

Americans United for Separation of Church and State

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

On the web at www.au-oc.org Email us at orangecountyau@yahoo.com

Program Announcement: Rev. Karen Stoyanoff
September 16th 2:00 p.m. at the Irvine Ranch Water District
Reconciling our support for the First Amendment with our work
for Justice

September 2006

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At our September meeting, the Orange County Chapter of Americans United for Separation of Church and State will present the Reverend Karen Stoyanoff.

Reverend Stoyanoff will focus her discussion on choices. Every day we make choices in what we do and what we say. Reverend Stoyanoff will discuss how we make those choices when our own concept of justice in

the world is challenged by the expressions of others. She will address the question of what can we do when we want to support freedom of expression, but the expression under consideration is offensive to our dearly held values?

Come hear the Reverend Karen Stoyanoff as she explores this dilemma that we all face — perhaps frequently — as we go through life.

The Rev. Dr. Karen Stoyanoff serves the Orange Coast Unitarian Universalist Church as its minister. She describes the efforts of her church as working on healing a wounded world, with the three-fold purpose of seeking truth, building just communities, and caring for one another.

Through the church, its members join together in efforts to create justice in the world through projects like the AIDS Team ministry as well as periodic assistance to families in need.

Prior to moving to California, Reverend Stoyanoff was interim minister at the Third Unitarian Church in Chicago where she was active in interfaith work, serving on the metropolitan initiative of the Parliament of the World's Religions and the Board of the Interfaith Council for the Homeless. She attended Meadville Theological School, which is affiliated with the Divinity School at the University of Chicago.

Dr. Stoyanoff is also on the Board of Directors of the Newport-Mesa-Irvine Interfaith Council.

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Barry Lynn in Marina Del Rey!

September 9th AU Training on media and legislative issues given by the National Office still has open seats. The training is 12:30-5:30 in Marina Del Rey followed by a reception with Barry Lynn. For more information, call 714-299-4551 or visit our web site at www.au-oc.org.

9th Annual 'Caring for Creation' Conference

The relationship between faith and environmental stewardship will be explored at the Orange County Interfaith Coalition for the Environment's (OCICE) **9th Annual Caring for Creation Conference on Saturday, Oct. 21** from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Tustin.

Pre-paid reservations for the daylong conference are \$40 for general admission and \$25 for students and seniors over 65, \$50 at the door (no increase for students and seniors). For more information on the conference or OCICE, please visit www.ocice.org or call Sherri Loveland at (714) 552-0333 or Margaret Henke at (714) 731-6775.

Message from the President—Steph Campbell

One day last week a man came up to me said “isn’t it odd how we still have to keep fighting for rights we thought we already have.” I was wearing my Americans United shirt and of course he was talking about the separation of church and state. I asked him to sign the First Freedom First petition which he was happy to do.

Talking to a stranger about it made me realize again how important the First Freedom First campaign is.

I have been reading out the latest in the law suit between the University of California and several Christian high schools over some of the books Christian schools use. For example a physics textbook interspersed with Biblical

passages. As Barry Lynn has said, the University of California has the right to decide what textbooks and courses adequately prepare students for work at their school. And of course he’s right.

I’m always surprised that students from these private schools who have studied mainly from books that focus on the Christian view of history, science, literature etc would even want to go to a school like the University of California. But they seem to want that.

I’m also surprised that no one is talking about the impact to the other students. After all, what happens to the student in freshman biology who has students in his class who are intent on disputing

evolution. The student who has already learned about evolution and wants to begin the arduous path of a science education is being hampered by those students who dispute basic science. This is not about “Keeping Out the Christians” it is all about promoting good science and great education. Because the UC system is educating the future teachers of children, our future doctors as well as our future politicians.

I hope you’ve signed the First Freedom First petition (see Page 3 for more details) — to protect the wall of separation; it impacts us everywhere!

—Steph Campbell

Letters To The Editor—*If you’d like to share your views or respond to a newsletter article, please send your submission to us at orangecountyau@yahoo.com.*

I’m writing to let you know how much I appreciated listening to the thoughtfully intelligent religious speakers at the Bat Yam presentation this afternoon. For the first time in many years, I actually relaxed, not feeling as if I, alone, am trying helplessly to combat the religious right, Bush machine. Conversing with a colleague (I’m a psychoanalyst) I happened to meet at half-time, we laughingly lamented that we never thought we’d long for good old fashioned conservative politics. An exchange with William F. Buckley would be a welcome intellectual relief, so repulsed am I by the one-dimensional buffoons who have appropriated our government and threaten our elemental civil liberties. America was a Republic the last time I looked, and we’re all entitled to respect and representation.

Definitely an issues woman, I’m not a knee-jerk liberal by any means. Yet, I believe that the concretized religious beliefs of the reli-

gious right are dangerous for many reasons. Not only do they threaten the integrity of a most basic civil liberty, the separation of church and state, they do so with insufferable arrogance and ethnocentrism. The wonderful experiment that is America rests on our combined and communal willingness to acknowledge and honor the other, to respect and protect the rights of those who adhere to a different religious or cultural schema. Efforts to nullify the separation of church and state while simultaneously installing a Christainoid paradigm will render the result of this American experiment an abject failure.

I felt hopeful listening to the speakers this afternoon. I was most impressed to learn that even Christians reject the religious right, recognizing their dangerous agenda. Preaching love, love, love, I say, “Respect me more and love me less.” I was pleased to look about and see individuals of very different backgrounds sitting

together comfortably and sympathetically. Empathy requires that we project a bit of ourselves onto the other, subsequently enabling us to see a piece of us in them, and vice versa. Emissaries of the religious right are unable to do this, because fanatic fundamentalists are mired in concrete, literal thought and are, thus, incapable of thinking symbolically.

The more we gather together to share ideas and combine our voices publicly, the less likely we are to be tyrannized by those who seek to obliterate the other. It is our responsibility to protect the beauty of our distinct and varied religious and cultural preferences. We must speak with one another, socialize together, share food and culture and concern; from this will come unbreakable bonds of respect. It is impossible to attack those with whom you identify.

Thanks again,

M.L. Heller

“First Freedom First” Campaign

If you attended our Interfaith Forum you may have already signed the First Freedom First petition.

The First Freedom First campaign is a joint partnership between Americans United (AU) and The Interfaith Alliance (TIA).

The First Amendment is the right on which the separation of church and state is based. But there are continual attempts to erode—if not totally break down—the wall of separation. The religious right is trying to enforce severe limitations on reproductive choice, on treating all people, regardless of sexual orientation, with respect, on teaching science in schools—and not the pseudo science of “intelligent

design” to name just a few issues.

And so AU and TIA have joined together to work on this campaign; in 2007 an event will be held announcing the number of signatures gathered to demonstrate broad national support for church-state separation and religious liberty.

If you haven’t signed yet, please be sure to either sign the petition at one of our events.

You can also sign on line. There are links from our Orange County web site or you can go to www.firstfreedomfirst.org.



Congratulations to Benito Franqui

Long time AU member Benito Franqui was profiled in a Los Angeles Times article by Dana Parsons on August 5th. The article is available online at <http://www.latimes.com/news/columnists/la-me-parsons5aug05,1,4713133.column?coll=la-news-columns>.

Benito is the Editor of the Orange County Humanists Association newsletter and a committed secular humanist and strong supporter of the separation of church and state. For those who are interested, the Orange County Humanists Association meets on the 3rd Sunday of the month at 1:30 at the Irvine Ranch Water District. AU-OC also offers its congratulations to the newly elected (and re-elected) officers and Board of HAOC.



Americans United Interfaith Forum a Great Success

by Rich Gillock

On July 16, over 170 people attended AU-Orange County’s first Interfaith Forum. Our speakers were Sheikh Yassir Fazaqa of the Orange County Islamic Foundation in Mission Viejo, Rabbi Stephen Julius Stein of the Wilshire Boulevard Temple in Los Angeles, and Reverend Jerald Stinson of the First Congregational Church of Long Beach.

Our speakers led off with a 15 minute statement about the separation of church and state, and after a short break, they answered questions from the moderator as well as questions posed by the audience.

Rabbi Stein discussed the intrusion upon personal liberties by religious fundamentalists of all faiths. He was especially concerned about gay rights and women’s choice which are both under attack by politically connected Christian Fundamentalists in this country. He focused upon marriage and the over 1,100 civil rights inferred upon people

when they are married that are denied to people in non-heterosexual unions.

Sheikh Fazaqa spoke next on the practice of Islam in this country and how Muslims enjoy more freedom to worship here than in many so called Muslim countries. In Morocco and Turkey for example, the traditional hijab is banned from government buildings. He also introduced many in the audience to their first encounter with the Islamic faith including its emphasis upon the teachings of familiar prophets Abraham, Jesus, and Noah.

Reverend Stinson showed why he is on the National Advisory Board to Americans United for Separation of Church and State with a rousing explanation of the separation of church and state and the intent of our founding fathers. He criticized the “Faith Base Initiative” as well as legislative attempts to dismantle religious freedom by tearing down the wall of separation.

At the break, dozens of questions were submitted, though we only had time for a few. The questions varied from the Faith Based Initiative, to feminine equality in Islam, to the meaning of sanctuary and religious privacy in an era of the USA PATRIOT Act, to the meaning of morality and what role it should play in secular law.

The discussion was stimulating and uplifting. Those who attended, from many religious faiths, seemed to thoroughly enjoy the Forum and the chance to hear well thought out answers to fundamental questions of religious liberty and human rights.

As three wars rage in the Middle East, each with its own ties to religious intolerance, it was clear from this Interfaith Forum that the seeds of hate and violence are not to be found in our religious faith, but in the political will of those who would corrupt religious faith in the pursuit of power.



Join or Renew Today!

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; 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

\$25 \$50 \$75 *Other* _____ *Amount Enclosed:* _____

Name _____

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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 and also through our Yahoo! Group.

If you're not on the Yahoo! Group, send an email to au-oc-subscribe@yahoogroups.com. We meet at the Irvine Ranch Water District, 15600 Sand Canyon Ave., Irvine on the 3rd Saturday at 2:00 pm.

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.



September

9 — Activist Training followed by a reception with Executive Director Barry Lynn—Marina Del Rey

16—Rev. Karen Stoyanoff (Irvine Ranch Water District, 2 pm)

23—Walk For Hope, El Dorado Park, Long Beach, 9-1pm

October

21— Join us for 2007 planning—let us know what kind of programs you would like in the coming year. (Irvine Ranch Water District, 2 pm)

Every Month

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



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