

The Humanist Society of the Suncoast

A Socratic society dedicated to the proposition that the fully examined life is well worth living.

Member organization of the [Humanists of Florida](#), the [AHA](#), [COR](#), and [CSH](#). Find us at www.suncoasthumanist.com

Our program for June 5th...

The Unexpected Connection: Scientology - Confucianism!

With *John Kieffer*

John Kieffer has recently made a unique discovery in the study of new religious movements. He has found that Scientology, a new religion announced by L. Ron Hubbard in 1951, contains, in large part, concepts that are similar to Confucianism. Though Hubbard admits being influenced by eastern traditions such as Buddhism and Daoism in shaping his worldview, he specifically discounts the teachings of Confucius as relevant in this regard. However, through the methodology of comparative analysis, Kieffer has uncovered significant and numerous instances of similarities between the two religions ranging from their worldviews to concomitant Salvationist theologies. Within these areas, his presentation will consider aspects of cosmogony; the composition of human beings; the source of good and evil; and the methods for, and ontology of, self-transformation.



John Kieffer is a former member of the Church of Scientology who, from 1985-1990, received and trained in Scientology's spiritual regimen called auditing. In 2003, he enrolled in the Religious Studies undergraduate program at the University of South Florida receiving a Bachelor of Arts degree in 2005 and, in 2009, a Master of Arts in this academic field. His graduate work included the successful submission of his thesis, *Finding Confucianism in Scientology: a Comparative Analysis*, which is, in part, presented in this lecture. He is the co-author of a chapter in the book, *Scientology*, edited by James R. Lewis, Oxford University Press, 2009. Kieffer is a decorated U.S. Army officer having served in infantry combat in Vietnam and currently serves Florida's freethought community as the president of Atheists of Florida.

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June, 2010

**Find the
Humanist Society
on Facebook!**

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Be a Friend!

Thanks to Bob Byrch!

**Please join us
for this
free and open
discussion.**

**On Saturday,
June 5th at
2 PM:
Clearwater East
Library
2251 Drew St.
Clearwater**

Following our meet-
ing, many of us will
dine together at the

**Farmer Boy
Restaurant**
at 2129 Drew St. just 2
blocks west of
Library.

The Florida Humanist Conference of 2010

Over 175 people from all around the state and a few other places came together for what became one of the best Conferences we have had thus far. The only flaw emerged from the fact that the meeting rooms were too small for the unexpectedly large crowd who showed up. But of course, this was also a good thing in that it showed how marked is the increase and participation in Humanism.

There was in fact a constant buzz of ideas being exchanged and challenged, along with the joy of old friendships being renewed. The leadership of many major national organizations were in the crowd as well. All in all, most found it to be a thoroughly invigorating experience; one from which we came away with many new ideas on making humanism live.

Jim Peterson



Bring as many boxed and canned food items as you can to this meeting.

With the important help of Glenn Paul and Tampa bay Harvest, we can do our part to help relieve significant human suffering in our area. **It's the Humanist thing to do!**

The following letter appeared in the St. Pete Times on May 2nd.:

All religions have only one thing in common: Humanism. Strip away all the supernatural and myth, all that remains is helping all of us to lead honest, helping, compassionate lives. Thomas Jefferson did just that by paring down the Christian Bible to just a few pages when he wrote, "The Jefferson Bible."
(See page 3 for another member letter)



Frank Prah

Our Website All newsletters from the past two years are there, as well as pictures of some of us. (We need more!) <http://suncoasthumanist.com>



Humanists work to build a world in which happiness is the enduring criterion of social policy.

What do Humanists Want?

1. To extend a human centered approach to the critical problems of life and society.
2. To encourage attitudes of kindness, compassion, tolerance and a loving generosity in human relationships, and in our treatment of all life. These attitudes help us to see ourselves in the lives of others and encourage appreciation for the remarkable diversity of human culture and experience.
3. To develop and popularize the skills of creative and critical thinking that empower people to challenge prejudice, superstition and irrationality in every area of life. Such empowerment enables the individual to reach the highest levels of achievement.
4. To exalt those artistic and imaginative expressions of life which have been the source of the greatest pleasure and enlightenment, and which reflect compelling human truths. Through music, literature, art, dance, and other expressions, we embrace the essence of the human spirit.
5. To explore the grounds of ethics and morality within the unfolding history of our evolving culture. Such knowledge will enable us to become effective protagonists for the happiness of the individual person. JP

Our monthly social dinner, The Moveable Feast for June will be at: **Savory Restaurant**

located at 12881 Walsingham Road at the east end of a small strip near a big Baptist church in Largo on Sunday June 13th at 5:00PM. Walsingham is an extension of Ulmerton and this red and yellow colored restaurant is located at the junction of the two with a bright sign out front.

The Savory is a rather low priced eatery offering everything from salads, sandwiches, eggs, pizza to early bird dinners and plenty of Italian dishes - a good range.

To confirm your reservation, call or write Glenn Paul at kpaul29@tampabay.rr.com or call 727-595-3347 by Saturday June 12th .

Laugh Lines Truths For Mature Humans

1. I think part of a best friend's job should be to immediately clear your computer history if you die.
2. Nothing sucks more than that moment during an argument when you realize you're wrong.
3. I totally take back all those times I didn't want to nap when I was younger.
4. There is great need for a sarcasm font.
5. How the hell are you supposed to fold a fitted sheet?
6. Was learning cursive really necessary?
8. Obituaries would be a lot more interesting if they told you how the person died.
9. I can't remember the last time I wasn't at least kind of tired.
10. Bad decisions make good stories.
11. You never know when it will strike, but there comes a moment at work when you know that you just aren't going to do anything productive for the rest of the day.
12. Can we all just agree to ignore whatever comes after Blue Ray? I don't want to have to restart my collection...again.

Thanks to **Connie Purdum**

HUMANIST SOCIETY OF THE SUNCOAST

A chapter of the American Humanist Assoc.
the Association of Secular Humanist Societies

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Meets Sept., December, April

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~*~*~*~*~

Jim Butler Publisher.
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Have an Idea, opinion or essay you want to share?
E-Mail us at:
jim@suncoasthumanist.com

Join us in our effort to ignite critical thinking, and embrace reason, & compassion in life.

~ Join or Renew ~

**The Humanist Society
of the Suncoast.**

- ☞ Trial -3 month- free news
- ☞ Regular -\$25. **New! 2010 only**
- ☞ Reg. Couple -\$30.
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Name: _____

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(Privacy respected)

Send to: Glenn Paul, Treasurer
Suncoast Humanist Society
2507 First St. #E
Indian Rocks Beach
33785-3010

Published Humanist Letters:

Church School's ugly act against a child

A famous biblical quotation reads, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God" (Luke 18:16). Little children, that is, who are not besmirched by association with loving lesbian mothers?

How dismaying to read that a Roman Catholic school in Massachusetts has refused to enroll an 8-year-old son of a gay couple. One is appalled at the ugly mean-mindedness of any institution that projects its disapproval of parents onto an innocent child.

Come to think of it, children play a very minor part in the church's affairs. The flaming publicity surrounding the abuse of little boys and girls by priests has, for the Vatican, always centered on the harm done to the church — to the church's image, we should say. All the pious words of Pope Benedict XVI concerning "sins" and "justice" point to the church as victim.

Has the great founder of the church changed his mind about representatives of "the kingdom of God"?

Abigail Ann Martin, *Brandon*

As published in the St. Pete Times Wednesday May 19th 2010

Ed note: We are extremely pleased to have Abigail among our most active and astute members.

Our Humanist Society is actively looking for interesting speakers with novel and well thought out ideas on just about any subject of interest to a general audience - even if not from a distinctly Humanist perspective.

Let me know if you would like to recommend a person or organization.

Call Jim at (813) 531-8138 or E-mail me at: jamestp@suncoasthumanist.com

Have an opinion, idea, or essay that needs to get vented? This newsletter is your space.

For editorial consideration for the next issue, see Jim Peterson at: jamestp@suncoasthumanist.com

Share your favorite restaurant.

Glenn Paul wants to improve the selection of restaurants in which we have our monthly social dinners. Our main criteria for selection is:

1. Location—center county preferred
2. Cost—low to moderate accommodates everybody.
3. Room—to accommodate up to 25
4. Ambience—not too noisy at 5PM.
5. Food—good.

Contact Glenn at:

kpaul29@tampabay.rr.com
or call 727-595-3347



Read Humanist Periodicals:

The Humanist, Free Inquiry, Free Mind, Humanist Perspectives, Skeptical Inquirer, Secular Humanist Bulletin, The Skeptic, Essays in Humanism, and many others.

Humanist Quotes

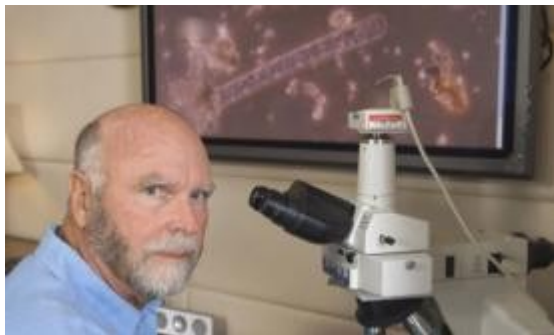
"Science is about disbelief. It accepts that all knowledge is provisional and that any theory might in principle be disproved. Some theories are better established than others: the earth is probably not flat, babies are almost certainly not brought by storks, and men and dinosaurs are unlikely to have appeared on earth within the past few thousand years. Even so, nothing is sacred. In 1905 classical physics collapsed after a seemingly trivial observation about glowing gases and the same is potentially true for all other scientific theories."

Professor Steven Jones, London

See
Steve Brown's Thoughts
on [page 7](#)

Dr. Craig Venter Creates Synthetic Life Form

Craig Venter and his team have built the genome of a bacterium from scratch and incorporated it into a cell to make what they call the world's first synthetic life form



The controversial feat, which has occupied 20 scientists for more than 10 years at an estimated cost of \$40m, was described by one researcher as "a defining moment in [biology](#)".

[Craig Venter](#), the pioneering US geneticist behind the experiment, said the achievement heralds the dawn of a new era in which new life is made to benefit humanity, starting with bacteria that churn out biofuels, soak up carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and even manufacture vaccines.

However critics, including some religious groups, condemned the work, with one organization warning that artificial organisms could escape into the wild and cause environmental havoc or be turned into biological weapons. Others said Venter was playing God.

The new organism is based on an existing bacterium that causes mastitis in goats, but at its core is an entirely synthetic genome that was constructed from chemicals in the laboratory.

The single-celled organism has four "watermarks" written into its DNA to identify it as synthetic and help trace its descendants back to their creator, should they go astray.

"We were ecstatic when the cells booted up with all the watermarks in place," Dr Venter told the Guardian. "It's a living species now, part of our planet's inventory of life."

Dr Venter's team developed a new code based on the four letters of the genetic code, G, T, C and A, that allowed them to draw on the whole alphabet, numbers and punctuation marks to write the watermarks.

Anyone who cracks the code is invited to email an address written into the DNA.

The research is reported online today in the journal [Science](#).

"This is an important step both scientifically and philosophically," Dr Venter told the journal. "It has certainly changed my views of definitions of life and how life works."

The team now plans to use the synthetic organism to work out the minimum number of genes needed for life to exist. From this, new microorganisms could be made by bolting on additional genes to produce useful chemicals, break down pollutants, or produce proteins for use in vaccines.

[Julian Savulescu](#), professor of practical [ethics](#) at Oxford University, said: "Venter is creaking open the most profound door in humanity's history, potentially peeking into its destiny. He is not merely copying life artificially ... or modifying it radically by genetic engineering. He is going towards the role of a god: creating artificial life that could never have existed naturally."

This is "a defining moment in the history of biology and biotechnology", [Mark Bedau](#), a philosopher at Reed College in Portland, Oregon, told Science. Dr Venter became a controversial figure in the 1990s when he pitted his former company, [Celera Genomics](#), against the publicly funded effort to sequence the human genome, the [Human Genome Project](#). Venter had already applied for patents on more than 300 genes, raising concerns that the company might claim intellectual rights to the building blocks of life.

Humanism and Art:

The Essential Relationship

The most famous (or notorious) Humanist today is probably Richard Dawkins, Oxford Professor for the Public Understanding of Science. He is a zoologist by training and he uses his knowledge of evolutionary biology as the basis of his opposition to religion in general. His television series, "The Root of All Evil", catalogued the baleful effects of religion throughout the world. His book, "The God Delusion", has achieved remarkable sales for a non-fiction polemic.

The success of Dawkins's campaign has had an unfortunate effect for Humanism. It has concentrated the public perception of Humanism on the Science v Religion debate and it has led to an identification of Humanism with Science. But there is more to Humanism than that. Humanism is not simply a world-view which scientists have created for us, based on their researches into geology, biology and paleontology. The origins of the Humanist outlook can be traced back to philosophers of Ancient Greece like Epicurus and Democritus. Furthermore, there is a whole history of Humanism in the Arts which is being neglected because of the way the current controversy is narrowly focused on scientific explanation versus religious faith.

The term, "humanism", with a lower case 'h', has been used in critical writing about art and literature since the 19th century. It is used to refer to the restoration of non-religious subjects and themes into art and literature following the Renaissance. Prior to that, in the Middle Ages, European culture was thoroughly Christian. Painters produced countless versions of the Madonna and Child, the Crucifixion and other Biblical scenes. Theatre companies performed Mystery, Morality and Miracle plays, which illustrated religious doctrines. Few people could read, the Bible was still in Latin and monks produced illuminated copies by hand. The Middle Ages was a time of Christian cultural hegemony.

The Renaissance changed all that. [Breughel](#) and the [Dutch Masters](#) began to paint scenes from everyday life. Theatre companies put on plays which told stories, often from ancient Rome or Greece, which had no religious component. Works of literature began to circulate which drew on classical ideas of Comedy and Tragedy and ignored the doctrinal imperatives of the Church. The medieval assumption that all meaning in art derived from Christian doctrine gave way to the realization that ordinary human life provided an equally valid source of meaning and purpose. The humanist revolution in the arts during the Renaissance can be seen as a counterpart of the scientific revolution led by Kepler, Copernicus, Bruno and Galileo. In both cases the rediscovery of writings from classical Greece and Rome, the 'renaissance' proper, encouraged a move away from the closed medieval world of Christian beliefs. The invention of the printing press enabled the free flow of texts and ideas, which the Church could not control, despite the ruthless efforts of the Inquisition. The Protestant Reformation, though severely anti-art in some sects, showed that the dominance of the Church could be challenged.

Continued on page 5

Art & Humanism Continued from page 4...

And affluence, derived from the proliferation of windmills and merchant shipping, created a class of people who could afford art and literature for their own purposes, without regard to religious propaganda.

We are the inheritors of that humanist revolution. Christianity is still the dominant religion of Europe and the West, but our culture is profoundly secular. The paintings of Breughel and the Dutch Masters established a realist style of art which is still practised and appreciated today. If we think of an average evening's television as the modern descendant of the Miracle plays that people watched in the village square, then it is clear that the drama which we watch has rejected the religious purposes which dominated medieval drama. The stories on television are humanist in that they present ordinary human beings dealing with issues and problems, without divine interventions and miracles providing the solution. The same is true for the literature that we read: most of it is simply humanist and only a tiny percentage invokes God or any other deity.

The humanist revolution in the arts and Humanism (with a capital H), the naturalistic outlook which dispenses with gods, the after-life and the supernatural, are related. The Renaissance humanists were still largely Christian, but their break with Christian hegemony paved the way for a complete rejection of religious ideology by later Humanists. Creating works of art, whether paintings, plays, poems or novels, which expressed their own meanings without any need for religious underpinning, showed that human life itself provides us with all the meaning we need. Later Humanists have built upon that foundation and established a world-view and an ethic on that basis.



HFA E-NEWS

An Electronic News Update from
The Humanists of Florida Association

HFA to plan mechanism for influencing public policy

The Humanists of Florida Association is set to consider how it will best devise a mechanism to represent Humanist, Secular and Freethought positions that will influence public policy in Florida. During an interactive session on Sunday at the conference, former president of CFI-Tallahassee Gary Whittenberger asked assembled participants if we should pursue this course, and a unanimous show of hands responded, "Yes!" At a meeting after the conference, board members identified HFA as the most likely and promising lead organization for this cause.



Humanists of Florida Association
Reason and Compassion in Action

Want to be a more active Humanist?

Being an active agent of social change in many ways defines the practical meaning of Humanism. Despite the vast numbers of us on this planet, all too few actually are involved in making life better for all of us. Especially if you are retired, or have leisure, you should consider expanding the range of your positive involvement in the lives of others.

Glenn Paul has been a stalwart of social/political activism in behalf a great many causes. He could sure use some help in his capacity as Social planning director, publisher, and all around doer of good deeds. If you have the time, interest, and a small amount of energy to devote to any of the forgoing, please contact Glenn and offer your help. He wants to continue as treasurer, but even here he could use a little help. Contact Glenn at: kpaul29@tampabay.rr.com or by phone at 727-595-3347.

HFA member Arthur Jackson from Silicon Valley wrote: "If you have an hour for a Humanist Sermon regarding Darwin, here is an opportunity brought to you from the Humanist Community in Silicon Valley's weekly Humanist Forum. Dr. John van Wyhe discusses the topic, Why did Darwin Really Give up Christianity." <http://vimeo.com/9289445>



Paul Kurtz Resigns Center for Inquiry Board Statement:

Amherst, N.Y. (May 18, 2010)—The Board of Directors of the Center for Inquiry, the world's leading and largest organization promoting humanism and skepticism, issued the following statement today: The board will accept Dr. Paul Kurtz's resignation as chairman emeritus and as a member of the board:

The board sincerely thanks Paul Kurtz for his decades of service to the Center for Inquiry and its affiliates. The board deeply respects Dr. Kurtz and his work and knows that this organization will always be associated with his efforts on its behalf. Dr. Kurtz founded and led our organization and helped it thrive. Much of CFI's success is due to Paul Kurtz's inspiration and leadership.

Our success is also due in no small part to the efforts of CFI's dedicated staff, its many skilled volunteers, and its generous financial supporters. CFI has never been a one-person operation.

At Paul Kurtz's behest, CFI began years ago to organize a leadership transition. Moreover, in recent years the board had concerns about Dr. Kurtz's day-to-day management of the organization. In June 2008, the board appointed Dr. Ronald A. Lindsay president and CEO; in June 2009, the board elected Richard Schroeder chairman, with Dr. Kurtz moving to chairman emeritus. During this two-year transition, CFI continued to hold a rigorous schedule of more than 110 national and international events, to develop its grassroots network, and to advocate effectively for humanism and skepticism.

As a result of this transition, CFI is well-prepared to move forward into the next phase of its institutional life, confident that the organization will remain at the forefront of secular humanism and skepticism.



Ed. Note: Paul Kurtz is a much honored and beloved figure in the world Humanist movement. He is the author of innumerable books on Humanism, ethics, and philosophy, founder of not only CFI and the Council for Secular Humanism, and leader of the skeptical movement, but also the founder of Prometheus Press, the world's largest Humanist publishing house. This is no small accomplishment for a single person.

He can be assured that his voice will continue to resonate through the humanist movement for many years to come, even as his organizational duties become less burdensome.

Jim Peterson

Meet Board Member,

Robert (Bob) Byrch



Recently retired with over 31 years of diverse industry and leadership experience, most recently providing guidance and direction as President and CEO for Private Cable Systems, LLC, a Florida based innovative provider of integrated broadband communication solutions to private residential and commercial properties. **President, CEO and Founder of over 12 diversified businesses with between 101-1,000 Employees** (took one Public). The youngest Insurance Company President in Canadian history. (North Canadian Insurance Company). Born, raised and educated in the UK. Cambridge University Matriculation (3 A Levels) History, Economics and Art; Insurance Institute of Canada Associates Degree in Insurance Company Management; BS, Business Management, Boise, Idaho. British Army Veteran. Conversational ability in French, German, Filipino. Member Society of Cable and Television Engineers, Past Director of Independent Multifamily Communications Council, Washington, DC; Past Executive VP, Canadian Board of Marine Underwriters (CBMU); Past Chairman, Hull Committee, CBMU; Past President, Toronto Marine Loss Group; Director, Faircrest Homeowners Association. Bob is married with two children and two grandchildren. Bob joined the British Humanist Association, as a teenager in 1962 and is currently a member of Brights; The Humanists of Florida Association; The Humanist Society of the Suncoast and The Free Inquiry Group of Southwest Florida in addition to other progressive groups.



Some Happy Talk

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I was lured recently to take part in an online discussion group organized and moderated by Michael Dirda, The Washington Post's book editor, who asked members to name books that on reading would transform any mood or state of mind they were in and presto! change-o! make them H-A-P-P-Y even in desert island solitude.

Just like me, I had nothing worthwhile to say so I popped right up.

The truth is I don't think I've ever chosen a book to read in order to make me happy. I'm more likely to choose a book to reflect the mood I'm already in.

But if I were to choose a book to elevate an already cheerful state, any screenplay of a Marx Bros. movie would fill the bill.

I might also go back to the Thorne Smith novels I read in my mid-to-late teens, for their gloriously irreverent attitude toward relations between the sexes and their elements of surreality. Smith is most well-known for "Topper," but "Night Life of the Gods," "Skin and Bones," "The Glorious Pool," "The Stray Lamb," "Rain in the Doorway" and (especially) "The Bishop's Jaeger's" are all joyous.

I would also be fond of Evelyn Waugh's "Vile Bodies" (terrific comedy as I recall, recently made into a vile movie -- ah, and that was one of two novels I once wanted to make movies of myself, when I had that kind of tic) and his African novels, "Black Mischief" and "Scoop," the first of which in particular is the opposite of what today would be "politically correct." The male protagonist winds up eating his amour, literally, in what he doesn't know is cannibal stew.

If ever I want a "feel-good" book, I would pick up either or both novels written in the mid-80s about young women who make it not simply as major league baseball players, but as a star, "She's on First" by Barbara Gregorich (who also authored a nonfiction book about women in baseball) and "Can't Miss" by Michael Bowen. They take "making it against all odds" to the extreme (a few years ago I watched the finest women's baseball players in the country, recruited by a famous rightwing brewery family to play professionally as the Colorado Silver Bullets against independent professional and semi-pro men's teams) lose a spring-training game in Florida something like 9-0 to a nondescript junior college team from Wisconsin.

Another way to feel good, if not to "get happy" is to reread a book that was important in your life at some point and find that it still resonates (and I've been disappointed with some that I've given a go). Since I'm in my eighth decade, that gives me a lot of space to roam..

Some that I'd look at it for that reason go back to age 9 ("Rustab: The Story of an Afghan Hound" and the pre-teen years (the "Tarzan" novels). Then in my teens would be S.J. Perelman short stories and vignettes, "The Saint" series by Leslie Charteris, the aforementioned Thorne Smith Novels and "King Lear" (!) moving on to surly youth "Earth Abides" and "Sheep Rock" by George R. Stewart, "Player Piano" and "Sirens of Titan" by Kurt Vonnegut, "Ape and Essence" by Aldous Huxley," and then in what passes to be maturity "Stranger in a Strange Land" and some other novels by Robert Heinlein, the many alternative family novels by Robert Rimmer starting with "The Rebellion of Yale Marratt" and "The Harrad Experiment" and "The Southpaw" by Mark Harris (best known for "Bang the Drum Slowly), probably my favorite baseball novel.

Most of my reading in recent years has been nonfiction, leavened by such as Robert B. Parker "detective" novels, which I read mainly for the repartee and pointedly idiosyncratic characterization. In general, I appreciate character more than narrative in book or film.

So Suncoasters, what do you read (or do) -- within legal bounds -- to get H-A-P-P-Y.

I started this column hoping not to be a solo artiste, but to get a chorus going. C'mon, let's put the "ist" in humanist, whatever that means -- and don't ask me what it means..

Steve Brown

Atheists instrumental in eliminating invocations at graduation ceremony

TAMPA, Fla.— Acting swiftly on a parent’s concern about prayers that were to be included in her son’s high school graduation ceremony, Atheists of Florida successfully negotiated with Hillsborough County school officials to compel them to comply with laws prohibiting such religious rituals at school events.

On Wednesday, May 19, the parent contacted the atheist organization when she learned that Alonso High School principle, Louis Diaz, would disregard her appeal to remove the invocation from the graduation program. Following discussions the next day between Atheists of Florida attorney and school officials, Mr. Diaz reversed his position. Though printed materials that included the word “invocation” had already been printed and delivered, he assured the group’s attorney that there would not be any religious message and that a non-religious poem would be read instead.

Upon learning of the change, the parent, who wishes to remain unidentified, stated, “I am appreciative that the school was considerate of our family’s concerns and we are now looking forward to our son’s upcoming graduation ceremony.” John Kieffer, the group’s president commented, “This is what we do: Atheists of Florida is there to safeguard the rights of Florida’s atheists, such as the family in this case. Moreover, I commend Mr. Diaz and school officials for acting promptly and professionally to acknowledge the civil rights of our community.”

The Alonso High School graduation event is scheduled to be held at the University of South Florida “Sundome” facility at 3pm, June 3, 2010. News Rel. AoF 5/20

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Ed Note: AoF has achieved unusual success lately in becoming the area’s most high profile advocate for church state separation.. The Humanist Society fully supports this activity and urges all our members to be as active as they can in attending local government meetings and other official functions where breaches of the first amendment still occur with some regularity. Only in acting together can the American people fully embrace the limitless possibilities of freedom outlined in our Bill of Rights. JP

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Take a stand on Florida's Anti-gay Adoption Bias

The ACLU invites you to take a stand against Florida's ban on adoption by gay men and lesbians. **Gain the information and skills necessary to change the hearts and minds of your friends, neighbors, and communities at two free events** on June 18th and 19th, presented by the *American Civil Liberties Union, Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation, Family Equality Council, St. Pete Pride, and Equality Florida.*

TOWN HALL MEETING

When: Friday, June 18th, 7-8:30 p.m.

Where: King of Peace MCC Church (3150 5th Ave. North, St. Petersburg, Florida)

Panel Discussion Featuring: Shelbi Day, (ACLU-FL LGBT Advocacy Project Staff Attorney), Martin Gill (ACLU plaintiff in lawsuit to overturn adoption ban), and Nadine Smith (Equality Florida Executive Director). ACLU-FL Director of Communications Brandon Hensler will moderate a panel discussion about Florida's adoption ban, the ACLU's legal challenge, and past and current legislative efforts to overturn the ban. Q&A to follow.