

The



HUMANIST

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE HUMANISTS OF NORTHEAST FLORIDA

PO BOX 1143 ORMOND BEACH FL 32175

PUBLISHED MONTHLY

October 2004

OUR GOAL IS THE APPLICATION OF REASON AND SCIENCE TO UNDERSTAND NATURE AND TO EXERCISE HUMAN COMPASSION TO SOLVE HUMAN PROBLEMS

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MONTHLY EVENTS CALENDAR

General Meeting : 10.9., 1:00 PM
Ormond Beach Library

Board Meeting : 10.20., 10:00 AM
Ormond Beach Library

Brunch / Bunch : 10.31., 10:30 AM
Riviera Country Club

will meet on Saturday

October the 9TH

at **1:00 PM** at the Ormond Beach Library, located at 30 S. Beach St. in Ormond Beach.

The topic will be

An American Muslim's View of Islam.

The presenter will be

Idris A. Muhammad, Director for Institutional Equity & Student Disability Services at DBCC.

Idris, formerly named Vandyke Thomas Toye, is a native of Brooklyn, New York. He graduated from the former Boys High School, Brooklyn, in 1964. He attended St John's University in Jamaica, New York where he graduated with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Criminal Justice in 1974.

Idris A. Muhammad is a practicing Sunni Muslim for 27 years. Before his conversion to Islam, Idris was a United Methodist and active member of Bethany Methodist Church in Brooklyn from 1974 to 1977..

A brief coffee/social hour will again take place after this meeting, giving our members and guests the opportunity to exchange thoughts with each other.

**The Humanists of
Northeast Florida**

Our pre-meeting lunch on October the 9th will take place at 11:00 AM in the Dining Room of the

ROYAL FLORIDIAN HOTEL,
located A1A opposite Granada Ave. in Ormond Beach. If you wish to attend the pre-meeting lunch, please give **Rosalyn** a call at **(386) 761-1456** or any of the board members listed on last page.

September Meeting

Unfortunately, due to the two previous hurricanes and the multitude of caused damages as well as the impending approach of IVAN our September meeting had to be cancelled. Our board tried to notify all our members of this cancellation in time but could not reach all of you. Apparently some of your phone numbers were out of order or our information concerning your numbers were not up to date. We regret that our published speaker who was looking forward to enlighten you with the life story of **Mark Twain** will try to make up for it at a later date.

November meeting

For the meeting in November we are presenting for the first time **Steve McLaughlin**, local photographer and artist, News Journal. The topic of his presentation will be published in our November newsletter.

October Board Meeting

The board meeting for the month of October will be as usual on the third Wednesday, which is

October the 20th

at 10:00 AM. It will take place in the Ormond Beach Library and is followed by our monthly luncheon at 12:30

noon in the dining room of the **Royal Floridian Hotel**, located A1A opposite Granada Ave. in Ormond Beach.

Brunch with the Bunch

Brunch with the Bunch will be on the **last Sunday** of each month; in this case it will be **October the 31st** at **10:30 AM** at the Riviera Country Club, located at Calle Grande Ave. in Ormond Beach. As usual it is always a casual, friendly get-together, which provides the opportunity to exchange those special and sometimes even trivial thoughts. **Everybody is welcome – we love your company!!** If you plan to join us, please give Rosalyn a call. Her phone number is (386) 761-1456. If you can not reach her please contact any of the other board members listed on last page of this newsletter.

THOUGHTS OF THE EDITOR

I received a long very thought provoking essay from Dan Kennedy in reply to last month's letter from Jim Strayer which I like to print in its entirety. While nothing ever said or written is the absolute truth, Dan's opinion is worthwhile to be looked at and thought of. Therefore I will abstain from my monthly opinions and print Dan's essay.

MEMBERS FORUM

AGNOSTICISM AND ATHEISM

by Dan Kennedy

Once again my nonbeliever beliefs have earned me a bit of flak. This essay is in response to comments by Jim Strayer in the September, 2004 Newsletter of the Humanists of Northeast Florida. Strayer expressed disappointment regarding comments by me published in a recent Daytona News-Journal article, most of which were accurately stated by the interviewer. Concerning metaphysical, religious, and spiritual questions and issues, my starting point is with the mystery of existence. But, how can there be anything? - Any existence? Theoretical physicists can lead us to the Big Bang. A few summers ago in a seminar with Nobel prize winning physicist Leon Lederman someone (not I) asked where the components of the Big Bang came from - energy and matter. His response was that one had to go across campus to the philosophy or religion department to explore that question. The answer thus far is that we truly do not know the answers to these questions. That's why I use the term mystery of existence and am an agnostic, rather than a believer or an atheist.

While dictionaries typically contain considerable overlap between the terms agnostic and atheist, they also support the

common, traditional distinctions between the terms, saying in essence that the atheist completely rejects the concepts of deity and intelligent design, whereas the agnostic only maintains that he does not know. This is the sense in which I consider myself an agnostic. To have completely made up one's mind concerning that which is truly a mystery is at the closed-minded end of an open vs closed-minded continuum, which is where both atheism and religious fundamentalism appear to be. Further, agnosticism is in keeping with scientific philosophy, which is very open-minded.

I believe that the choice between agnosticism and atheism results from more than intellectual and scientific considerations. As a psychologist I can't help but recognize a strong affective component (e.g. personality, emotions). Those who have difficulty tolerating ambiguity tend to become either strong believers or atheists. Those who can tolerate ambiguity are more likely to become agnostics. I strongly believe that science has by far done the best job of searching for clear and **definitive** answers to the mind-boggling mystery of existence and that this is likely to continue to be the case. Science has numerous points on the scoreboard, while mysticism, religion, theology, and philosophy have essentially zero. However, as an agnostic I'm open even to the possibility that mystical revelation or even intuitive transcendental insight may be valid paths to Truth. Just to experience existence makes me think that almost anything may be possible. As Einstein said "Either everything is a miracle or nothing is." Also, concerning natural laws and knowledge in general, I suspect that there is much more that we do not know than what we do know. Here are a few closing thoughts that might be of interest, most of

which come from scientists.

"Science is not only compatible with spirituality; it is a profound source of spirituality. When we recognize our place in an immensity of light-years and in the passage of ages, when we grasp the intricacy, beauty, and subtlety of life, then that soaring feeling, that sense of elation and humility combined, is surely spiritual."

Carl Sagan

(who referred to himself as a "devout agnostic")

"The odds against a universe like ours emerging out of something like the Big Bang are enormous. I think there are clearly religious implications whenever you start to discuss the origins of the universe. There must be religious overtones. But I think most scientists prefer to shy away from the religious side of it."

Stephen Hawking

"That odd feeling provoked by our recognition of the reality of existence rejuvenates our wonder and curiosity about the universe, restoring the child in each of us. And that wonder is the beginning of science."

Heinz Pagels

"The most beautiful and most profound emotion one can experience is the sensation of the mystical. It is the source of all true science."

Albert Einstein

"The Universe is more like a great thought than a great machine."

Thomas Henry Huxley

"I do not say there is no God. I do not know. I have traveled but very little - only in this world. About this world little is known - about another world, nothing."

Robert G. Ingersoll
(*"The Great Agnostic"*)

"I can live with doubt and uncertainty. I think it's much more interesting to live NOT knowing than to have answers which might be wrong."

Richard Feynman

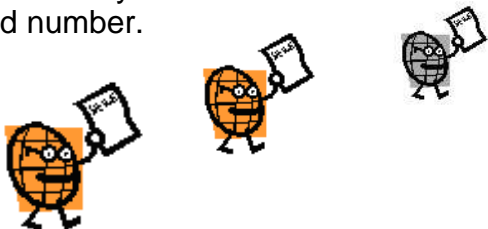
"The important thing is not to stop questioning."

Albert Einstein

Dear Members and Friends

Those hurricanes and tropical storms just won't leave us alone. I am certain thousands of people have raised their faces skyward (towards heaven) and prayed to the almighty to protect us from those life threatening extremely powerful movements of air and water vapor. He just does not listen or we people living in this tropical paradise are all sinners and not on his most favorite list.

Whatever, due to the uncontrollable power of nature we were forced twice to cancel or change our monthly meetings. Most of our board members were trying by telephone to advise you accordingly. We regret, that we could not reach all of you. While some telephones were out of operation, for some others we did not have a valid telephone number on record. To correct this shortcoming we ask you to inform us about your latest and valid number.



The Board of 2004

- The President **Dennis Deshaies**
(904) 794-2706
- Vice President **Larry Munding**
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- Treasurer **Michael T. Simmons**
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- Editor **Harald Podgora**
(386) 257-5628
- Publication Coordinator **Emily Seibert**
(386) 615-1920
- Social Chairperson **Rosalyn Pluzynski**
(386) 761-1456



HAPPY BIRTHDAY WISHES

TO ALL THE WONDERFUL MEMBERS AND FRIENDS

who entered this world during the months of and October .and November .

Melba Seron	10.04
Joan Kennedy	10.11
Frank Seibert	11.05
Ray Pluzynski	11.07
Barbara Eveleigh	11.21

SOMEBODY MISSING ???

Please let the editor know of your important EVENT !



Membership Application –and Renewal
Humanists of Northeast Florida
Dues per calendar year: Regular \$25.00. Family \$35.00, Patron \$100.00

Optional

Name:.....**Birth date:**.....

Address:.....

.....

Phone :.....**e-mail:**.....

To be paid by check or money order to the Humanists of Northeast Florida
PO Box 1143, Ormond Beach, FL 32175

Please take note
OUR WEB SITE:

<http://northeastflorida.humanists.net/>

