

MARCH 1996

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FREETHOUGHT IN MODERN MUSIC

by Heather Lucio

For those of you worried about "these kids today," this "slacker generation": there is hope. Freethought in music is alive in many different styles of music these days. Local rap artists Brenda Anthony and Tracy Slocum looked up AOF recently and joined us at a meeting. They are trying to get freethought ideas into rap and hip-hop music which, apparently, is not an easy thing to do. Brenda saw an article in the *Freethought Observer* (which she found on our literature table) and responded thusly:

"I am responding to the article 'Violent Entertainment Dangers Cited' in TFO. I am a freethinker and a rap artist - we're RAZEN KANE, a hip-hop duo. Recently we hooked up with Atheists and Other Freethinkers here in Sacramento, CA. Being a freethinker is hard in the music business because when you're rap artists, like ourselves, your lyrics reflect your lifestyle. Therefore the subject of non-believing has definitely been practically the #1 issue for record companies. We have our own independent label (No Town Records) and therefore distribution is all on us. Some major record stores have accepted our tapes though. Tower Records and The Warehouse are just two of a few out here on the West Coast that have. We don't glorify bloodshed, gangbanging or any violence in our music. When I read the article on entertainment written by Mr. Bernard, I agreed fully, understanding his concern. That's why **RAZEN KANE** is exposing the ills of the

record business, which is responsible for gangsta rappers being in demand while conscious rappers like ourselves are not. It's not the public, but the record companies that decide who's music gets out there.

There are rap artists - and I can think of many - who, in the name of Allah, are talking about killing a whole nation of people because of their color. But it's "OK, because it's in the name of..." They get signed every day. We, on the other hand, don't get the same treatment because we're unbelievers. For instance, on the first song of our tape entitled "Unleash Da Beast," (meaning "let go of the lie") we bring a message of peace in the 'hood,' without God the Bloodshedder. When the people at one record label reviewed our demo tape and heard the words "revealing truth about the God concept" they snatched out our tape and said they would be happy to distribute, but not manufacture our work. Another gangsta rapper came in after us, with music that glorified the "devil" and killing people, and was signed. Now the record companies are pulling his tapes off the shelves because his lyrics are so gross, even cannibalistic in nature. Something is wrong when you're an entertainer and discriminated against because you're a freethinker and don't respect "god."

In our music we rap about a day of atonement with ourselves and our neighbors, and about stopping the violence and leaving the "spookism alone." We rap about stopping racism by not pointing fingers and blaming the white man but by checking the man or woman in the mirror. We're humanists, we're artists, we're positive, and we're proud freethinkers. We're tired of being stepped on by these God-loving, God fearing record companies. We notice all of the rappers screaming "Lord, Lord," while their killing, killing is paying off. The record companies are at fault here. They promote violence, God, and death. Your printing this letter will help our quest, and thank you for listening."

Brenda's letter was printed in the January/February 1996 issue of *The Freethought Observer*. We are thrilled that Brenda and Tracy have found AOF and wish them well and support their efforts. Hopefully, they will address our group at some time in the future and fill us in on their experiences and progress.

Perhaps it will help Brenda and Tracy to know that freethought has already found its way into "modern rock" and "alternative rock." One day several weeks ago I came across a beautiful, blatantly atheistic song on the radio. I immediately called the radio station (KWOD 106.5) to find out what it was. The title is "Dear God", sung by Sarah McLachlan, on the album *A Testimonial Dinner - The Songs of XTC* which is a tribute to the group XTC (not all of the songs are atheistic). The song was originally on their album *Skylarking*. Here are some of the words:

*Dear God, don't know if you notice but
Your name is on a lot of quotes in this book
As crazy humans wrote it you should take a look
And all the people that you made in your image
Still believin' that joke is true
Well, I know it ain't and so do you
Dear God, I can't believe in you
No, no, no I don't believe in you*

*I don't believe in Heaven or Hell
No saints, no sinners, no devil as well
No pearly gates, no thorny crown
You're always letting us humans down*

Pretty great stuff, I think. While perusing the Internet a while back, Pat Kelley found a list of artists and songs expressing freethought and atheism which was compiled by D. Dale Gullledge. I will list a few of them here (artist name first, album title in italics and song title in quotes):

Tori Amos, *Little Earthquakes* (several songs), *Under the Pink*, "god";
Crowded House, *Woodface*, "There Goes God";
The Cure, *The Top*, "The Top";
Emerson, Lake & Palmer, *Works II*, "I believe In Father Christmas";
Genesis, *We Can't Dance*, "Jesus He knows Me";
Metallica, *Ride the Lightning* "Escape", and *Metallica*, "The God That Failed";
Ministry, *Psalm 69*, "Psalm 69";
Monty Python, *Monty Python Sings*, "The Galaxy Song" and "All Things Dull And Ugly";
Nine Inch Nails, *The Downward Spiral*, "Heresy";
Rush, *Signals*, "The Weapon"; *Moving Pictures*, "Witch Hunt" and "Roll the Bones"

and last but not least,

Rudy Schwartz Project, *Don't Get Charred, Get Puffy*, "Creationist Polka."

This is just a small sample of what is being produced, which is very encouraging. Young People are thinking.

The President's Desk

by Betty Simonsma

Where are the people who could speak out for the rational mind - either in the media or individual conversations? Was there ever a time when the public could hear some sane words for freeing the mind from the clutches of religion? I know that Ingersoll drew large crowds in the early 1900's to hear him speak against the absurdities in the Bible stories and the plea for the rational mind. Did his audience then feel free to talk about what they had heard? I'm wondering why we hear no one today. While the media is swarming with preachers and stories about religious leaders we hear very, very few people who clearly state their atheist views. There are some programs on local public access stations and we hear mild statements by Bill Moyers or Carl Sagan, but we hear few people make flat-out pleas for common sense. And a personal conversation about atheism is unheard of.

I'm aware that there are books being published about atheism and freethought but they do not get reviewed and exposed in prominent newspapers and magazines. Once in a while an article will leak into a magazine, a newspaper, or a newsletter but, all in all, it's as though no one questions the truth of religion stories not assesses the clout religion brings into politics and world events not is anyone speaking out for atheism.

Are nonbelievers too timid, too kind, too easily frightened, to speak out? Or is there a code of silence enforced by publishers and producers and advertisers to deny the media to the skeptics, nonbelievers, and iconoclasts today? Or are we not rich enough to buy our way into the media? What is suppressing the voice of reason?

Recently, I spoke on the phone to my niece in Los Angeles and she asked me if I could send her some atheist reading material. She surprised me for I really didn't know she was interested. She also said her teenage son wanted some. So I packed up a few newsletters, brochures and some of my books and sent them since I knew she would never find them in the libraries. She did not know the names of atheist writers and books so purchasing books was difficult. And she has never heard anyone speak out for atheism or skepticism except her son and I.

Whatever reason for the silence and the scarcity of voices and words of freethought and reason, their absence keeps atheists and doubters in their closets and unaware of each other. This silence is the greatest power the religionists could have.

I've posed a lot of questions. Maybe some of you can give us some answers and suggestions in your letters to our Atheists and Other Freethinkers Newsletter.

Quote of the Month:

"When I do good, I feel good; when I do bad, I feel bad. That's my religion." - Abraham Lincoln

Hank Kocol To Speak At [Atheist Alliance](#) Convention

AOF's own Hank Kocol will speak at the [Atheist Alliance](#) convention which will be held on April 5, 6, and 7, 1996 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The theme of the convention will be "Imagine a World Beyond Belief" and will be hosted by Minnesota Atheists.

Hank's topic will be *Science vs Religion: Reality vs Fantasy*. As those of you who attended our general meeting in December know, Hank is a very engaging and informative speaker.

The convention will feature many fascinating speakers from all parts of the country, and there will be parties, dinners, and other activities. Many of you have already received information about the convention by direct mail since AOF is a member of the [Atheist Alliance](#). If you did not receive a flyer or have lost yours, copies will be available at the AOF meeting on March 10. For more information you may contact Minnesota Atheists at 612/588-1597 or 612/484-9277.

Letters

How to become politically active

Several people came up to Emil and me after the meeting (AOF General meeting, Feb, 11) to find out how to become politically active. I suggest: (1) Joining the League of Women Voters (non partisan, studies issues, supports action, welcomes men as well as women): and (2) Come to Peace Action's brown bag lunch on Thursday, March 7 at noon at 909 12th street, Sacramento.

Emil will be moderating a discussion on "Campaign Finance Reform: Two ballot proposals." Speakers will be Kris Greenlee from the League of Women Voters and Sean Beach from CALPIRG. Admission is free but bring your lunch. Coffee, tea and juice will be provided.

Sincerely Eleanor Bernstein

Need Proof!

I wrote this letter to the editor of the *Wall Street Journal* in response to an article on religion:

I was astonished to read in your story in Tues., Jan. 30, 1996 (Culture of Faith; For Kansas' Freidlines, Life, Politics, Religion Are Mostly Inseparable) on the front page and continued on page 8, that, "According to a Gallop Poll, 96% of adult Americans believe in God, 90% in heaven and 73% in hell. Seventy-two percent believe in angels and 65% believe the devil is quite real."

I find those statistics hard to believe. Since you can get any answer you want just by the way in which you ask the question, an effective evaluation of the validity of the above numbers requires answers to the following: How were the questions worded? Was a definition of "god" or "heaven" or "hell" given, and if so, what was it? Were the questions so broad and inclusive that someone who was lukewarm or agnostic or said, "maybe" or "perhaps" included in the 96%

tally? How was the poll taken: telephone? questionnaire? interviews? Where was it taken: throughout the country or specific areas or states? in the home? church? RV park? business?

Another factor in these astonishing statistics could be the subject matter itself. Many people find it comforting to believe that in an obviously unjust world that ultimate justice will be meted out in "heaven" or "hell" or that an "angel" is looking out for them or the "devil" made them do it.

The question as to the existence of god, heaven, hell, angels or the devil comes down to the following: There is no proof or reliable evidence that any of these things or places exist. By the same token, there is no proof or reliable evidence that they don't exist. Therefore, (1) do you believe that something *does* exist until there is reliable evidence or proof that it doesn't, or (2) do you believe something *does not* exist until there is reliable evidence or proof that it does?

If you favor argument #1, you find yourself in a dilemma. You either believe everything, or you believe only some things. If you believe everything, you open yourself up to any and all beliefs about anything and everything - monsters, fairies, aliens, the Easter Bunny, ghosts, witches, Santa Clause. You can be persuaded by unscrupulous people to do just about anything, including giving all your money and even your life (remember Jonestown), in accordance with that belief system. If, on the other hand, you believe only some things, how do you make the distinction between those things that are true and worthy of your belief and those that are not? Adults don't believe in Santa Clause. Why not? Can you prove he doesn't exist? Could you please explain the thought process you went through to believe in God but not in Santa Clause?

It seems to me the only way out of this dilemma is to favor argument #2. If you only believe in those things that are backed up by reliable evidence to support their veracity, you can easily evaluate everything. If it cannot be supported by proof or sufficient evidence, then you do not believe it/ It's just that simple. Who knows...there may be a god, there may be a Santa Clause...but until I get some convincing evidence on one or both, my belief system tells me not to believe in either.

Sincerely Gail Sanders.

News & Views welcomes your letters!

And we thank you for making them short (100-200 words), topical, and to the point. Send letters, comments, news, notes, quotes, and tidbits to:

Newsletter Committee C/O AOF PO Box 15182 Sacramento CA 95851-0182

Or call AOF Voice Mail at (916) 920-7834

Charity Dinner

The next charity dinner event will be held on Friday, March 22 at the Haggewood Community Center from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. Kay Stinson will chair the event this time. Kay has been a regular volunteer at these dinners but this will be her first time as the chairperson so let's support her as much as we can. <P><>If you would like to participate in this very important and rewarding community service you may sign up as a volunteer or you may donate money (or both) at the next AOF meeting on Sunday, March 10. People are needed to cook, serve, and clean-up. Or, you may leave a message on the AOF Voice-mail (920-7834) to volunteer. You may send donations to AOF at PO Box 15182, Sacramento CA 95851-0182.

February Meeting Report

The speaker at our February meeting was **Jerry Sloan of Project Tocsin**, a group that monitors the Religious Right. Jerry said that the political strategy of the "Religious Atrocity", as he refers to them, is to divide out country, to get citizens fighting against citizens. They use such issues as immigration and school vouchers to this end. Evangelicals have convinced followers that the government is "out to get them." They say that government is "persecuting" Christians, when in fact religion is flourishing because of the "freedom of religion" policy of America.

Our Northern European ancestors who came to America in the 1600's were Calvinists who believed that God ordained our positions in life - if you were a blacksmith and wanted to become a banker, you were sinning and fighting the will of God. By the time of the Revolution, there were nine colonies which had established churches, but leaders were beginning to think about de-establishing them and allowing free conscience to be the law of the states. The founders were rejecting some of the Calvinistic thought that was prevalent during the first 150 years. By stating that "all men are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights" they were not trying to establish the fact that there is a creator, but that humans have power over our own destinies. Today in America there is a group of powerful, wealthy people who have returned to Calvinism and want the rest of the country to follow. They believe that God will save he who will and the rest can go to hell. Many fundamentalists are driven by Dominion Theology, which means that God has given man (Christian) dominion over all the earth, and they are to go out and conquer it, politically and financially. Christian reconstruction falls under the Dominion Theology belief system. Christian Reconstructionists believe that they must reconstruct society so that it conforms to Biblical Old Testament law - they have been working very hard for the last twenty years towards this goal. They want the 600+ laws of the Old Testament enforced as the laws of modern-day America.

Mr. Sloan said that he attended Bible College with Jerry Falwell. At that time, the two basic schools of theology concerning the return of Christ were known as pre-millennial and post-millennial. The pre-millennialists believed that before Christ would return, the world must be converted so that he could come back and establish his kingdom on earth. Many pre-

millennialists, such as Jerry Fallwell and Pat Robertson have become operational post-millennialists and are out to change the world politically. Wealthy fundamentalists have donated large sums of money to get the political candidates of their choice elected to the California legislature. They have elected 28 out of 41 Republicans to the California Assembly and 9 out of 16 Republicans to the California Senate. At first, the contributors would only back strong Religious Right candidates, but now they donate money to any Republican candidate they think can win. Once elected, and indebted to their sponsors for their success, they quickly fall in line and vote the Religious Right agenda. As Speaker of the House, Willie Brown had previously kept them in check, but in recent weeks they have consolidated their power.

Mr. Sloan noted that freethinkers are not as likely to call legislators as are religious groups who will jam the lines at the command of their leaders. He said that humanists and atheists tend to intellectualize a lot - but now is the time for action. He suggested that one thing that we can do is join organizations which sponsor candidate forums and ask the candidates exactly what their positions are.

FYI

Freethought News You Can Use

National freethought publications and organizations

Here is a list of national publications and organizations that we think might interest readers of *News & Views*. This is not an exhaustive list, and we would certainly welcome suggestions for additions to it.

FREE INQUIRY, CHS (The Council for Secular Humanism, formerly the Council on Democratic and Secular Humanism), Box 664, Amherst NY 14226-0664. \$28.50/yr, 6 issues.

The FREETHOUGHT OBSERVER, PO Box 202447, Arlington TX 76006, 817/461-2145. \$25/yr, 6 issues.

FREETHOUGHT TODAY, Freedom From Religion Foundation, PO Box 750 Madison, WI 53701. \$35/yr, 11 issues.

The HUMANIST, American Humanist Association, 7 Harwood Dr. PO Box 1188, Amherst NY 14226-7188. \$24.95/yr, 6 issues.

The AMERICAN RATIONALIST, PO Box 994, St Louis MO 63188, \$6/yr, 6 issues.

FREEDOM WRITER, Institute for First Amendment Studies, PO Box 589, Great Barrington MA 01730. Monitor of religious right activity. #25/yr, monthly.

BIBLICAL ERRANCY, 2500 Punderson Dr, Hilliard OH 43026. Biblical Criticism. \$12/yr, monthly.

THE SKEPTICAL REVIEW, PO Box 617, Canton IL 61520-0617. Biblical Criticism. \$5/yr, quarterly.

SECULAR NATION, [Atheist Alliance](#), PO Box 5296, San Mateo CA 9402-0296. \$14/yr, quarterly.

SKEPTICAL INQUIRER, CSICOP (Committee for Scientific Investigations of Claims of the Paranormal), PO Box 703, Amherst NY 14226-0703. \$29.50/yr, 6 issues.

SKEPTIC, Box 338, Altadena CA 91001. \$35/yr, quarterly.

CREATION/EVOLUTION and NCSE REPORTS, National Center for Science Education, PO Box 9477, Berkeley CA 94709-0477. \$25/yr, quarterly.

CHURCH AND STATE, Americans United for Separation of Church and State, 1816 Jefferson Place, NW, Washington DC 20036. 202/466-3234, \$25/yr monthly.

Freethought humor on tape *The Secular Humanist Revival Meeting*, by Orson Scott Card (science fiction writer) is an hilarious and poignant jab at Creationists and other critics of freethought. To order a copy, send \$9.00 to Revival, PO Box 18184, Greensboro NC 27419-8184

"Fight the Right" Rally

The National Organization for Women is sponsoring a rally which will take place in San Francisco on Sunday, April 14. Buses will be available to take participants from Sacramento to the site of the rally. Tickets for the transportation are \$15 or \$20, depending upon how quickly you sign up. For more information, contact Cleo Kocol, via AOF's Voice Mail message recorder (920-7834).

AOF Board Elections Coming

Elections for a new Board of Directors is just around the corner. The slate of candidates must be complete by our April general meeting, and the election will be held at the meeting in May. The following positions need to be filled: President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary, and Director at Large. If you would like to serve in any of these capacities, please notify either Cleo Kocol or Karen Abbe. You may approach them at the next meeting in March or leave a message for them on the AOF voice mail recorder (920-7834). Also, you may nominate someone whom you feel would be a good candidate.

Calendar of Events

Sunday, March 3

Highway Clean-up

Sunday, March 3

Freethought Forum - Discussion Group

Sunday, March 10	General Meeting
Sunday, March 10	Newsletter Deadline for submissions
Tuesday, March 19	Board Meeting
Friday, March 22	Charity Dinner
Sunday, April 14	General Meeting

For calendar updates, call the 24-hour AOF information system at (916) 920-7834.

OUR GENERAL MEETINGS...

are on the seconds Sunday of the month, noon - 2 pm. at
Sierra 2 Community Center, Room 10, 2791 - 24th Street,
Just south of Broadway and the DMV.

Visitors are welcome.

Parking is available on the street or in the rear, off 4th Avenue.

After the meeting, join us at the **New Helvetia coffee house**, one block north of Sierra 2, where we often go for coffee, muffins, and a chance to talk.

March Program Features Cleo!

When Mormons tromped on separation of church and state, a handful of people, including the Kocols, responded in ways the LDS church didn't expect. On Sunday March 10, at our General meeting, Cleo Kocol will relate the events of the yearlong protest and tell us about its dramatic ending. Hear how the movement expanded and grew until Cleo became one of the "Bellevue 21" and the Mormon hierarchy cried "uncle."

**Sunday, March 10
at Noon
Sierra 3, Room 10
SEE YOU THERE!**

AOF Committees & Projects

Programs:	Cleo Kocol
Newsletter Editor:	Pat Kelley
Meeting Facility:	Betty Simonsma

Membership Database:	Heather Lucio
Liaison:	Betty Simonsma
Voice Info:	Karen Abbe
Charity Dinner Project:	Karen Abbe
Literature Project:	Brad Clark, Cleo Kocol
Book Sales:	Brad Clark

AOF STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The purpose of the association Atheists and Other Freethinkers (AOF) is to promote the understanding and acceptance of Atheism in our community. To accomplish this purpose, AOF will, through educational programs, projects, and publications, extend Atheistic perspectives concerning the separation of church and state and the right to think and speak freely on these perspectives.

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The contents of News & Views are informational and educational. Subscription: \$8.00 per year (free to members.) Views expressed via the articles in this publication are not necessarily those of Atheists and Other Freethinkers. Submissions may be sent to AOF (Attn: Newsletter Committee). AOF cannot be responsible for unsolicited submissions.