

What have Non-Theists Contributed to the World?

By Norm R. Allen Jr.

Theists have long maintained that non-theists have not contributed anything great to the world, especially in the way of goodness. Let's examine that ridiculous claim, shall we?

The Bible says that there is no good in the atheist. Indeed, the recently disgraced comedian, entertainer, game show host and host of the Miss Universe Pageant, Steve Harvey, has said this in public on a few occasions.

Many theists claim that non-theists have built no schools. However, there are plenty of examples of schools built by non-theists all over the globe. In Nigeria, there is the Mayflower School that was founded in 1956 by the late Tai Solarin and his late wife Sheila. It is one of the finest schools in Nigeria and continues to turn out first-rate students that find great success in life.

In Uganda, there are a few secular schools, including the Mustard Seed School. These schools were established by organized humanists in Uganda, and the schools are quite impressive.

There is a humanist primary school in the Netherlands Antilles that was founded by Frank Arion. The school offers a great alternative to the Catholic schools in the country that focus obsessively on religion.

These are just a few of the more noteworthy private schools that humanists have built throughout the globe. Humanists have also sponsored numerous college courses, seminars, workshops, and so forth throughout the world.

What have humanists contributed to the world in the way of humanitarianism? Non-theists have raised money for people suffering from "acts of God" in Haiti after the earthquakes in that nation, after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in the U.S., after Super Storm Sandy, after Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines, and other catastrophes.

Humanists give food to food banks, help poor families during the holidays, give blood, and help others in numerous ways. Indeed, many humanists realize that,

because there is no God to help those in need, it is up to human beings to look out for one another.

The aforementioned Tai Solarin of Nigeria was known throughout Nigeria for his humanitarianism. He considered himself to be the only outspoken atheist in Nigeria, and many Nigerians saw him as the perfect example of the Good Samaritan who did not need Christianity to serve his fellow human beings.

The great 19th Century freethinker Robert Green Ingersoll was known as one of the greatest humanitarians of his day. Major Black leaders mourned his death, and he was one of the great feminists of his time.

Today, wealthy non-theists such as Bill Gates and Warren Buffet are known for spreading their wealth around and agreeing to give away most of it after they die. Ted Turner gave \$1 billion to the UN. Todd Stiefel has been very generous, and has given some of his wealth to advance organized freethought.

What have humanists done in the name of human rights? We all know about Martin Luther King and Mahatma Gandhi. However, most people do not realize that civil disobedience was greatly popularized by Henry David Thoreau in his essay on Civil Disobedience first published in 1849. His theory was completely secular and his first act of civil disobedience was in opposition to a tax that was supposed to go to support a church. What was of central importance to Thoreau's theory was not obedience to God, but the following of one's conscience.

Later, numerous humanists participated in the U.S. civil rights movement. There were Andrew Goodman and Michael "Mickey" Schwerner, who, along with James Earl Chaney, were brutally murdered in 1964 in Neshoba County, Mississippi as they were fighting against White supremacy.

Humanist leaders and activists also included James Farmer, James Forman, A. Philip Randolph, Lorraine Hansberry, James Baldwin, Julian Bond and numerous others. (It should also be noted that in the beginning, there were many Black and White Christians that were opposed to the civil rights movement.)

Throughout the history of human civilization, religion has been one of the biggest obstacles to women's rights. It therefore should not be surprising that humanists were in the vanguard in the fight for women's rights.

In 1792, Mary Wollstonecraft wrote *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, the first major feminist statement in writing. Frances Wright was another early feminist pioneer. Elizabeth Cady Stanton wrote the controversial book *The Woman's Bible* that demonstrated that the Bible was patriarchal to the core. Ernestine L. Rose was widely regarded as the first outspoken woman atheist. She contributed greatly to the feminist cause. Matilda Joselyn Gage wrote *Woman, Church and State*, in which she pointed out the feebleness of Christianity. There have also been great male feminists such as Thomas Paine, Ingersoll and Frederick Douglass.

Last but certainly not least, humanists have made great contributions to science for the betterment of humankind. Darwin gathered the all-important data supporting the theory of evolution. James Watson and Francis Crick (working with others) co-discovered the double helix in which DNA exists and revolutionized our understanding of genetics. The contributions of humanists to science are endless.

It is time once and for all for so many theists to stop fooling themselves into believing that non-theists are essentially useless. Reality tells the opposite story.