



January

2011

The Humanists of Ft Worth meet on the 2nd Wednesday of each month at the Unitarian Universalist building 901 Page Ave at 7 PM

Governor defends tax incentives for religious theme park Says jobs, not religion, at issue



From The Chair

"The Politics at God's Funeral"

This book will be reviewed by our speaker at our January 12 meeting by Dr. Don Jackson. As you may remember from our September meeting when he spoke about the Constitution and its many interpretations over the years, Don is a man of

many talents: a lawyer, a professor of constitutional law, a past board member of state and local Civil Liberties Unions, a staff member for Chief Justice Warren Burger, an author of many books and articles on the subject of law, politics and the protection of human rights, and much, much more.

The author of "Politics at God's Funeral," Michael Harrington, a man who is considered to be a social democrat in the same mold as Eugene Debs and Norman Thomas, poses the question of what may happen now that Marxism has failed to transform society and Christianity to create a peaceful, loving people. His book asks how will people live in the absence of transforming belief systems? A good question, answered in Europe with decent secular social democracies. But what about the U.S.? Is our option only that of living in a materialistic consuming society? Will we be hedonists? Or will we succumb to some new ideology?

FRANKFORT — Gov. Steve Beshear defended state tax incentives that could surpass \$37 million for a religious theme park in Northern Kentucky, saying Wednesday he's happy to lend state support to a business that will bring hundreds of jobs.

State involvement in the \$150 million project brought outrage from groups focused on the separation of church and state, but Beshear said there was nothing "remotely unconstitutional" about the proposal.

"The people of Kentucky didn't elect me governor to debate religion," Beshear said. "They elected me governor to create jobs."

Beshear announced plans for the park, called Ark Encounter, in a Capitol news conference. The centerpiece of the proposed park is a 500-foot-by-75-foot wooden ark built to replicate the biblical Noah's Ark.

The Answers in Genesis group, which started the Creation Museum that opened in Petersburg in May 2007, will handle daily operations of the theme park, expected to be completed by 2014. A Grant County official said it would be built on 800 acres off Interstate 75 south of Williamstown. Ark Encounter will include the ark, live animals, event venues and a children's play area, among other things. The ark will be made of various types of wood and capable of floating.

The project is expected to create more than 900 full- and part-time jobs after its completion and attract 1.6 million visitors in the first year, with the number increasing after five years.

Beshear said the park could have a \$214 million economic impact in the first year and bring \$250 million into the state by the fifth year.

Answers in Genesis' Creation Museum is based on a literal interpretation of the Bible, showing visitors how the world was created in six, 24-hour days 6,000 to 10,000 years ago. It has dinosaurs next to depictions of Adam and Eve.

To Read more:

<http://www.kentucky.com/2010/12/02/1548034/creation-museum-to-get-wooden.html#ixzz16y6EJUVl>

When facism comes to America it will be wrapped in the flag and carrying a cross. Sinclair Lewis

In response to the bus sign posted last month

An anonymous Ft Worth merchant wrote:

This one got me excited enough to finally register and post a comment!

I live in Fort Worth, and while a small business owner, I find most of the population agreeable (if only because my above average level of customer service) I know us atheists are outnumbered 9-1 down here.

The longer I spend down here and the more conversations I have with these people makes me more convinced that the religious folk down here, predominately Christian, are racist, sexist, hypocritical, homophobic, Islamophobic, sexually repressed, and just generally ignorant among some other qualities that disgust me that I'm sure I'm leaving out.

It's becoming harder and harder to find any redeeming qualities in their religious beliefs.

I've learned to get along with most of them, it just comes at the price of not being honest about my atheism.

I hate evangelists. I don't subject my customers to my religious beliefs or lack thereof. I have enough respect to look at it simply as me providing a needed service, regardless of our differences.

I wholeheartedly believe that I would lose enough customers to go out of business if I came out of the atheist closet.

All of my honesty, hard work, and customer service would mean nothing to these people if they found out I was atheist. I feel sorry for these backward people.

It made me excited to see some atheist excitement down here. I plan to look further in to the Dallas-Fort Worth Coalition of Reason.

It's uplifting to know that I can treat these people with courteousness and respect regardless of the fact that they unknowingly despise me and openly despise atheism, what they deem the left, and generally anyone who is different. It's what makes this so touching to me and the message on the bus is spot on.

It's not preachy, it's not trying to convert, it's not speaking badly of any religion. It's simply saying that I can be atheist and still be a considerate, friendly, respectful, intelligent, hard working, moral, contributing member of society. And they find it offensive, it's absurd I tell you!

They fear we have no moral guidelines because we don't believe in the bible and it just emphasizes their ignorance. I believe this is the only life I have to live and it makes everything matter so much more and inspires me to be responsible, better myself, and treat people with kindness.

Christians don't have to convert for all I care. Their beliefs and religious practices have no effect on me until they try to legislate their religious beliefs or feel the need to preach to me. (I also have to mention their non profit status role on the economy).

I grew up Southern Baptist for 18 years, then on to a year of agnosticism, before having a deep heart to heart with a childhood friend attempting to convince me Jesus would ease my burdens. That conversation ended in me laughing hysterically and letting go of all my fears of eternity in hell. I remember that moment very vividly and was a very significant moment in my life. That's much more than I could say of salvation or baptism.

I have enough knowledge and experience to blend in unnoticed, but I hate it. I have to cope with their outward displays of Christianity, and I'm able to do it without contempt. It'd just be nice if they could treat me the same.

Sorry for the rant, but hell yeah Fort Worth!



HARVARD POLITICAL REVIEW

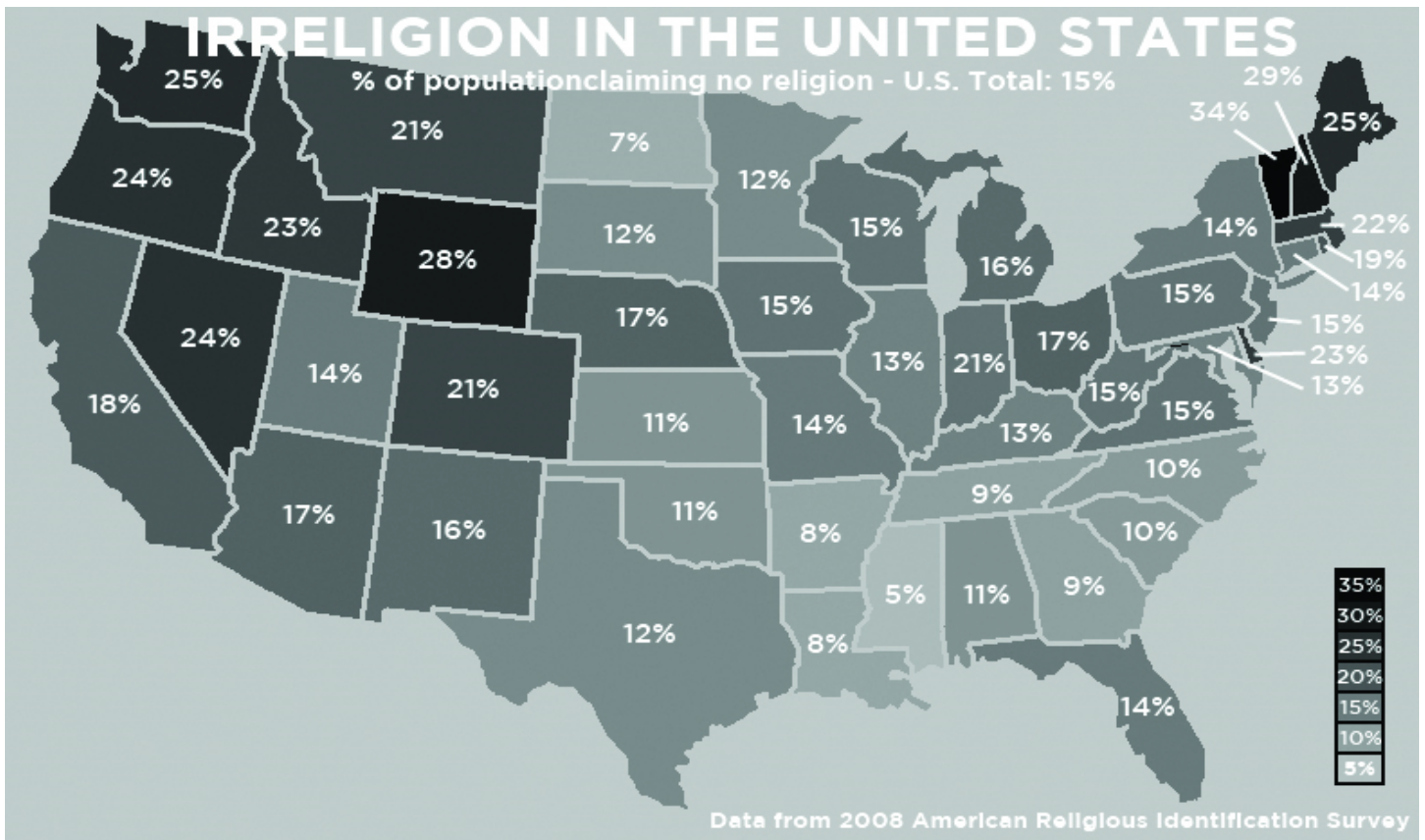
Is God Great? By Sarah Harland-Logan

A New Heyday for American Secularism

On April 10, 2009, the Harvard Secular Society took over Harvard's Memorial Church to present Joss Whedon, the TV producer and director, with the Outstanding Lifetime Achievement Award in Cultural Humanism. Whedon began his acceptance speech by reminding his audience of "nonbelievers" that President Obama had given them "a shout-out during the Inauguration." He insisted that "the important thing is not that we're right ... [but] where do we go from here?"

According to Barry Kosmin, principal researcher of the 2008 American Religious Identification Survey, a "rising tide of secularity" is sweeping through the nation. The proportion of religiously unaffiliated Americans has reached 15 percent, and will likely continue to rise since the unaffiliated are disproportionately young. Secularism faces challenges ahead, including the continued hostility of religious leaders and a lack of internal cohesion, but the movement will continue to grow in influence in this religiously diverse country.

See page 3 for a detailed map indicating secularism in the United States.



In the Dominican Republic-Haiti border. The clinics are in critical need of funds to continue health services for women and children in the area

Your donation will be put directly to use to purchase medicine, prenatal vitamins, nutritional supplements for children, and support for a local manager needed to provide services for hundreds of patients each month. All donations made before December 31 will be matched, up to \$10,000, by an anonymous donor. [Donate now.](#)

For more info go to:
<http://www.humanistcharities.org/index.php>

Crazy People Are Sure God Hates Elizabeth Edwards by Abby Zimet

The hateful loonies of Westboro Baptist 'Church' - motto: God Hates Fags and Anyone Else We Decide He/She Hates For Utterly Unfathomable Reasons - plan to picket Saturday's funeral of Elizabeth Edwards. They say she is in hell for her "smash mouthed assault" on God after her son was killed, and urge all seven of their followers to "run away from all that she was," which, First Amendment be damned, makes us want to do the same with these "people."

"When they were visited from the Most High God with the death of their 16-year-old son, they did not humble themselves before His mighty hand. They reared up in rage, decided they would show God who is boss, and meddled in matters of the womb, resulting in 2 more children -- now motherless."

Today's chuckle

The Truck following the bus shown above, is to refute the sign on the side of the bus that reads "Millions of Americans are good without God" posted by DFWcor.org



Support Humanist Clinics in the Dominican Republic— *and your gift will be matched!* Humanist Charities is accepting donations for the Children of the Border project, led by Harvard biologist Sebastian Velez, which supports two Humanist clinics

Pass the Caribou

stew By MAUREEN DOWD NY-
Times editorial



The doomed caribou gazed calmly across the Alaska tundra at Caribou Barbie.

The female caribou could easily have escaped, since it took the Wasilla huntress six shots, two rifles and some help from her dad to bag her prey. (Giving credence to Levi Johnston's contention that she isn't all that proficient with guns.)

But, inexplicably, the caribou just waited to get gunned down by Sarah Palin, who came across less like a pioneer woman than Private Benjamin with her camo, her French manicured nails, her cap that says (in pink) Girls And Guns, her 72-year-old father and her TLC reality show crew.

Sarah checked her freezer at home before she flew 600 miles to the Arctic, trying to justify her contention that she needs to hunt to eat. Wasn't it already stocked with those halibuts she clubbed and gutted in an earlier show?

"My dad has taught me that if you want to have wild, organic, healthy food," she pontificated, "you're gonna go out there and hunt yourself and fish yourself and you're gonna fill up your freezer."

Does Palin really think the average housewife in Ohio who can't pay her bills is going to load up on ammo, board two different planes, camp out for two nights with a film crew and shoot a caribou so she can feed her family organic food?

It's amazing that Palin patronized Neiman Marcus during the campaign. Couldn't she have spun cloth to sew her own clothes?

Hunting seems more sporting with birds — at least they have a better chance to get away. Unless the hunter is Dick Cheney, who would shoot pheasants that were pen-raised and released from a net to make slaughtering them easier.

The poor caribou in the Arctic Circle, a cousin to Santa's reindeer, had to die so Palin could show off her toughness to voters and try to boost ratings on her show that have slipped since its premiere. (Next Sunday, she's dragging up nine Gosselins to go shooting and camping.)

Sarah's view of America is primitive. You're either a pointy-headed graduate of Harvard Law School or you're eviscerating animals for fun, which she presents as somehow more authentic.

In movies with animals, they often have a line in the credits assuring that no animals were harmed. In "Sarah Palin's Alaska," they should have a line at the end assuring that "almost every living creature involved in this show was harmed."

The caribou that waited too pliantly in the cross hairs is doomed to become stew for Palin and an allegory for politics. The elegant animal standing above the fray, dithering rather than charging at his foes or outmaneuvering them, is Obambi. Even with a rifle aimed at him, he's trying to be the most reasonable mammal in the scene, mammalian bipartisan, and rise above what he sees as empty distinctions between the species so that we can all unite at a higher level of being.

Palin's father advises her to warm up her trigger finger. And trigger-happy Sarah represents the Republicans, who have spent two years taking shots at the president, including potshots, and tormenting him in an effort to bring him down.

The Republicans think they have hurt their quarry on the tax-cut deal, making him look weak and at odds with his party. There's an argument to be made for what the president did, but he doesn't look good doing it.

When all the Democrats are complaining and all the Republicans are happy, it just can't be a good deal for Democrats.

Obama gave up on a big principle, and Democrats showed — again — they can't win the message war. Republicans proved that, while they don't have the House (for now), the Senate or the White House, they're still running things.

Obama used to play poker in the Illinois Legislature, but it's hard to believe. First, he cried uncle to Republicans standing in the corner, holding their breath and turning blue. Then, in his White House press conference, he was defensive, a martyr for the middle class.

He said he must compromise at times as he follows "a North Star." It was odd, given that Palin uses North Star as a code name, her own "city on the hill" reference, and an allusion to God.

My Favorite War By GAIL COLLINS NY Times
op-ed columnist

Well, here's some good news for a change. The Holiday Parade of Lights in Tulsa, Okla., has been saved!

I know you've been worried.

The Tulsa City Council has voted to allow the parade to go forward Saturday night, despite protests against the disappearance of the word "Christmas" from its name.

It's not entirely clear that the council actually could have stopped it, or even whether the parade ever officially *had* Christmas in its name. But Senator James Inhofe of Oklahoma is outraged.

Inhofe was away from home last December, stuck in Washington trying to kill off health care reform. Now he's back, and he's noted a dwindling in the parade's religious angle.

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“I just don’t like what’s going on in America today, all over the country, with the aversion some people seem to have toward Christ,” he said in one of his many interviews explaining that he will no longer ride his horse in any holiday event that isn’t named for Christmas.

Go to it, Senator Inhofe! I love this controversy, and only in part because it diverts Oklahoma’s senior senator from his normal day job of trying to convince the world that global warming doesn’t exist.

We live in a time of so many terrifying, insurmountable problems. It’s comforting to return to arguing about whether the nation’s moral fiber is endangered if Tulsa downplays the religious aspects of a parade full of Santa Clauses that is currently sponsored by a popular downtown pub.

Actually, the “war on Christmas” controversy has been a little muted this year, and I’ve missed it. Even the public hearing in Tulsa looked thinly attended, as if the issue at hand was charter revision instead of the preservation of the Christian half of our Judeo-Christian heritage.

The American Family Association is still checking up on major retailers and informing us that while Bed Bath & Beyond is “for Christmas,” Foot Locker is “against.” **And a coalition of concerned clergy in Fort Worth is calling residents to boycott the transit system because someone purchased ads on four buses that say “Millions of Americans Are Good Without God.” (editors bold type, not Ms Collins)**

It is my impression that people who ride buses in Texas don’t have a whole lot of other options. Really, concerned clergy, do you think they’re doing it to cut their carbon footprints?

But until Tulsa, the biggest conflict was here in the New York area, where a billboard war erupted after the American Atheists forked over \$20,000 for a sign that showed a picture of a Nativity scene and the message: “You know it’s a myth. This Season, Celebrate Reason!” The Catholic League then erected one on the other side of the Lincoln Tunnel that retorts: “You Know It’s Real. This Season, Celebrate Jesus.”

In this battle for the hearts and minds of commuters, the atheists seem to have been overly belligerent, although it is understandable that they get a little testy this time of year. If you complain about Christmas overkill because you are, say, a Muslim or a Jew, the general response is a quick hug and a nervous affirmation that all faiths deserve respect. But atheists do not get that many hugs, and perhaps it is beginning to tell on them.

We are still enjoying the continuing fights about What To Call The Tree. In one of the most notable screeds of the season, Gary Bauer, the former Republican presidential candidate and

social conservative, appeared to be saying that officials in Portland, Ore., who named the annual tree-lighting ceremony “Tree Lighting” were doing the work of the would-be Christmas tree bomber. “Radical Islam’s secular enablers have been driving Christianity from the public square for decades,” he wrote.

Bauer said in a phone interview that he was not suggesting that trying to blow up downtown Portland and secularizing the tree lighting were equivalent.

“To me, it was just a nice rhetorical way to get people to read the column,” he said.

I am in sympathy with such sentiments since I would do just about everything short of bomb threats to get people to read a column. I also have a soft spot in my heart for Bauer and I am sorry he is not planning to run for president again in 2012 because the moment he fell off the platform during a preprimary pancake flipping contest in New Hampshire was one of my personal campaign high points.

But about Tulsa. For years the parade was sponsored by the American Electric Power-Public Service Company of Oklahoma, which is mercifully known as P.S.O. “We always referred to it as the P.S.O. Parade of Lights,” a spokesman for the utility told The Tulsa World. When P.S.O. backed out, a downtown pub named McNellie’s agreed to underwrite the Holiday Parade of Lights. You’d think people would be grateful that the new sponsor didn’t want to call it the Happy Hour Parade of Lights, or Atomic Chicken Wings Special. But no.

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