

UNBELIEVERS: WE ATHEISTS, AGNOSTICS & FREETHINKERS IN A.A.

“...this was the great contribution of our atheists and agnostics. They had widened our gateway so that all who suffer might pass through, regardless of their belief or lack of belief.” -- Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age, p. 167

My name's Joe and I'm an alcoholic. It was a delight to be invited here; it's been a real adventure. I'm going to present some data based on some research I've done at GSO [General Service Office] and our own Toronto AA Archives. Toronto, in Area 83 does a great job preserving our history. We've had a number of delegates and some trustees and their committee notes are available to Toronto researchers. And it was great to get to GSO and meet Michelle Mirza (Archivist). Many of you here, have been mentors to me. AA History Lovers Yahoo Group—where would we be without this resource? No one gets attitude there. Well, if you spout opinions you might get bitch-slapped but there are no stupid questions. If you're brand new and curious about something, you get treated with respect there. I was brand new there once; not to recovery, but to AA research. I didn't want to be a researcher—I wanted to be a rock star—but because you've never heard of any of the songs I wrote, rock star wasn't a promising career path.

I was a closet agnostic in AA. I came to AA a Catholic apostate. It might have been the age of reasoning or a teenage acid trip but I asked the question, “If there was no God, then man would create one; so what is it?” Hmmm. I just stopped feeling some of the things I had come to believe. Well I hadn't “come to believe.” I had accepted and at face value and now I was asking, “Well, what if what I was told isn't true?”

UNBELIEVERS: WE ATHEISTS, AGNOSTICS & FREETHINKERS IN A.A. INTRO, CONTINUED

So I explored possibility and probability. Skeptics get a bad name. Many atheist and agnostics grimace at several places in our literature; Dr. Bob feeling sorry for us, for example. “If you think you’re an atheist, an agnostic, as skeptic, or have any other form of intellectual pride... I feel sorry for you.” This is almost anti-intellectual. Being a skeptic isn’t like being a cynic; that’s quite a different thing. A skeptic is more child-like, “But why, why, I don’t accept ‘just because,’ why?” Skepticism is a healthy, natural state.

I came to AA a teenager in 1976. I didn’t want to get sober; I was here to get my cousin sober. Before my first 12th step case, I didn’t come to AA; I was brought to AA. Shake any family tree and a few alcoholics fall out it, right? Mine’s the same. I’m not the first generation of Twelve Stepper. We are a notorious family of Two-steppers which is, “We admitted we were powerless over alcohol and so are you and you too, and you should read these 20 questions—I think you’ll pass! Let’s talk about your drinking.” From Step One right to Twelve. I don’t have a book recommending and it’s not how I counsel people but AA works in mysterious ways. My mother came to AA through Al-Anon, trying to get her second husband sober. She laid into me every time I got into drinking trouble.

UNBELIEVERS: WE ATHEISTS, AGNOSTICS & FREETHINKERS IN A.A. INTRO, CONTINUED

It's not that I didn't think AA worked. My mom's home was a happy place of after-meeting coffee and smoking and I could see people were getting and staying sober. It just wasn't for me. Somehow dying a tragic alcoholic death seemed more romantic than living sober. But when I heard that my cousin wanted to get sober, which wasn't wholly true—but that's what I believed—hers was a life worth saving. "Joe, you could be a power of example and take her to a few meetings." "Yes," I thought. I didn't want to be sober but I kind of wanted to be her power of example.

Being a phony in AA is natural for teenage alcoholics. We have to walk into a liquor store and look like we belong, talk to drug dealers and act like we know what we're talking about, have a seat in bars and seem like part of the furniture. We fake our way through drinking, sex and everything else. So I went to AA and said, "My name's Joe and I'm an alcoholic," because that's what Bill said. If he said, "My name's Bill and I'm a unionized pipe-fitter," I would say, "My name's Joe," looking right in the eye, "and I am a unionized pipe-fitter," and I'd mean it. In fact, I'd likely pass a polygraph test. It was just that natural for me. I now call it, *hiding out in plain view*. I saw what you did to the resisters—people who didn't accept the "join the Borg, resistance is futile," punks. You surrounded them, teamed up on them.

UNBELIEVERS: WE ATHEISTS, AGNOSTICS & FREETHINKERS IN A.A. INTRO, CONTINUED

When I read, “How it Works,” it wasn’t a matter of, “Is this true for me?” I was performing “How it Works” and I wanted to perform it better than the last gal or guy who read it. I was just there to get my cousin sober, be a good power of example and be on my way. But something happened. Some of you have heard me say that I consider addiction to be a phenomenon. I also consider recovery—at least my own recovery—a phenomenon, too. By that I mean I know what addiction is, I can recognize it. But I don’t know why I’m an alcoholic. Over 40 years I’ve developed a narrative about how I became alcoholic but I don’t know if it’s true—it’s just my story; it is my version of the truth. And I know what sobriety is but I don’t know what it was I did or didn’t do that got me sober. Was it the Steps? I think so but I don’t know. Was it the meetings? Well, I wouldn’t want to try to go it alone. Was it dogged determination? I know some people who say they got sober that way but I don’t know. So I know what sobriety is but I can’t explain it. And I’ve never learned how to look someone in the eye and determine if they have had their last drink—not even the eyes looking back at me in the mirror. People who fight everything and stay sober, totally disagreeable and now 20 years sober; “how’d that happen?” Then, someone else who says all the right things—slippery eels just like me—they say, “Great meeting, see you next week” and walk right from the meeting to the liquor store and we don’t see them for a few months. So, it really is “Many Paths” to something, isn’t it. And... I wasn’t even going to talk about that.

Three topics: Unbelievers in AA – our history

1. Meetings for AA atheists and agnostics: Meeting the needs of an evolving demographic
2. We Agnostics: Conventions and Conferences
3. Bonding and Bridging: The unmet need of a pamphlet for humanists, unbelievers, secular AA members

I came here to talk about three things and I'm going to add a 3b just because of some of the discussion that has been going on at AA History Lovers Yahoo site and the rest of the blogosphere. I'm from Toronto and some of you would like hear about the Toronto Human Rights Tribunal. Not that this is what my research is based on but AA history isn't something that just happened in the 1930s and '40s. Those AA Tradition quirky stories that you just can't forget—Ed the Atheists and that's why we have Tradition Three, how we came to find Rule 62, how we came to value anonymity—all those stories. Well they're all happening all over again. Tell a millennial that posting their medallion on their Facebook page is a public display and they'll say, "No it's not; no media outlet is visiting my page; it's just my friends." To a Baby Boomer or Generation X that's risky business having that information on the internet. But so is telling your friends in a busy restaurant. Anyone could be listening, anyone could write it down and share the information with others, thus compromising your anonymity. So for young people, they have a different attitude about anonymity, today along all of the rest of our Traditions.

Three topics: Unbelievers in AA – our history

I was asked to talk about labels and I will get to it. I have one slide on the Toronto tribunal case but you can ask me about it at the break if you want to know more about it; I'll tell you what I know.

“ I HAD BEEN NEITHER HUMBLE NOR WISE. BOASTING OF MY FAITH, I HAD FORGOTTEN MY IDEALS. PRIDE AND IRRESPONSIBILITY HAD TAKEN THEIR PLACE. BY SO CUTTING OFF MY OWN LIGHT, I HAD LITTLE TO OFFER MY FELLOW ALCOHOLICS. AT LAST I SAW WHY MANY HAD GONE AWAY - SOME OF THEM FOREVER. ”

BILL W. "THE DILEMMA OF NO FAITH"

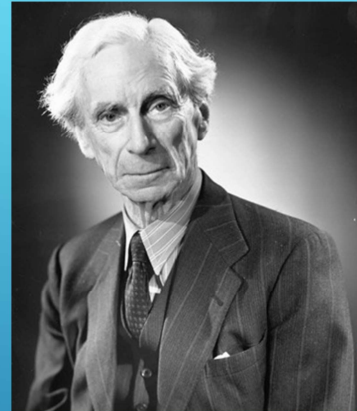
AA Grapevine, April 1961

In 1960 AAs were now hundreds of thousands of members and growing. "We're doing great; we don't need to change a thing," people were saying. But Bill Wilson was thinking about those we weren't reaching. He talked about his concern in his essay, "The Dilemma of No Faith." Bill was concerned about his own arrogance and irresponsibility. I can assure you that believers don't hold the franchise on arrogance over worldview: "Our worldview is better than your worldview," we see in the media from some of the new-atheists. Atheists will say, "You'll outgrow that mythology," the same way AAs will tell nonbelievers, "Give it time; you'll save time and see it our way."

So Bill was concerned as we can see in 1961 and he went from this concern in 1961 to 1965 when he came out with The Responsibility Declaration, "When anyone, anywhere reaches out for help," making open-mindedness everyone's responsibility. Well, we all ought to have this as our creed.

"What makes a freethinker is not his beliefs but the way in which he holds them. **If he holds them because his elders told him they were true when he was young, or if he holds them because if he did not he would be unhappy, his thought is not free; but if he holds them because, after careful thought he finds a balance of evidence in their favor, then his thought is free,** however odd his conclusions may seem. ... The freedom that the freethinker seeks is not the absolute freedom of anarchy; it is freedom within the intellectual law. **He will not bow to the authority of others, and he will not bow to his own desires, but he will submit to evidence.** Prove to him that he is mistaken and he will change his opinion; supply him with new facts, and he will if necessary abandon even his most cherished theories."

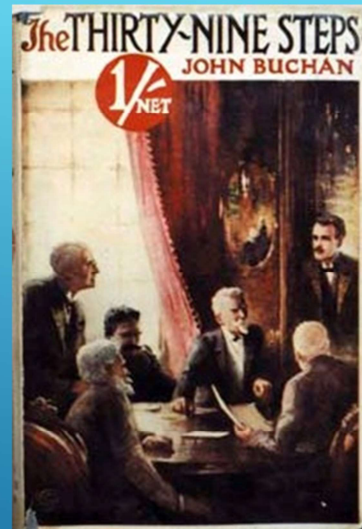
Russell, Bertrand, *The Value of Free Thought: How to Become a Truth-Seeker and Break the Chains of Mental Slavery* (1944)



Russell, Bertrand, *The Value of Free Thought: How to Become a Truth-Seeker and Break the Chains of Mental Slavery* (1944)

I want to invite everyone to be a Freethinkers for a while. Let me apologize; it seems nonbelievers have taken possession of this term, "freethinker" as if it means only to be free of religious dogma. But the Pope could be a freethinker. It's not what one believes or doesn't believe. It is more about how we come to our decisions/assumptions. Let's look at how Bertrand Russell sees freethinking (see above).

Freethinker as a label ought to be available to anyone. Nonbeliever? What does that mean. Of course it doesn't mean that someone doesn't believe in anything. Someone who doesn't believe in God may hold as many beliefs as the most devout. There are Gods that you don't believe in and that doesn't make you a nonbeliever. There doesn't seem to be—yet—a universal language and because of that, we can say things to each other, with the best of intentions, and still offend each other.



JOHN BUCHAN (1875 – 1940)

It wasn't actually the Baptists that came out with "An Atheist is a man who has no invisible means of support." It was John Buchan (1875 – 1940), a Scottish author and diplomat.

Buchan beat us to the punch with a book on addiction and recovery. But *Thirty-nine Steps* – way too complicated for alcoholics. His book never caught on.

Okay, so *The Thirty-nine Steps* was a detective novel and had nothing to do with alcoholism. That's the only known fib in the presentation.

FROM "A NEWCOMER ASKS..." (P-24)Q: "THERE IS A LOT OF TALK ABOUT GOD, THOUGH, ISN'T THERE?"

A: The majority of A.A. members believe that we have found the solution to our drinking problem not through individual willpower, but through a power greater than ourselves. However, everyone defines this power as he or she wishes.

1. Many people call it God,
2. others think it is the A.A. group,
3. still others don't believe in it at all.

There is room in A.A. for people of all shades of belief and non-belief.

(is this reality or a liberal fiction about AA? What does the evidence say?)

From "A Newcomer Asks..." (P-24) The question is asked: "There is a lot of talk about God, though, isn't there?"

The way this is answered is as follows:

It would be great if there is room for everyone but the question remains, "Is this reality or a liberal fiction about AA? Does everyone feel as comfortable as everyone else, regardless of worldview?"

What does the evidence say? Through the lens of us all being freethinkers we'll explore how equal everyone in AA is.



Pg 248, "For a long time the only Higher Power I could concede was the power of the group ... I don't think the boys were completely convinced of my personality change, for they fought shy of including my story in the book, so my only contribution to their literary efforts was my firm conviction, being still a theological rebel, that the word God should be qualified with the phrase 'as we understand him'—for that was the only way I could accept spirituality."

If you see this "Friend of Jim B" bumper sticker in your home group parking lot, there's your atheist. She or he could be a closet atheist but their message that we are like-minded reaches other members like me.

From Page 248 of my third edition, "A Vicious Cycle", Jim Burwell is the first recorded member to rely on Group Of Drunks for power. "For a long time the only Higher Power I could concede was the power of the group ... I don't think the boys were completely convinced of my personality change, for they fought shy of including my story in the book, so my only contribution to their literary efforts was my firm conviction, being still a theological rebel, that the word God should be qualified with the phrase 'as we understand him'—for that was the only way I could accept spirituality."

Jim B never abandoned what he believed to be true and accepted someone else's beliefs. He merely stopped fighting. He outlived both co-founders.

“ TO SOME OF US, THE IDEA OF SUBSTITUTING ‘GOOD’ FOR ‘GOD’ IN THE TWELVE STEPS WILL SEEM LIKE A WATERING DOWN OF A.A.’S MESSAGE. BUT HERE WE MUST REMEMBER THAT A.A.’S STEPS ARE SUGGESTIONS ONLY. A BELIEF IN THEM, AS THEY STAND, IS NOT AT ALL A REQUIREMENT FOR MEMBERSHIP AMONG US. THIS LIBERTY HAS MADE A.A. AVAILABLE TO THOUSANDS WHO NEVER WOULD HAVE TRIED AT ALL HAD WE INSISTED ON THE TWELVE STEPS JUST AS WRITTEN.”

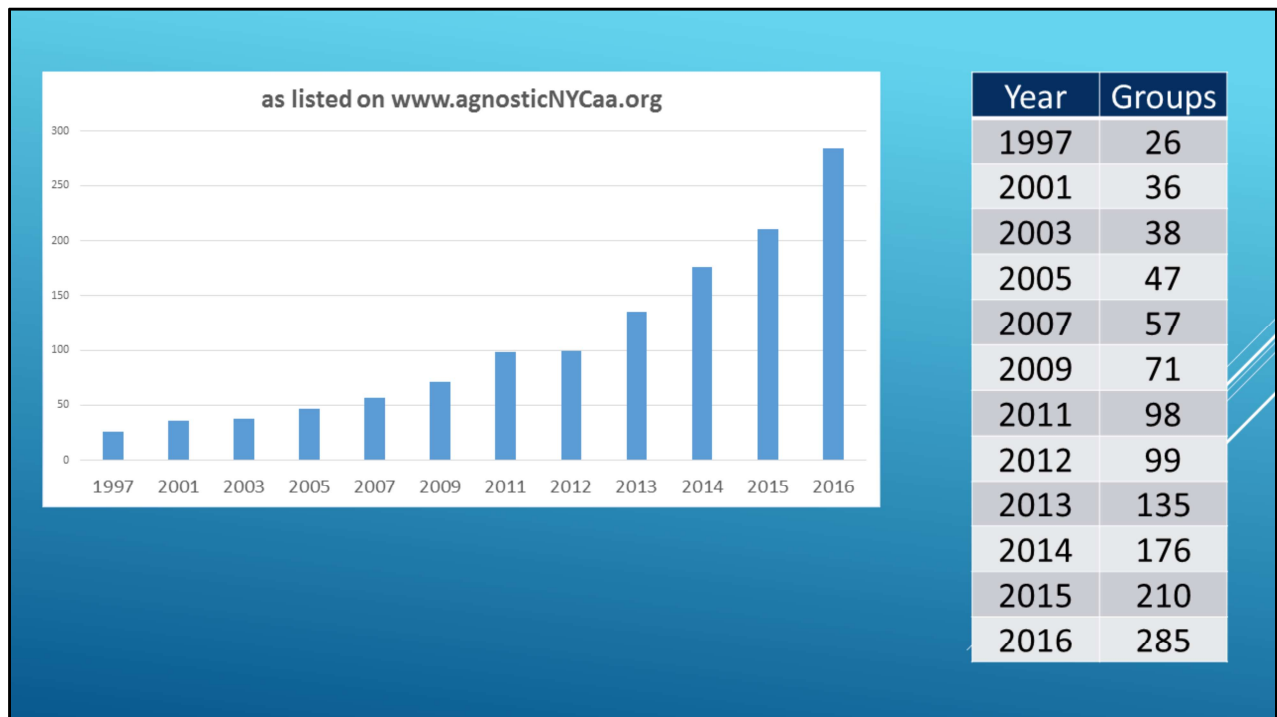
FIRST AA ATHEIST (BUDDHIST) GROUP USED GODLESS
INTERPRETATION OF THE 12 STEPS TO CARRY THE MESSAGE

AA Comes of Age p. 81 from the Chapter “Unity.”

The issue in Toronto is that some of the groups use in their meetings an agnostic interpretation of AA’s Twelve Steps. They didn’t invent the idea, they adopted it. The idea has been around a long, long time as I’m about to show you. Can members and groups do that? Are the Steps sacred; is it forbidden for groups to alter them? If you let atheist change them, what happens when young people’s groups want to read, “The Dude, *as we understand Him*”? Then it’s chaos, then what about newcomer, slippery slope and on and on and on, right? So that is the issue and Toronto Intergroup took offense to it. You might have a knee-jerk reaction to groups taking artistic liberty with the Steps. You may feel, “Of course you can; your imagination is your only limit.” Or, you might feel, “No, you can’t compromise the integrity of the message.” So what would the author of our Twelve Steps say about a group that took “God” out of the Steps?

Here’s what Bill Wilson said in the 1950s about the first Buddhist groups to do this: (see above).

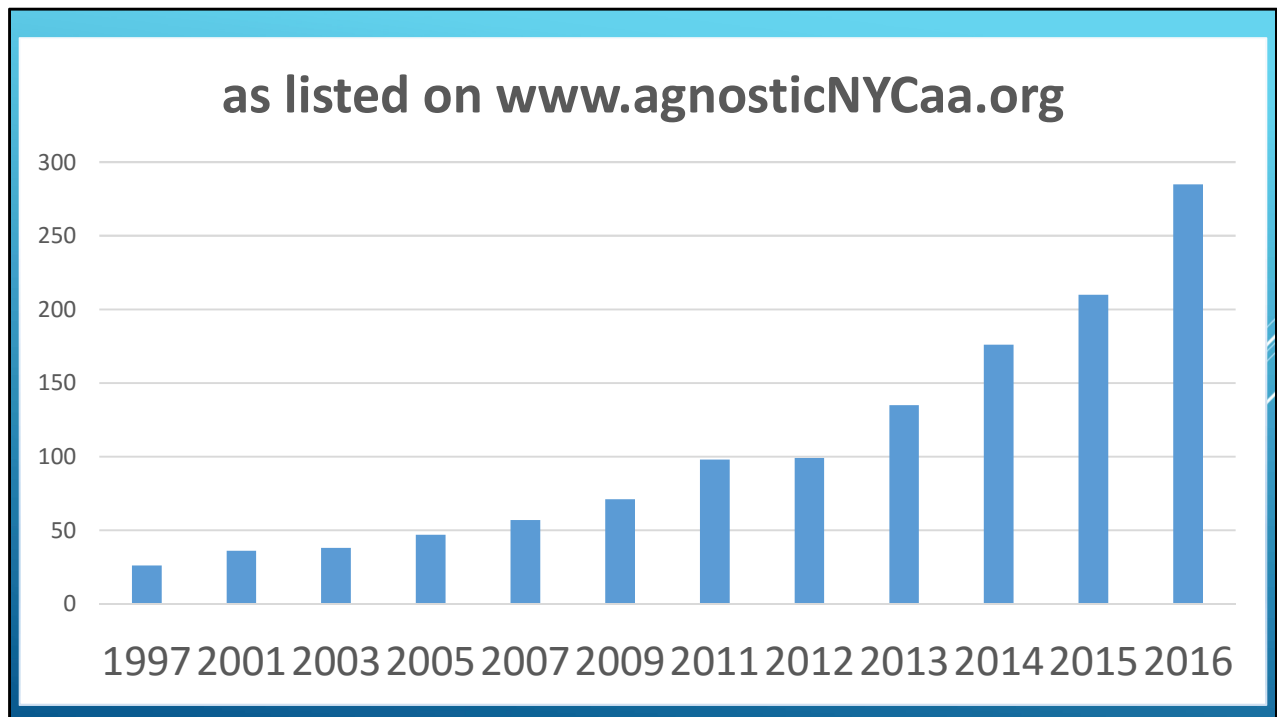
My agnostic AA group gets newcomers who would never go to or go back to a regular AA meeting. We say, “Look, theism isn’t contagious. Go to other meetings; we’ll go with you if you want.” I’ve been here 40 years and no one’s told me—other than Toronto Intergroup—that I don’t belong here. Our group’s attitude about the service structure (such as Intergroup) is, “If we want your opinion, we’ll give it to you.”



PART 1: Groups, Freethinkers, no-prayer, agnostic, humanist, atheist

Agnostic groups aren't exactly taking over the world. Because some groups meet more than once per week, there are roughly 300 meetings a week without prayer in the formalities. It should comfort everybody that, as there is a growing appetite for a secular view of recovery, our AA is meeting that need. For some attendees it's their only safe harbor. For some, it's a stepping stone to full AA engagement. For AA apostates, those who bought the whole intervening-God idea but later in sobriety started to doubt the official story, it is no longer a matter of AA or no AA. We offer a secular alternative of AA with or without God.

Something really important happened in 2002. New York agnostic groups put up a website that included a world directory of atheist/agnostic AA groups. For many of us, closeted or in small towns with no likeminded support, we found that we are not alone. We found each other, teamed up and no-prayer groups grew.



A little something about the law of unintended consequences... When Intergroup in Toronto chose to de-list agnostic groups there were two. Then another one started and they held another meeting to delist that group, too. Now there are eleven. I wonder, if they had minded their own business and left us be, would there be eleven groups today, would there be two? Would it be more or would it be less? I think AAs vote with their feet and Toronto members supported these groups. For many who come, it's not because they don't have a higher power concept, it is because they believe in a pluralist AA. They don't feel excluded from agnostic AA because of their theism. They came to lend support. They wanted their \$2 to go in our bucket, not the Intergroup bucket (power of the purse).

We are still a welcome and active part of District and Area. They never blinked during the Intergroup debacle. They said, "Welcome; we need someone to do the Center for Addiction & Mental Health service meeting are you available? Get on the phones we need a group there tomorrow night."

<http://aaagnostica.org/2016/01/26/a-history-of-secularism-in-aa/>

Roger C., AAagnostica.com (an international beacon of secular AA discussion and community).

- 1975: Chicago, first Alcoholics Anonymous for Atheists and Agnostics (Quad A) Don W. was giving a talk to the congregation of local Unitarian Universalists about AA as an atheist in 1974 and Don was invited to start a meeting for nonbelievers. In January of 1975 the first known North American no prayer meeting. Currently 12 meetings a week for QuadA.
- 1980: Hollywood, home to We Agnostics, started by Charlie P, who moved to Austin and started another We Agnostics group there.
- 1986: New York City, Ada H., John Y. and David L. start We Atheists (now called We Humanists) There are now 16 New York secular groups.
- 1992: <http://agnosticaanyc.org/worldwide.html>

Roger C., of AAagnostica.com (an international port for secular AA discussion and community) gave a talk at a recent Olympia Washington WAAFT conference (We Agnostics, Atheists & FreeThinkers AA Conference). Roger gave a very moving talk about secular AA history and the recording and transcript are both available at the link above. He gives a heartfelt account of resisting AA and then feeling at home in AA, then being kicked to the curb by his local Intergruop. It's like a double stigma: You're a threat to society—you're an alcoholic; you're a threat to AA—you're a nonbeliever. Wow, that's hard to take at the last house on the block.

"The way our 'worthy' alcoholics have sometimes tried to judge the 'less worthy' is, as we look back on it, rather comical. Imagine, if you can, one alcoholic judging another!" A.A. *Tradition: How it Developed* by Bill W. (P-17) p.10

Above is some of what Roger presented in Olympia:

PART II: We Agnostics on the world stage: The International + WAAFTIAAC

1995 We Agnostics, San Diego Panel, Audio #80

Chaired by Jacques F. AAWS Director (Montreal), Merl E. CA, 19 years - Mel D., NY, 5 years, Linda F. AZ, 8 years

2000 We Agnostics, Minneapolis #248

Chair Bob F., NY - Gwen G., FL, 27 yrs - Fred C., B.C. 48 yrs - Richard B., OH 28 yrs.

2005 We Agnostics, Toronto AA 05 – 171 (Thank you Fred I, GA)

Chaired by Naomi D. NY, 21 yrs - Caroline K., NY 17 yrs - Thomas M., OH, - Joe L. FL 54 Yrs

2010 We Agnostics, San Antonio*

Chaired by Gale P., AZ - James S., DE - Mike O. UT - Melissa D., OK

2015 We Agnostics, Atlanta

Diggins, Mike K. NY, 32 yrs – Jeff Y. 30 years, past delegate.

Since 1995 “We Agnostics” has been a panel at AA’s quinquennial world convention. Jacques, an AAWS Class B director from the Serendipity Group in Pointe Claire Quebec chaired the first. Merl for California and Mel from New York City spoke . Jacques asked if there was a female nonbeliever present who would share and Linda from Arizona came up. There was time for audience members to share and there was a lot of bonding in this packed San Diego meeting room.

Thanks to Michelle and the archives team at GSO, I had access to hear all the meetings but they didn’t have a copy of the Toronto 2005 tapes/CDs. In fact they are still without them; if anyone has the collection and would be so inclined to share, I am sure Michelle would be delighted to get a copy for archives. Toronto Intergroup archives didn’t have a copy, either. I reached out on Yahoo Group A.A. History Lovers and thank you Fred I from Georgia who had a copy and sent me an MP3 so that I could hear the whole collection, 1995 to 2015. 2010 has an asterisk (*) because it was more of a Chapter Four “We Agnostics” meeting. It was a fine meeting but it was a disappointment for nonbelievers in attendance who, if they were hyped but the stories they heard about the last two conventions, had to sit through the more typical, “I was a nonbeliever and now I see the light,” kind of talks. I expect someone was asked to chair a meeting, was given a topic and looked in the book to see what direction it ought to take. Atlanta was right back on track from an unabashed unbeliever point of view. Diggins and Mike were both nonbelievers with long-term sobriety and Jeff was a past delegate (past delegates can talk about any topic) and he presented AA’s history of inclusiveness with several Bill W and other AA literature quotes.



First International: Santa Monica November 2014

300 nonbelievers & others dedicated to rigorous inclusion from Canada, USA, Turkey, France and the United Kingdom.

Next up: WAAFTIAAC (We Agnostics, Atheists & FreeThinkers International A.A. Conference) in Austin TX, November 11, 12, 13, 2016

We had our first ever International We Agnostics, Atheists and Freethinkers AA Conference in 2014 in Santa Monica; some of you were there. It wasn't just nonbelievers doing our nonbeliever thing—being skeptical of each other—it was also the greater AA community, lending support, being part of history in the making, "Let's be part of it; let's show our support."

It was a life-altering experience for many. There were people from Turkey, France, the UK, Canada and the USA. Our next event will be in Austin November 11th – 13th 2016 and you're all invited.

<http://www.waافتiaac.org/>

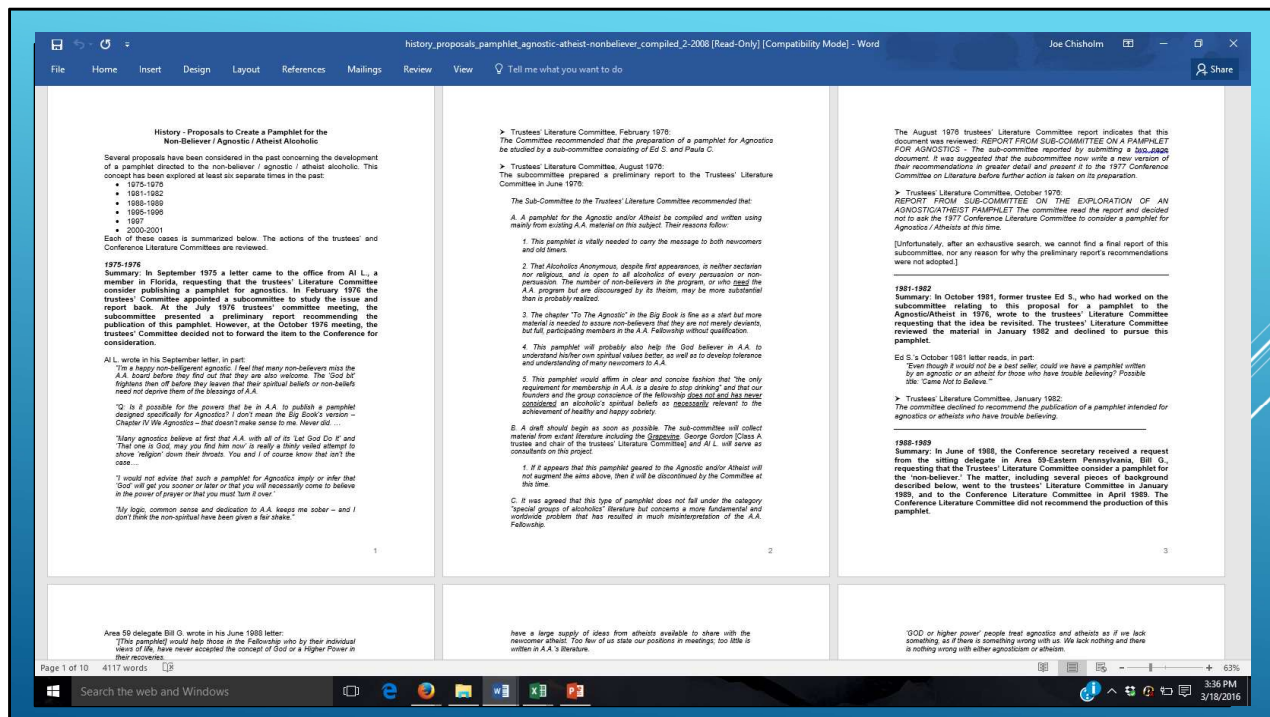
PART III: 10+ PROPOSALS HAVE BEEN CONSIDERED IN THE LAST 40 YEARS CONCERNING THE DEVELOPMENT OF A PAMPHLET DIRECTED TO THE UNBELIEVER ALCOHOLIC.

Year	outcomes
1975-76	Subcommittee said, "this pamphlet vitally needed" not sent to Conference Committee (CLC)
1981-82	Like AL L, in '76, Ed H wrote GSO. Trustees' committee declined to recommend.
1988-89	Area 59 asks GSO to meet the requests of non-believer members. Wouldn't this help our efforts to expand AA in secular Eastern Europe? CLC said, "no need for atheist/agnostic literature."
1995-96	Area 49 voted with substantial unanimity for non-believers pamphlet. Passed on to CLC who declined.
1997	We Agnostics NYC wrote to TLC who declined to make forward out of respect of '96 decision of CLC.
2000-01	5 member letters "Spiritual Variety" idea passed to CLC + 2 letters of opposition. CLC: no action
2002, 03 and 06	Lengthy discussions, no action, TLC made a recommendation to the 2006 CLC. "Already numerous references. Took no action.
2008	Area 17, with substantial unanimity asked GSO to create a pamphlet about working the program without a spiritual conversion (belief in prayer answering, sobriety granting higher power).
2010-14	2011 advisory action directed TLC to solicit stories for a pamphlet on spirituality including successful atheists and agnostics. 200 stories collected. The conference sent it back in 2012, 2013 and replaced it with Many Paths to Spirituality.
2016 ?	Grapevine to devote a month to humanists, unbelievers etc. Discuss a Grapevine book of existing stories.

In the course of research, on the Area 17 website, I found a ten-page, 25 year history from 1976 until 2001 of requests by AA to the Literature desk for an atheist/agnostic pamphlet. The document was un-authored and I wanted to corroborate these claims. The recurring theme is about equality in AA. "You have a pamphlet for women, young people, aboriginal/Native Americans, African Americans, LGBTQ, Armed Forces... how about us; stories told by atheists and agnostics in AA?"

The 1975 trustees' literature committee (TLC) received a letter and formed a sub-committee that concluded, "this pamphlet is definitely needed to help nonbelievers and believers alike". It was carried over to the 1976 TLC and they took no action. In all fairness, in 1976 a pamphlet came out called, "Do You Think You're Different?" It had a story by an atheist. They took out one story by a Hispanic member and added an agnostic AA story. So, an accommodation, to a certain extent, was made in 1976.

In 1981, again a member writes in, the Trustees met, didn't see a need for it. They had other fish to fry. Nothings suggests a conspiracy of majority tyranny over an AA minority. I don't think 1981's committee was aware that the 1975 committee was close to going ahead with such a pamphlet. In 1989 and 1995, these initiatives were taken up by districts which took their case to the area where they got the support of substantial unanimity from the area. Their delegate brought the request to the Conference. So the trustees' committee forwarded proposals on to the Conference Literature Committee (CLC). In both cases, for whatever reason, they said, "Not at this time."



The sad thing is no one at this point saw the bigger picture. Because of the spirit of rotation there was nothing to suggest that in 1995, the CLC was aware that four times in twenty years atheists and agnostics had been denied.

So I found this *History Proposals to Create a Pamphlet for the Non-Believer/Agnostic/Atheist Alcoholic*, while I was doing research for a book I was writing called, *Beyond Belief: Agnostic Musings for 12 Step Life*. The short version of the story is that I went to a bookstore, looking for a secular daily reflection book and I couldn't find one. I stomped out of there, mad. I complained to my AA friends. Eventually, someone said, "Joe, you've been writing for 20 years; you're sober for 30, why don't you write it?" I had no rebuttal. So I started. If I had known how long it would take, I might not have done it. But I did. And while I was working on my book, I found this document on Area 17's website. You can still find it there and I'll leave you the URL and you can read this history. I sent this ten-page document to Michelle and I said I wanted to corroborate its claims and she'd never seen it or heard of it. So I figured that someone from Area 17 had compiled this history but Rich H said, "No, GSO sent this to us when we sent our request for a pamphlet in 2008."

So the mystery of who wrote *the History – Proposals to Create a Pamphlet for the Non-Believer/Agnostic/Atheist Alcoholic* remains unknown.

Sites of Interest:

http://www.area17aa.org/area17/wp-content/uploads/2008/03/history_proposals_pamphlet_agnostic-atheist-nonbeliever_compiled_2-2008.doc

<http://www.164fl.com/wp.pdf> Anti-agnostic "The White Paper on Non-Believers" (Anonymous)

<http://aaagnostica.org/2016/03/01/a-different-road/> Chicago Tribune '95 (20 yrs of QuadA)

<http://www.aabeyondbelief.com/> The international coffee shop of unbelievers

<http://rebelliondogspublishing.com/rebellious-radio> Rebellion Dogs Blogs, Radio + Links

<http://www.waafftiaac.org/> We Agnostics, Atheists & Freethinkers International AA Conference

FOR YOUR INTEREST...

MYSTERIES YET TO UNCOVER?

1. Who produced the 2008 History Proposal – Pamphlet for atheists, agnostics, non-believers 2008?
2. The White Paper on Nonbelievers – what' the impact?
3. The evidence: Zero for ten attempts from the AA fellowship to create a pamphlet for non-believers (Like Young People, Native Americans, Gay & Lesbians, Women, Military, Mental Health [draft]). Are we as open minded as we claim?



The democratization of AA Literature: Print On Demand and small press books are satisfying a previously unmet need. AA has a growing thirst for secular AA recovery literature and with or without Conference participation, AA members are meeting this need.

Cleveland, Martha PhD & G., Arlys, *The Alternative 12 Steps: A Secular Guide to Recovery*, Deerfield Beach: Health Communications Inc., 1991

Z., Philip, *A Skeptic's Guide to the 12 Steps*, Center City: Hazelden Publishing, 1990

Lauritsen, John, *A Freethinker in Alcoholics Anonymous*, Dorchester: Pagan Press, 2014

Hornbacher, Marya, *Waiting: A Nonbeliever's Higher Power*, Center City: Hazelden Publishing, 2011

C., Joe, *Beyond Belief: Agnostic Musings for 12 Step Life*, Toronto: Rebellion Dogs Publishing, 2013

C., Roger, *The Little Book: A Collection of Alternative 12 Steps*, Hamilton: AA Agnostica, 2013

N., Adam, *Common Sense Recovery: An Atheists Guide to Alcoholics Anonymous*, Hamilton, AA Agnostica

Hawkins, Vince, *An Atheists Unofficial Guide to AA*, United Kingdom: Vince Hawkins, 2011

[7] The respondent, GTAI, submits that the Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) recovery program follows 12 steps and that these steps involve a belief in God. GTAI submits that evidence indicates that its purpose is to practice the 12 steps and practice a belief in God. In order to be part of GTAI, a group must be prepared to practice the 12 steps and thus the members of the group must have a belief in God. GTAI submits that it is not denying the applicant's group the right to form its own intergroup and follow its own process.

[8] GTAI submits that is a special interest group that is protected, by section 18 of the Code, from a finding that it has breached the applicant's Code rights. Section 18 of the Code, states,

Rights ... are not infringed where membership or participation in a religious, philanthropic, educational, fraternal or social institution or organization that is primarily engaged in serving the interests of persons identified by a prohibited ground of discrimination is restricted to persons who are similarly identified.

[9] GTAI also submits that it is a bona fide requirement that groups that wish to be part of this intergroup must have a belief in the higher power of God.

GTAI (Greater Toronto Area AA Intergroup, along with AAWS are respondents in Social Justice Tribunal Ontario hearing (HTRO File Number: 2014-18832-1) Applicant L.K., AA member in Toronto filled a complaint of discrimination for being excluded from the local meeting list and banned from participation (having a voice) at Intergroup. The matter has been ongoing since 2011 and all negotiations have failed. L.K. seeks reinstatement.

Intergroup is seeking "Section 18" relief from prosecution, stating that AA is religious (practice of Steps & belief in God is mandatory for members and groups).

GTAI (Greater Toronto Area AA Intergroup), along with AAWS are respondents in Social Justice Tribunal Ontario hearing (HTRO File Number: 2014-18832-1). Applicant L.K., an AA 25 year member in Toronto, filled a complaint of discrimination for being excluded from the local meeting list and banned from participation (having a voice) at Intergroup. Delisting happened in 2011 and all negotiations over five years have failed. L.K. seeks reinstatement.

Intergroup is seeking "Section 18" relief from prosecution, stating that AA is religious (practice of Steps & belief in God is mandatory for members and groups).

So, you paint yourself into a corner and where does it end? Many attempts have been made to coax AA into it's self-correcting habit. All corrective measures have fallen short. So, it's come to this. You have to pick the devil you dance with. Intergroup was dancing with the agnostic groups but then they wouldn't anymore and now who is Intergroup's dance partner? I read the Intergroup minutes and it's not like Intergroup voted on the wording of this defense.

I don't know what will come it but it will be page-8 news eventually. That will be a good thing. I'm a spectator like any of us.

The screenshot shows the OHRC website with a navigation bar including 'YOUR RIGHTS', 'CODE GROUNDS', 'SOCIAL AREAS', 'EDUCATION & OUTREACH', and 'OUR WORK'. The main content area features a large image of a tree with the word 'Creed' overlaid. Below the image, the text reads 'Policy on preventing discrimination based on Creed' and '1 of 6'. The footer contains the text 'In response to claims that ethical veganism is now a creed' and 'Human rights in Ontario'. The date 'February 25, 2016' is also visible. The browser's address bar shows the URL: <http://www.hrc.ca/en/ontario/Pages/Preventing-creed-based-discrimination.aspx>.

April 12th, 2016 Noon EST Webinar sign up:
<http://www.hrc.ca/en/ontario/Pages/Preventing-creed-based-discrimination.aspx>

Here is a site: The OHRC is having a webinar on Creed—not because of this one case in particular but it’s timely for anyone who wants to better understand the Commission’s role and stance in matters like this.

April 12th 2016, at 12:00PM EST, the Ontario Human Rights Commission is holding a webinar on issues pertaining to Creed. Anyone can register if you want a broader understanding on the issues at hand, the Human Rights Code, OHRC’s role with organizations in Ontario, such as AA.



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Welcome to Rebellion Dogs Publishing:

Key Players in AA History
by bob k

Episode 20 of Rebellion Dogs Radio features Bob K and a look at story telling and the ongoing history of addiction & recovery. [HEAR it now HERE](#)

asheyondbelief.com now has the latest from Widening the Gateway in Olympia Washington, January 16th, 2016. January 19th is day that we remember Ernie Kurtz (September 9, 1935 - January 19, 2015) and his literary contribution to 12-Step culture. Here's a 1997 speech he gave celebrating AA's local archivists that he calls, Varieties of AA Experiences. I hope you enjoy it. Click to enjoy.

bob k, author of Key Players in AA History has written about Ernie Kurtz today and I would encourage anyone to visit this link: @asheyondbelief.com to learn the history of this historian and join the conversations if you're so inclined.

join the rebellion
newer less dogma and more blue
periodic emails when there's something awesome to say.

Your email Sign up

AA Grapevine Overhaul? by Joe C Dec 2009 0:00 / 05:25

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STAY IN TOUCH...
SYMPOSIUM ON AA HISTORY,
MARCH 5, 2106 – THANK YOU.

You can contact me any time. I run a site called, Rebellion Dogs Publishing.com. Does anyone know where that line, “rebellion dogs” comes from?
That’s right—“Rebellion dogs our every step at first.” From Step Seven in Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions.

Here’s my phone number, this is my email address. Help yourself to these slides.
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