

AOK|ATHÉE OKIE

THE NEWSLETTER FOR FREETHINKING OKLAHOMANS

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OKLAHOMA ATHEISTS 2003 - YEAR IN REVIEW

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Another year has come and gone and we atheists and agnostics can count our blessings. We have come a long way in the past year, from a relatively small group of unconnected unbelievers to a large cadre of centrally coordinated, politically savvy, well-connected operatives infiltrating every level of government and education, working together to secularize policy and inculcate godlessness into the youth of America. Naturally, we have to give the radical religious right some credit for giving us the idea in the first place – but for their paranoid delusions, we would have never have considered this possible.

In all seriousness, however, we *have* come a long way. At the beginning of the year, we began to take advantage of www.meetup.com to coordinate our monthly meetings.



Okie atheists at the first meetup in 2003

The first meetup was at O'Connell's Pub in Norman. The waitress found my Landover Baptist ball cap a bit confusing, given the nature of the meeting.



One step closer to religious neutrality in Oklahoma

In February, after atheist James Worrell inquired regarding the constitutionality of the cross erected and maintained on public property at the state fairgrounds, city manager James Couch made the decision to have the cross removed, thus sparing the city the money, time and effort they might have wasted in fighting a losing court case, not to mention the embarrassment of defending such an egregious breach of the wall of separation of church and state (reference [section II-5](#) of our state constitution). Shortly thereafter, we wrote letters supporting Couch's support of separation and condemning a certain legislator's condemnation thereof.



Okie atheists writing letters in March 2003



Separation of church and state continued to be a theme throughout the spring, as the Oklahoma Atheists prepared for the [National Day of Reason](#) celebration in the spring, the goal of which is to “celebrate reason - a concept all Americans can support - and to raise public awareness about the persistent threat to religious liberty posed by government intrusion into the private sphere of worship.” This effort was launched as a response to the federally mandated [National Day of Prayer](#), an annual abuse of the Constitution brought about when Congress passed a law respecting an establishment of religious exercise one-half century ago, during the height of the red scare. While over one hundred known separationists were contacted about the event, the vast majority of those that showed up to stand against the religious right were atheists and agnostics.



**Okie atheists at the May 2003 meetup
(in the heart of Bill Grave's country)**



**Okie atheists at the July 2003 meetup
(in the heart of the Paseo district)**

Come summer, we laid off political activism and got back to socializing, recreating, and relaxing. We hosted the first annual Summer Solstice Atheist Pool Party, photos of which I have not included here for the protection of the innocent. We continued to hold some of the largest atheist meetups in the nation, much to the chagrin of a certain family restaurant in Bill Grave's district who did not want to be known as a den of godlessness. While many of us enjoyed Dina's food, none of us can say we particularly relished her hospitality.



Okie atheists at the August 2003 meetup



Okie atheists at the December 2003 meetup

On September 12th, many of us gathered at the University of Central Oklahoma to hear the good doctors John Miller and John George debate the existence of the Christian deity. It was a lively and rousing affair, as philosophical debates go, and generally enjoyed by all the freethinkers who attended (if you would like a copy, please contact us at debates@OklahomaAtheists.org).

Towards the end of October, several of the OKC-area atheists gathered together for our annual sojourn to the local fundamentalist alternative to Halloween, a “Hell House” replete with scenes of suicide, homicide, and deicide. Word has it that waiting in the queue was even more purgatorial than the hell house itself, but even so no one elected to buy the fire insurance being peddled by the church counselors on hand at the end of the evening. Next year, perhaps we will go in costume.

In November, several freethinkers protested a rally at the State Capitol organized by our friendly neighborhood theocrats from the National Coalition to Restore the Constitution, who are (ironically enough) stalwartly dedicated to tearing down the Constitutional wall of separation between church and state as conceived by such luminaries as Jefferson and Madison. While a couple hundred assorted Calvinists wailed and gnashed their teeth over the treatment of former Judge Roy Moore, perhaps a dozen people gathered across the street holding up signs to remind them of our longstanding tradition of recognizing, in the words of John Calvin, “the great distinction [between] ecclesiastical and civil power.” Shortly after we assembled, a Capitol policeman came walking down the sidewalk and asked us if we were going to “keep it peaceful,” and we responded that we had every intention of doing so. We were greatly surprised, therefore, when another Capitol policeman came driving up some few minutes later, lights flashing, stepped out of his cruiser and told us to “pack it up” because we didn’t have a permit. Evidently, one may exercise one’s constitutional rights to assembly only by the good graces of the Department of Central Services. One might well reason that the Oklahoma Bill of Rights is a weightier legal document than the Oklahoma Administrative Code ([Section 580:10-7-2](#)) but I suppose that is ultimately a matter for the courts.

Finally, in December, we gathered at the home of two of our members to celebrate the real reason for the season, that is, the turning of the seasons and the lengthening of days. Our *third* annual winter solstice party was a tremendous success, thanks to the efforts of the hosts and everyone who came out.

In the coming year, we hope to achieve even more than in the previous year, building upon our previous accomplishments and experiences in order to become a more potent force for reason and liberty in our state and our nation. Join us in our efforts to build a community of freethought!



Jan 2004 Events

Friday the 30th - 7:06 pm

Galileo Bar & Grill (Paseo district)
Monthly dining out with OKC freethinkers.

Saturday the 24th - 1:00 pm

Ajanta Indian Cuisine - 11921 N. Penn
Visit <http://agnostic.meetup.com> for details

Tuesday the 20th - 7:06 pm

O'Connell's - 120 E. Lindsey, Norman
Visit <http://atheists.meetup.com> for details

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