

PIQUE

Newsletter of the Secular Humanist Society of New York

August-September, 2014

Herein we quote your memorable movie quotes (*thank you*), but get serious about five clueless-about-women Catholic men in black robes and our religion-trumps-everything Congress, atheists on TV and the Pope's newest nuttiness. We review (and quote) a brilliant new book, an atheist invocation, a humanist meditation, and the weird wisdom of three new (one not-so-new) Dumbths. We compare the willfully ignorant 100 years apart but, first, strive to right a 200-year wrong. – JR

IT'S COMMON SENSE:

RENAME BARROW STREET FOR TOM PAINE

Gary Buiso

(Reprinted from "Push to rename street to honor writer Thomas Paine" in The New York Post, 7/6/2014)

An effort is under way to change the name of tony Barrow Street in the West Village to honor Thomas Paine, the 18th century writer who helped inspire the American Revolution.

"Thomas Paine is like the Founding Fathers' founding father. He's the one who made the convincing case for independence," writes Dylan DePice in an online petition to the City Council calling for the switch.

"The guy who did as much as anyone to spark the creation of a country founded on religious liberty deserves to be honored for it."

Barrow, which runs from Washington Place to the West Side Highway, was once called Reason Street, in honor of Paine's 1795 *The Age of Reason*. The street became city property in 1809 and was renamed Barrow to honor rich landowner Thomas Barrow, a vestryman at nearby Trinity Church.

LET'S GIVE PAINE BACK HIS STREET

John Rafferty

Paine, whose tract *Common Sense* ("These are the times that try men's souls") made him a hero of the American Revolution, fell out of popular favor with his anti-theist *The Age of Reason*, and I wonder if the renaming of the street was punishment by mini-minded politicians on whatever served as a New York city council in 1809.

Whatever, he's *our* hero, and humanists and freethinkers of every stripe in New York and everywhere else ought to get behind Dylan DePice's idea (above). However, I think

online petitions have all the heft and clout of a dry tea bag. Here's what each of us should do ...

Write a short note – on paper and through the mail – urging your Council person to sponsor and/or vote to rename Barrow "Thomas Paine Street". (Don't forget your return address so he/she knows you're a constituent.) Follow up with an email two days later, and a phone call reminder about your letter and email the day after that.

Your council member's name and addresses? Go to <http://council.nyc.gov/html/members/members.shtml>.

Here's my letter. Feel free to copy:

Honorable Daniel Garodnick:

I urge you to co-sponsor and support a measure to rename the Greenwich Village street now named "Barrow" to honor one of the greatest heroes of the American Revolution, Thomas Paine.

The street was originally (1795-1809) named "Reason" to honor Paine, author of "Common Sense" and "The Age of Reason", but was renamed Barrow in 1809 to honor a rich landowner. It's 200 years past time to correct that error.

Sincerely,

John Rafferty

President, Secular Humanist Society of New York

Okay, you good with that? Willing to do a little more?

Write and follow up with Barrow Street's councilman, Corey Johnson, 3rd District. District office: 224 West 30 St. (1206), NY, NY 10001. Email: district3@council.nyc.gov and phone 212-564-7757. Especially if you live in his district.

One more?

Let's push City Council Speaker Melissa Mark Viverto (District 8, Manhattan/Bronx), whose legislative office is at 250 Broadway (1820), NY, NY 10007; phone 212-788-7548 and email: slevin@council.nyc.gov.

Let's do it!

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ATHEIST TV: MAKING THE “IDIOT BOX” A BIT SMARTER Paleolibrarian

American Atheists, Inc., will launch their newest multi-media venture this summer. Calling it “Atheist TV” and in partnership with internet streaming company, Roku, the service will beam the non-belief message into homes that have the Roku box connected to their television. This is the first time on a nationwide level that such atheist-themed cable programming has gone to the masses in broadcast form.

And from my own perspective, this is yet another important step in “normalizing” the atheist viewpoint in American culture. The channel will be a validation of sorts, allowing non-believers from across the United States access to atheist-themed programming on politics, culture, the arts, and a host of assorted topics and ideas regarding humanism, skepticism and freethought.

Just as there is a Food Channel and Catholic and Jewish, Islamic and Shinto channels, so too now will atheists have their viewing choices established and met by the programming from AA. While the channel is certainly targeting non-believers, it will be available to everyone, making it a pluralistic attempt to reach the widest broadest audience possible. From AA’s official press release:

The channel will be available through internet-streaming service Roku, which offers devices similar to cable boxes that hook up to regular televisions. The atheism channel, believed to be the first of its kind, will begin broadcasting this summer. Content will be free.

The exciting thing is that the multi-media expansion of Atheist TV, both in terms of reach and digitized content, expands and offers stability in the digital realm where messages can sometimes become fuzzier. Certainly the Internet plays a much bigger role in our lives because of social media, synchronized communication and a citizen-based media which can reach millions almost instantaneously.

But the real value of television is that it allows limited hands on in the creation of content which it then broadcasts, and that is sometimes simply better because information and programming can be more efficiently managed and more professionally produced. The Internet, even after almost 20 years of existence, is still the Wild, Wild West of content – democracy for sure, but at times anarchy for sure as well.

The final reality is that there is an ongoing recognition that AA needs to be everywhere people are. This means on the Internet, on our TVs, radio, in print, on highway billboards, in our memberships and socially in our work for secular democracy. David Silverman, the President of AA, knows this and is fully aware of the power all forms of media play to shape debate and public opinion, foster social change and fight for atheist civil rights as well as secular causes.

I’m calling Roku today to begin my subscription.

ON REACHING ACROSS THE AISLE, EVEN IF THE AISLE IS IN A CHURCH Edd Doerr

Religion obviously runs the gamut from constructive to *aaaargh!gawdawful*. We often focus on the latter, but to illustrate the former, let me quote a short news item from the July 9 *Education Week*:

“A group of churches in Wyoming has endorsed the Next Generation Science Standards, including the stance that evolution should be taught as scientific fact. Wyoming blocked the common science standards in March. The backlash has been, at least in part, a result of the document’s language on evolution and human contributions to global warming. But a statement from the Wyoming Association of Churches—a group representing ten Protestant denominations—says:

“WAC believes that God gave us the responsibility to serve as stewards of the created order. Science, on the other hand, is not based upon a belief system but rather a field of study dedicated to the understanding of how the created order works. Therefore, WAC strongly supports the advancement of an education system founded upon 21st century evidence-based science standards.”

In my 50+ years of active professional involvement in defending church-state separation and religious freedom I have found that cooperation among Protestants, Catholics, Jews, Humanists, “Nones” and others is the only way to combat the forces of clericalism and reaction. We work together or we lose separately. And that is why I have long said that “atheism *uber alles*” is counterproductive.

Note: Edd is President of Americans for Religious Liberty, and a past President of the American Humanist Association.

ABOUT THAT “ATHEISM ÜBER ALLES”

Apparently, the way I don’t believe in God is not the right way to not believe in God.

– Sanderson Jones, co-founder of the Sunday Assembly, in response to criticism from some atheists for being too church-like.

FAITHINESS Herb Silverman

(Excerpted from “Why I’m Faithless at On Faith: An atheist considers what it means to be a part of a conversation about faith”, on faithstreet.com, 7/20/2014)

This is my 184th article for OnFaith since I started writing for the publication back in November of 2008. [But] FaithStreet is not a street on which I live. Its work is primarily about connecting people to faith communities, but I’m more interested in disconnecting people from faith communities and connecting them with atheist and humanist communities.

Out of the approximately 150,000 words that I’ve written for OnFaith a few have involved positive comments about religious leaders and issues they’ve espoused, but I’ve not had one positive word about “faith”. ...

I prefer “preaching” to religious believers on FaithStreet

rather than to those whose views are similar to mine. Jesus purportedly went where the sinners are, and I like to go where the “faith-ers” are. ...

“Faith”, unfortunately, is usually thought to be a virtue. Why should we automatically show reverence to someone of great faith, which only indicates a conviction that can’t be shaken by contrary evidence? Respect for religious faith, whatever that faith might be, plays an important role in perpetuating human conflict.

Atheists and humanists are divided on whether to participate in interfaith coalitions and alliances on those rare occasions when we are invited or allowed to join. Mostly, the controversy is about the label “interfaith”. While atheists give no credibility to religious faith, we would like to be part of a wider community that works together on worthwhile projects, have a place at the table of public opinion, and have an opportunity to change stereotypes about people of no faith. Atheists often engage with progressive religious allies on important causes, which has the added bonus of showing that we can be good neighbors in a diverse country of religious and nonreligious individuals. Perhaps it is time for a more inclusive name, like “Interfaith and Faithless Alliance”.

Some atheists are comfortable with “faith”, at least in a restricted way. When our local secular humanist group discussed which specialized license tag to request from the state, one candidate was “Faith in Reason”. (We eventually decided on “In Reason We Trust” because South Carolina had already approved “In God We Trust” license tags.)

The 2006 word of the year was “truthiness”, defined by Stephen Colbert as “the quality of preferring concepts or facts that one wishes to be true, rather than concepts or facts known to be true”. With that in mind, I define “faithiness” as “the quality of preferring concepts or facts for which there is evidence, rather than concepts or facts that one wishes to believe on faith alone”.

I’m happy to write for OnFaith while living on Faithiness Street. I’d like to think that “faithiness” will become the 2014 word of the year, but I know that’s just “truthiness.”

POPE FRANCIS: INTO THE 14TH CENTURY

In July, the Vatican formally recognized the International Association of Exorcists, a group of 250 priests in 30 countries who say they free the faithful from demons.

More than his predecessors, says the Associated Press, Pope Francis speaks frequently about the devil, and last year was seen placing his hands on the head of a man purportedly possessed by four demons in what exorcists said was a prayer of liberation from Satan.

Comment: Maybe he was just doing a before-the-game scalp noogie-rub for good luck. – JR

HOW IS THE BIBLE LIKE A SOFTWARE LICENSE?

Nobody actually reads it; they just scroll down to the bottom and click “I Agree”.

– Forwarded by Brian Lemaire

WHAT THE HOBBY LOBBY DECISION REALLY MEANS

Katie McDonough

(Reprinted from “SCOTUS gets Hobby Lobby horribly wrong: Why this isn’t a ‘limited’ ruling” at Salon.com, 6/30/2014)

In a 5-4 decision, the Supreme Court ruled that Hobby Lobby can ignore federal law and deny its employees comprehensive health insurance because of its “sincerely held religious beliefs”. Analysis of the case has so far called this a limited ruling because it only applies to closely held corporations and “only” impacts contraceptive coverage. But this framing completely ignores the fact that more than 90 percent of corporations in the United States are closely held, and that the court just effectively ruled that it’s fine for employers to discriminate against half of the labor force. There’s nothing limited about it. As Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg noted in her powerful dissent, far from being narrow in its ruling, the high court just “ventured into a minefield”.

So what does the decision actually mean? In the immediate term, it means that women who work at Hobby Lobby and Conestoga Wood Specialties are paying for health coverage (insurance is part of their compensation package, it’s not some gift bestowed upon them by their bosses) that their employers have decided that they can’t have. That’s really what this comes down to in the most blunt terms imaginable. The religious owners of these companies have medically inaccurate ideas about contraception and abortion, and they now get to impose those ideas on the people who work for them. In the majority opinion, five male [*Catholic – Ed.*] justices argued that the Department of Health and Human Services can fill in the gaps in coverage created by this ruling by including for-profit companies in the accommodation system created for religious nonprofits and other explicitly faith-based organizations. Women’s health, it seems, has become someone else’s problem.

This is certainly bad news for the women who work at both of these places, but it’s bad news for the rest of us, too. The ruling sends a strong message that women’s health and women’s rights – as individuals and employees – do not matter as much as so-called religious liberty. It also shows once again that medically inaccurate ideas about healthcare can dictate the terms of a debate and ultimately win the day. Writing for the majority, Justice Samuel Alito argued that contesting Hobby Lobby’s claim that contraception is the same thing as abortion – an idea that has been refuted time and again by medical providers and associations – “in effect tells the plaintiffs that their beliefs are flawed”.

And as Ginsburg alluded in her dissent, the decision opens the door to other sweeping forms of discrimination. While Hobby Lobby based its claim in its apparent objection to four forms of emergency contraception (contraception that the company covered without issue prior to the new healthcare law), other companies challenging the requirement object to all forms of contraception. Those beliefs are just as sincerely held, and just as dangerous to

women's health. The legal precedent is now in their favor.

The opinion also raises the question of whose religious beliefs matter. Conservatives are hailing this as a victory for freedom of religion, but what about the religious employees at Hobby Lobby who don't share the views of the Green family? The Greens' profoundly unscientific and extreme views about contraception are not even universally accepted among Christians. Where's their religious liberty in this? And for the women whose religious liberty is freedom *from* religion? Where are *they* in this opinion? "The Court puts claims of corporations over those of its employees and allows a corporation's owners to override the Federal rights of its employees, many of whom have a different set of religious beliefs," Ginsburg wrote in her dissent.

And this is one of the ways that the framing of this case has been off from the start. The lawyers for Hobby Lobby presented the legal challenge as though it were religious rights versus reproductive rights, and many in the media accepted these terms. But religious people use contraception, including emergency contraception. People of faith also have a stake in keeping employers from imposing religious views on employees. The fault lines in the case have never been as clean as some would like you to believe.

To sum it up, five male [*Catholic - Ed.*] justices ruled that thousands of female employees should rightfully be subjected to the whims of their employers. That women can be denied a benefit that they already pay for and is guaranteed by federal law. That contraception is not essential healthcare. That corporations can pray. That the corporate veil can be manipulated to suit the needs of the corporation. That bosses can cynically choose à la carte what laws they want to comply with and which laws they do not. Each specific finding opens a door to a new form of discrimination and unprecedented corporate power. If you think this ruling won't affect you, you haven't been paying attention. If you think these corporations are going to stop at birth control, you're kidding yourself.

Comment: And as many other writers have pointed out, this opens the door for Jehovah's Witness employers to deny coverage of blood transfusions, for Scientologist business owners to strike out psychiatric coverage, and for Christian Science bosses to refuse to pay for, well, anything. - JR

THE END OF ENDA?

Jonathan Engel

The Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) is a bill pending in the U.S. Senate that would prohibit employment discrimination against an individual because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Understandably, this proposed law was originally championed by virtually every gay rights organization in the country. Just as understandably, many gay rights organizations have now withdrawn their support for this legislation. The reason? The Senate has added to the bill a provision that grants an exception for religious organizations to its prohibition against discrimination. Furthermore, it is presumed from the decision in the Hobby Lobby case that

this exception would also apply to secular closely-held corporations whose owners want to discriminate against homosexuals for religious reasons.

Let's take a closer look. When was the last time you heard an argument against gay rights that wasn't based on religion? "God made Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve", right? Sure, occasionally you'll hear right-wing types allege that marriage equality would damage the institution of marriage in general, but they never get around to explaining how or why that would be the case, neither theoretically nor empirically. We've had marriage equality in enough states for a long enough time now that if gay marriage was somehow damaging "traditional" marriage in those jurisdictions, there would be research available to back up that claim, but there isn't.

So, lacking actual logic, reason, and/or research to support their homophobia, gay rights opponents almost always fall back on that endless font of illogic: organized religion. After all, if you believe in something based on "faith", you don't need reason or logic to bolster your argument, all you have to do is cite a passage from a book written thousands of years ago by people who didn't know that the earth revolves around the sun. And so it has come to pass that most discrimination against gays is religiously based. Sometimes such beliefs are sincerely held (doesn't make them any less wrongheaded though); sometimes individuals just use religion as a cover for their gay bashing.

Either way, the rationale for hate and discrimination comes from somebody's "good book". This being the case, to pass a law that bans workplace discrimination against gays, but builds in a loophole for the people who are the most likely to practice such discrimination, makes no sense whatsoever. It would be like passing the Voting Rights Act, but putting in an exemption for the southern states.

Likewise, it is within our faith-based community (and those hiding their hatred behind religion) that a large proportion of anti-gay discrimination takes place. Therefore, to exempt religious believers/pretenders from ENDA would eviscerate much of the statute's meaning and effect. Many southerners used religion for years to argue for the appropriateness of slavery and then Jim Crow laws. Some still do, but we don't allow such beliefs to act as an excuse to evade racial anti-discrimination statutes.

The ENDA situation is no different. I agree with the gay rights groups who have withdrawn their support for this bill.

AMERICA'S BEST CHRISTIAN, MRS. BETTY BOWERS, EXPLAINS HOW "RELIGIOUS FREEDOM" WORKS

(Forwarded by Eileen Regan from www.bettybowers.com, where you can get to know "America's Best Christian".)

If I discriminate against or criticize you, it's called "Religious Freedom".

If you return the favor, it's called "Persecution".

HOW CAN I BE HAPPY?

Stephen Fry

(Editor: This is the fourth and final of actor, director, writer, atheist and humanist Stephen Fry's "What's Humanism?" videos for the British Humanist Association - all available at <https://humanism.org.uk/> or on YouTube, and together an excellent short intro to humanism for someone you know.)

How can I be happy? Some people believe that there is one single meaning of life. They think that the universe was created for a purpose, and that human beings are part of some larger, cosmic plan. They think our meaning comes from being part of this plan, and is written into the universe, waiting to be discovered.

A humanist view of meaning in life is different. Humanists do not see that there is any obvious purpose to the universe, but that it is a natural phenomenon, with no design behind it. Meaning is not something "out there", waiting to be discovered, but something that *we* create, in our own lives. And they know this vast and incredibly old universe was not created *for* us. All of us are connected to something bigger than ourselves, whether it is family and community, a tradition stretching into the past, an idea or cause looking forward to the future, or the beautiful wide and natural world on which we were born and our species evolved.

This way of thinking means that there is not just one big "meaning of life", but that every person will have many different meanings in their life. Each one of us is unique, and our different personalities depend on the complex mixture of influences from our parents, our environment, and our connections. They change with experience and changing circumstances. There are no simple recipes for living that are applicable to all people.

We have different tastes and preferences, different priorities and goals. One person may like drawing, walking in the woods, and caring for their grandchildren. Another may like cooking, watching soap operas, savoring a favorite wine or a new food. We may find meaning through our family, our career, making a commitment to an artistic project or a political reform, in simple pleasures, such as gardening or hobbies, or in a thousand other ways, giving rein to our creativity or our curiosity, our intellectual capacities or our emotional life.

The time to be happy is now. And the way to find meaning in life is to get on and live it, as fully and as well as we can.

"GREAT AGNOSTIC" ROBERT GREEN INGERSOLL'S "HAPPINESS GRACE" INSTEAD OF PRAYER

The time to be happy is now.

The place to be happy is here.

The way to be happy is to make others happy.

Happiness in intelligent people is the rarest thing I know.

– Ernest Hemingway

A BUMPER-CROP MONTH FOR DUMBTH

John Rafferty



Dumbth Past Champion Ann Coulter, who won the horse's-ass statuette in 2007 for her suggestion that Jews could be "perfected" by becoming Christians, makes a strong bid for the 2014 (dis)honors by dissing July's World Cup mania and soccer/*futbol* as a plot against America.

"Any growing interest in soccer can only be a sign of the nation's moral decay," she ranted in her syndicated column. Why? Because "you can't use your hands", because "girls can play with boys", because there is not enough "personal humiliation or major injury" for soccer to count as a real sport and, finally, "it's foreign".

"I promise you," the Wicked Witch of the Right promised, "No American whose great-grandfather was born here is watching soccer."

Met Kentucky State Senator Brandon Smith (R-Hazard), the owner of a mining company. He argues that man-made climate change is scientifically implausible because Mars and Earth share "exactly" the same temperature, even though the red planet doesn't have any coal mines.



During a Natural Resources and Environment Committee meeting in July, Smith, said:

"I won't get into the debate about climate change but I'll simply point out that I think in academia we all agree that the temperature on Mars is exactly as it is here. Nobody will dispute that. Yet there are no coal mines on Mars. There's no factories on Mars that I'm aware of."

Note: The average temperature on Earth is 57 degrees Fahrenheit; on Mars it's -81 degrees. That's minus 81.



Pity poor put-upon carbon dioxide. So said Princeton physics professor and climate-change denier William Happer while being interviewed on CNBC.

"The demonization of carbon dioxide is just like the demonization of the poor Jews under Hitler," he said on air. "Carbon dioxide is actually a benefit to the world, and so were the Jews."

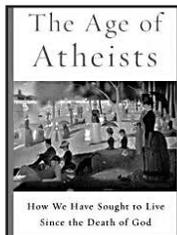
How nice of him to say; I'm sure that made Jews worldwide feel warm and welcomed. Happer, who has no climate-science credentials, was introduced as "an industry expert", perhaps because ExxonMobil (an industry, right?) donated hundreds of thousands of dollars to his organization, the Marshall Institute.

Oh, and when asked if he was "taking flak" from real climate scientists for his views, he compared himself to Galileo, who "also took a lot of flack".

SHSNY CALENDAR: AUGUST - SEPTEMBER 2014

SHSNY BOOK CLUB
THURS, AUG 7, 7-8:30 pm
THE COMMUNITY CHURCH
OF NEW YORK
28 East 35 St. (Park-Mad)
 (3 doors West of the church - red door)
 We'll discuss
THE AGE OF ATHEISTS:
How We Have Sought to Live
Since the Death of God.
Intro and Part 1
Peter Watson

From one of Britain's most distinguished historians comes the stirring story of one of the modern world's most important intellectual achievements: atheism. Watson offers a sweeping narrative of the secular philosophers and poets, psychologists and scientists, painters and playwrights, et al, who have forged a thrilling, bold path in the absence of religious belief.



From Nietzsche to Habermas, Watson's narrative explores the revolutionary ideas provoked by these great minds and movements.

"This book has so much to offer," says Book Club Editor Elaine Lynn, "that we're going to give it in-depth study over two sessions, and concentrate on just the Intro and Part 1 this month."

Join us even if you haven't finished reading.
The SHSNY Book Club is open to all ... and free!

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www.facebook.com/pages/The-Secular-Humanist-Society-of-New-York/168704396485734

AND MEET US ON MEETUP
www.meetup.com/shsnny-org/

SHSNY BOOK CLUB
THURS, SEP 4, 7-8:30 pm
 at Community Church of NY
THE AGE OF ATHEISTS
Parts 2 and 3
 Our wrap-up discussion. "Even the casual reader will find much to delight and enlighten as Watson elegantly connects the dots from Nietzsche and William James to Bob Dylan and jazz."

SHSNY BOOK CLUB
THURS, OCT 2, 7-8:30 pm
 at Community Church of NY
DOUBT: A HISTORY
The Great Doubters and Their Legacy of Innovation from Socrates and Jesus to Thomas Jefferson and Emily Dickinson
Jennifer Michael Hecht

Historian, poet (and SHSNY Honorary Member), Hecht champions doubt as one of the great, if unheralded, intellectual traditions that distinguish the Western mind. This is an account of the world's greatest "intellectual virtuosos", and of their attempts to reconcile the seeming meaninglessness of the universe with the human need for meaning.

PLANNING AHEAD
The usual SHSNY schedule is ...
Book Club: First Thursday
 at the Community Church of NY
Movie Night: Second Monday
 at Stone Creek Lounge.
Brunch: Third Sunday
 at The Stag's Head
Great Lectures: 4th Wednesday
 at Stone Creek Lounge.
Humanism 102: Last Monday
 at the Community Church of NY

More info: www.shsnny.org,
 and/or 646-922-7389

BRUNCH & CONVERSATION
SUNDAYS at 12 NOON
AUG 17 & SEP 21,
MONTHLY CASUAL BRUNCH
The Stag's Head
252 East 51 St.

The Stag's Head offers an American-traditional brunch menu of eggs and omelets several ways, crepes, burgers, frittatas, burritos and short-rib hash, all in the \$10.95-12.95 range., and including a drink. Join 15-20 other freethinkers and humanists for food, fellowship and well-fed conversation.

After-Brunch Discussions:
Aug: Naming "Tom Paine Street"
Sep: The Midterm Elections

MONDAYS at 7:00 pm
AUG 11 & SEP 8
SHSNY MOVIE NIGHT
Stone Creek Bar & Lounge
140 East 27 St (Lex-3rd Aves)
Aug 11: "1984"

Orwell's classic vision of a dystopian future, where love and sex are outlawed and society is led by "Big Brother". With Richard Burton, John Hurt.



Sep 8: "Sleeper"
 Woody Allen's screwball vision of a dystopian future where love (i.e., sex) is free and society is ruled by the Leader's nose. With Allen, Diane Keaton.



SHSNY Movie Night is FREE.
(But put something on the bar beside your elbow.)

SHSNY CALENDAR: AUGUST - SEPTEMBER 2014

GREAT LECTURES ON DVD
TUE, AUGUST 19, 7:00 pm
Stone Creek Bar & Lounge
140 East 27 St. (Lex-3rd Aves)

ENEMIES OF REASON
Richard Dawkins
& Derren Brown

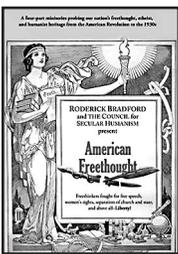
For his "Enemies of Reason" series on Britain's Channel 4, Professor Dawkins of "New Atheist" fame introduces us to atheist and "Psychic Fakery" paranormal-debunker Brown, the "playfully mendacious" master of "magic, suggestion, psychology, misdirection and showmanship". Should be fun.



GREAT LECTURES ON DVD
WED, SEP 24, 7:00 pm
Stone Creek Bar & Lounge
AMERICAN FREETHOUGHT

Part III

The Mainstream Press and the Alternative Press
Rick Bradford



In Part 3 of this Outstanding history of secularism, free speech and censorship in America, produced in cooperation with the

Council for Secular Humanism, we meet Victoria Woodhull, *The Truth Seeker*, Thomas Huxley, Abraham Lincoln, the National Liberal League, the National Defense Association (ACLU), and Edward B. Foote, Ezra Heywood, and D.M. Bennett.

Great Lectures on DVD is FREE.
(But put something on the bar beside your elbow.)

OTHER REASONABLE NEW YORK EVENTS

www.reasonablenewyork.org
CFI-NYC. Mon, Aug 11 & Sep 8, 10 pm, Googie's Lounge (Upstairs at the Living Room), 154 Ludlow St.: *Skeptics on the Mic Karaoke.*
New York Philosophy: Fri, Aug 8, 6-1 pm, 10th Annual *Philosophy of Sex Gender Wars*, 49 Grove; Date and place for Sep *Cocktails & Conversation* to be determined. Check www.nyphilosophy.com.
NY Society for Ethical Culture: Sun, Aug 1, *Ethics in Film: "Quiz Show"* (1994), \$5 suggested donation; bevs & snacks.

• Sun, Aug 3, 2 pm, *Sunday Assembly*, with philosopher Massimo Pigliucci Coffee & Cookies. Free.

For other Aug/Sep NYSEC events, check www.nysec.org/calendar-date_nysec

See the full RNY calendar at reasonablenewyork.org

PLUS

Agnostic A.A.: Fifteen weekly AA-endorsed meetings in four boros (not Queens). Info at agnosticAA.nyc.org/meetings.html
Atheism History Week – With SHSNY's John Rafferty, 5:30 p.m. every Wednesday, MNN Ch. 1997 in Manhattan, and live streaming on your computer anywhere at www.mnn.org.

Drinking With Atheists: Every Friday, fun and conversation.

meetup.com/GothamAtheists/
Feminist Freethinkers of New York: Check schedule at feministfreethinkers.org

Manhattan History Buffs: Every 3d Tues, 6:00, dinner/talk at Lili's rest, 83-84th/3rd. Aug 8: *The Life & Times of Eugene Debs*. Sep 16: *Cardinal thomas Wolsey's Downfall*. Reservations: 212-802-7427

Save the date!

SUNDAY, OCT 12, NOON
SHSNY 6TH ANNUAL
FREETHOUGHT DAY
BRUNCH

at Pete's Tavern
12 East 18 Street

Guest Speaker:

JENNIFER MICHAEL HECHT
Poet, Historian, Author of
Doubt, a History,
The Happiness Myth,
and

Stay: A History of Suicides & the Philosophies Against It

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AND SHSNY MEMBERS ARE ALSO ...

• **Wed, Aug 27 thru Sun, Sep 7:** Artists **Irene Christensen** and **Donna Marxer** are curating "The Suitcase Show" of works by 28 Artists In Residence In Everglades at Galerie Schaeffersgate 5, Oslo, Norway.

• **Wed, Sep 10 thru Sun, Sep 21:** **Ms. Christensen** and **Ms. Marxer** will exhibit in a two-woman show at the same gallery in Oslo.

NOTE: If you are a member of SHSNY and *actively* involved in an event open to the public, send your info to editor@shsnv.org.

OUR FAVORITE MOVIE LINES

John Rafferty

In our July issue, just for summer fun, and inspired by YouTube's post of the American Film Institute's "AFI 100 Years, 100 Movie Quotes", we asked you to tell us what your favorite movie lines were. The results – from members, subscribers, friends, family and a few outliers, damn near overwhelmed.

So, still just for fun, here they are, in chronological order as received.

• **Brian Lemaire:** Sam Spade (Humphrey Bogart) confronts murderer Bridgid O'Shaughnessy (Mary Astor) in "The Maltese Falcon": "You're good. You're very good. It's chiefly your eyes, I think, and that throb you get in your voice when you say things like, 'Help Me, Mr. Spade.'"

• **Anton Spivak:** Madman Howard Beale (Peter Finch), in "Network", implores America to join him in shouting: "I'm as mad as hell, and I'm not going to take this anymore!"

• **Jon Engel:** In "Blazing Saddles", the Waco Kid (Gene Wilder) consoles the new black sheriff in town (Cleavon Little) after the sheriff receives a less than warm welcome: "What did you expect? 'Welcome, sonny'? 'Make yourself at home'? 'Marry my daughter'? You've got to remember that these are just simple farmers. These are people of the land, the common clay of the new West. You know, morons."

• **Will Engel:** Rico Bendello (Edward G. Robinson) to a foe in "Little Caesar": "If you ain't out of town by tomorrow morning, you won't ever leave it except in a pine box."

• **Chuck McMellon:** Robert DeNiro as Johnny Boy in Scorsese's "Mean Streets": "Mook? What the fuck's a mook?"

• **Bob Murtha:** In the party scene in "All About Eve", Margo Channing (Bette Davis in full über-bitch mode) warns: "Fasten your seatbelts. It's going to be a bumpy night."

• **Camille Padula** (also **Roberta Title**): Charlotte Vale (Bette Davis again) to her lover Jerry Durrance (Paul Henried), in "Now, Voyager": "Oh, Jerry, don't let's ask for the moon – we have the stars."

• **Remo Cosentino:** Ex-boxer Terry Malloy (Marlon Brando), in "On the Waterfront", to his brother (Rod Steiger), who years before forced Terry to throw a fight: "I coulda had class. I coulda been a contender. I coulda been somebody, instead of a bum, which is what I am, let's face it."

• **Chris Everett:** U.S. President Merkin Muffley (Peter Sellers), as negotiations to avert nuclear war devolve into a brawl in Kubrick's "Dr. Strangelove, Or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb": "Gentlemen, you can't fight in here! This is the War Room."

• **Kathy Morris:** In "The Godfather", Clemenza (Richard Castellano) instructs Rocco, who has just killed Paulie, on tidying the car: "Leave the gun. Take the cannoli."

• **Gretchen Robinson:** "Auntie Mame"'s Mame Dennis (Rosalind Russell) to sad-sack Agnes Gooch: "Live! Life is a banquet, and most poor suckers are starving to death."

• **Phil Appleman:** In "The Wizard of Oz", when Dorothy (Judy Garland) steps out of her tornado-tossed house and looks around Technicolor Oz, she whispers to her little dog: "Toto, I have a feeling we're not in Kansas anymore."

• **Dennis Middlebrooks:** Also from "The Wizard of Oz", when the "wizard" (author L. Frank Baum's stand-in for God) is revealed, his amplified voice commands: "Pay no attention to that man behind the curtain!"

• **Jennifer Michael Hecht:** In "Caddyshack", Carl Spackler (Bill Murray) speculates on his future: "And I say, 'Hey, Lama, hey, how about a little something, you know, for the effort, you know?' And he says, 'Oh, uh, there won't be any money, but when you die, on your deathbed, you will receive total consciousness.' So I got that goin' for me, which is nice."

• **Martine Reed:** In Bergman's "The Seventh Seal" the knight Antonius Block (Max von Sydow), speaking in confession to Death, who is disguised as a priest: "We must make an idol of our fear, and call it God."

• **Adrienne Karp** (also **Phil Livingston**; also **Jack Herschlag**): In the deli scene in "When Harry Met Sally", Sally (Meg Ryan) loudly proves to Harry (Billy Crystal) that any woman can fool any man with a fake orgasm. A watching Older Woman Customer (Director Rob Reiner's mother Estelle) says to a waiter: "I'll have what she's having."

• **John O'Brien:** Henri de Toulouse Lautrec (José Ferrer) in John Huston's "Moulin Rouge": "Some men can swing by their heels on the flying trapeze. Some men can be president of the Republic. I can drink cognac."

• **Colin Rafferty:** The eponymous hero of "Buckaroo Banzai" (Peter Weller) drives through solid matter and "adventures ... across the eighth dimension", but: "Wherever you go, there you are."

• **Donna Marxer:** In "In a Lonely Place", Laurel Gray (Gloria Graham) watches as her lover Dixon Steele (Bogart again) walks away: "I was born when he kissed me, I died when he left me, and I lived for a few weeks while he loved me. Goodbye Dix."

• **Chic Schissel:** In "Casablanca" American Rick Blaine (Bogart yet again!) tells inquisitive Major Heinrich Strasser (Conrad Veidt) that he came to Casablanca for his health and "the waters". The Nazi counters that they're in the desert. Blaine answers laconically: "I was misinformed."

- **Mike Tuchman** (also **Bill Reed**): In “The African Queen”, set in WWI Africa, the Captain of a German gunboat (Peter Bull) accedes to the wishes of his captives, Charlie Allnut (Humphrey Bogart) and Rose Sayer (Katherine Hepburn): “By the power vested in me by Kaiser Wilhelm II, I pronounce you man and wife. Proceed with the execution.”
 - **Brian Rafferty**: In “Almost Famous”, aspiring rock ‘n roll writer William Miller (Patrick Fugit) learns from Band-Aider Sapphire (Fairuza Balk) about being a fan: “They don’t even know what it is to be a fan, y’know? To truly love some silly little piece of music, or some band, so much that it hurts.”
 - **John Rafferty**: In “Switch”, when a fur protestor on Fifth Avenue asks Margo Brofman (JoBeth Williams in a full-length sable), if Margo knows how many animals had to die to make that coat, Margo snaps back: “Do you know how many animals I had to fuck to get this coat?”
 - **Christine Rafferty**: On the soundtrack over the opening scenes and credits of “Bull Durham”, “Baseball Annie” Savoy (Susan Sarandon) philosophizes: “I’ve tried ‘em all, I really have, and the only church that truly feeds the soul, day in, day out, is the Church of Baseball.”
 - **Jerry Taylor**: The eponymous “Forrest Gump” (Tom Hanks), slow-witted but heroically decent, quotes his mother (Sally Field): “My mamma always said, ‘Life is like a box of chocolates; you never know what you’re gonna get.’”
 - **Carl Marxer**: Also from “Forrest Gump”, our hero several times has the opportunity to use another of his mother’s mottoes: “Stupid is as stupid does.”
 - **Elizabeth Morris**: In “Young Frankenstein”, Dr. Frederick Frankenstein (Gene Wilder), Igor (Marty Feldman) and peasant-bloused Inga (Teri Garr) arrive at the huge castle door. Inga smiles and says “Thank you” when Dr. Frederick exclaims: “What knockers!”
 - **Mike Orzechowski**: The title character of “Captain January” (Guy Kibbee), a lighthouse keeper homeschooling Star (Shirley Temple), whom he rescued from drowning: “I’ve been learning her from the two best books there is, *The Bible and Bowditch* [a navigation text].”
 - **Flash Light**: In “My Dinner with Andre”, paranormal proponent Andre Gregory debates science-and-reason guy Wallace Shawn. Even if a fortune cookie advises him not to take an airplane trip, Shawn says, he won’t change plans, because: “The cookie is in no position to know.”
 - **Joel Galker**: In “The Horse’s Mouth”, artist Gulley Jimson (Alec Guinness), who “appropriates” people’s houses to paint his monumental works (mostly of feet), responds to a patron’s refusal of more money: “The rich are so Christian.”
 - **Alan Scott**: In “To Have and Have Not”, saloon singer Slim Brown (Lauren Bacall) tells Steve Morgan (Bogart once more), how to gain her attention: “You know how to whistle, don’t you, Steve? You just put your lips together and ... blow.”
 - **Lila Joyce**: In a voice-over opening to “Rebecca”, the “Second Mrs. de Winter” (Joan Fontaine) whispers: “Last night I dreamt I went to Manderley again.”
 - **Samantha Rafferty**: In “The Bride of Frankenstein”, the Monster (Boris Karloff) ruefully advises his bride (Elsa Lanchester): “We belong dead.”
 - **Barack Obama**: When asked to identify himself by an incompetent cop in “The Departed”, police sergeant Dignam (Mark Wahlberg) answers: “I’m the guy who does his job; you must be the other guy.”
- And a miscellany of second- and third-choices submitted:**
- “You’re going to need a bigger boat.” – “Jaws”
 - “Too many notes, Mozart!” – “Amadeus”
 - “I think that this situation absolutely requires a really futile and stupid gesture.” – “Animal House”
 - “I’ll get you my pretty, and your little dog, too.” – “The Wizard of Oz”
 - “The only true currency in this bankrupt world is what you share with someone else when you’re uncool.” – “Almost Famous”
 - “It’s alive! It’s alive!” – “Frankenstein”
 - “Round up the usual suspects.” – “Casablanca”
 - “And you will know my name is The Lord when I lay my vengeance upon thee!” – “Pulp Fiction”
 - “Things are never so bad they can’t get worse.” – “The African Queen”
 - “Show me the money.” – “Jerry Maguire”
 - “To a new world of gods and monsters!” – “The Bride of Frankenstein”
 - “I consider myself the luckiest man on the face of the earth.” – “Pride of the Yankees”
 - “Don’t nobody bring me no bad news.” – “The Wiz”
 - “We’d all be better off if there was not a single gun in this valley, including yours.” – “Shane”
 - “I’m shocked, shocked, to find that gambling is going on here.” – “Casablanca”
 - “Badges? What badges? We don’t need no stinkin’ badges.” – “The Treasure of the Sierra Madre”
- And of course ...**
- “What’s up, doc?” – “Looney Tunes & Merrie Melodies”
- And finally ...**
- “I’ll be back.” – “The Terminator”

AND THE DVD WINNER IS ...

We printed out these two pages, turned them face down, gave SHSNY Grande Dame Donna Marxer a sharp knife and asked her to punch a hole.

The pinioned movie buff is *Mike Orzechowski*, who will receive a DVD of “Captain January” (or whatever movie he likes).

“VAST LIBRARIES OF WISDOM”

A review of *The Labyrinth: God, Darwin, and the Meaning of Life*, by Philip Appleman

Edd Doerr, Pres., Americans for Religious Liberty

Perhaps the best way to review this new book by veteran secular humanist Phil Appleman is to quote my jacket blurb on the book:

“In The Labyrinth, poet, novelist and science writer Philip Appleman distills into one short, delightful, beautifully written book vast libraries of wisdom, history, science, ethics, and philosophy. The Labyrinth puts Appleman in the distinguished company of fellow Midwesterners Mark Twain and Ambrose Bierce.”

ESSENTIAL READING

John Rafferty

I finished reading *The Labyrinth: God, Darwin, and the Meaning of Life* in an hour, and immediately turned back to page 1 and read it through again.

This little book thunders with truth. And beauty. Poet, Darwin scholar, philosopher (and longtime member of SHSNY), Philip Appleman surveys the essential (and eternal) questions – the existence of a god, our place in the universe, free will, why we are (or should be) good – in just 72 pages of lean prose that only as accomplished a poet as he is could produce.

Do not miss this book; buy it, read it, treasure it.

GOD IS AN UNNECESSARY HYPOTHESIS

Philip Appleman

(Excerpted from *The Labyrinth: God, Darwin, and the Meaning of Life*)

God is an unnecessary hypothesis, but for many people, suffering the terrors of the imagination, a seductive one. People in general have never exhibited much passion for the disciplined pursuit of knowledge, but they are always tempted by easy answers. God is an easy answer.

Why are we here? Where shall we spend eternity? The brain has become capable of inventing questions to which there are no satisfactory answers. For such questions, God is a convenience: the unanswerable question is referred to undefinable being, and lo, we have the impression of an answer, though in fact we know no more than before. This seems to soothe some minds temporarily, as an empty bottle may soothe a crying baby; the nourishment from each is the same. “God” is a term that deliberately masks our ignorance.

Whenever God is invoked, language and sense part company. For that very reason, God has practical and political uses that partly account for its survival as a hypothesis. Among its other conveniences, God has always comforted aggressors by blessing the carnage of battle; armies carry their own chaplains. God is described as that which knows everything and is all-powerful. If so, then there is no escaping the conclusion that God is ultimately responsible for everything that happens – for the Holocaust, for the

carpet bombing of primitive villages, for the defilement of children, for slavery. Priests were on hand to sanction all of those activities: God is a serviceable bureaucrat.

The worship of the undefinable is necessarily illogical: “Praise the mercy and goodness of God for saving my life,” says the survivor of an earthquake in which God, with complete indifference, has just brushed away a thousand lives.

The large brain, that masterpiece of evolution, capable of wonder but unpracticed in reason, throws patterns across the stars: Aquarius, Taurus, Capricorn. To invent these images is poetry; to believe in them is faith. God’s survival depends upon our peopling the heavens with angels and archangels, chimeras of our banal imaginations. No wonder the prophets thundered against the sin of knowledge, the sin of pride. God depends upon our ignorance as much as any magician.

Learning is hard work; imagining is easy. Given our notorious capacity for indolence, is it any wonder that school is so unpopular, faith so attractive? So we fumble through the labyrinth of our lives, making believe we have heard answers to our questions, even to our prayers. And yet, deep down, we know that something is out of joint, has always been out of joint. How long? we lament. How long, O Lord?

ON THE CHARACTER OF GOD

MARK TWAIN

(Extracted from *The Autobiography of Mark Twain*, Vol. 2, on *Salon.com*, 9/29/2013, and forwarded by the estimable John O’Brien)

Tuesday, June 19, 1906: About the character of God, as represented in the New and the Old Testaments.

Our Bible reveals to us the character of our God with minute and remorseless exactness. The portrait is substantially that of a man – if one can imagine a man charged and overcharged with evil impulses far beyond the human limit; a personage whom no one, perhaps, would desire to associate with, now that Nero and Caligula are dead. In the old Testament His acts expose His vindictive, unjust, ungenerous, pitiless and vengeful nature constantly. He is always punishing – punishing trifling misdeeds with thousand-fold severity; punishing innocent children for the misdeeds of their parents; punishing unoffending populations for the misdeeds of their rulers; even descending to wreak bloody vengeance upon harmless calves and lambs and sheep and bullocks, as punishment for inconsequential trespasses committed by their proprietors. It is perhaps the most damnatory biography that exists in print anywhere. It makes Nero an angel of light and leading, by contrast.

It begins with an inexcusable treachery, and that is the keynote of the entire biography. That beginning must have been invented in a pirate’s nursery, it is so malign and so childish. To Adam is forbidden the fruit of a certain tree – and he is gravely informed that if he disobeys he shall die. How could that be expected to impress Adam? Adam was

merely a man in stature; in knowledge and experience he was in no way the superior of a baby of two years of age; he could have no idea of what the word death meant. He had never seen a dead thing; he had never heard of a dead thing before. The word meant nothing to him. If the Adam child had been warned that if he ate of the apples he would be transformed into a meridian of longitude, that threat would have been the equivalent of the other, since neither of them could mean anything to him.

AN ATHEIST INVOCATION

Dan Courtney

(Editor: Immediately after the Supreme Court handed down its damnable decision in Greece v. Galloway this spring, allowing public prayer at government functions, Dan Courtney of the Atheist Community of Rochester petitioned the Greece (New York) Town Board to deliver an invocation at a Board meeting. On July 15 he did, the first atheist ever to do so. His remarks, I think, make a damn good template. – JR)

Freethinkers, atheists, non-believers, whatever label you wish, this group comprises a significant part of our population. I am honored to be providing an invocation on their behalf, and on behalf of all the citizens of the town of Greece.

On July 4th, 1776, the 56 men who pledged their lives to the document that changed the course of history agreed to the central tenet that, "Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed."

More than 238 years later, the central premise still echoes, however faintly, from the town hall to the white columned halls of Washington. Yet this premise, this foundation necessary for a free and flourishing society, is today, more than ever, under assault. This central pillar of a free society; this notion that is deeply heretical to authoritarian culture, proclaims that it is from the people that moral authority is derived. It is that within us, the citizens, that knowledge and wisdom must emerge.

The preservation of this premise does not come from accepting the status quo, but by asserting our rights and exercising our duties. That this premise still endures testifies to its truth, and we can say with confidence that it is in seeking the counsel of our conscience that we find the beginning of wisdom. It is in the exercise of our duty as citizens that we find the beginning of knowledge.

We, as citizens, the beginning and the end, the alpha and the omega of our destiny, are not, as the great philosopher Immanuel Kant warned, mere means to the ends of another, but we are ends in ourselves. This basic premise, this profound idea, guides us such that we need not kneel to any king, and we need not bow to any tyrant.

So I ask all officials present here, as guarantors of our Founders' revolutionary proclamation, to heed the counsel of the governed, to seek the wisdom of all citizens, and to honor the enlightened wisdom and the profound courage of those 56 brave men.

MEDITATION Paleoliberalian

The world will only be healed when every house of worship, every center for spiritual prayer and all places used to indoctrinate religion are shuttered or turned into museums that highlight our past human ignorance.

Imagine a world culture unafraid of death, aware that original sin is an illusion, that the golden rule does not require theology because it is latent in our genes, and which adores science and reason.

The need for holy men and gods would disappear. No one would be able to frighten us about unseen boogeyman or a god's eternal wrath. We would be born perfect, grow to be informed and create a peaceful secular and humanistic world.

This is my only wish. I work non-violently every day to be the change for my children and their children and everyone's children.

And to live long enough to make this happen in my own lifetime.

Note: Google Paleoliberalian (our own David Orenstein) and subscribe to his excellent blog, and/or follow him on the Paleoliberalian Facebook page. – JR

ROBERT HEINLEIN ON WHAT WE SHOULD KNOW

A human being should be able to change a diaper, plan an invasion, butcher a hog, conn a ship, design a building, write a sonnet, balance accounts, build a wall, set a bone, comfort the dying, take orders, give orders, cooperate, act alone, solve equations, analyze a new problem, pitch manure, program a computer, cook a tasty meal, fight efficiently, die gallantly. Specialization is for insects.

A MESSAGE FROM THE BBC FOR FOX, CNN, ABC, CBS, NBC and MSNBC Lindsay Abrams

(Excerpted from "BBC staff ordered to stop giving equal air time to climate deniers", salon.com, 7/6/2014)

Good news for viewers of BBC News: you'll no longer be subjected to the unhinged ravings of climate deniers and other members of the anti-science fringe. In a report published by the BBC Trust, the network's journalists were criticized for devoting too much air time (as in, any air time) to unqualified people with "marginal views" about non-contentious issues in a misguided attempt to provide editorial balance.

"The Trust wishes to emphasize the importance of attempting to establish where the weight of scientific agreement may be found and make that clear to audiences," the report reads. "Science coverage does not simply lie in reflecting a wide range of views but depends on the varying degree of prominence such views should be given."

Comment: Including no prominence at all. – JR

THE GUNS OF AUGUST

John Rafferty

Piqued by centennial observances of the “Great War”, I have been re-reading Barbara Tuchman’s magnificent *The Guns of August*, her almost horrifying account of the events of the summer of 1914 – so many of them impelled by willful, even proud ignorance or fanatical indifference to facts – that exploded into what most historians now view as a 30-year World War (1914-45) and more than 100 million dead.

This month, August, 2014, more than 2,700 Americans will die by gun violence – 90 a day on average, by suicide, by homicide, and by accident, including a few children at play with the guns their parents bought “for protection”.

2,700 dead – we know that number is a statistical sure thing (let’s not even get into the maimings and blindings), and we know just as surely where those deaths will occur: in the states with the most guns and the least restrictions on gun ownership.

According to the latest analysis of federal statistics by the Violence Policy Center:

“The five states with the highest per capita gun death rates in 2011 were Louisiana, Mississippi, Alaska, Wyoming, and Montana. Each of these states has extremely lax gun violence prevention laws as well as a higher rate of gun ownership. The state with the lowest gun death rate in the nation was Rhode Island, followed by Hawaii, Massachusetts, New York, and

New Jersey. Each of these states has strong gun violence prevention laws and has a lower rate of gun ownership.

“The overwhelming trend is that the strong gun law states have seen dramatic declines in violence.”

In other words, more guns mean more gun deaths, a conclusion so simple it reads like a tautology, right?

Not for the American gun industry or its NRA lobbying front. Not for the craven politicians—some bought-and-paid-for, some simply dunderheaded— who have convinced millions of Americans that “guns don’t kill people, people kill people” ... that “if guns are outlawed, only outlaws will have guns” ... that “the best defense against a bad guy with a gun is a good guy with a gun” ... and that any restrictions – *any!* – on gun ownership, even by convicted felons and committable crazies, is a violation of their God-given Constitutional right to own an AK-47 loaded with “cop killer” (that’s what they’re called) bullets.

Like the be-medaled and be-ribboned WWI “donkeys” (what historian Alan Smith called them) who drove literally millions to slaughter in spite of simple common sense that screamed “*Stop!*”, the willfully ignorant of 2014 in America will deny statistical facts, reason and stark reality.

The facts? More guns mean more gun deaths, and tighter gun laws mean fewer deaths.

The reality? This month, *this* August, two thousand, seven hundred or more Americans – perhaps you, maybe me – will die of gun violence.

Page 7
Jennifer Michael Hecht
Sunday, October 12, with
Freethought Day Brunch

Page 12
The Guns of August

Pages 8-9
Your Movie Lines

Page 1
Let’s honor Tom Paine

*This is a combined
August-September issue*

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