



# *The* **COWTOWN HUMANIST**

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We will not be meeting at the usual location on the second Wednesday of July. We will instead gather at the Palace Theater (3<sup>rd</sup> and Commerce in downtown Ft Worth) to view Al Gore's 'Inconvenient Truth' – The showing begins at 5:30 PM - Arriving later (5:45 or so) will limit watching those inane commercials and previews of coming attractions. er the movie most of us will have dinner at La Madeleine (two blocks from the theater). We'd like to invite all to attend.

Jim Cheatham submitted what is described on the website as the world's smallest political quiz (both Jim and I scored liberal, as most of you will, I'm sure). <http://www.theadvocates.org/quiz.html>  
For those without internet capability, I have placed the quiz below:

## **Personal Issues**

(Choose A if you agree, M for Maybe, D if you disagree.)

Government should not censor speech, press, media or Internet

Military service should be voluntary. There should be no draft

There should be no laws regarding sex for consenting adults

Repeal laws prohibiting adult possession and use of drugs

There should be no National ID card

## **Economic Issues**

(Choose A if you agree, M for Maybe, D if you disagree.)

End "corporate welfare." No government handouts to business

End government barriers to international free trade

Let people control their own retirement; privatize Social Security

Replace government welfare with private charity

Cut taxes and government spending by 50% or more

"The Quiz has gained respect as a valid measure of a person's political leanings."  
The Washington Post

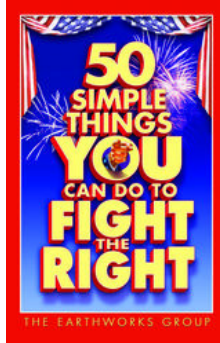
"The World's Smallest Political Quiz is savvy and willing to tell you the truth."  
YAHOO! Magazine

The World's Smallest Political Quiz stands ready to help you determine your political identity. Quick and relatively painless.  
USA Today

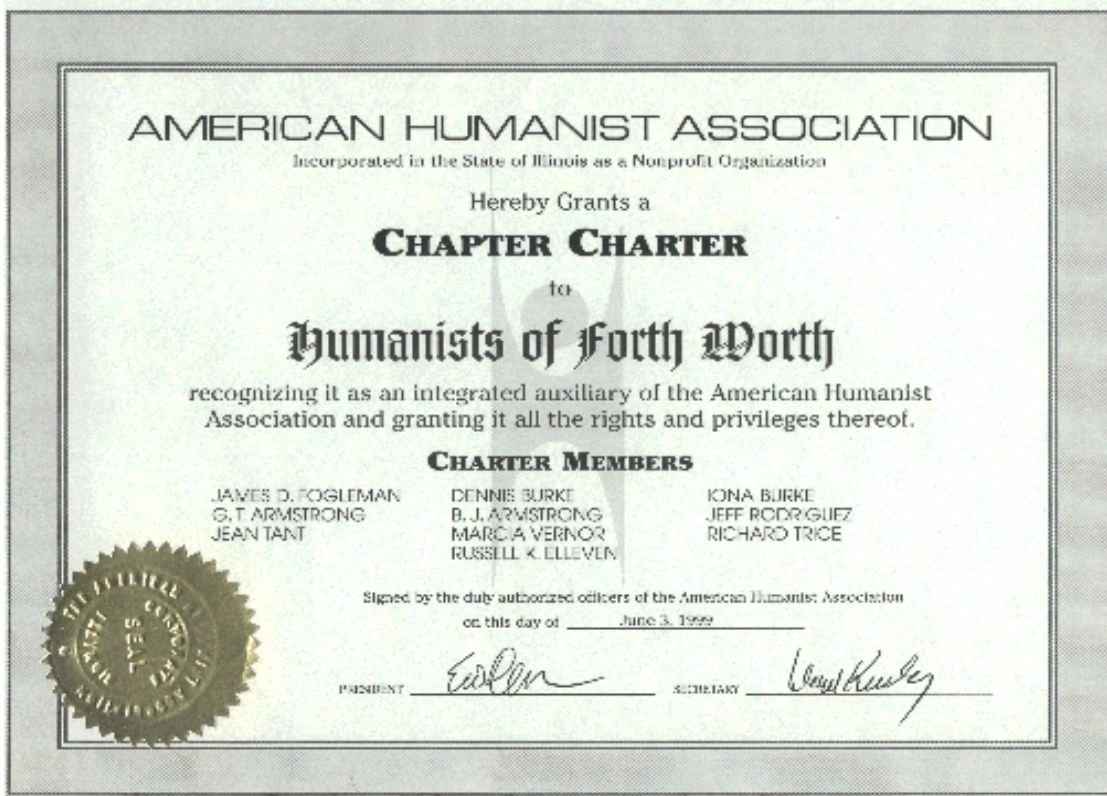
Give this quiz a try. It's fun, and who knows, you may be surprised at what you find."  
Politics on the Net by Bill Mann

I frequently visit [www.buyblue.org](http://www.buyblue.org) for assistance when making purchasing decisions . What follows is what the site says about *50 Simple Things You Can Do to Fight the Right*.

“In recent weeks you may have heard about a new book called "50 Simple Things You Can do to Fight the Right." BuyBlue happens to be one of the things the authors recommend. We first started having conversations with them about our part in the book about 9 months ago and it is my great pleasure to be able to announce the release of this book.”



For those who haven't seen it . . . this is a copy of our charter from the American Humanist Association.



The American Humanist Association is a member of [www.secular.org](http://www.secular.org) another site you may wish to visit.

The following is reprinted from Secular.org, which in turn reprinted it from the San Francisco Chronicle.

Gathered around the plastic red-and-white tablecloths in the back room of a San Francisco hofbrau, 30 of the Bay Area's "out" atheists were recasting themselves as the protagonists of America's newest civil rights struggle.

As they described the strain of being openly atheistic in an increasingly religious culture, many wished their godless crusade would emulate one social movement in particular -- the fight for gay rights.

"You can be elected as an openly gay politician in this country, but you can't be elected as an openly atheistic one," said Lori Lipman Brown, who was hired last fall to be the Washington, D.C., lobbyist for an organization devoted to atheist causes, the

Secular Coalition for America. She's believed to be the first paid lobbyist for the unbelievers in the nation's capital, the front lines of the culture wars.

Now, all Brown is seeking is a constituency willing to go public.

"Think of where the LGBT movement was 25 years ago," said Brown, who has worked on gay and lesbian rights issues as a legislator and attorney. "That's where atheists are today."

Brown stopped by the Van Ness Avenue restaurant Tommy's Joynt recently to address the faithless as part of a West Coast barnstorming tour to raise money and awareness for the atheists' new tack. Like other leading atheists, the 47-year-old former Nevada state legislator, teacher and attorney freely borrows from gay rights nomenclature to make her point.

Brown, who is married and was raised a "humanistic Jew," talks about how she "came out" as an atheist several years ago, and how most atheists aren't "out yet" at work. She says atheist kids -- like many gay children -- are made to feel outcasts at school, and explains that she wants to erase the negative connotation to the word "atheist" just as homosexuals have reclaimed slurs like "queer" and "dyke."

"When a congressional aide reads our material alongside that from the NEA (National Education Association) or the Baptist Joint Committee, it says 'Atheist' at the top," Brown said, proffering a business card that says, "Atheists. Humanists. Freethinkers. Americans," with the last word in bold type.

When it comes to atheism, she said, "we're not avoiding the word."

Rick Wingrove, a 56-year-old former Navy Seabee who in January was named a federal lobbyist for American Atheists, another national group, said atheists have to be loud and proud when pressing their point in Washington.

So why haven't more atheists picked up the atheist pride megaphone and started shouting?

The problem, said Arthur Jackson, who has been part of the Bay Area's atheist community for more than 40 years, is that the movement hasn't yet had its own crystallizing moment.

"We haven't had our Stonewall," Jackson said, referring to the 1969 riots in New York that spawned the modern gay rights movement.

The reaction from gay rights organizations to this admiration is muted, even among those that usually have no problem taking bold political stands. Privately, some point out that the comparison of atheists to historically persecuted groups isn't exact -- atheism is arguably a choice, not an orientation, and unlike racial minorities, the godless aren't discriminated against on the basis of their looks.

"I'd have to say we're really neutral on this one (atheists emulating the gay rights struggle)," said Brad Luna, a spokesman for the Human Rights Campaign, the nation's largest gay and lesbian rights organization, with 600,000 members. "We have many members who are very religious, and many who aren't at all."

Representatives of the National Center for Lesbian Rights, and Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders declined to comment.

Brown said dozens of congressional offices have welcomed her -- "but it's not like we've tried Rick Santorum's office," referring to the conservative Republican senator from Pennsylvania.

Others on Capitol Hill say they don't have a problem working with atheists, at least on some issues.

"We'll cooperate with other organizations on our shared goals, but that doesn't mean we endorse the rest of their agenda," said Hollyn Hollman, general counsel for the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty, which is supported by 14 Baptist organizations. Her group and the Secular Coalition have worked together to oppose parts of the Bush administration's faith-based initiatives that they feel discriminate against secular organizations.

"We don't see them having any stigma that would prevent us from working with them," said Afshin Mohamadi, communications director for Rep. Carolyn Maloney, D-N.Y. The Secular Coalition supported a bill by Maloney that would require a pharmacy to provide a woman with birth control even if a staff pharmacist refused to fill a prescription on religious grounds.

Several on Capitol Hill praised the upbeat, good-natured Brown for putting a friendly face on atheism, which for decades was personified by Madelyn Murray O'Hair. Life magazine once dubbed O'Hair "the most hated woman in America," and the media tended to portray her as intolerant and cranky.

"Lori's a nice, smiling, eager-to-please person with an agreeable personality," Hollman said. "And she seems to have enough experience with government to not get overwhelmed here."

But Brown admits that the godless are far from a force on Capitol Hill. The Secular Coalition's annual budget of \$120,000 is what some lobbyists spend annually on lunch. Wingrove, the American Atheists' lobbyist, is part-time. Their job is largely playing defense against legislation that they see as inserting religion into government.

Both say a bigger challenge in creating a coast-to-coast atheistic movement is figuring out how many supporters they have and how to activate them into a political force.

Depending on how a poll question is asked, atheists say, America has anywhere from 5 million to 30 million unbelievers. Yet the number of names on Brown's national e-mail list of supporters is a mere 1,700. Not exactly a force that could make even a state legislator listen.

Of those who are "out," relatively few are young or women. Only a third or so of the folks at Tommy's Joynt were women, and more than half the crowd had silver hair.

"When a young person shows up to a meeting, they usually always tell me, 'Go talk to them,' " said Adrienne Mowery, a 32-year-old San Franciscan who has been an atheist since her childhood in Texas.

Mowery struggled to explain why more young people don't turn up at atheist gatherings. Are young atheists just too apathetic to come to get organized, or are most godless types really just white-haired retirees?

"It takes a lot of thinking to get to the point where you don't believe," said Jackson, who is 73. As for the gender gap, he says, "Atheism is a head thing. Women might be more inclined to be involved in something rather than to sit around and talk and talk."

While the "out" atheists tend largely to be older, male and white, their political views are not monolithic, said Brown and the other atheists gathered at Tommy's Joynt. They cover the range of opinions on everything from gay marriage to abortion to taxes to the war in Iraq.

During the recent confirmation hearings of Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito, the Secular Coalition was one of few groups expressing no interest in the nominee's view of Roe vs. Wade. It was more interested in his views on the First Amendment's establishment clause, which says Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion.

Yet Brown kept the politics light as she addressed the crowd at Tommy's Joynt. All she asked her fellow atheists to do was to let themselves be counted as atheists, as part of a movement.

"When I go into a congressional office," Brown said, "the first thing they ask me is, 'How many people live in my district?'"

Until more atheists come out of the closet, she can't say.

Other Capitol Hill interests can trot out celebrities to attract media attention at the right moment. Brown said atheists have Teller, the one-name-only half of the comedy-magic team Penn and Teller.

Part of Teller's shtick in the act: He never speaks.

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For newsletter comments, complaints and/or suggestions

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