

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

Six Fixes to Democracy

Former political consultant, and current member of the Humanist Society,
Matt Cooper will talk about the state of democracy globally today, and where the concept may have lost its way in the US.

Democracy, or perhaps Theocracy, or perhaps both, may be coming soon to much of the middle east. Included will be proposed solutions for gerrymandering, filibustering, special interest influence, unpopular winning candidates and other shortcomings, along with lots of time for discussion."

The aim is to deepen understanding of the issues, the personalities, and the sources of the discontent now boiling over on our television screens every night.

Humanist Society of the Suncoast Board

will have a regular meeting on Saturday, March 5th at 12:45 PM. Members are invited to attend at the Library. Submissions for the agenda will be accepted until March 4th. Send to jim@suncoasthumanist.com

Board elections will be held in April. Please consider running!

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

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

Following our meeting, many of us will dine and argue together at the
Farmer Boy Restaurant
at 2129 Drew St. just 2 blocks west of Library.

Please support the Humanist Society

And don't Forget...



Tampa Bay Harvest Please...

**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.

This year's goal: 1000 pounds. **It's the Humanist thing to do!**

Coordinator, Glenn Paul says that Tampa Bay Harvest food deliveries in the past year - statistics - TB Harvest delivered 2,765,517 pounds of food to 220 agencies who feed the hungry in Pinellas and Hillsborough counties last year. That's 5,531,000 meals to feed the hungry by TBH's calculations.

Volume 20 No. 3

March, 2011

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.
- 👉 Reg. Couple -\$30.
- 👉 Life -\$200.
- 👉 Life Couple -\$250.
- 👉 Limited income -\$10.

Name: _____

Address -if new: _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone:(____) _____

E-mail: _____
(Privacy respected)

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



Help Pakistan, Haiti, Chile, etc.
through secular charity.

**Now, Find the Humanist
Society on [Facebook!](#)
Be a Friend!
Thanks to Bob Byrch!**



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 March will be at:

Ivory Mandarin Bistro

5 PM March 20th
2192 Main St. (S.R.580),
Dunedin, FL 34698 (in Coastal Plaza, 1/4 miles
West of Countryside Mall) Phone: (727) 734-3998
A wide variety of choices. The prices begin at \$8.

Please reserve your place at the table by
March 19th with **Carolyn Frase**. Use email
frasec@aol.com or phone 727-533-2279.

Laugh Lines:

- 1) I asked God for a bike, but I know God doesn't work that way. So I stole a bike and asked for forgiveness. Not sure if I got it, but I do have the bike.
- 2) Do not argue with an idiot. He will drag you down to his level and beat you with experience.
- 3) I want to die peacefully in my sleep, like my grandfather. Not screaming and yelling like the passengers in his car.
- 4) The last thing I want to do is hurt you. But it's still on the list.
- 5) Light travels faster than sound. This is why some people appear bright until you hear them speak.
- 6) If I agreed with you, we'd both be wrong.
- 7) We never really grow up; we only learn how to act in public.
- 8) War does not determine who is right -- only who is left
- 9) Knowledge is knowing a tomato is a fruit; Wisdom is not putting it in a fruit salad.
- 10) The early bird might get the worm, but the second mouse gets the cheese.
- 12) Evening news is where they begin with 'Good evening,' and then proceed to tell you why it isn't.
- 13) To steal ideas from one person is plagiarism. To steal from many is research.
- 14) A bus station is where a bus stops. A train station is where a train stops. My desk is a work station.
- 15) Dolphins are so smart that within a few weeks of captivity, they can train people to stand on the very edge of the pool and throw them fish.

Thanks to **Connie Purdom**

HUMANIST SOCIETY OF THE SUNCOAST

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

Board of Directors

Meets Sept., December, April

Don (Ace) Acenbrack
Steve Brown, Secy.
Jim Butler
Robert Byrch
Bob Collette, Vice Pres.
Mark Kligman
Glenn Paul, treasurer
Jim Peterson, President
Mark Winterbottom

~*~*~*~*~

Jim Butler Publisher.

Jim Peterson, Editor

Have an Idea, opinion or essay
you want to share?

E-Mail us at:

jim@suncoasthumanist.com

Challenges in our future.

As a result of the recent November Elections, the Humanist community in Florida, and its many allies, face a situation of unprecedented deterioration in many aspects of everyday life. Education, environment, business regulation, finance, and politics are all in play in a great contest between the radical right and its reactionary agenda, and an enlightened vision of how the greatest good might be served in the interest of the greatest number within the context of a rapidly growing understanding of the limits of traditional methods of creating everything needed to satisfy the essentials of a good life.

The challenge for everyone is to our imagination, rationality, and the will to engage in public dialog to persuade our fellow citizens to explore new paths. It won't be easy, but it is necessary. **Jim Peterson**

Beware the Technocrats

3

by **Lula Dovi**

How does it strike you when a knowledgeable author writes about “what the robots want?” This kind of ominous reference appeared recently in a Nation Magazine book review, January 10/17 issue. Reviewer Paul Duguid was writing about *What Technology Wants*, by Kevin Kelly who also previously wrote *Out of Control*(1994).

How do we answer to the following quote from the review? “We do live in a world of increasingly autonomous technology. Machines have a speed and calculative power that humans cannot rival. Kelly sees these autonomous technologies as higher states of evolution to which he wants us to cede choices and decisions. But in so doing, we are also and more speciously ceding responsibility...When computers crash the stock market, when drones kill civilians or when oil platforms explode, killing oil workers and destroying the environment, it should not be acceptable to shrug our shoulders and say, That’s what technology wanted...though ensuing choices may not be ours, responsibility for the choices and their consequences is.”

In his last paragraphs Duguid suspects that governmental policies which powerful technocratic candidates (including a recent array of former CEO’s of large companies) “would cater less to the wants of technology than to those of technocrats, especially the ones who have amassed large fortunes. What they want won’t be what the rest of us want, or need.”

Lula Dovi is a member of the society

The World Future Society Predictions for 2025

Forecast #6 Invention Becomes Automated—

Tomorrow’s inventors won’t toil away in workshops painstakingly building, testing and refining their creations. Instead, the Edisons of the next decade will spend their days writing descriptions of the problems they want to solve, and then hand those descriptions to computers to work out the solutions. This technology has already designed a successful antenna for a NASA space mission and invented innovative consumer products. It promises to spark a revolution in innovation and allow non-technical people to become inventors.

Ed. Note. But will it allow technical “minds” to become people? Who benefits? JP

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, idea,

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

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

Share your favorite restaurant.

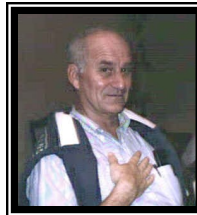


Carolyn Frase

has graciously taken over as chair of the social committee. She welcomes your comments and suggestions for future venues for our s mid-month dinner.

Frasec@aol.com

Many thanks to
Glenn Paul
for all of his work.



Read Humanist Periodicals:

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

Humanist Quotes

Humanism is an approach in study, philosophy, or practice that focuses on human values and concerns.

Man creates all value, even religion, and is the nexus of all value.

Wikipedia February 2011

Read
The insouciant, vexatious thoughts
of Steve Brown on page 5



An Electronic News Update from The Humanists of Florida Association

Anti-choice protesters visit FL universities

The fundamentalist “Center for Bio-Ethical Reform” (<http://www.abortionno.org/>) is holding antiabortion protests and training sessions (“Pro-Life Institute,” <http://www.cbrmidwest.org/pdf/PLI.pdf>) at Florida university campuses – including Florida State University and University of West Florida last week on Feb. 12-13 and this next week at Ava Maria University on Feb. 18 and Florida Atlantic and Florida International University on Feb. 19-20.

Josh Karpf, founder of the NYC Atheists and cofounder of “Equal Time for Freethought” on WBAI-FM, wrote: “I know most of these campuses don't have secular student groups (least of all Ava Maria U., founded in 2003 by Domino's Pizza founder Tom Monaghan as part of a strictly Catholic planned community), but I hope the nearest freethought organizations will be able to travel to them to demonstrate against these fundamentalists. There's great merit in opposing religious control of our lives, and it's a great way for our community to gain activism experience.”

Feb. 14: (Washington).

Last week, the Secular Coalition for America sent letters to every U.S. Senator urging each of them to oppose and not co-sponsor S. 206, the Scholarships for Opportunity and Results Act of 2011, which would reauthorize and expand the Washington, D.C. private school voucher pilot program. Many of the schools that accept vouchers are explicit in their religious agenda. One such example is the Anacostia Christian Bible School, which describes its purpose as turning K – 6 students “*into an army by reconciling them to God by making warriors for Christ* and to each other through worship, prayer, preaching, fellowship, and teaching” (emphasis added). The entire text of SCA's letter to U.S. senators can be read [here](#).

Feb. 14: (CREDO action from Working Assets). Public media is one of the last bulwarks against the corporate media where the combination of consolidation and profit-motive has long since shifted the focused to infotainment rather than substantive news. In many rural and less affluent communities, broadcasters rely on federal funding to provide the only available high-quality news and public affairs programming. If you share this concern,

Don't let Congress pull the plug on NPR and PBS! Tell them reject cuts to public broadcasting. Click here to automatically sign the petition.

Please visit
www.FloridaHumanist.org
to support HFA with your
membership & donations



Humanists of Florida
Association
Reason and Compassion in Action

First Annual International Freethought Film Festival May 13 – 15, 2011

The Freethought Film Festival Foundation, is hosting the First Annual International Freethought Film Festival at the historic Tampa Theatre located at 711 Franklin Street in downtown Tampa. The program will consist of independent films selected from film submissions that have been entered for consideration. Ten different screenings of films, which best reflect the mission of promoting reason, critical thinking, and freedom of inquiry, will be scheduled. The film selections are to be announced after the final judging in January, 2011.

Read more at http://www.freethoughtfilmfest.org/web_documents/iffeventannouncementpress.pdf

www.freethoughtfilmfest.org

International Freethought Film Festival

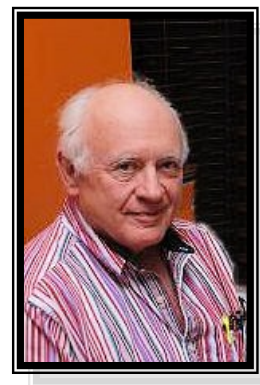
When: May 13th -15th, 2011

Where: Tampa Theatre, 711 N. Franklin St.

Tampa, FL 33602

ON THE WAY TO GRAMMAR'S HOUSE

Steve Brown



-- Hopping, Skipping and Jumping

"Vocational training" as an idea and a process has been thought to apply specifically to people who couldn't "cut it" in college. Truth is that the entire educational system is vocational training.

Schools also are less "educational" systems than socialization systems. Assembly lines whose end products are socio-economic units, rather than learned or thoughtful persons. The gadfly Paul Goodman entitled one of his books "People or Personnel."

We the Personnel speak.

Conservatives wail about the overwhelmingly liberal faculties in the humanities, social and natural sciences, as though they result from a deliberate political conspiracy, rather than, perhaps, from an intellectual commonality arising from critical intelligence applied to those fields.

One can get very esoteric discussing "spirituality." As with "religion," agreement on a definition may be difficult. Most atheists for sure, and perhaps most humanists, aren't on good terms with it. It can seem to us a dodge away from the burden of an implausible "God" while still waxing keenly supernatural.

To those who take "spirituality" very seriously, it's more often than not connected with Eastern meditative practices and getting to "Enlightenment."

I have a much simpler working definition of "spirituality." It is the experience of blowing open one's ego boundaries, the boundaries of "the Self." It doesn't require meditation or other special practices. It can be the result of sexual union or of a fervent common effort, or aesthetic exultation inspired by art or something in our natural environment. The feeling may be simply of being one with another single person or a community of persons or the Earth or the universe (the sense of being "one with all there is" essentially defines "Enlightenment"). Yes, it can get out of hand. Its ugly side is in such as Nuremberg rallies, mob assaults and war. But it is NOT supernatural. It's part of our being.

There is also a kind of natural justice in the maximum "spiritual" or "oceanic" experience. If we as individuals are composed of physical particles that have forever existed in the universe, and when we die and decompose these particles go back into the universe for other uses, then feeling at one with the universe is a quite reasonable assessment.

We come into the world as part of another being and for a time after birth we don't even experience a boundary between ourselves and our mother or other caregiver. Part of growing up is in effecting that separation. New young men suddenly find themselves hostage to the overpowering sexual allure of young women, close to defenseless in its grasp. Some become angry, because they're supposed to be the "stronger" sex, but refuse to expose their vulnerability to the "weaker" ones. Out of childhood, but dependent, in a sense, once again on a woman or women, they turn their attraction upside-down and inside-out into hostility, harassment, domination and abuse, a pattern that can continue for years.

Some Islamic societies make this power of women abundantly evident with burqas and other concealing dress, and their misogyny equally clear through subjugation by law and custom.

I'm unhappy that I didn't deliver on the promise of my Valentine presentation: "Sex and Time Travel" and "Sex [or more properly "Eros"]": For or Against." I bit off more than, tritely, I could chew. I'm glad that I provided, as intended, a fair quantity of laughs, but I left a good deal of the "time traveled" unexplored. I didn't intend to be so exclusively memoirist -- I'd hoped to provoke more audience involvement -- although there would have been even more laughs, I suspect, had I not run out of time before getting into my "revolutionary" days. I'd planned for a final exchange of views on the changes not only in sexual behavior and attitudes, but also in the social roles of women and their effect on family and society, as well as discussion of possible future developments. As to the "For or Against" debate, I hope you'll welcome it at a future date.



Thanks to contributions from many members, and from the board, **Jackie Jordan** is within \$100 as of this writing, of achieving her goal of \$500 for her sponsorship of the annual Guide dog Run.

To keep up on her progress, see: <http://www.sitstaygive.org/jackieandjc>

One of the joys of Humanism is the ability to experience the satisfaction of improving the lives of others as they have shared themselves with us. Life has only the purposes and meanings we define for ourselves. In an otherwise indifferent universe, we are wise to fan the warm glow of human generosity and goodness that is the most available source of our own happiness. JP

It's Not Just Evolution They're Attacking

The religious right has expanded its war on reason to include the science of climate change.

By **Clayton Whitt**

With Darwin Day approaching, now is a good time to point out that there is more to the religious right's attacks on science in the United States than just their attempts to suppress the teaching of evolution and research involving stem cells. Religious organizations are also targeting the science of climate change, making religious arguments straight from scripture to assert that humankind has no responsibility for preventing catastrophic warming of the planet.

A perfect example is the Cornwall Alliance. This organization describes itself on its website as "a coalition of clergy, theologians, religious leaders, scientists, academics, and policy experts committed to bringing a balanced Biblical view of stewardship to the critical issues of environment and development." This benign description barely masks a radical agenda to undermine attempts to mitigate human-caused damage to the climate.

The Cornwall Alliance's high profile supporters include anti-church-state separation activist David Barton, religious right stalwart James Dobson, and well-connected Family Research Council head Tony Perkins. Despite their description of the organization as being a coalition that includes scientists, out of the 65 advisory board members listed on their website, only two could actually be denoted as scientists, with only one of those two doing work related to climate. The rest are mainly theologians, ministers, and economists.

Their agenda is laid bare in their statement entitled "An Evangelical Declaration on Global Warming." Released in 2009, the statement purports to put forth a consensus position that no action to mitigate climate change is necessary. The statement draws explicitly on the language of creationism, arguing that human beings are not capable of destroying the world that God created. An excerpt:

We believe Earth and its ecosystems—created by God's intelligent design and infinite power and sustained by His faithful providence—are robust, resilient, self-regulating, and self-correcting, admirably suited for human flourishing, and displaying His glory. Earth's climate system is no exception. Recent global warming is one of many natural cycles of warming and cooling in geologic history.

This is sort of akin to Gottfried Leibniz's "best of all possible worlds" explanation for theodicy, but applied instead to the environment: all evidence to the contrary be damned, the world remains the best possible for human habitation and is not threatened by our actions. Never mind that geological and glaciological investigations have shown that the rate of climate change we currently face is far beyond a "natural cycle." Never mind the incontrovertible evidence that greenhouse gases, which we pump into the atmosphere at an increasing rate, warm the planet. The Cornwall Alliance is here to tell us that we should sit back, relax, and not worry about climate change, for this is God's planet, and it is in His hands.

And it goes even further: the Cornwall Alliance also attacks the broader environmental movement itself, going so far as to accuse it on their website "Resisting the Green Dragon" of being "a new religion" and "targeting our youth." These ominous statements are intended to market a twelve-part DVD series that you can buy for \$49.95 that presents a "Christian response to radical environmentalism," intended for showing in church discussion groups and special events.

There may be more than meets the eye with the Cornwall Alliance. An investigation by the Center for American Progress found that the organization is connected through several people to an organization called the Committee for a Constructive Tomorrow (CFACT), an organization that has received hundreds of thousands of dollars from oil companies and has worked hard to discredit climate change science in the eyes of the public. The Cornwall Alliance has been successful in keeping its principal funders secret, however, so it is difficult to determine the depth of the linkage.

This year has already seen unusual weather extremes around the world, from the unprecedented punishing Cyclone Yasi which hit Australia last week to the massive winter storm that recently cut a broad swath of destruction across the United States. These weather extremes likely reflect a changing climate, and more extreme storms are probably in our future. With glaciers melting from Argentina to India, coral reefs bleaching, record floods and droughts, diminishing sea ice, and so many more measurable manifestations of climate change, the Cornwall Alliance and its allies must engage in the most extreme form of willful blindness—or or conscious deception—to assert that, faced with all of this, nothing bad is happening and there is nothing we should do.

No holy book will save us from what we have wrought on the Earth: humans hold the key to our own destruction—and salvation—in our hands.

Clayton Whitt is the development and communications coordinator of the American Humanist Association.



Institute for Science and Human Values

Inspired by Empathy, Creativity and guided by Reason

(This is the latest institution of Humanism created by Paul Kurtz. Ed.)

We are pleased to announce the formation of a new research project, the Institute for Science and Human Values. May we invite you to support this new endeavor. This institute is dedicated to the cultivation of personal morality and meaning. Although religious institutions have done much good, infamous crimes against humanity have been perpetrated in the name of god. Both religionists and secularists alike have often neglected moral integrity. There is no guaranteed that secularists who reject religion will

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Secularists have devoted the lion's share of their attention to emancipating individuals from the repressive institutions of church and state and achieving social justice. They have defended the right of privacy and many are devoted to enhancing the common good. These are eminent goals. Secularists have pointed out that ethical principles and values can be developed quite independent of religious foundations and that religionists have often performed immoral deeds but so have secularists. Being religion-free is no guarantee of virtue. There is thus a need to develop a new humanist morality, tested by its adequacy in human experience and quite independent of ancient religious faith, spawned in the infancy of the race. As secularists and scientific rationalists we wish to improve this life here and now--for the individual, the society at large, and the planetary civilization that is emerging.

For the secular humanist the enrichment of the individual's personal life is essential for well-being and happiness. If religious foundations are rejected, humans need to take responsibility for their own destiny. They need to draw on the best ethical wisdom of the past and test moral principles by their consequences. They should be evaluated by their relevance to the present and the future. Central questions for secularists are what is the meaning of life without god? What is the good life in all of its diverse forms? What is the basis of our obligations to others? We say that ethics should be based on evidence. It has its source in nature and human conduct not on faith or transcendental salvation.

We are embarking on a new research project which we believe is essential in contemporary society. This will attempt to deal with the key precepts of moral virtue. It will not only focus on the creative fulfillment of a person's life, but on her/his relationship to others, and the need to develop genuine compassion and empathy. How to achieve this is a central question that we need to address. Obviously we need to deal with the moral education and growth of children. But we also need to develop various projects for adolescents, young people as they launch their careers, families, middle age persons, single individuals and senior citizens.

Moral quandaries are found throughout life. How shall we deal with them is the issue. We are concerned with the rational-emotional-behavioral dimensions of decision making. Thus we believe that an independent team of inquirers free of unnecessary legalistic restrictions or in the threat of censorship by entrenched social traditions can best fulfill their goals.

We are enlisting scientists and scholars, women and men of diverse backgrounds, to join us in this important mission. Since we are beginning from scratch any funding at all would be gratefully received. May we invite you to consider supporting us by contributing to the Institute for Science and Human Services, a 501c3, non profit corporation.

May we hear from you? We welcome your questions and counsel.

Sincerely,



<http://www.instituteforscienceandhumanvalues.net>

Barry Lynn Speaks!



Lynn is the author of *Piety and Politics: The Right-Wing Assault on Religious Freedom* and co-author of *The Right to Religious Liberty*. He writes frequently on First Amendment issues, appearing in such publications as *USA Today*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Nation*, *American Teacher* and *Liberty*. A reception will follow the talk.

7:00 PM March 7, 2011

Good Samaritan Church

Park Blvd. at 61st St. North, Pinellas Park

A Tradition of Advocacy



Open to the public

Sponsored by the South Pinellas
Chapter of **Americans United for
Separation of Church & State**

Our best letters:

Shameful proposal

It may be time for changes in the Florida retirement system. The problem is how to do this fairly. The headline reads, "State workers would chip in." This sounds real chummy and innocuous. It should read: "Scott proposes 5 percent slash in state employees' already frozen pay."

Many state employees are close to subsistence wages now. This proposal is shameful and typical of the wealthy elite in control of our state. If money is a problem, they hit the poorest and weakest and don't even consider other ideas like eliminating sales tax exemptions.

Robert D. Collette

Published Feb. 09 St. Pete Times

Bob is a retired state worker, and an enthusiastic Humanist. He is a former president of the Humanists of Florida Association. In his quiet but elegant way he has contributed more than most people know toward a more humane and decent future.



It is probably no accident that freedom of speech is the first freedom mentioned in the First Amendment: "Congress shall make no law...abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances." The Constitution's framers believed that freedom of inquiry and liberty of expression were the hallmarks of a democratic society.

The First Amendment exists precisely to protect the most offensive and controversial speech from government suppression. The best way to counter obnoxious speech is with more speech. Persuasion, not coercion, is the solution.

From defending the speech rights of protesters during the 2003 FTAA ministerial meetings in Miami to ensuring that controversial groups such as the Klu Klux Klan have a right to be heard, the ACLU of Florida has been instrumental in challenging government efforts to silence protest groups and stifle freedom of expression. In the current world atmosphere of protest, this is a freedom which will be tested again and again.

ON the Florida ACLU site you'll find free speech issues separated by various categories. Click on your issue of interest for press releases, legal documents and additional information on how you can help protect free speech.

For more information on the Freedom of Speech in Florida, see: <http://www.aclufl.org>