

# secularworld

A Positive Voice for Atheism

First Quarter: 2017

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The Need for Critical Thinking

The Battle for Our Children: Fact Versus Fiction

Secularism in The Workplace

What's humanism?

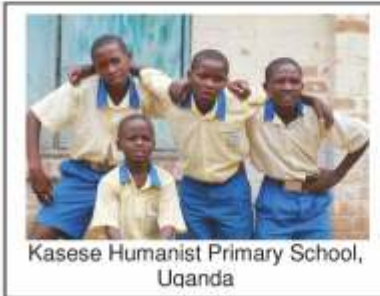
Life Post-Trump & more!

# If Atheists Speak But No One Notices, Are We Making A Difference?

It's not enough to simply espouse a naturalist view based on science and reason. The **AAI Foundation**, an internal program of Atheist Alliance International, supports educational and community improvement projects - including through international exchanges - and advocates on behalf of atheists facing discrimination around the world, particularly in developing countries.

The AAI Foundation sponsors and supports a number of activities around the world:

## Humanist Schools in Africa and Asia.



AAI has been an active sponsor of humanist and secular schools in countries where religious organizations control the majority of educational institutions. AAI and its partners provide a secular alternative to focus on critical thinking, science and reason in a naturalistic and nontheistic worldview. **Since 2009, these schools have served over 1,200 children.**

## Legal assistance and family support for atheist discrimination and oppression.



Alexander Aan is an Indonesian man who was attacked by his neighbors, fired from his government job, and then arrested by the Indonesian police and convicted with a 3-year prison sentence for 'inciting religious hatred' after posting 'God does not exist' on his personal Facebook page. AAI covered Alexander's legal costs and provided family support while working with local human-rights groups to campaign for his release, for a change in Indonesian law and to fundraise to assist with his family's ongoing expenses while Alexander, the family breadwinner, languished in prison.

## Relief assistance to countries and regions devastated by natural or man-made disasters.



Since 2010, AAI has organized relief efforts with our affiliate groups and raised thousands of dollars for natural disasters that have befallen communities around the world. Per Robert Ingersoll: "Hands that help are better than hands that pray."



## Overseas social work project sponsorships

## Scholarships for the next generation of humanist leaders in indigent countries



**The AAI Foundation exists to improve the quality of life for communities through the application of critical thinking, science and reason. It is through your support that this important work continues.**

**[www.AtheistAlliance.org/Activities/AAI-Foundation](http://www.AtheistAlliance.org/Activities/AAI-Foundation)**



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A Positive Voice For Global Atheism

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For more information: [www.secularconference.com](http://www.secularconference.com).

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# Become a Supporting Member of Atheist Alliance International

**Supporting AAI means promoting naturalism, science and reason while challenging and confronting religious privilege and discrimination against atheists and religious minorities around the world.**

AAI's projects include **funding new groups** and **conferences**, **school** and **social service projects**, bringing attention to **religious discrimination**, as well as **legal** and **asylum support** for those targeted by religious bigots.

**AAI operates entirely through the support of our members.** Even more, if you live in the US, your donation to AAI is fully tax-deductible.

**AAI members are also invited to directly participate in projects supported by AAI around the world**, whether it be teaching or assisting a primary school class, participating in a speaking tour on atheism & humanism, or working with one of our affiliate groups to improve the local quality of life.

**Your monthly contribution helps AAI sustain and expand our programs.** Join our team and know that you are making a difference in challenging religion and expanding freethought around the world!

**All members receive** members-only access to the AAI website | Freethought Audio Library e-version of *Secular World* magazine(printed copy at additional charge) | *Imagine!* quarterly newsletter

**Monthly memberships include a printed copy of *Secular World* magazine**

**Thanks for your support! Together, we'll create a sane and rational world!**



FOR A SECULAR WORLD



**atheistalliance.org**



# A LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Rustam Singh

Like many Indians in my circle growing up in the nineties, I grew up in what I convinced myself was a lower-middle

class society. Cable television barely played any English cinema (forget TV shows), and that too at late night hours with essentially just smutty sexually graphic films on a loop. But as I grew older, internet became cheaper and India grew wiser, our paychecks rose and disposable cash became a reasonable asset everyone had access to. Finally, with one person illegally downloading all the TV sitcoms on a painfully slow dial-up connection, I witnessed a world which offered an alien lifestyle – but yet, somehow made sense. I was never fascinated with the sexual liberation it offered, or witty dialogues and edgy cuss words, but the freedom in which individuals existed. Sure I knew TV is all fictional drama, and even most average westerns do not lead such lifestyles, but merely the simple act of someone living in his own tiny apartment, going to a job and traveling back to his own life was such a liberating taboo for a vast majority of my country. When I was 18, I got my first freelance writing job that started paying my bills – which I knew only two other kids were doing at my age. The idea of someone working alongside studying was so alien, it was associated with extreme social stigma and having over felt classicist all my life, it was associated with quiet mummies that my family's going through financial woes (which we thankfully weren't). It was never about

chasing the western dream – it was chasing the western freedom.

As I grew older, it pains more than it should affect me personally to see what's happening with the civilized world, the same world that all my childhood I considered to be as close as to utopia it gets. When the leader of the free world doesn't even apologize for saying that he “grabs women by the pussy”, when Sharia councils exist and flourish in the UK, IS beheads people listening to music, if you get raped in Dubai you being the victim can be sentenced to jail, witchcraft still exists in parts of Africa, LGBT rights are stigmatized in a majority of individuals worldwide, science and rational bloggers get beheaded in Bangladesh in broad daylight, I get a sinking feeling of helplessness. All my earlier life I confidently believed sure individuals can be good as well as bad, and that hardly has anything to do with their associations, but as a general collective, the good will always win over the bad. Turns out, the numbers have switched – or were they always like that and me like the rest the rest of the world is just more aware of their presence, courtesy the immunity their numbers have granted them?

How did this wave of “alternative facts”, deep fried in the artery chocking intangible concept of national pride become so mainstream that we have to hard search for objective facts? In a world of social media frenzies, easy blaming and the ease of access to news



spread in seconds, how did we choose to select obvious fake news instead? Did the opportunity to have infinite sources actually make us more confused as science says? What does this spell for the future?

In a world where nobody wants to see direct advertisements, and use clever ways to block ads, yet nobody wants to pay subscriptions either, how are media labels or content generators supposed to earn their revenue? If sponsored news crosses a certain line of content vs paid news, does it not become a biased and promotional instead of a factual news reporting portal? These are

pressing questions we need to ask ourselves before we question our news sources – are we willing to pay that tiny fraction of money to pay for those that risk their lives and reputation to get the facts straight or listen to those that work on click-bait, pointlessly sexualized and advertisement soaked paid news.

To my best understanding, these negative elements, fascists, bigots, conservatives and all those that use all sorts of excuses to avoid progress are inherently no different than rationalist liberals. They grew their narrow minds in the same circumstances that all hate

grew in –  
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fixating on some form of cause that gives them the feeling of belonging. Does this excuse their behavior and views? Of course not. Does it teach us that there's still hope inside even the most conservatives to change? Possibly.

Rewind again to my childhood, I always envisioned the west as a mystical place where life was so progressive it was like the future, not just technologically but socially, politically and culturally as well. Turns out the majority voice is reverting back decades of progress in human rights, equality and surprisingly scientific discoveries too. In our quest for finding newer solutions to existing

problems, we may have overstepped our reach to not notice the system in which things work for the majority are still the very old systems that bigots used. Liberals brought essentially every celebrity to perform everything you can think about including parodies, stand-ups, comics, talk shows, news, advertisers and promotions in the disastrous US elections. Every witty Twitter status, every rhyming micro-poetry, every dank meme and every inspirational cover photo possible was utilized, but no avail – since conservatives simply ignored all that and just voted. No new media or radical

outreach was utilized than plain old standing in line to vote – no Starbucks color schemes, and no T-Shirts or caps. The exact same thing happened in India's elections in 2014 as well. Expressing solidarity is one thing, but expecting it to match up to real change that happens via proper lawful intervention is just building castles on clouds.

Currently, my nation's Prime Minister is visibly banking on cashing the sentimental values of national pride to counter for obvious bigotry. When a Muslim guy was lynched by the public for alleged possession of beef (not a

metaphor, real edible beef), instead of saying strict action will be taken by the government to punish those guilty, they promoted an ancient belief that a cow is holy mammal for Hindus hence its slaughter must be banned. Sure, thousands of Hindus freely eat it in South India, and so have for centuries in earlier generations, but all of a sudden everyone must be reminded of this fictional, misguided tradition based living. When some unarmed student, coming from a Muslim family (although the individual said he does not identify as a practicing Muslim in some interviews), spoke about the


unbelievable special law in the state of Kashmir that literally allows police to shoot down anyone or arrest and harass without any prior warrants or even stating the reasons for doing so, he got half mauled by a paid crowd of goons. An year later and merely few weeks ago, the same

individual now tries to make a speech on a different topic in a university, and similar goons appear throwing rocks at journalists, threatening rape to the female students and beating up everyone just attending college while the police stood and watched. Instead of protecting free speech, our Prime Minister chooses to encourage his dedicated army of fixed spammers across social media to say these individuals were advocating for independence for the state of Kashmir and thus being anti-national and had it coming.



While anyone objectively would agree the public must be allowed to have the right of free speech till the point it doesn't promote violence directly or goes out of its way to malign an individual, it's vital to understand intangible concepts such as national pride are defined by every individual who identifies by them. For example, if I as a citizen of India color my hair red, it is incorrect to say all Indians have black hair. Similarly, if I as citizen of India believe the state of Kashmir should repeal it's fascist law, you cannot say it

goes against nationalism when I myself am a part of nationalism. Nobody, by law or socially, has ever been given a special privilege to decide what constitutes national pride or not. It's completely different individual struggles, we are acceptable to neither love nor hate your country understanding you're global citizen and the mere act of your birth should not be able to decide your lifelong commitment to a piece of land. At the end of the day, it doesn't matter which country you're in as long as we share the same common goals of

promoting scientific advancement, spreading knowledge, choosing facts over fiction, preserving human rights and spreading equality. In our own united with the hope that our voices will lead the masses towards a progressive future. In one humble attempt to spread such perspectives, please enjoy this edition of the Secular World magazine. As always, I encourage you to like our social media page and spread the word if you liked it. Thank you. 

## Oppression against nontheists? Atheist Alliance International

The Freedom of Thought Report  
A Global Report on Discrimination Against Humanists, Atheists and the Nonreligious



[www.FreeThoughtReport.com](http://www.FreeThoughtReport.com)

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# A SECULAR 'BOOSTER'

**Diego Fontanive**

There is this huge amount of talking about equality nowadays: politicians, 'spiritual' leaders, are using it and speakers of sorts are preaching about "equality among religions or ideals" that is utterly absurd. With the nonsense of the "new age movement" and its bombastic but empty slogans for example "we are all one"; they all talk about equality in a way or another, although they sound appealing and ideal what seems to be missing is a serious willingness to understand the real implications of that word. The matter of equality should be introduced in the field of education and approached through a solid critical analysis.

The intelligent development of every individual in terms of critical thinking skills is indeed the fundamental booster for secularism; as well it's the only and primary option to create a society of equals in which different ideas can co-exist but with no room for ideologies. This means without a critical analysis that promotes the possible co-existence of different beliefs, especially the religious ones, such as allowing religious outfits or any of its teachings at school or in society is a very much deleterious choice. The study of religious books, instead, should be introduced in the

field of education, not to indoctrinate of course but to go through the plenty of incongruences, immoralities and absurdities presents in such books. Secular tutors skilled with critical thinking abilities should actuate the exploration and analysis of religious books at school, and never by a theologian and especially not by a person that does not possess critical thinking skills. Elaborations of data derived by the analysis of the implementation of secular thinking within one and more scholastic years should be performed so to show how precious the cultivation of criticalness is for children, future generations and rational secularism. This proposition should also be extended outside of schooling for example by producing public initiatives aimed to make people question the contradictions and the iniquities present in religious books and ideologies in general. This could be done by using public monitors, displays, bill boards and local mass media, magazines and so on.

Religious issues aside for a moment; the implementation of critical thinking skills are also profoundly necessary to contain and prevent the rise of modern gullibility caused by fallacious approach

to the overload of information we come across with, especially on the Internet. Nowadays basically everybody can publish whatever false, deeply or partially biased data they want on the web. There is no filter and an incredibly scarce capacity (and willingness) to check the sources of articles and claims, especially when bombastic. In other words, most people ignore that bombastic claims requires bombastic evidence to be trusted. This usual extremely flawed approach to the overload of info present on-line nowadays results in a dangerous flowering of new religions, sects, cults, internet gurus, new age movements, pseudo-science of all sorts, the spreading of modern 'spiritual' ideologies, popular gullibility, anti-science beliefs such as anti-vaccine movements, 'flat Earth theory' and even the permeation of fallacious motivational and demi-spiritual ideas in the field of today's psychotherapy.

Social reforms, at whatever level, aimed to bring about equality do nothing but consolidate inequality and conflict; because there cannot be any sort of productive reform nor intelligent progress within and among individuals and countries as long as the structure of



**Atheist Alliance International's Accreditations**

the human believing is not deeply understood and emancipated from the industrial quantity and level of ideological garbage and the contagious biases it carries around. As long as there are unquestioned beliefs with no evidence and ideologies, the longer it will take for us to see the dawn of objectively intelligent reforms, the more poisonous domination of ideals based on the subjectivity of local beliefs, leaders and similar authorities will be. The problem of secularism is that secularism is too slow: a solid inquiry of this reality characterized by beliefs and ideologies can really speed the velocity of secular thought up.

Another way we can speed secular thought up is by taking into account modern human migrations and geo-politics. The political parties' anti-migration have certainly some valid points, nevertheless it does not require a high level of intelligent political analysis to acknowledge how they mainly tend to fuel people's disappointment and anger rather than clever propositions in regard of this modern geo-political and human issue. These parties in Italy or France, for example, and pretty much all over the western world, are driven by leaders who do not even care about hiding at least a little bit of their (sometimes spectacular) intellectual ignorance. Some of them deliberately engage these approaches because they know that this 'language' catches people's attention which is required to acquire more votes, instead they just seem to have no idea about how flawed their propositions and decisions are.

The issue is in truth very complex and precisely because of this fact what is required is a very attentive analysis of the problem and not really the easiness of taking positions. Both popular positions, whether intransigence against immigrant (mixed with racism and ignorance), and ideals of goodness, blind acceptance and even simplistic slogans such as 'we are all human beings', which are completely out of topic, are indeed superficial, unintelligent and futile positions, as well both positions (tolerance and intolerance) lead to the very same creation of further problems.

The real issue is to be investigated is right within the geo-political and sociological conceptualization of 'globalization' and how it came into being throughout the last few decades. The gigantic error that has been committed has been the act of being focused and concentrated primarily on the economic aspect of it and not on a proper globalised education, not an education based on so called "political correctness" which involves shameful epistemic acceptances such as "freedom of religion" (which equals: "freedom of indoctrination"), or "respect other beliefs" (which equals a general process of popular sensitization against questioning). This gradual, silent, vague and ambiguous process of globalization grew up and took place within general people's consciousness and civil collectives by undertaking a wrong,

## AAI LEGAL / SUPPORT FUND

- A Project of the AAI Foundation -

There are places in the world where being "out" as an atheist – or, for that matter, even expressing open doubt about the dominant religious



faith – makes you a target of violence and incarceration.

AAI receives pleas from atheists and skeptics every month seeking protection and asylum assistance and who have few other



places to turn. While we collect information and report on these cases to international human rights groups, AAI also extends



help as it can through its affiliate groups. Our legal support fund provides legal assistance to those



arrested and asylum support to those seeking to find safer sanctuary.



The demand for such services far exceeds our resources and

rely solely on contributions from our supporters. Please consider contributing to the AAI Legal / Support Fund, a project of the AAI Foundation, to continue to provide help to those in need.



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biased, conditioned way the consequences of which resulted in the nowadays' mess and confusion.

The idea of a globalised world is certainly preferable than the old fashioned way represented by borders, restrictions, walls and nationalisms: a globalised world is the right and intelligent way to shape a future civilization, progress and betterment for mankind based on secularism and critical thinking abilities.

Nevertheless the enormous error that has been committed and that continue to be perpetuated also today, consists in the reality in which and because of which it is impossible to globalize people who hold mindsets pivoted in beliefs and ideologies: this idea of globalization is utterly stupid because it merely consists in cancelling the

bureaucratic and geo-political walls among people and countries, but such an operation does not cancel at all the walls shaped by beliefs and rigid mindsets, which is something that only an education in critical thinking can do (in time, generationally, and through a massive effort in every sense, in terms of finances, investments, intelligence, analyses, educational institutions, programs, projects and so on). It seems that average minds do not catch the


distinction between what cultural things are and what religious or ideological things instead are: a religious thought is not a culture: it's a mindset.

When people and tribes move elsewhere, indeed, they do carry also their beliefs, their cultural lifestyles, their conditioning, their collective absurdities and rigid mindsets as well.

This process might seems invisible at the beginning, because 'people are people

indeed great confusion when it comes to touch topics like racism and such. To discharge certain absurd values that every religion carries and to proclaim openly such things as human abominations, is not to be racist; because a religion is not a race, and such absurd beliefs are independent from the color of the skin or the real genetic human race one belongs to.

Geo-political and economic games and gambles aside, beliefs that encourage rigid mindsets are what and where the core of the problem is: it is the structure of belief what shapes lifestyles, cultures, individuals' attitudes and masses, just like it is the understanding of this structure and its biases, logical fallacies and emotional absurdities what can reduce the irrationality of man, and this is not something that can be solved by a politician, neither it can be solved by the

average, ordinary sentiments of the masses: this is something that can be progressively understood and erased by the act of investing all possible resources in a revolutionary form of education: a meta-cognitive education based on the analysis of our own. Since politics is characterized by taking positions, then taking positions has very little to do with a qualitative education based on critical thinking, secular thought and values and on the achievement of high order thinking skills. Therefore religion ideologies are instead the enemy of this qualitative education, as well the hindrance against human progress and secularism. 



regardless of where they come from', but as long as it remains unseen and therefore not approached seriously, so long the problems and conflicts that will come into being will always manifest themselves as well as slow progress of prevention will come into being, just more anger, resentment and various grievances nourished by the basic fears of the different which then lead to racism, homophobia and the ignorant self-encapsulation within primitive conservative ideologies). There is



Diego is the founder of The EOF Project and has a background in Political Science, Sociology and Psychology. His main concern and field of research are the flawed systems that reduce our ability to think, resulting in psychological suffering, social iniquities and the contradictions embedded within the decaying structures of society and what can be done about it.

[www.eofproject.org](http://www.eofproject.org)



# THE BATTLE FOR OUR CHILDREN: FACT VERSUS FICTION

**Zachary R. Phillips**

There is a battle spanning the globe, not only continue the trend but seem to which has been fought since the first try and intensify it) it now focuses its time an idea based on reason efforts on indoctrinating our children. threatened religious faith. A battle in Across the world, the debate rages on, which imprisonment, torture, and even should creationism be taught in our death have been tools of the faithful schools as well as evolution and the majority, from Galileo's imprisonment, creation of the universe? Should parents

won out over fact despite any and all evidence that supported it. We fortunately now live in a world that is much more tolerant of science than most cultures of the past, provided it leaves in some room for a religion to either adapt or ignore any discoveries



simply for opposing the Pope about a heliocentric solar system to Giordano Bruno, burned at the stake for having ideas that are contrary to the Catholic faith which also included heliocentrism. Today this battle still continues and although in most of the developed world it doesn't keep the historical trend of murder and imprisonment (with the exception of religious extremists who regretfully still

have the right to decide whether or not to vaccinate our children based on their own personal beliefs? Should the world's governments act on climate change because of the theories supported by an overwhelming majority of scientists? Each of these debates have a side which is solely based in scientific fact and a side based in personal belief, and historically, popular belief generally

that may damage the validity of the religious doctrine. However, these questions are also somewhat different now, they're asked from legal standpoints, not so much denying the scientific fact but asking whether individuals can ignore any evidence and replace them with their own personal beliefs. So now we face a much more seemingly philosophical debate on

where an individual's rights fall regarding their personal beliefs and if an individual can force their children to abide by those beliefs at their children's and even society's risk.

Unfortunately, those who suffer the consequences of these misguided beliefs are rarely the believers themselves but instead their children and the generations following their children's. Religious leaders are fighting our education system to remove scientific theories, that have been built on centuries of rigorous testing, like the origin of our universe or evolution and

of facts and wastage of massive amounts of time which is already significantly limited, especially once you consider that even within any particular religion many of the denominations can't agree with each other in their creation stories. If we accept religion into our class rooms at what point do we stop? Do we allow our future astronomers to learn that the cosmos were created in its entirety within seven days or our future biologists that things were willed into creation by a magical man in the sky? Do we teach how Odin gave Askr and Embla the breath of life or

it is entirely possible that their child could. So now we have a child who could suffer life altering disabilities or even death because of their parent's beliefs, a child will be stripped of their right of an otherwise healthy life because of their parents right to deny scientific fact. How many children can we watch die because their parents would rather pray for their health than give them proper medical care? Is it acceptable to allow someone to neglect and even abuse their children in the name of their religion to such extremes as death? If that is acceptable at what point do we draw the line?



put in their place simple mythology. These efforts not only strip a child of the right to an actual education based on fact and supported by science but also strips the scientific community of its legitimacy by equating proof with belief, essentially taking away a century of progress. What's the purpose of sacrificing a lifetime to studying, testing and exploring any field of science when a two-thousand-year-old book gets to be an equal without a single piece of viable evidence?

With so many different religions and different creation myths to teach them along side the Big Bang theory and the theory of evolution would be a dilution

that Prometheus created man from mud as taught in Greek mythology? I know these may seem like far-fetched examples however that is the door we open when we put myths on the same educational level as theories backed by mountains of evidence. Is it worth it to bog down every science classroom in order to accommodate the various religions or should we keep them in the various classes already dedicated to myths and theology?

A parent who refuses to vaccinate their children out of the completely incorrect fear that it could possibly cause autism will not have to suffer through polio themselves because of their mistake but

It is more likely that the entire world will feel major effects of climate change relatively soon and despite an overwhelming 97% consensus on climate change by climate scientists, many governments are still split on the issue, claiming the science is still being debated and thus is unable to act in any truly meaningful way to help soften the blow of man caused climate change. These "beliefs" benefit no one other than those with ties to the fossil fuel industry, yet far too many people deny the actual science, generally with nothing to back them up but a group of politician's stances on the subject, is it the politician's right to spread these beliefs, knowing the influence they




have, with absolutely no evidence to support them? Is it acceptable for the people of this world to pick and choose the science of climate change they follow because of their beliefs and make decisions based upon those beliefs and if so can our world's leaders make laws according to their beliefs for their citizens?

After a lifetime of indoctrination children have grown into adults who now have an ingrained distrust of any "mainstream" science. The scientific community is, in many religions, seen as the enemy whose sole purpose it to discredit and disprove their religion so they largely ignore any conclusive evidence that it provides. By allowing our children to not only ignore the scientific community but also fear it, is effectively undoing decades of progress simply because their parents valued the teachings of outdated stories over a culmination of hundreds of years of scientific research. After having these religious texts so deeply ingrained into their beliefs no amount of evidence can convince them anything other than what they already believe to be true, this is why approximately 23% of Americans still, despite the overwhelming evidence, do not believe in climate change or, according to gallop poll's, why 42% of Americans disbelieve evolution and many see it as an Atheist conspiracy.

Apart from the blatant disregard of facts, brainwashing our children with religious ideologies often teaches them a set of seemingly broken morals. Passages encouraging murder, rape, racism, homophobia and rampant sexism fill the Torah, Bible and the Quran. Children are taught it's perfectly acceptable to hate someone simply because someone's sexual preference differs from the majority and so they are an ungodly abomination, they are taught that there are cases where rape isn't an atrocity but acceptable behavior, they are taught that there is no moral issue with pedophilia, just like their prophets and priests believed. Can we truly call ourselves a moral society when the majority of our people see these heinous acts as holy tradition? When so many people normalize this highly immoral behavior and write it all off with the name of god?

Do we continue to allow personal beliefs to blur the line between tradition and abuse or do we place our children's individual rights of health, education, and sustainability above those? Each of these questions have an answer, an educated, progressive and even morally driven answer. If we expect any kind of continued existence of meaning and substance, we must cast aside personal beliefs and instead prioritize scientific facts. We can no longer hold religious, corporate or individual beliefs over another life regardless of their roles in

creating said life. There is no longer any room in our society for laws to be based on the right of a belief, if someone wants to live their life by a holy text that's their right until it infringes on the rights of any other individual at which point their religious freedom should become meaningless.

For far too long we have allowed outdated beliefs to discriminate and even destroy our neighbors, every race that fell within the minority, women, the LGBT community, scientists and especially our children. We have the benefit of living now, in a time where progressive ideas aren't a death sentence but for the most part celebrated, we live in a world built by science, seemingly crafted to cater to the curious mind. As non-theists we each have to be the voice of science, building on the proven theories while discarding the disprove. We have the responsibility of remaining a beacon of knowledge in what seems to be an ocean of ignorance and despite the sometimes overwhelming battle of indoctrination remember many of us were also indoctrinated. We can no longer allow religious "morals" to rule out society, instead we must stand for the rights of every individual and not individual ideas. Let's for the first time in human history truly embrace knowledge, support science and actually prioritize our children's futures before greed, ignorance, and mythology. 



Zachary Phillips is a writer who enjoys covering and debating religion, science, politics, and comic books. When he isn't writing he's looking to the stars with his son, reading books or diving head first into the nerd culture. After becoming physically disabled he has dedicated his life to the pursuit of knowledge and tries to share said knowledge with everyone around him, much to their annoyance.



# SECULARISM IN THE WORKPLACE

**Mart Hoe**

At work, I'm sure like me, you'll discuss numerous subjects - how your sports team is performing, how Janice in Accounting is always so petty, is Donald Trump's hair made from shaving Yaks - the normal things. In the 21st Century the modern work place is generally a diverse place. You'll likely find people from many countries, cultures and

always taken the time to know my work colleagues but knowing your audience is important since religion can be a very delicate subject. The challenge I find as an atheist is trying to drip feed reason into conversation, without coming across as preachy, jumping in with 'Look at this picture of eye worms in orphan

unprovable, can you respect something that subjugates women, indoctrinates children and can pit brother against brother?

Religion has not often been a go to subject for me at work, however as I enjoy discussion and understanding differing viewpoints I've engaged where I can. I remember one conversation with



beliefs. And as we live in a world where offending anyone ever apparently makes you worse than Hitler, how do you navigate the waters of religion? Over the years I've worked all over the world, from London to Barcelona to Papua New Guinea and as an atheist I've always tried to engage with people. Before jumping in with both feet I've

babies in Africa!' isn't going to win you friends. Similarly, just respecting beliefs isn't going to change anything either. I saw a great stand up show with Patton Oswalt, who said that you should 'acknowledge what people believe, but don't respect it'. That struck a chord with me. If you're secular, can you respect something

a former work colleague, who claimed the he was once Jewish, then atheist and now born again. I enjoyed our sparring sessions, especially as he loved to roll out the classics - 'If we evolved from monkeys, why are there still monkeys', 'How can you make something from nothing', and 'You can't prove God DOESN'T exist'. It's amazing how often

these get used like it is atheist Kryptonite. On the latter point I tried to reassure him that you can't prove a negative his reply of 'Yes, exactly' had me creased up, I don't think he understood. When I attempted to explain to him how we can, relatively accurately, estimate the age of the universe and the Earth, he said to me 'Well, you can't believe everything you read' the irony was truly lost on him. His somewhat questionable beliefs about homosexuality aside, (he didn't believe that it naturally occurs throughout nature), he was a genuinely decent bloke, but I did know that nothing would ever really change his mind. In the 21st Century we're living in a time where facts are apparently less important than feelings - I *feel* like immigrants are to blame for everything, therefore Donald Trump is right, I *feel* like the NHS is being crushed by illegals, so Brexit. The big difficulty now is separating the religion from the people. While there is undoubted bigotry towards all Muslims, which is obviously disgraceful, the ability to critique Islam or any religion for that matter, may be off putting for many people. Anything sufficiently ridiculous should be open to healthy debate, without it being called a 'phobia' or an 'ism' by Batman. Indeed, one of my work colleagues, a very westernised Muslim, has spoken to me many times about his religion. He very definitely believes in the Prophet, and admits he doesn't understand many aspects of things I know to be true, even trying to pull the old 'what you believe is like a religion too', which I did correct. I asked him what he felt was the biggest problem within his religion, and he told me that it was most of the people practicing it, 'they don't read enough, and don't think enough'. I was surprised at his honesty, as very few people I've ever spoken to were so critical of their own religion, or the people practicing it. He had been on the Hajj and hated being in the country, he didn't feel safe due to the disorganization and the hard liners that were everywhere. It was genuinely refreshing to talk to someone that was open enough to know where he felt the issues were. It's something that is lacking from many religious people, which can make engaging with them more difficult.

Working in Britain, I've never found religion something that has affected the way I work, I'm happy to work with anyone if they're a good person, irrespective of their beliefs. I feel Britain generally is probably less religious than people realize. Church attendance has dropped from over 5 million in the 80's to just over 3 million as of 2005. Weekly CofE attendance is well below 1 million a week now, and certainly the culture shift has contributed to this. Conversation is key

## AAI STUDENT SCHOLARSHIP FUND

- A Project of the  
AAI Foundation -



Alexander  
Aan, Indonesia

As part of our work in defending and protecting atheists, AAI has

also established a student scholarship fund to help the disfranchised build new lives as well as to promote rationalism and science in their own communities.



The AAI Foundation awards student scholarships to atheists in impoverished or disadvantaged countries to seek education and training outside of their country: Some in order to start a life in a new country, others to allow them to return to their homeland to educate the next generation.



Please consider contributing to the AAI Student Scholarship Fund, a project of the AAI Foundation, to continue to provide help to those in need.



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to so much in life, finding that common ground and then engaging with people is vital to opening minds of people. I feel younger people are the best to talk to. Quite often they haven't hardened as much, and that allows for better conversations, and better relationships with people. The fight for reason, which I would hope all secular people are a part of is one that is going to get more difficult, it's why I've changed the way I am when religion comes up. In days gone past I was very militant with it, which almost never works. Immovable object meet unstoppable forces. In many ways, the office environment may be the best place to engage with people. People are slightly more disarmed, out of their bubbles and easier to talk to. I've often talked about documentaries I've watched or books I've read, which talk about the universe, evolution, and the massive amounts of religious plagiarism that goes on, and just sometimes you can see that little flicker of doubt. I'm certainly not here to preach on my soapbox, or start a secular club at work, but as one of the most distrusted groups of people, atheists and secularists must keep their approach modern. As I never went to a school that had much in the way of religious studies, and my parents had no interests either, it allowed me to learn on my own and develop my own voice and my own attitudes. I lived in Saudi for a key period of my youth, it opened my eyes to the fact people do dress differently, look differently, and live differently. And I'm absolutely certain this contributed hugely to the formation of who I was to become. Culture fascinates me, it's why I like to travel, and even visit religious sites. Christ the Redeemer in Rio is a genuinely impressive thing to witness, until you realize that a giant Christ is watching the entire city day and night. If he's your thing it must be very intimidating.

Office culture around the world is clearly different, British offices and I would venture most British employers aren't going to wrestle you to the ground to find out what your beliefs are. I'm much more proud in my atheism now than at any other time, I feel if people are happy to talk about their lord/saviour/planet owner then you should be proud to wear your reason badge. Know you're an African ape, just like every other human on our wonderful world. That fire that burns inside you, that inspires you, and allows you to look up at the sky on a clear night and allows your mind to drift off into the cosmos, is beyond priceless. Much of what I do and say is to help other minds to break free of the shackles religion puts on them. The 'don't think, do you as you're commanded' indoctrination may be hard to shake off



**Existing to improve the quality of life for the impoverished and disadvantaged around the world, on a basis of science and reason.**

## **“If Atheists Speak But No One Notices, Are We Making a Difference?”**

**The AAI Foundation sponsors good works and volunteerism to promote nontheism, science and reason around the world.**

**Religious privilege and superstition are strongest in countries where the populace struggle for daily survival and where education is reserved for the privileged. The AAI Foundation works to counter such forces through the sponsoring of quality-of-life projects including health care, public infrastructure, and education.**

**The AAI Foundation also provides opportunities for our members to participate in cultural exchanges volunteer with AAIF projects around the world. AAI Members can spend anywhere from two weeks to a year with a local AAI affiliate to improve local conditions or even just to see a new country and experience a new culture.**

**Learn more about the AAI Foundation and our current projects, and how you can get involved, at:**

**<http://www.atheistalliance.org>**








most people. But sometimes, the smallest sparks are all it takes - you don't know who you may affect. And maybe it starts in the office, in your office. Maybe the new intern doesn't have anyone to talk to, and bringing up Dawkins, Hawking, or Sagan could be help someone needs to say 'I'm an atheist too'. I've made some truly amazing friends over Twitter, due to my secularism, people who have been there for me when I've been truly lost and

alone, people on different continents in different time zones, with their own lives, and yet they've been there more than people I knew in real-life. So, that one conversation you think twice about, could mean more to someone else than you will ever know. Many people are walled in by their religion, and they have no way out, in your office you never know who may need to hear your thoughts, or your advice. Charlie Chaplin gave one of the all time great

speeches in 'The Great Dictator' and I urge anyone who hasn't see it to watch it. It's as relevant now as it has ever been, the following he says about us as a race has always resonated with me, *'Human beings are like that. We want to live by each other's happiness - not by each other's misery. We don't want to hate and despise one another. In this world, there is room for everyone. And the good earth is rich and can provide for everyone. The way of life can be free and beautiful, but we have lost the way.'*

We may have lost the way, but we can find it again, and we can all contribute. The conversation you never have will affect nobody. For some office life is a nothing more than paying the bills, for others it's eight hours of escape from something they don't believe in, start a healthy conversation, there could be someone who needs to listen. 



Mart's interest in secularism increased with the rise of social media. His passion for science and reason have grown with each passing year and has always had a passion for writing, as well as travelling and photography. Mart is a gamer, a football fan and film enthusiast is there to help people whenever he can.

# THE RISE OF HUMANISM

Jing Dalagan

What made writing about the rise of humanism tough? Not that this is an excuse for accepting an article challenge. But the moment you check out the trends online related to the rise of humanism, you'd notice how the common keywords popping up are "atheism" and "humanism". While atheism may not always be synonymous to humanism, the absence of religion does not stop certain individuals from helping other people. That's why atheists end up getting viewed in a whole different light.

How does it start? Just when you are starting to get tired of seeing news about jailed atheists on your newsfeed, you spot a [news article](#) by Kimberly Winston of The Huffington Post about how a community of non-believers planned rallies. The purpose behind the planned rallies was demanding for the release of Bangladeshi bloggers jailed for "hurting religious sentiments". The religious sentiments that were allegedly offended refer to the Bangladeshi bloggers' sit-down protest demanding that the country's largest Islamic political party, Jamaat-e-Islami, be banned.

If you would read the last sentence on the previous paragraph, it says "largest

Islamic political party". Not Islam itself. Just the party. Still, the said bloggers were branded as atheists in an attempt to shame and harass them. Or so the perception makes it seem so. The bloggers on the other hand referred to themselves as Bangladeshi secularists. Their calls for the banning of Jamaat-e-Islami stemmed from the decision of the war crimes tribunal that convicted some members of the said party. And the secularists didn't think that the penalty was not harsh enough.

What worsened the situation was how the Bangladeshi government ended up jailing these secularists. It felt like poetic justice (in a bad way) for the secularists since the harsher penalties are supposed to be for Jamaat-e-Islami. The demand for the ban of the aforementioned Islamic party was strengthened by the death of an atheist blogger, Ahmed Rajib Haider. According to [bdnews24.com](#), Haider was one of the organisers of the Shahbag movement, the group behind the demand for harsher penalties and the eventual ban of Jamaat-e-Islami.

Upon closer look, it was more of a criticism of Jamaat-e-Islami, not of Islam. It was confirmed in a statement that Haider's uncle, Khurom Haider, attributed to the slain blogger, quoting.

"I am not against Islam, but against Jamaat-e-Islami." Still, the part where the Bangladeshi government ended up jailing some Bangladeshi secularist bloggers ended up looking like the wrong solution to a problem caused by religion. Religion ends up getting the blame because its fundamentalist practitioners gave a murderous spin to their "religion of peace". The rise of humanism became inevitable once secular organizations like UNESCO (through Irina Bokova) issued a statement demanding that the perpetrators be brought to justice.

It served as a spark that freethinkers and secularists around the world to follow in these dark times. Going back to the aforementioned rallies, these were held, according to The Huffington Post, outside Bangladeshi institutions organized by members of the International Humanist and Ethical Union, American Atheists and the Center for Inquiry. These Bangladeshi institutions were situated in Canada (Vancouver, Calgary and Ottawa), UK (London) and in the United States. (New York, Washington and Missouri). But the most telling sign of the rise of humanism was back in Bangladesh. Locals in Mirpur and Kapashia rallied in protest to the brutal murder of Haider. This was no longer about religion but human rights



## REPRESENTING ATHEISTS INTERNATIONALLY

AAI has consultative status with the United Nations Human Rights Council and the Council of Europe's Commission on Human Rights— and will soon hold similar status with the African Commission on Human and People's Rights!

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and the freedom of expression.

It was the same freedom of expression that was fought for as of this writing in Egypt. In the age of information, Egyptians have found a way to console each other after finding a common ground - skepticism in Islam. Most of them still hasn't gotten out of the proverbial atheist closet. So they end up in the deep web under fictional identities like Gabr.

Gabr agreed to be interviewed by [Al Jazeera](#) on the condition of anonymity. He was once a critic of atheists to the point of thinking that they should be killed. But the moderate Islamic upbringing influenced his freethinking tendencies. While the rest of his family went the literalist and puritanical route of Islam, he found himself losing his belief in God.


While he found comfort in finding like-minded individuals, the fact that Egyptian atheists are not yet openly accepted meant an increased doubt as to the actual number of atheists in Egypt itself. This is despite the fact that atheism has evolved into the elephant in the room. Did the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood stop the atheists and "apostates" (Al Jazeera's choice of term) from sticking out like sore thumbs? No.

It served as confirmation on Gabr's part that he's not the only atheist in Egypt. But as more atheists become obvious, it somewhat coincided with the rise of Muslim Brotherhood. This is where the Egyptian atheist community becomes an interesting case. Which segment of this society rose first after the fall of the Mubarak regime? It then reaches an unpredictable level because you confirm one thing - religious tolerance is decreasing.

How does humanism come into play

## KASESE HUMANIST PRIMARY SCHOOL

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<http://kasesehumanistschool.webs.com/>



Located in rural East Uganda, the Kasese School has been supported by AAI since 2008 and has provided a secular education based in science and reason for over 3,000 students.

90% of the schooling in Uganda is provided by religious organizations. The Kasese Humanist Primary School is unique in providing a Humanist education.

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here? As much as atheists have so much anger and resentment against organized religion, their humanity comes out once they discover fellow atheists. Gabr found a community that meets up for movies or drinks and discuss their thoughts about religion and politics. When you are angry and you need to unleash all that resentment to the world, you feel better when there are people out there to listen and not pass judgment to what you express as a person. You are not viewed as a bigot. You are viewed as wounded person emotionally and psychologically. A far cry from the death threats that atheists like Gabr receive online simply because they chose to stand by their convictions as opposed to sticking to their "beliefs". It's no longer about religion. It becomes about humanity.

Prioritizing human beings over religion is gaining ground in the Philippines as well. One of the very few dominantly Catholic countries in Asia (the other one being East Timor), it has been constantly a reminder of how difficult it is to separate Church from State. This became more evident once cases of sexual abuse by the Catholic clergy regained exposure on mainstream media.

The cases of sexual abuse regained momentum once one of its victims spoke out against them - the President of the Philippines himself, Rodrigo R. Duterte. [The Independent](#) reported the first time that Duterte discussed the abuse. It was way back in December 2015 when he narrated how he was "fondled" by a priest when he was young.

His instances of discussing his issues against the Catholic Church would usually surface in media every time he was asked about the latter's opposition on his war on drugs. But he provided a face that the mainstream media could use to discuss separation of Church and State. Here is a man who claimed of



having experienced something traumatic in his childhood. So traumatic that it affected his view about humanity and religion in general and the Catholic Church in particular. So much that he ended up referencing Aries Rufo's controversial book "Altar of Secrets" every time he needed to emphasize how the Church isn't as immaculate and morally upright as they claim. This was a far cry from his predecessor, Benigno C. Aquino III, who simply reminded the Church that while it is their duty to save their parishioners' souls, it is the government's duty to save their constituents' lives through the Reproductive Bill.

But going back to the cases of sexual abuse in the Catholic Church. There are people leading non-government organizations with the purpose of helping victims of sexual abuse by going after their abusers, particularly Catholic priests. Merian Aldea was one of workers affiliated with these NGO's that [Al Jazeera's 101 East](#) interviewed. She was one of the individuals interviewed to confirm cases like that of Imelda (not her real name), a 15-year-old choir girl who sued a Catholic priest for acts of lasciviousness. She is helping victims similar to that of Imelda in handling such cases.

Al Jazeera's 101 East got to interview Imelda. The girl's own parents told her to drop the complaint. She narrated even the part where her parents pressured her. "They actually beat me to the point that I was afraid to go home. They were angry at me. They were telling me that what I did was wrong. They treated me like a stray dog because of what I did. Because I filed a case." When poor families get pressured and, as expected, offered money for their silence, people like the former Catholic nun, Merian Aldea, comes in as a great help.

While the interview did not confirm that Aldea was directly helping Imelda, it confirmed how outreach workers like Aldea become helpful in assisting cases about clerical sexual abuse. Luckily, there are other cases where it's the mother or close relative that seeks Aldea's help in behalf of the victim herself. The ages of the victims are varied too. According to Aldea, "The youngest is 6."

The fear and intimidation that these victims face made it difficult to confirm the actual number of cases of clerical sexual abuse. Aldea continued. "They don't talk about it. They are afraid that they will be cursed. Or God will curse them if they [the victims] go against these people." In a nutshell, the perception about filing cases against Catholic priests is that they are suing God. And that the God venerated in the Catholic Church would retaliate against these hapless individuals for seeking justice in the court of man.

Still, despite the reform measures that the Catholic Church itself espouse, for every Archbishop Oscar Cruz interviewed in mainstream media, there would be a Fr. Ned Disu that would apologize for the clergy and claim that these complainants are "just after the money." He didn't brag about having the case dismissed. But in his words, and as counsel for one of the priests sued in court for acts of lasciviousness, the case was dismissed "because the court threw it in the garbage." He even mentioned a deal that the altar boys had with the priest, insinuating that this is the money that the complainants were after.

## STAND UP FOR REASON CAMPAIGN

**In Uganda, hundreds of children are marked as "witches" each year by Christian evangelists who market their exorcism services to local villages that have suffered misfortune or loss.**



**These children are abandoned, attacked, and maimed or even killed by their friends and family. Those who are fortunate to survive are rendered orphans who are forced to beg and steal to survive.**



**HELP US STAND UP  
FOR REASON IN UGANDA.**





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So if these cases end up getting dismissed in government-sanctioned courts, what is the rest of raging public left to do? Discussing it more is seen as the alternative, not to shame the Church for allegedly coddling clergymen accused of sexual misconduct but to at least try to clamp down the rape culture that has perpetuated in the Catholic Church. If the case that Fr. Disu narrated sounded familiar, it's because it was already reported in [Gulf News](#), [The Philippine Star](#) and the [Philippine Daily Inquirer](#). Al Jazeera's 101 East got to interview one of the altar boys that got molested, Michal Gatchalian, by Fr. Apolinario Mejorada.

The blog Thinking Pinoy, on the other hand, compiled some of the articles about cases of clerical sexual misconduct in his [article](#). The articles were gathered and analyzed for the sake of spotting the commonalities in them, namely:


- No priest has been sent to jail or arrested even;
- CBCP would settle these cases financially using money from the mass collections;
- The priests accused of sexual abuse get to return to their priestly duties as if nothing happened;

- Mainstream media immediately loses its interest and stop reporting about it.

R Joseph Nieto, the man behind the Thinking Pinoy blog, knew that once he's ready to confirm his identity to the public, readily admitted in one [Facebook live clip](#) that he is agnostic. A far cry from the Catholics who chose to keep the faith despite confirming the cases of sexual abuse and fundamentalist Christians who usually exploit the flaws of the Catholic Church to solicit new converts to their version of Christianity. Not anti-theist even. The focus is obviously on the people of the cloth involved in cases that the Church hierarchy chose to sweep under the rug. Not on the religion. Not on the debate on whether God exists or not. Just the people who need to be answerable to their crimes, in case they exist. If they would rather pay the complainants than face trial in a government-sanctioned court, it really says a lot about the institution - an anomaly that the Thinking Pinoy blog fairly called out.

Does standing up for the victims of clerical sexual abuse automatically qualify them as humanists? It's a close call. In an administration that was

established based on a campaign against crime and corruption, that would mean calling out THE institutions that have been plagued for so long with issues of sexual misconduct, cover-ups and bribery. Even if the Catholic Church has appointed men from their own ranks to investigate these cases, when the results don't add up to expectations, the State is expected to interfere. And former President Aquino's quote becomes useful again.

In the face of organized religion, criticisms are immediately dismissed. The critics are then dismissed as atheistic anti-theists and the discussion switches into ad hominem mode. It devolves into a discussion about the critic instead of the issue criticized upon. It did not stop the atheists and agnostics from calling out the excesses of religion for the simple reason that they will not fall into the misconception of being apologetic for their faith. If the actual apologetics are already getting flak for defending their faith despite acknowledging religion's flaws, what more for the people who used to be part of the faith? Humanism then becomes the safest label to use. And it's gaining momentum. Thanks to a community that refuses to stay ignorant. 

Jing Dalagan is a freelance writer for more than 3 years. Her articles appeared on The Philippines Web, Musicals Online and FilipinasInShowBiz.com. She was the former media director of the Humanist Alliance Philippines International. As of this writing, she is conducting research on the separation of the Church and State. She chooses not to be identified.

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# WE THE PEOPLE OF THIS WORLD

Rob Penczak, Elliot George, Justin Clark, and CW Brown

The jingoistic embrace of American Exceptionalism might have had its coup de grâce back in 2012 when The Newsroom's fictional anchorman Will McAvoy [eviscerated counterfactual claims of American greatness](#) noting that only in defense spending, incarceration, and belief in angels was America number one.

Jingoism *might* have had its coup de grâce then and there. But sadly it did not.

So now he we are in 'Post-Truth America,' with left-leaning media outlets having colluded to marginalize a genuine

progressive, and right-wing propaganda mills having distorted the public sphere to the point that flat Earth aficionados and conspiracy peddlers of every sort can now have their day in the sun. In possession of the nuclear codes, we have a small-minded, petulant, kindergarten king. And while it may have

taken some antiquated Electoral College math to stake him to that post, that doesn't change the fact that sixty-three million Americans had signed onto the

world-renowned biologist at Oxford. How disquieting that 'We the People' have become smitten with the whiff of fame and uninspired by the quest for

truth. How demoralizing the state of disrepair that Jefferson's informed electorate has fallen to.

Throughout much of our political system, as Elliot George discusses next, reality and logical deliberation have seemingly ceased to hold sway. And perhaps more damning still, it's not entirely clear how much of the voting public is aware of that fact or finds it disturbing.

**The Importance of Science and Reason in Good Governance**



proposition despite – or in many cases because of - his unwavering buffoonery and belligerence.

How disheartening that 'The Greatest Show on Earth' calls to mind the antics of a circus clown in the Oval Office, rather than the best-selling masterpiece of a

*Do we really need a lesson on this?* The fact that we do is indicative of the parlous state of civilization in the free world. Democracy has been great for hundreds of years, but universal suffrage means that ignorance has equal value to expertise. That didn't matter while the electorate had respect for



knowledge, but recent events like Brexit and the election of Donald Trump make me wonder whether our governing system has reached its sell-by date; or whether our education services needs a serious overhaul. Today, intelligence has been dubbed elitist and the ill-educated, who are currently a majority, vote instead for a *celebrity*, which is defined by the amount of media saturation rather than by any measure of credentials. It's more like a beauty pageant than a job interview for a leader. Trump knows a lot about beauty contests; he can play to the clap-o-meter, he's gone from crowning Miss World to being Captain America.

The BBC news recently featured a newly rediscovered [article about science, written in 1939 by Sir Winston Churchill](#). It's been languishing in the US National Churchill Museum in Fulton, Missouri since the 1980s. With a prescience to be expected of that great thinker, Sir Winston wrote about the likelihood of alien life and concluded that, given the vastness of the universe, it is unreasonable to believe that humanity is unique. See that word there: 'unreasonable'? He thought like a scientist: he *reasoned*.

History teaches us the power of reason and science. Churchill funded the development of radar, radio-astronomy, code-breaking and the nuclear program. Once the war was won, these research initiatives continued to innovate, giving us micro-wave ovens, the internet and smart phones. Conversely, we know what happens when reason and science are ignored; people die from avoidable diseases, wars are fought for non-existent weapons of mass destruction, and vaccines are denied to children.

The thing about science and reason is they are grounded on *evidence*, repeated observations, and facts, not 'alternative facts'. 'Alternative facts' are not facts; they are *fiction*. Would you

want to be convicted for a crime you did not commit based on 'alternative facts?' I realize that I'm biased; I'm a retired science teacher so you wouldn't expect anything else, but surely it's deplorable to the power of infinity, even to a whole basket of deplorables, that we have to plead for science and reason to be re-evaluated as important. The condition we have arrived at would be laughable if the survival of planet Earth was not at the mercy of decision makers who disregard evidence. We can only hope that the electorate will come to its senses in 2020.

I'll leave you with this from the late great Carl Sagan:

*When Johannes Kepler found that his long cherished beliefs did not agree with the most precise observations, he accepted the uncomfortable facts. He preferred the hard truth to his dearest delusions; that is the heart of science.*

The heart of science indeed, leaning on a methodology designed to remove bias from the equation so as to provide a fuller glimpse of reality. And it truly does matter that our governance remains tethered to that reality, that we get a handle on global warming, for instance, rather than having elected officials persist in their denial though wildfire and drought while putting out government-sanctioned [prayers for rain](#).

There's truly nothing groundbreaking in that assertion, nothing that would cause any scientist to blink. Which brings us to the following query by Justin Clark...

## Where are the Scientists in Congress?

A few years ago on [Real Time with Bill Maher](#) astrophysicist and science communicator Neil deGrasse Tyson brought up a very interesting point about the United States Congress. "I

wonder what profession all these Senators and Congressmen are? Law, law, law, business man, law, law. . . . There are no scientists? Where are the engineers? Where is the rest of life?," quipped Tyson. The rest of life, indeed. According [to a report released last year](#) by the Congressional Research Service, there were only 11 members of Congress (out of 535) that were scientists or engineers; all of them were in the House of Representatives, with the exception of one engineer in the Senate. This is the very definition of disproportionate, seeing as by 2010, [one in every 18 jobs in the United States was in Science, Technology, Engineering, or Math \(STEM\)](#). By 2018, it is projected to be nearly one in five. If our congressional representation kept a parity with the private sector, there should be 30 scientists, rather than merely 11. By 2018, it should be closer to 91.

This is a sad state of affairs, something that should have changed years ago. However, with the election of one of the most unqualified, [anti-science administrations in history](#), scientists are beginning to get political. [As a recent piece in the New York Times noted](#), scientists are now beginning to organize and even run for office, namely UC Berkeley biologist Michael Eisen. Within the growing secular movement, activist and science communicator [Aron Ra is running for the Texas State Senate](#). This is all culminating in a national [March for Science on Earth Day, April 22, 2017](#). Thousands of scientists, engineers, and all-around rationalists from across the country are getting organized to take on the anti-science, anti-reason impulses of our body politic. But it doesn't end there.

The March for Science should be the starting point of an even larger movement to reshape Congress. Our Congress needs to be more aligned with the growing body of knowledge about

the harmful effects of climate change, the wrong-headed hysteria over GMO foods and vaccines, as well as a larger commitment to critical thinking. We need to have organizations and activist resources that help us find, groom, canvass for, and finally elect science-oriented reformers to Congress. So much of the rancor and divisiveness plaguing our politics is rooted in a partisan view of the truth. As Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan used to say, "You are entitled to your own opinion, but you are not entitled to your own facts." An objective, non-partisan view of facts and science should come back to our politics. Liberals, conservatives, and independents should more than happily disagree about specific *actions* we take on the issues, but if we can't even agree on what the issues are, we can never really change them. Electing science-minded members to Congress will go a long way to fix many such ills we face in our country and the world.

Now, does a scientific mind set stand as a guarantee against poor behavior or bad decision making? Of course not. One will always be able to point to [Tuskegee](#) or [eugenics](#) or the ilk of [Piltdown Man](#) like frauds. But those stand out as a handful of failures against the backdrop of a process that has advanced humanity further in the last four hundred years than any other force since civilization's dawn.

What's more, when one jettisons the ancient scribblings of delusional madmen as a source of history, ethics, and law, and relies instead on a logical consideration of how to maximize communal well-being, all of the marginalization of gays and infidels and women, of course, suddenly fades to nothingness along with the invisible

And it's hard to imagine that a science-minded Congress would have us hurtling toward cliff's edge at the breakneck pace we're currently sailing along. Indeed, with that edge no longer

so distant on the horizon, there's now a movement afoot whereby scientists are emerging from their cloistered quarters and heading for the Hill – following in the footsteps of women, millions strong, who, as CW Brown describes below, just staged the [largest protest](#) in U.S. history...

## Standing Against Trump and the Evangelicals: Women on the March

"Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet." - [1 Timothy 2:11-12 ESV](#)

The United States' Women's March on January 21nd certainly animated a variety of responses from both its participants and its onlookers. So much so that it became difficult to understand its importance. As such, I'm trying my best to unpack why I think it happened and why it's relevant to many women whose voices are desperately needed in these uncertain times.

With the election of a government deemed unsympathetic to their well-being, women were acutely aware of a backward shift in our political climate. They wanted to make their voices known, to preempt any attack that would undo their hard-fought gains in equality over the last century. They wanted the freedom to choose, to be respected, to be taken seriously, and



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most importantly, they didn't want their voices lost in the wilderness. They want to make their own decisions regarding their wellbeing, but our current president, due to many cognitive biases, does not believe that they should be granted that right. He believes that women should be seen as objects for men's satisfaction and entertainment. As his famous quote "grab them by the pussy" demonstrates, Donald Trump doesn't take women and their call for equality seriously.

However, while I do not see our president as anything close to a religious man, his views of women are definitely mirrored by much of our country's religious conservatives. The Christian doctrine, not unlike Judaism and Islam, perpetuates the mentality that men should have the dominant role in the household as well as the larger society. It rings through the halls of our churches, down the streets of our cities, and even echoes in the chambers of our Congress in Washington D.C. Unfortunately, this is now being emulated through the thoughts and actions of the leader of the free world. In the long run, I hope that Trump and his allies reject what 1st Timothy suggests. I don't want women to be silent; they should speak loudly and make themselves unmistakably known. I not only want them to reject the authority of a conservative, patriarchal government, but I want them to reform it. Lastly, women of the United States have begun to strike back against injustice, because as Martin Luther King said,

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"injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." Women in America must condemn the encroaching fundamentalism and derogatory attitudes thrust upon them by this new administration. This will not only protect their rights here at home, but also the rights of every women on this planet dealing with the sharp and deadly poisonous arrows of regression that weaken the power of their voice and the improvement of their lives.

So, with climate change proceeding largely unchecked, oceans acidifying, ecosystems poised for collapse, and the sixth mass extinction already underway – with threats bearing down on us from every direction, the first thing we need to do is recognize that we're truly in danger, and recognize it in more than a passing manner.

The Doomsday Clock stands nearer to Armageddon than it has at any point in the last five decades, and the risk of our species going extinct within the lifetime of infants being born today is not one in a million as many might imagine, but somewhere in the neighborhood of one in four, according to experts in the field of existential risk. That should be a wake up call to everyone who is not actively looking forward to the apocalypse as a prelude to some variant of a heavenly rapture.

The second thing we need to recognize is that we're facing global threats, not simply localized ones, and that religion and hypernationalism, by exploiting ignorance and fear, are dividing us up and divorcing us from reality, when what we need most

desperately is a unified, well-thought out response to the threats that lie ahead. Which is why the Women's March was so awe inspiring, a march on D.C. echoed throughout the nation and on every continent around the world. driven by agendas that bear little resemblance to their words, to know that reasoned discourse won't persuade them in the least. But whether we're talking women's suffrage, civil rights, or bringing down Apartheid in South Africa, grassroots activism has moved mountains before, and if Standing Rock, the Women's March, the Science March, and countless other citizen movements beyond America's borders are any indication, then We the People of this World just may realize our latent power to save the planet. 

So with the most powerful nation on earth having been taken over by such an anti-scientific, anti-educational, anti-environmental, race-baiting, women-hating pack of genuflecting magic thinkers, it's safe to say that the citizens of this ever more interconnected planet certainly have their work cut out for them. And why the scientists marching in those women's footsteps are similarly poised to shake our electorate from its slumber and perhaps begin stocking the Halls of Congress. It can feel paralyzing to see what rises to the top, to know that many of our 'leaders' are entirely disingenuous and

This was a joint article written by Rob Penczak, Elliot George, Justin Clark, and CW Brown. Subsections authored as follows:

### **The Importance of Science and Reason in Good Governance by Elliot George**

Elliot George is a UK based anti-theist activist who debates theists in churches, pubs and on radio. Since the publication of his first book, Godbuster, he has spoken at The Conway Hall, London and in Cambridge, Winchester, Plymouth, Horsham, Littlehampton and Worthing. His response to a Christian book that knocks atheism is about to be published with the title, The Atheist Who Didn't Exist - DISSECTED.

Elliot George is a pseudonym, the author does not wish to be identified.



### **Where are the Scientists in Congress? by Justin Clark**

Justin Clark is a public historian and freethought activist. He is the co-cost and producer of the Atheist Alliance of America's official podcast, Secular Nation. You can contact him at [thedailyclark@gmail.com](mailto:thedailyclark@gmail.com) or follow him on Twitter and Instagram at @thedailyclark.

### **Standing Against Trump and the Evangelicals: Women on the March by CW Brown**

CW Brown is the CEO and Founder of Philosophical Atheism and a freethought activist. He is also the Social Media Manager of the Atheist Alliance of America. You can contact him at [cwbrown.pa@philosophicalatheism.com](mailto:cwbrown.pa@philosophicalatheism.com) or follow him on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/CWBrown.PhilosophicalAtheism](https://www.facebook.com/CWBrown.PhilosophicalAtheism).



### **Remaining commentary for We the People of this World by Rob Penczak**

Rob Penczak is a physician turned writer and secular activist. He serves as the President of Richmond Humanists; Founder of SavedByScience; Host and Co-producer of Road to Reason; and Executive Director of the Atheist Alliance of America.



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