



May

2010

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



## From The Chair

It is time for our annual meeting to elect new officers who will take over at the June meeting. I ask each of you to be thinking about the persons you would choose for Chair and Vice-Chair.

Our By-laws also allow self nominations so keep that in mind. Our lonely group of free-thinkers is an oasis of like-minded, open-minded seekers of knowledge and truth amid a countless number of good folks whose beliefs lie in other directions.

It is important that we not only keep alive but also that we grow in number, in camaraderie, and in understanding. Please come, participate, and give consideration to serving an office to keep humanism alive in our city.

Dick Trice

Surely sometime in the past few years you have found yourself at a [Forever 21](#) purchasing a \$5 tunic or a \$24 winter coat and thinking, "Where the hell did Forever 21 come from that I now buy half my clothes there, anyway?"

Jesus is *huge*. Church is to Forever 21 what ... taking sexy party photos and doing lines is to [American Apparel](#).

There are Bible verses on all shopping bags, designers go on Christian missions around the world, and the company gives loads of money to orphanages and churches and Christian educational institutions, etc. "People join their church just to get close to them," a garment district insider says of Don and Jin Sook Chang, the first generation Korean immigrant couple that founded the company in 1984.

(Don worked at a gas station at the time; allegedly he noticed that all the nice cars pulling up to the gas station he worked at were owned by people in the fashion industry.

Mrs. Chang, who attends pre-dawn services every day and strongly encourages her vendors to do the same, makes it a point to give Christians in the industry a leg up, too. "She plucks young designers out of the companies she's working with," he says. "And if they're Christian and religious, she puts them in business." Rowena Rodriguez, a 33-year-old fashion consultant and one-time "unbeliever" who was born again with Mrs. Chang's help, may be one of those lucky designers. "In the short time I worked with Mrs. Chang, my life was transformed, and I accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior," she recalls in an email interview. "Mrs. Chang prayed me into the Kingdom! Rodriguez says she has been approached by executives looking for the secret to Forever 21's phenomenal success. "I usually say, 'If you really want to know, I'll tell you. But you won't believe me...The Changs love Jesus!"

So anyway, obviously the next question is, *hmm*, so do I feel more conflicted about supporting this strange, rabid, proselytizing Christian cult? Or [Dov Charney's](#) greasy-locked harem of lame untarded people over at American Apparel? And it's a tough call. Both make clothes in the United States, and though American Apparel sticks much closer to the spirit of JC in offering its lowliest employees decent wages and benefits, Forever 21 *does* get points for locating its factories in a city where the authorities can actually legally, like, raid them and demand compliance with labor laws etc. etc. Both steal ideas from designers who got rich outsourcing all their shit overseas, but Forever 21 steals more. (Extra points!) And both want to sell employees and shoppers on their *lifestyles*; [Don Chang](#) would have you read *Left Behind* series; [Dov Charney](#) would have you ...um, show him your behind.



## Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens Call for Pope's Arrest

British authors and atheists Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens, whom Terry Eagleton has affectionately referred to as the combined entity known as "Ditchkins," are joining legal forces to see if Pope Benedict XVI can be prosecuted for crimes against humanity.

### The Guardian:

The pair argue that Pope Benedict XVI should be arrested when he visits Britain in September and put on trial for his alleged cover-up of sexual abuse in the Catholic church. Last week a letter emerged from 1985 in which the then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger urged that a paedophilic priest in America not be defrocked for the "good of the universal church".

The Vatican has already suggested the pope is immune from prosecution because he is a head of state. But Dawkins and Hitchens believe that because he is not the head of a state with full United Nations membership, he does not hold immunity and could be arrested when he steps on to British soil.

Prominent atheists [Richard Dawkins](#) and [Christopher Hitchens](#) are paying lawyers to investigate the possibility of prosecuting the pope for crimes against humanity, their solicitor confirmed today.

The pair argue that [Pope Benedict XVI](#) should be arrested when he visits Britain in September and put on trial for his alleged cover-up of sexual abuse in the Catholic church. Last week [a letter emerged](#) from 1985 in which the then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger urged that a paedophilic priest in America not be defrocked for the "good of the universal church".

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This is the advice they have been given by their lawyers – solicitor Mark Stephens and human rights barrister Geoffrey Robertson QC.

"I'm convinced we can get over the threshold of immunity," said Stephens. "The Vatican is not recognised as a state in international law. People assume that it has existed for time immemorial but it was a construct of Mussolini, and when the Vatican first applied to become a member of the UN, the US said no. So as a sop they were given the status of permanent observers rather than full members."

But the Holy See insists it is a state like any other. Earlier this month Giuseppe Dalla Torre, Vatican tribunal chief, said:

"The pope is certainly a head of state and he has the same legal status as all heads of state."

Stephens said there are three lines of approach to put the pope in the dock. "One is that we apply for a warrant to the international criminal court. Alternatively, criminal proceedings could be brought here, either a public prosecution brought by the Crown Prosecution Service or a private prosecution. That would require at least one victim to come forward who is either from this jurisdiction or was abused here. The third option is for individuals to lodge civil claims," said Stephens.

He said he had recently been approached by seven wealthy individuals who donated money to the Catholic church and were dismayed their money had not only been used to fund abuse but also buy the silence of victims. These people could potentially sue the pope, Stephens suggested.

Writing in the [Washington Post on Friday](#), Dawkins described Ratzinger as a "leering old villain in a frock ... whose first instinct when his priests are caught with their pants down is to cover up the scandal and damn the young victims to silence."

Without admitting that he had consulted lawyers he added: "This former head of the Inquisition should be arrested the moment he dares to set foot outside his tinpot fiefdom of the Vatican, and he should be tried in an appropriate civil – not ecclesiastical – court. That's what should happen. Sadly, we all know our faith-befuddled governments will be too craven to do it."

Pope Benedict will be in Britain from 16-19 September where he will beatify the theologian Cardinal John Henry Newman.

### Here we have the muslim equivalent to Pat Robertson

#### Iranian cleric: Promiscuous women cause quakes

BEIRUT – A senior Iranian cleric says women who wear immodest clothing and behave promiscuously are to blame for earthquakes.

Iran is one of the world's most earthquake-prone countries, and the cleric's unusual explanation for why the earth shakes follows a prediction by President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad that a quake is certain to hit Tehran and that many of its 12 million inhabitants should relocate.

"Many women who do not dress modestly ... lead young men astray, corrupt their chastity and spread adultery in society, which (consequently) increases earthquakes," Hojatoleslam Kazem Sedighi was quoted as saying by Iranian media. Sedighi is Tehran's acting Friday prayer leader.

Women in the Islamic Republic are required by law to cover from head to toe, but many, especially the young, ignore some of the more strict codes and wear tight coats and scarves pulled back that show much of the hair.

The Shameless hussies . . . . It seems ever since Eve ate that fruit women have caused our pain! Your editor's observation



## The American Humanist Association files Amicus Brief in Christian Legal Society v. Martinez For Immediate Release

(Washington, DC, March 17, 2010) The Appignani Humanist Legal Center, legal arm of the American Humanist Association, filed a friend-of-the-court brief with the Supreme Court Monday, arguing that the Court should affirm a decision made by a federal appeals court that the University of California Hastings College of the Law acted appropriately when they denied recognition to a Christian-only student group. (The brief can be found at the following

URL: [http://americanhumanist.org/system/storage/29/1449/CLS\\_v\\_Martinez\\_08-1371\\_AHA\\_amicus\\_brief.pdf](http://americanhumanist.org/system/storage/29/1449/CLS_v_Martinez_08-1371_AHA_amicus_brief.pdf) )

The lawsuit was launched in 2004 by a chapter of the Christian Legal Society (CLS), a group that was barred from receiving school funds, priority access to facilities and use of Hastings' logo because they did not permit non-orthodox Christians and gays to become voting members or leaders. Hastings had denied a request from the group that they be exempt from the school's nondiscrimination policy, which prohibited student groups from discriminating on the basis of "race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, disability, age, sex or sexual orientation" as a condition for receiving access to school resources. The District Court ruled that Hastings' policy was permissible and did not constitute a violation of the groups' free speech rights, contrary to CLS's argument. The 9th Circuit Court affirmed the policy was permissible because it was viewpoint neutral and reasonable.

"A University has every right to prohibit discrimination on the basis of religion or sexual orientation among student groups that receive school resources," said Bob Ritter, AHLC attorney and counsel of record for the brief. "Public schools have an interest in making sure all students feel welcome, whether they are religious, non-religious, straight or gay. And ensuring that their resources don't go to groups that violate policies of non-discrimination is an appropriate measure to keep universities inclusive."

"To be clear, this case is not about the school limiting student groups' free speech rights," Ritter added. "Groups that wish to discriminate in their membership are free to do so as privately operated entities, but they are not entitled to school sanction of their discriminatory policies."

The AHLC's brief argues that Hastings and other publicly-run institutions or entities can establish a conditional limited public forum for free speech, as long as the conditions for using the forum are neutral and generally applied. "A university can require student groups to abide by certain policies as long as those policies are applied universally, without bias or favor," Ritter clarified.

## Richard Dawkins doesn't think the Pope should resign

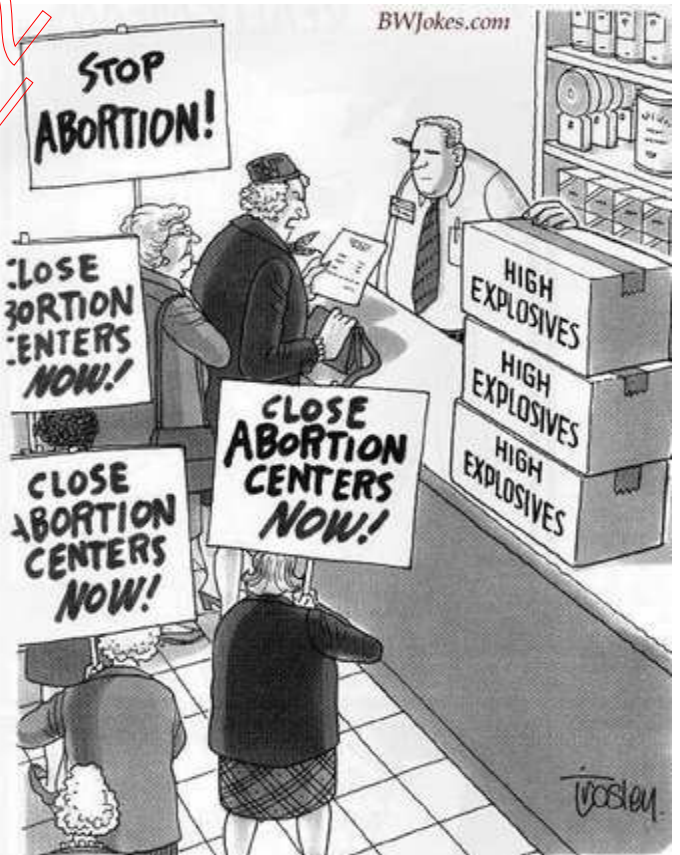
"Should the pope resign?" No. As the College of Cardinals must have recognized when they elected him, he is perfectly – ideally – qualified to lead the Roman Catholic Church. A leering old villain in a frock, who spent decades conspiring behind closed doors for the position he now holds; a man who believes he is infallible and acts the part; a man whose preaching of scientific falsehood is responsible for the deaths of countless AIDS victims in Africa; a man whose first instinct when his priests are caught with their pants down is to cover up the scandal and damn the young victims to silence: in short, exactly the right man for the job. He should not resign, moreover, because he is perfectly positioned to accelerate the downfall of the evil, corrupt organization whose character he fits like a glove, and of which he is the absolute and historically appropriate monarch."

## On the other hand, Dawkins does think that Benedict XVI should go to jail:

Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens, the atheist author, have asked human rights lawyers to produce a case for charging Pope Benedict XVI over his alleged cover-up of sexual abuse in the Catholic church.

A point of clarification: Richard Dawkins does not have the "delusion" that he himself would personally arrest the pope.

Dawkins is, however, supporting a legal challenge put forward against Ratzinger.



## Group wants evangelist's Pentagon event canceled

DENVER (AP) - A watchdog group objected Tuesday to an evangelist's invitation to speak at the Pentagon next month, saying his past description of Islam as "evil" offended Muslims who work for the Department of Defense and the appearance should be canceled.

Mikey Weinstein, president of the Military Religious Freedom Foundation, said inviting evangelist Franklin Graham to speak May 6, the National Day of Prayer, "would be like bringing someone in on national prayer day madly denigrating Christianity" or other religious groups.

It would also endanger American troops by stirring up Muslim extremists, Weinstein said.

Graham is the son of famed evangelist Billy Graham and president and CEO of both Samaritan's Purse, a Christian international relief organization in Boone, N.C., and the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, in Charlotte, N.C.

He said through a spokesman that he will be a guest of the Pentagon and will speak only if he's still invited. A military spokeswoman said she was locating officials to respond to the criticism.

After the 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States, Graham said Islam "is a very evil and wicked religion." In a later op-ed piece in *The Wall Street Journal*, Graham wrote that he did not believe Muslims were evil because of their faith, but "as a minister .... I believe it is my responsibility to speak out against the terrible deeds that are committed as a result of Islamic teaching."

Graham hasn't changed his views on Islam, said his spokesman, Mark DeMoss.

DeMoss quoted Graham as saying, "As the father of a son serving in his fourth combat tour, I'd be glad to know someone was leading a prayer service at the National Day of Prayer, or any other day."

Weinstein, the foundation president, also criticized the Pentagon's working relationship with the National Day of Prayer Task Force, a Colorado group that organizes Christian events for the prayer day, designated by Congress.

Weinstein said that while he doesn't object to the day of prayer, the Pentagon chaplain's office has effectively endorsed the task force by using its materials and routinely inviting its honorary chairman to speak at the Pentagon. Weinstein said that amounts to preferential treatment in violation of Defense Department rules.

Graham is honorary chairman this year for the National Day of Prayer Task Force, based in Colorado Springs. A spokesman for the task force didn't immediately return a telephone message.

## Limbaugh: Volcanic ash cloud is God's punishment for health care

Volcanoes have elicited religious veneration for thousands of years, but talk show host Rush Limbaugh may be among the first to ascribe a political agenda to one, *Think Progress* reported.

After an Icelandic volcano continued to spew ash into the sky Saturday, halting President Obama's planned flight to Poland, conservative icon Limbaugh said the surprising strength and timing of the eruption suggests a God displeased with the passage of health care reform.

"You know, a couple of days after the health care bill had been signed into law Obama ran around all over the country saying, 'Hey, you know, I'm looking around. The earth hadn't opened up. There's no Armageddon out there. The birds are still chirping.' I think the earth has opened up. God may have replied," he said on his radio show Friday.

The volcano's activity halted many travel plans Friday and Saturday as the volcano continued to erupt longer than scientists anticipated. President Obama was forced to cancel his plans to fly to Poland for a memorial in honor of Polish leaders, including the country's president, that were killed in a plane crash last week.

Aviation experts say the volcanic plume has caused the worst travel disruption Europe "and the world" has ever seen. "I've been flying for 40 years but I've never seen anything like this in Europe," said Swedish pilot Axel Alegren, after landing his flight from Kabul, Afghanistan, at Munich Airport; he had been due to land at Frankfurt but was diverted.

"The activity has been quite vigorous overnight, causing the eruption column to grow," Icelandic geologist Magnus Tumi Gudmundsson told *The Associated Press* on Saturday. "It's the magma mixing with the water that creates the explosivity. Unfortunately, there doesn't seem to be an end in sight."

One Christian blog post suggested the volcanic eruption was a sign from God that the End Times are near. Limbaugh was quick to capitalize on the unexpected drama. "Earth has opened up," he said. "I don't know whether it's a rebirth or Armageddon. Hopefully it's a rebirth, God speaking."

The talk show host also made headlines earlier this week for his reaction to President Clinton's remarks during the 15th anniversary of the Oklahoma city bombings. Limbaugh said a future bombing in Oklahoma City should be blamed on President Clinton and President Obama.

"Clinton says that right-wing talk radio has made money off of anger, aided by the Internet," Limbaugh stated. "They just can't get away from it. We are living in their heads rent free. We are in their heads and on their minds. They -- and I'm going to throw the in there -- are out to destroy western civilization, folks. Why do you think the tea party people are so reviled?"

# Justices' Ruling Blocks Cross Removal

By **ADAM LIPTAK** NY Times

**Published: April 28, 2010 WASHINGTON** — A badly fractured [Supreme Court](#), with six justices writing opinions, reopened the possibility on Wednesday that a large cross serving as a war memorial in a remote part of the Mojave Desert may be permitted to remain there.

The 5-to-4 decision provided an unusually vivid glimpse into how deeply divided the court is on the role religious symbols may play in public life and, in particular, the meanings conveyed by crosses in memorials for fallen soldiers.

“A Latin cross is not merely a reaffirmation of Christian beliefs,” Justice [Anthony M. Kennedy](#) wrote in a plurality opinion joined by Chief Justice [John G. Roberts Jr.](#) and Justice [Samuel A. Alito Jr.](#) “It evokes thousands of small crosses in foreign fields marking the graves of Americans who fell in battles, battles whose tragedies would be compounded if the fallen are forgotten.”

Justice [John Paul Stevens](#) rejected that view. “The cross is not a universal symbol of sacrifice,” he wrote in a dissent joined by Justices [Ruth Bader Ginsburg](#) and [Sonia Sotomayor](#). “It is the symbol of one particular sacrifice, and that sacrifice carries deeply significant meaning for those who adhere to the Christian faith.”

The disagreement recalled perhaps the most heated exchange of the term, from the [argument](#) in the case in October.

Peter J. Eliasberg, a lawyer with the American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California, said many Jewish war veterans would not want to be honored by “the predominant symbol of Christianity,” one that “signifies that Jesus is the son of God and died to redeem mankind for our sins.”

Justice [Antonin Scalia](#) responded that the symbol in the context of a war memorial carried a more general meaning. “The cross is the most common symbol of the resting place of the dead,” he said.

Mr. Eliasberg said, “There is never a cross on the tombstone of a Jew.”

Justice Scalia, who is usually jovial even in disagreement, turned angry. “I don’t think you can leap from that to the conclusion that the only war dead that that cross honors are the Christian war dead,” he said. “I think that’s an outrageous conclusion.”

Well, we lost this one, but we had a win on page 6

## One nation under whose God?

Recently the AHA issued a press release announcing the ruling of U.S. District Judge Crabb that the National Day of Prayer is unconstitutional. The ruling will no doubt be appealed. The Supreme Court will probably overturn it, if it goes that far. The suit was brought by the Freedom From Religion Foundation and supported by the AHA Appignani Humanist Legal Center.

David Niose, AHA president, said we can’t rely on the establishment clause as much now and we would do better basing our cases on our rights and the equal protection clause. In this case the argument would be that a call for a National Day of Prayer by the President to all US citizens discriminates against those who don’t pray. It treats those who don’t believe in or practice prayer as lacking in patriotism and citizenship. As Dan Barker of FFRF said, “Our challenge is taken on behalf of millions of nonreligious

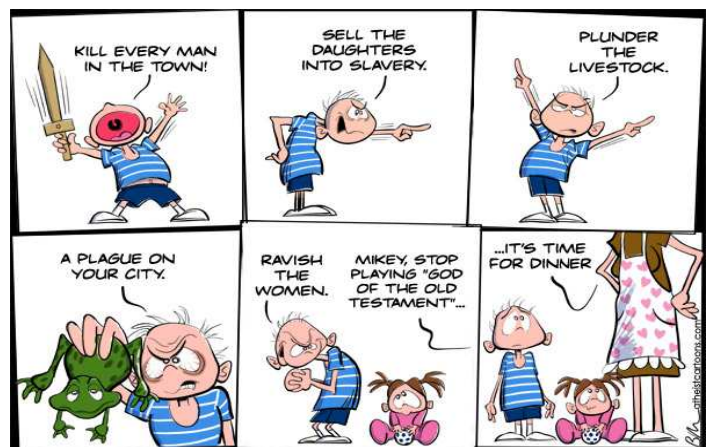
Americans who are demeaned and excluded by annual exhortations by our president that all Americans should pray and believe in a god.”

Niose’s idea that we need to shift our strategy and tactics was interesting. He illustrated with the “under God” addition to the pledge: He noted, as a lawyer, that we can’t win that battle, or many others, relying on the establishment clause. Instead, we should rely on the equal protection clause and claim discrimination.

He said we could also fight that battle in state courts, as he and others are doing in Massachusetts. There they are petitioning to discontinue recitation of the pledge in schools or to use the original pledge (which, of course, would eliminate the “under God” addition).

It seems to me, in this connection, that you do get support from most people by arguing for fairness (i.e. it is not fair to the kids who come from non-believing families and get stigmatized) than by arguing that Jefferson’s wall of separation doesn’t allow acknowledgement of God in public schools.

David’s ideas on strategy and tactics followed from his assertion that we need to make our identity known and respected and then insist on our rights and place at the table. He stressed that in our public advocacy we should not try to hide the non-theistic aspect of Humanism, but that we, along with all seculars, need to be open about our disbelief, atheism, agnosticism, etc...





## At Last . . . . . A win for our side!

SAN DIEGO — The [U.S. Supreme Court](#) has refused to take up one of the central constitutional issues in a long-running legal dispute over the discounted leases for city parkland that San Diego has given to the Boy Scouts.

Monday's decision allows to stand — at least for now — a federal judge's ruling that such agreements violate the state's constitutional ban on government preference for religious groups.

The Scouts lease 16 acres in Balboa Park and another half-acre on Fiesta Island that the city granted under a no-bid and, initially, nominal yearly fee.

After the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 2000 that the Boys Scouts of America could ban atheists and homosexuals under the Constitution's right to free association, an agnostic couple and a lesbian couple sued the city over the leases.

Three years later, federal Judge Napoleon Jones struck down the leases because he said they displayed religious preference.

The Scouts appealed that decision to the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, which asked the state Supreme Court to weigh in on three questions of state law. They are: Do the leases amount to aid to religion; if so, does that aid support a sectarian purpose; and do the leases violate the state's "no preference" ban on government favoring a religious group.

Before any state high court decision was made, the Scouts asked the U.S. Supreme Court to weigh in on the 9th Circuit's conclusion that the couples had standing to file the lawsuit. The justices declined to do so Monday.

That means the case returns to the federal appeals court for a decision on the central issue of the case.

The Boy Scouts couldn't immediately be reached for comment, but the group did post a statement on its website.

"While Boy Scouts is disappointed with the outcome, the organization respects the court's decision," the statement read.

David Blair-Loy, legal director for the American Civil Liberties Union's local chapter, which filed the lawsuit on behalf of the couples, called the Supreme Court's decision "a big step along the way" but said the case is far from over.

"It means that the Supreme Court has firmly told the Scouts 'No, you can't jump the gun and get us to take up this case in the middle,'" he said. "It's still not done yet. The appeal needs to go forward on its merits."

The Scouts had leased land in Balboa Park since 1957 for \$1 per year. After the case was filed, the city negotiated a new lease, and the Scouts pay \$2,500 in fees per year.

Jones ruled that the Boy Scouts — which bar gay leaders and require members to take an oath to God — are a religious organization and that the leases amounted to an unconstitutional government assistance to religion.

City Councilman Todd Gloria, who is gay, said he is hopeful the Scouts will reconsider their policies because of their repeated court losses on the issue.

"If they're able to make those changes I think we'd welcome them in Balboa Park, but unfortunately they choose to persist with a policy that's not reflective of 21st century values," he said.

Councilman Tony Young echoed those sentiments. "The city of San Diego should not support allowing exclusionary policies to be used on their property," he said.



18-acre Camp Balboa in Balboa Park which the [Boy Scouts](#) leased from the city of San Diego

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