughter of American natives. For example, followers of the Quaker persuasion were opposed to any form of warfare, or the killing of other colonists.

The same exists in communist nations where atheism is incorporated into its political system. A percentage of its politicians may embrace atheism; some of its citizens may also be atheists, but their views, aspirations and objectives may be in complete contrast to the objectives of its government. For the religious to proclaim that some of the most brutal killing in this century was committed by communist governments because they were atheistic, completely ignores other critical facts, and that is, that religious nations, both present and past, have waged just as many or more conflicts which have involved the killing of others to the same extent, or worse. Indeed, some of the worst crimes against humanity were committed long before the establishment of any communist government. There is no excuse for the crimes committed by communist governments. However, for the religious to blame their acts of brutality on atheists and atheism, rather than the ideology of a distorted, oppressive version of communism, is a deliberate attempt by the religious to blame atheism for crimes executed by elected representatives of the various communist governments.

In the past, there have been numerous religious wars fought in the name of the Christian god, Jesus, Allah, and other holy spooks. These conflicts resulted in the innocent murder of countless individuals. If individuals were not innocently killed in wars, they were either murdered, or killed under other circumstances, burned at the stake, tortured, or imprisoned because of refusal to convert, etc. Religious aggression has been waged against other nations whose theology of belief did not conform to their accepted delusion of god. Most readers are aware of the countless atrocities committed by the Catholic hierarchy during the era when it was a dominant force in Europe. Conflicts such as the Crusades, and other religious wars were acts of perversion committed in the name of god. The recorded history of religious nations clearly shows that the brutal killing of others was equal to or far more obscene than

those attributed to the actions of communist dictators. I can't recall an incident where a communist dictator invaded another country in the name of atheism, or murdered its citizens because they did not convert to atheism.

One can argue endlessly over the extent of crimes committed, but it is irrational and absurd for religious apologists to say that because a nation embraces the ideology of communism, therefore, atheism is the primary reason why communist regimes are perceived as establishments of brutality and suppression. If, for example, because the USA is dominated by the Christian faith, and its leader a self-proclaimed born-again imperialist, why do recent polls indicate that a majority of the public opposes the policies of this administration? It's obvious that many liberal Christians also oppose Bush's policies. Many atheists under the government of Stalin and other dictators, without doubt, opposed the policies of their governments. To claim, as fundamentalist religious apologists obnoxiously articulate, that atheism is the rationale for past communist brutality, is a deluded, false excuse to blame atheists for murder and warfare committed in the name of communism.

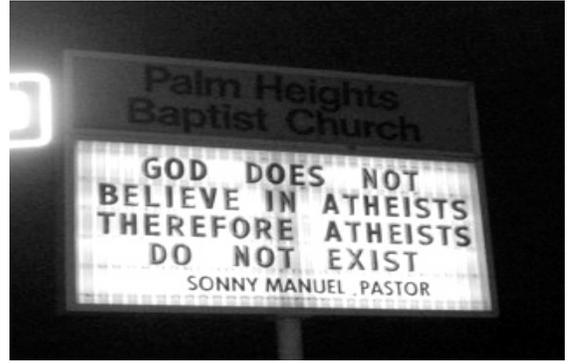
Seldom do we hear fundamentalists mention the atrocities committed by Francisco Franco (fascist dictator), who was raised a Catholic, but had no qualms about committing wanton murder to achieve his objectives. It's estimated that at least two million were killed during his reign. He likewise was intimate with the hierarchy of the Catholic Church, a relationship that continued throughout his many years of control over the government of Spain.

Then there is the insane fascist dictator Adolf Hitler. The Catholic hierarchy never placed his book *Mein Kampf* on the notorious *Index of Forbidden Books*. However, some Christians continue to this day to make the false claim that Hitler was an atheist. There are many other historical references that prove this demented personality worked hand in glove with the Catholic Church to prop up his government and subdue the feelings and patriotism of a population that was mainly religiously devout. If he were an atheist, he would have severed all ties to this church. He never uttered a public statement disavowing his Catholicism, and was never excommunicated by this church for his crimes against humanity. It's also a fact that among those incarcerated during his few years of madness, were atheists opposed to his government and policies. His motives for killing Jews and communists also were religiously motivated. We know that he was an avid admirer of Martin Luther, the Reformer, whose despicable literature is filled with offensive comments concerning Jews. Luther's comments had seeped into the consciousness of the German population through many years of exposure to his deranged concepts.

In the meantime, don't expect religious fundamentalists to cease twisting the historical facts to suit their weak arguments for sustaining belief in an over pompous, glorified god.

Whenever a religious apologist insinuates with utmost conviction, that atheists are responsible for more brutal death than the religious, ask them how they justify the biblical story of the flood? A deliberate, calculated sadistic act of their god, which was responsible for the innocent death of countless men, women, children and mothers who were pregnant. Certainly the god they worship, as a benevolent dictator, or whatever IT supposedly is, is not an atheist, is it?

Atheism is not a BELIEF; it is DISBELIEF in the absurd notion that humanity is governed invisibly by a source that exists somewhere in the twilight zone.



### KUDOS AND CONGRATS

In the September 4 issue of the *Times-Picayune*, NOSHA member **Lucy Tierney** was forefront in a photograph accompanying an article about the Labor Day rally in support of the reopening of Charity Hospital. Said Lucy, the real "credit for this good deed should really go to fellow NOSHAN and organizer [of the rally] **Brad Ott**, who read a 3-page speech before the TV cameras." More than two years after Katrina, there remains a paucity of emergency medical care in New Orleans, especially for the indigent. A job well done, Lucy and Brad, and to all the others who joined you at the rally.

NOSHA president **Harry Greenberger** was a guest on the October 17 broadcast of the Andre Trevigne radio show, which runs daily on a local FM station. Harry was invited to discuss atheism in lieu of a new movie to be released soon called "The Golden Compass." The movie is raising the hackles of some religionists because the series of books on which it is based is anti-religion and promotes atheism. The books' and movie's target audience is children, and some church's find it appalling that someone would want to convert children from the word of god. Several NOSHA members who listened to the show say that Harry did a great job in defense of freethought.

Recently listed in the *Times-Picayune* under "Higher Education Notes," NOSHA member **Craig Hood**, Chairman of Loyola's Department of Biological Sciences, was named a fellow by the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Dr. Hood was recognized for combining teaching and research.

### THANKS TO VOLUNTEERS

NOSHA wishes to thank all those who brought refreshments to recent NOSHA meetings. They include Denis Dwyer, Barbara Forrest, Lucy Tierney, Connie Gordon, Martha Boudreaux, Betty Alessandra, Lanny Goldfinch, and Will Hunn. And thanks to all of you who always put a little something extra in the donation basket. It helps defray the costs of the goodies.

**SOLSTICE EVENT AND OTHER  
UPCOMING MEETINGS**

NOSHA’s December 15 meeting is only a week before the winter solstice, so we will take the opportunity to celebrate the shortest day of the year and the return of the sun. The topic/speaker for the meeting is appropriate to the solstice event as well.

Dr. Patrick Lestrade, an astrophysicist from Mississippi State University (and a NOSHA member) will discuss “Gamma-ray bursts and other oddities from space.” The celebration will follow. Please come prepared to be festive. For this one time only, NOSHA meeting has moved up to **1:00 pm**.

The first two meetings of 2008 are scheduled as follows:

January 19 – A representative from Blueprint Louisiana

February 15 – A representative from the Final Exit Network

\* \* \* \* \*

“Religion consists in a set of things which the average man thinks he believes and wishes he was certain of.”

-- Mark Twain

“Science can destroy religion by ignoring it as well as by disproving its tenets. No one ever demonstrated, so far as I am aware, the non-existence of Zeus or Thor – but they have few followers now.”

-- Arthur C. Clarke

**BOOK FOR SALE**

NOSHA member **William Sierichs Jr.** has published a collection of his essays, short commentaries and satires (mostly on religion and politics) from the 1990s, with a contemporary 63-page introduction. ***Constitution-Loving, Anti-Fascist, Patriotic, Anti-Superstition, Really-Angry, Secular Humanist*** (2007) is \$27 for a while directly from Bill, [sierichsw@bellsouth.net](mailto:sierichsw@bellsouth.net), also available from Robb Marks, Bookseller, P.O. Box 350, Rockton IL 61072, and Amazon.com. The book was mostly written for the Shreveport Humanists newsletter (now defunct), but some articles appeared in other publications, notably Farrell Till's "The Skeptical Review" and the African Americans for Humanism newsletter. It includes "The Fellowship of the Constitution," a 43-page, 2004 satire that adapts "The Lord of the Rings" plot/concept to contemporary politics. Autographed copies are available by request. Bill hopes to attend at least one NOSHA meeting soon and can sell and autograph copies then.

The New Orleans Secular Humanist Association (NOSHA) was formed to provide an opportunity for like-minded people to meet and exchange ideas and to promote awareness of secular humanist viewpoints in the community. We are committed to the application of reason and science to the understanding of the universe and to the solving of human problems. We reject efforts to explain the world in supernatural terms and to look outside nature for salvation. We strive to make the public aware of the importance of the separation of church and state, to oppose the teaching of creationism and other religious doctrines in the public schools, and to provide a voice of reason when superstition is presented in the media. We believe in enjoying life here and now, and in cultivating moral excellence. We believe in the fullest realization of the best and noblest we are capable of as human beings.

**To become a friend of THE NEW ORLEANS SECULAR HUMANIST ASSOCIATION, complete, clip, and mail in the following form:**

Check one:  New Member  Renewing Member  Mailing list only  Newsletter by mail

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone and/or e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

**2008 Annual dues are \$15.00.** Make checks payable to “NOSHA” and mail to Connie Gordon, 2509 Giuffrias Ave., Apt. 603, Metairie, LA 70001.

**NOTE: For those of you who receive the newsletter by standard mail, the year for which you have last paid membership dues is reflected in the upper right corner of the mailing label.**

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