



**Americans United for Separation of Church and State**

**3337 S. Bristol, #251, Santa Ana, CA 92704**

On the web at [www.au-oc.org](http://www.au-oc.org) Email us at [orangecountyau@yahoo.com](mailto:orangecountyau@yahoo.com)

**Program Announcement: Dr. Martin Young**

**May 20th 2:00 p.m. at the Irvine Ranch Water District**

**Why do people who support separation of church and state promote religion in the schools?**

At our May meeting, the Orange County Chapter of Americans United for Separation of Church and State will present Philosophy professor Dr. Young.

Dr. Young discusses the apparently conflicting positions that are held by people who support religion in the schools. Dr. Young discusses the question of why many otherwise sensible people support or acquiesce to the use of state power to promote religion in our schools while at the same time believing, or at least professing to believe, that such promotion does not violate the separation of church and state.

Dr. Young will explain the cognitive and neurological bases of such self-deception and suggest ways in which these people can be helped to realize the logical contradiction of their beliefs.



*Dr. Martin Young*

Martin Young got his Ph.D. in philosophy in 2000. He teaches philosophy at two Southern California commu-

nity colleges.

He is convinced that the root cause of many of American society's worst problems, and worst failures, is a widespread lack of logical, fact-based thinking. He has grown to understand the thinking processes in a very deep way as a result of his work teaching critical thinking and philosophy.

He will show that an effective way to make the world's problems more solvable is to teach real critical thinking at a grass-roots level to as many people as possible.



*April 2006*

**Volume 2, Issue 2**

**Inside this issue:**

Message from the President	2
Alternate Theories by Bert Bigelow	2
Great American Write In	3
ADL Debates	3
Review of Francisco Ayala	3
Membership Form	4
Keeping Up to Date	4
Calendar	4

**Save The Date**

**July 16th 3:00 p.m.**

Our July meeting will be an interfaith discussion between Rabbi Stein of the L. A. Wilshire Blvd Temple, Rev. Stinson of the First Congregational Church of Long Beach and Sheik Yassir of the Mission Viejo Mosque.

This meeting will be at the Bat Yahm Temple on Camelback Drive in Newport Beach. Please note this meeting will be on a Sunday and at this special location.

Watch the web site for more details!

**Join Americans United at International Day at Soka University**

On May 6th, we will be participating at Soka University's International Day. The event is part of Orange County's Imagination Celebration which is held in cooperation with Arts Orange County and the Orange County Department of Education. The event runs from 10:30 to 5:00 and includes international food, exhibits, demonstrations, workshops and international music and dance.

Soka University is located on a beautiful campus at 1 University Drive, Aliso Viejo; it's worth going to the International Day just to see the campus. Please stop by and visit the Americans United table!

## Message from the President—Steph Campbell

It seems that we need to be monitoring our school boards closely in the months ahead. There are attempts all around us to introduce (or to sneak) in to schools challenges to evolution and the introduction of intelligent design. In March, in Lancaster just 100 miles from us, the School Board adopted a philosophy encouraging students to question evolution. This may be a way to move intelligent design into the schools. And it was only in January in El Tejon that an intelligent design class was canceled with the assistance of the work of American United's National organization.

On the state legislative front we are

watching AB 2704 closely; this was introduced by Assembly Member Tim Leslie in February and is designed to open an office of Faith Based and Community Initiatives to work out of the Governor's Office. This is the way the federal program began; we must be vigilant.

As I write this, there are only 2 initiatives that have qualified for the June ballot and 1 for the November ballot. But there are 49 others in circulation and 11 pending title approval prior to circulation. Many of these are being promoted by the religious right in an attempt to limit our liberties. At last count there were 9 separate initiatives eliminating domestic partnership rights and 2 that bring back a slight

variant to Proposition 73 (parental notification) which was just defeated last year. As an organization we will need to determine our position on these initiatives should their signature gathering be effective.

And in this election year we will need to continue to watch for potential electioneering from the pulpit.

On a more upbeat note, this newsletter inaugurates a new feature. We are providing space for an AU member to write on a church/state issue that is important to them. If you would like to be a guest columnist send an article and picture to [orangecountyau@yahoo.com](mailto:orangecountyau@yahoo.com) and see yourself in print!

—Steph Campbell

## Alternate Theories by Guest Columnist, AU-OC MEMBER BERT BIGELOW

SEE MORE FROM BERT AT: [HTTP://BIGELOWRS.GATHER.COM/](http://BIGELOWRS.GATHER.COM/)



The recent national debate over teaching Creationism (now euphemistically called Intelligent Design) in public

school science classes has gotten me thinking about other "alternative theories" that should also be presented in the nation's classrooms.

I have always had a keen interest in astronomy, and took classes when I was in college. But there is an "alternative theory" to explain the nature and significance of the "heavens." It's called astrology. Here is one definition of astrology:

Any of several traditions or systems in which knowledge of the apparent positions of celestial bodies is held to be useful in understanding, interpreting, and organizing knowledge about reality and

human existence on earth.

There is no scientific basis for astrology. Like Intelligent Design, it is faith-based. But many people believe in it and follow their horoscopes religiously. So, why shouldn't astrology be taught in astronomy classes?

To go one step further, there are a number of people in this country, and probably elsewhere in the world, who believe that the earth is flat. In fact, there is an International Flat Earth Society. The president of that organization, Charles K. Johnson, who lives in Lancaster, CA, has been quoted as saying that the "dome of Heaven is about 4000 miles away." He believes that the Apollo moon missions were a massive hoax perpetrated by the US government. "You can't orbit a flat earth," says Mr. Johnson. "The Space Shuttle is a joke--and a very ludicrous joke." Again, science contradicts these ideas, but they do represent alternative explanations of

our perceived reality, so shouldn't they be given "equal time" in the classroom as well?

Now I must admit that this argument is a *reductio ad absurdum*, but the point is that none of these ideas - Creationism, Intelligent Design, Astrology or belief in a flat earth have the slightest scientific basis. Science classes are supposed to teach science, aren't they? Not superstition or religious dogma. People are free to study any wacko theory they want to at home or even at their local library. They are even free to contaminate the minds of their children with such garbage. It's a free country, after all. But when it comes to public, taxpayer-funded educational institutions, our constitution and the courts have made it clear that this stuff does not belong there - except maybe in a class on myths and fantasies.

Americans United had a table at this year's Great American Write-In; it's becoming an annual event for us. The morning started in a deluge of rain and both the people staffing the AU table and the event organizers were concerned that there would not be a strong showing. Not to worry. This is one of the premier progressive events in Orange County and our hats are off to this great event planned by Women For: Orange County.

The Great American Write-In serves to bring non-partisan progressive groups together to inform the attendees on a wide variety of issues and concerns. Sample letters and information are provided so that attendees can write letters to Congressional members, local

government officials as well as the White House.

We provided sample letters on religious coercion and intolerance at the Air Force Academy as well as on the Workplace Religious Freedom Act and used the opportunity to educate people on these issues. We also distributed a large number of brochures and copies of "Church and State".

We had a great table location and were busy answering questions for the entire event. As always this was an opportunity to introduce Americans United for Separation of Church and State to the community.



The Regional Office of the Anti-Defamation League held its Civil Rights Debate Series in January, February and March moderated by Marshall Kaplan of the Merage Foundations. We were very pleased to be invited to participate in the second debate against Karen Lugo, the Assistant Director of Claremont's Center for Constitutional Jurisprudence. The topic of this debate was the Faith Based Initiative and whether or not it funds religion.

The audience, mostly law students at Chapman University, where the debate was held, seemed very engaged and raised many challenging questions. The consensus from the attendees was a victory for Americans United!

### Dr. Francisco Ayala Speaks to A Packed House for AU-Orange County's March Meeting by Rich Gillock

*OUR MARCH GENERAL MEETING WITH DR. AYALA A GREAT SUCCESS.*



March 18 was a very busy day in Orange County and Los Angeles including peace marches and several other activities for activists. It was very

heartening that Dr. Francisco Ayala was greeted with an overflow audience of over 50 members and non-members alike.

Dr. Francisco Ayala is a member of the National Academy of Sciences, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. He is currently a Donald Bren Professor of Biological Sciences. He has been a member of advisory committees for the Environmental Protection Agency, the National Science Foundation, and the National Institute of Health as well as being on President Clinton's Committee of Advisors on Science and Technology.

But it was not his credits that captivated the audience, it was his compelling discussion of evolution and the incontrovertible evidence he presented.

One of the great claims of "Intelligent Design" is the impossibility of the evolution of the eye. With so many intricate parts that must work together to create vision, certainly it requires a "maker." Dr. Ayala showed the constructive evolution of the eye starting from a light sensitive spot on a mollusk, to the evolution of a perfect eye of an octopus. Further up the evolutionary chain, humans have all of the elements of the octopus eye but with defects of a blind spot created by a nerve bundle from the retina to the brain. How could this be intelligent design?

Only Dr. Ayala could have captivated an audience of laymen with the DNA sequence of a single chromosome that illustrated the evolutionary differences between a horse, a chimpanzee, and a hu-

man. The DNA was nearly identical for all three except for a change here or there: Fourteen changes from a horse to a chimpanzee; only one more to a human. It was the illustration of a map up the evolutionary tree that could precisely be mapped from one species to the next. For me it was the revelation that connected belief with absolute fact.

Of course the denials of evolution will rage on from fundamentalists who reject science in favor of a belief in the instantaneous creation of man in his final form. But Darwin's explanation of natural selection does not deny the existence of God, it simply provides the principles that connect every living thing through the twenty proteins that all living things share. It explains why our heads are too big for the female birth canal and why our jaw is too small to contain our wisdom teeth; all of this to accommodate brains evolving to ever increasing size. Would a designer have made so many mistakes and compromises in His ultimate design?

# Americans United

## Orange County



Help us promote the separation of church and state in Orange County

We're on the web at [www.au-oc.org](http://www.au-oc.org)

Basic membership is \$25 and includes an annual subscription to Church & State magazine. We are a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, and donations beyond the \$18.00 value of the subscription to Church & State magazine are tax deductible to the full extent of the law.

Email any questions to [orangecountyau@yahoo.com](mailto:orangecountyau@yahoo.com); to join or renew, complete this form and mail to the chapter at: **3337 S. Bristol, #251, Santa Ana, California 92704**

New Membership     Renewal Membership     Special Donation

Amount Enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

### Keep Up To Date with Americans United-Orange County

Along with our newsletter, we keep people informed with what's going on in the fight to preserve separation of church and state as well as our events through the web site at [www.au-oc.org](http://www.au-oc.org) and also through our Yahoo! Group. If you're not on the Yahoo! Group, send an email to [au-oc-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:au-oc-subscribe@yahoogroups.com). We normally meet at the Irvine Ranch Water District, 15600 Sand Canyon Ave., Irvine on the 3rd Saturday at 2:00 p.m. (Our July meeting will be at a different venue and time, see page 1.)

Irvine Ranch Water District neither supports nor endorses the cause nor activities of organizations which use the District's meeting rooms that are made available as a public service.

### Americans United-OC Chapter

3337 S. Bristol, #251

Santa Ana, CA 92704

#### Calendar of Events



Steering Committee  
2nd Thursdays, 7:00  
Call 714-299-4551 for  
information and location

#### May

6 — International Day (Soka University, Aliso Viejo, 10:00-5:00)

20—Dr. Martin Young see Page 1. (Irvine Ranch Water District, 2 pm)

#### June

17— The Issues Group will be meeting, topic TBD. (Irvine Ranch Water District, 2 pm)

#### July

16 — Interfaith discussion on the separation of church and state from the perspectives of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. (Temple Bet Yahm, Newport Beach, 3 pm)