

## Sexism in Organized Non-Theism

By Norm R. Allen Jr.

Sexual harassment and sexual assault in organized non-theism continue to be serious problems. Major scandals occur with disturbing regularity. The latest major controversy centers on atheist scholar Richard Carrier. Women at non-theist conferences have routinely accused Carrier of inappropriate behavior. Carrier has even admitted to over-stepping boundaries. The situation has become so bad that skeptics have gone so far as to ban Carrier from Skepticon, a major gathering of skeptics, in order to protect women from his alleged predatory behavior.

What is as bad as the sexual misbehavior is the reaction of many male skeptics to it. It is one thing for skeptics, atheists and humanists to have no interest in social justice and to mock those that do as “social justice warriors.” However, to cover up or downplay such behavior within one’s own movement is unconscionable.

Witness atheist James A. Lindsay in his rant against feminists in “Atheism +: The Name for What’s Happening to Richard Carrier.”

(<https://www.allthink.com/1411309>.) Lindsay attacks the Atheist + (plus) movement for tackling sexism within the organized non-theist movement. He implies that White males are being unfairly attacked. (The Atheist + movement arose in response to the fact that some highly influential non-theists are not interested in fighting for social justice. Those involved with Atheist + are interested in promoting atheism *and* social justice.)

Still, Lindsay’s reaction is almost kind compared to some of the hateful words and rape threats used by some atheists against women fighting against sexism. Many non-theist men have heaped much sexist abuse upon women merely for standing up for what is right.

Some atheists and skeptics have the same mindset found among religious fundamentalists. They are very thin-skinned and are unable and/or unwilling to be their own strongest critics. They imagine their worldview to be perfect and they feel persecuted, even as they accuse others of having a “victim-focused identity.”

This is nothing new. Self-professed freethinkers have sometimes engaged in bigoted thinking. For example, Woolsey Teller was a raving anti-Black bigot. In his 1945 book *Essays of an Atheist*, Teller argued, in the name of Darwin, that Blacks were inferior to all other races.

How is it that atheists that do not believe in social justice, or that, like the late Antony Flew, even deny that it exists, can imagine themselves to be better than Christians like Martin Luther King? How is it that they can imagine their worldview to be better than one that improves the world by fostering empathy, altruistic love and democracy? Moreover, why can they not see that their narrow worldview limits their growth, power, influence and standing in the world?

In most parts of the world, most humanists consider humanism to be inextricably linked to social justice. Indeed, it is primarily certain White males in organized non-theism in the United States and Britain that constantly whine about social justice. Could it be that they are happy with an organized non-theist movement that is mostly White and whose major spokespersons and writers are mostly upper-class White males? Could they be threatened by any real or perceived threats to the status quo?

If non-theists will not combat sexism in their own movement, who will? It is amazing that the critics of social justice do not seem to care what might happen to their movement if increasing numbers of women become fed up and decide to abandon the movement altogether. Then again, conservative and reactionary male religionists have no such concerns in their organizations.

Throughout most of the history of organized non-theism there had not been any reports of sexual assault and sexual harassment in the movement. Is that because such problems did not exist in the movement back then? If so, why has this become a problem only in recent years? More importantly, what more can be done to stop it?

Ironically, some of the men accused of sexual assault or sexual harassment consider themselves upstanding feminists, as does Carrier. Bill Cosby, who has been accused of sexually assaulting numerous women, not only considered himself a fine feminist, but he had been applauded by many feminists, especially for his work on his famed television show. How does this happen?

Where do those that seemingly despise social justice stand on the subjects of sexual assault and sexual harassment? If they are opposed, what do they propose to do about these problems? Why are they attacking so-called social justice warriors but not coming up with solutions of their own?

These are problems throughout the world. However, if people cannot tackle problems in their own organizations, they certainly cannot be counted upon to make the world a safer and better place for women.