

Annie Laurie Gaylor Exploring religious freedom episode 04

Video available at <https://youtu.be/cspncemMA9A>

0:00:01.490,0:00:06.480

(Alastair Lichten) Hello and welcome to episode 4 of the National Secular Society's podcast and

0:00:06.480,0:00:11.820

Part 4 in our series Exploring Religious Freedom. I'm Alastair Lichten, Head of

0:00:11.820,0:00:16.769

Education at the NSS, and in this series I'm speaking with a variety of experts and

0:00:16.769,0:00:21.800

activists about religious freedom. What does it mean? What are its limits?

0:00:21.800,0:00:26.339

And how might it be abused? Listener, I'm gonna give you a little peek behind the

0:00:26.339,0:00:29.999

curtain here and let you know that today's episode comes a bit out of order.

0:00:29.999,0:00:34.110

I like to space the episodes out regularly, but sometimes you just need to

0:00:34.110,0:00:38.490

grab an interview with a subject when you can, so in this interview I

0:00:38.490,0:00:42.420

spoke with Anne Laurie Gaylor and you'll hear us mentioning Religious Freedom Day

0:00:42.420,0:00:47.910

in the US, which is on the 16th of January. Anne Laurie Gaylor is a co-founder and

0:00:47.910,0:00:52.420

co-president of the American based
Freedom From Religion Foundation.

0:00:52.420,0:01:00.920

I'll be back at the end of the interview with
some reflections and closing remarks.
Enjoy.

0:01:01.060,0:01:05.200

Annie Laurie, welcome to the NSS podcast
(Annie Laurie Gaylor) Thank you for inviting me.

0:01:05.200,0:01:07.620

(AL) You're very welcome.
You're co-president

0:01:07.620,0:01:11.340

of the Freedom From Religion Foundation.
I wonder if you can start by telling the

0:01:11.340,0:01:16.240

audience a little bit about the FFRF,
and how you came to be a secularist activist.

0:01:16.240,0:01:22.040

(ALG) Yes, I am a co-founder of the
Freedom From Religion Foundation, and I

0:01:22.040,0:01:28.260

co-founded it with my mother, Anne Nicole
Gaylor, back in 1976, when I was a

0:01:28.260,0:01:32.360

college student, and she was a very
well-known feminist activist in

0:01:32.360,0:01:38.729

Wisconsin, and nationally, and our
eyes were opened to the dangers of

0:01:38.729,0:01:46.590

religion and government because she, in
her work to legalize contraception and

0:01:46.590,0:01:51.120

abortion in the state of Wisconsin, and
we realized that the only organized

0:01:51.120,0:01:55.500

opposition was religious in nature, and they were trying to inflict their dogma

0:01:55.500,0:02:00.240

on everyone else through civil law. And she was asked to go national with the

0:02:00.240,0:02:07.500

group in 78 and I became co-president with Dan Barker in about 2005 I think.

0:02:07.500,0:02:15.299

And we are in our 41st year, and we have rectified many violations of the

0:02:15.299,0:02:21.180

separation of church and state, taken over 70 lawsuits, won most of them.

0:02:21.180,0:02:27.180

We have grown from the original two of us to over 31,000 members in North America,

0:02:27.180,0:02:34.400

and our members are mainly non theists: atheists, agnostics, skeptics, rationals.

0:02:34.400,0:02:38.540

We like to joke that we don't care what you call yourself, we all disbelieve in the

0:02:38.540,0:02:42.780

same gods. So we have two purposes:
- to keep religion out of government,

0:02:42.920,0:02:45.780

to defend the constitutional wall of separation between church and state

0:02:45.780,0:02:51.030

that's in the American Constitution, and
- to educate the public about non-theism,

0:02:51.030,0:02:55.400

to promote the Enlightenment,
to promote the free thought point of view and

0:02:55.400,0:03:01.840
represent free thinkers, especially
interested in keeping religion out of social policy.

0:03:01.840,0:03:06.560
(AL) So the FFRF advocates for
religious freedom and the separation of

0:03:06.560,0:03:12.000
church and state, but you come at that
from a specifically non religious perspective.

0:03:12.000,0:03:15.930
(ALG) Yes we do. Although we do
represent religious people in some of

0:03:15.930,0:03:19.400
our lawsuits and some of our legal complaints.
(AL) What do you think the

0:03:19.400,0:03:23.860
strengths and weaknesses of that approach are?
(ALG) The strength is that we are purists.

0:03:23.860,0:03:28.700
We don't get, we don't have a
conflict that suddenly we're taking a

0:03:28.709,0:03:33.870
position that our church is going to not
like, and that's one of the things that

0:03:33.870,0:03:39.019
has freed the Freedom From Religion
Foundation, to be absolute in our

0:03:39.020,0:03:42.920
definition of separation of church and
state, and to take some lawsuits that

0:03:42.920,0:03:47.160
some of the other groups, that have
religious ties, would not be willing to take.

0:03:47.160,0:03:51.500
Because churches are not comfortable with them.
And one of the weaknesses, of course,

0:03:51.500,0:03:54.120

is that we're a great minority in the United States.

0:03:54.120,0:03:59.440

But since FFRF was founded, of course, we've seen enormous growth in the number of seculars.

0:03:59.440,0:04:05.040

And it's never been a better time, in the United States, to be without religion.

0:04:05.040,0:04:09.840

We have a lot more company and there's about 24% of the

0:04:09.840,0:04:15.840

population identifies as non-religious, not necessarily as atheists, and we're

0:04:15.840,0:04:22.080

seeing much higher numbers among what's called Generation Z -

0:04:22.080,0:04:27.180

young people - in their teenage years. We're seeing up to 36%,

0:04:27.180,0:04:30.960

and 21% of them actually saying they're atheist or agnostic.

0:04:30.960,0:04:35.280

So that's a huge sea change here in this country, where we're finally catching up

0:04:35.280,0:04:42.940

with the free thinkers in in the UK and in much of Europe.

0:04:42.940,0:04:50.220

But, because we are a minority, I think that, of course, that makes it harder, and sometimes people

0:04:50.220,0:04:52.660

will say "Well why don't you just work for separation of church and state, and

0:04:52.660,0:05:00.730

then anybody of any belief could join you?" And this is true, but we like to

0:05:00.730,0:05:04.220

point out there are other groups for
believers to join, such as

0:05:04.220,0:05:10.180

Americans United for Separation of Church and State.
And so, you know, I think the

0:05:10.180,0:05:15.100

more people fighting the same problem,
chipping away at the same problem, from

0:05:15.100,0:05:18.360

different perspectives, makes our movement stronger.

0:05:18.360,0:05:23.980

(AL) So this is part of a series of discussions about religious freedom.

0:05:24.120,0:05:30.560

How does freedom from religion relate to that?

(ALG) Well we believe, most sincerely,

0:05:30.560,0:05:36.020

that there can be no true religious liberty without the freedom to dissent.

0:05:36.020,0:05:40.800

You cannot dissent once there's religion
in government. Watch out!

0:05:40.800,0:05:46.020

And then, invariably, persecution follows, as Thomas Paine wrote so many years ago.

0:05:46.020,0:05:53.520

We also feel that secularism is a
prerequisite for women's rights, for

0:05:53.520,0:06:02.770

LGBTQ rights, for unfettered science,
which, you know, stem-cell research, is

0:06:02.770,0:06:08.560

still greatly fettered here in the United States.

You can't really have true liberty

0:06:08.580,0:06:12.820

if you have religion in government.

(AL) There might be a perception

0:06:12.820,0:06:22.160

that freedom of religion is for the religious
and that freedom from religion is for the irreligious.

0:06:22.160,0:06:26.540

Is that fair and, if not, is that a problem for those advocating for

0:06:26.540,0:06:31.320

the separation of church and state?

(ALG) I think there's definitely a perception among

0:06:31.320,0:06:36.560

many Americans that freedom of religion does not encompass any freedom to dissent,

0:06:36.560,0:06:39.880

or freedom for atheists or agnostics .

0:06:39.880,0:06:44.840

But when you look at the word "of" and "from", they're really the same word, you know, in French.

0:06:44.840,0:06:50.480

"De" means "of", "de" means "from".

The concepts go together, and

0:06:50.490,0:06:55.080

in the United States we have the First
Amendment of the Bill of Rights

0:06:55.080,0:06:59.880

which says Congress shall make no law
respecting an establishment of religion.

0:06:59.980,0:07:04.280

That's the Establishment Clause that's
interpreted to have a wall of separation

0:07:04.280,0:07:10.940

between church and state. But the second
prong is prohibiting the free exercise thereof,

0:07:10.940,0:07:16.000

and that's the freedom of religion.

And so the two things go together.

0:07:16.000,0:07:21.480

And, really, what the First Amendment is about,
what religious liberty is about,

0:07:21.480,0:07:26.480

is about freedom of conscience.
We all have freedom of conscience,

0:07:26.480,0:07:31.520
to decide whether to accept or reject religion.
That's what we're fighting for.

0:07:31.520,0:07:35.560
(AL) We were originally scheduled to have this meeting on January 16th,

0:07:35.560,0:07:41.280
which is religious freedom day in the US.
I think one of the biggest challenges facing

0:07:41.280,0:07:47.520
organizations, like the FFRF and the NSS,
is a sort of redefining of religious freedom

0:07:47.520,0:07:52.020
in hands of, not exclusively, but largely reactionary groups,

0:07:52.020,0:07:59.500
as being about the freedom to impose religion, or an unlimited freedom that overrides other rights.

0:07:59.620,0:08:04.860
What do you think we can do about this, what you might call might call, a distorted version of
religious freedom?

0:08:04.860,0:08:09.780
(ALG) It is one of the biggest fights that we
have here in the United States, and,

0:08:09.780,0:08:15.000
of course, Religious Freedom Day is the
anniversary of the issuance of the

0:08:15.000,0:08:18.960
Virginia statute for religious liberty,
written by Thomas Jefferson.

0:08:19.080,0:08:24.780
And that became the cornerstone that led to the
First Amendment in the United States and

0:08:24.780,0:08:31.740
actually often the the main text of it,
the most important paragraph of it, is

0:08:31.740,0:08:36.720
repeated almost word for word in
probably about thirty five state constitutions,

0:08:36.720,0:08:41.520
that no citizen shall be compelled
to attend, to direct, or support,

0:08:41.520,0:08:47.120
any place of worship or support
any ministry or religious teachers.

0:08:47.120,0:08:52.880
What makes the point about what you are
saying, what the evidence of that, is that

0:08:52.880,0:08:58.220
the religious right is turning, is
weaponizing this very date, this anniversary.

0:08:58.220,0:09:00.980
They're trying to turn
Religious Freedom Day into a day that

0:09:00.980,0:09:09.500
celebrates taking away religious liberty.
This has all been organized and orchestrated

0:09:09.500,0:09:14.580
by the religious right,
to turn this anniversary on its head.

0:09:14.580,0:09:19.740
This is exactly what is happening in the United States.
We are seeing courts, even,

0:09:19.740,0:09:23.920
and not just the religious right, use language that is appalling.

0:09:23.920,0:09:30.480
We just had some arguments, by the Trump administration, against the contraceptive
mandate.

0:09:30.480,0:09:34.940
This has been one of the biggest religious freedom issues in the United States,

0:09:34.940,0:09:38.180
because we had the Hobby Lobby decision, by the Supreme Court,

0:09:38.180,0:09:40.880

that said that Obamacare's contraceptive mandate,

0:09:40.880,0:09:50.320

that said that women workers have to be given contraceptive appointments without extra penalty.

0:09:50.320,0:09:54.760

And the Hobby Lobby decision, by the Supreme Court, said that, if they had a religious objection,

0:09:54.760,0:10:01.020

employers could actually veto this kind of health care, or what kind of contraception women workers choose.

0:10:01.020,0:10:05.600

It was a horrible decision, and they're still arguing for this,

0:10:05.600,0:10:08.370

and they are using the language that we use at the

0:10:08.370,0:10:16.060

Freedom From Religion Foundation,
saying that employers have the right,

0:10:16.060,0:10:23.000

under freedom of conscience, to dictate to employees what kind of contraception they may, or may not, use.

0:10:23.000,0:10:27.900

They're using the same language we've been using for years.
It's incredible.

0:10:27.900,0:10:35.100

(AL) So might this be a case where some people's religious freedom needs to be restricted or limited

0:10:35.100,0:10:39.060

in order to protect the religious freedom of others,

0:10:39.160,0:10:44.880

the religious freedom to manifest your
belief, that you don't like contraceptives,

0:10:44.880,0:10:50.120

bumps up against other people's religious freedoms or indeed freedom from religion?

0:10:50.120,0:10:57.520

(ALG) Yes. I mean, they have the religious freedom to avoid or essee any kind of contraception that they want

0:10:57.580,0:11:01.720

That protects their freedom of conscience.
They don't have the right to force their

0:11:01.720,0:11:06.209

contraceptive choices on others,
especially their employees, and

0:11:06.209,0:11:10.300

especially when it's a corporation it
isn't even a church.

0:11:10.400,0:11:15.160

The Hobby Lobby ruling was a disastrous ruling, which we have, you know, protested vociferously,

0:11:15.160,0:11:22.780

and it has led to quite a groundswell of opposition.
Whereas fighting we're still duking this out,

0:11:22.780,0:11:27.920

but there's no question, there's some famous quotes,

0:11:28.020,0:11:34.680

you know, your your freedoms and my nose.
I mean, you can't swing your your fist

0:11:34.680,0:11:44.140

at somebody's nose and say that's your freedom.
You can see that we have checks to so-called

0:11:44.140,0:11:49.880

religious liberty. We don't allow polygamous marriages in the United States, for example.

0:11:49.880,0:11:54.180

We don't, in theory, allow child brides.

0:11:54.200,0:12:02.140

You can't commit crimes in the name of religion, although they happen frequently.

0:12:02.140,0:12:07.060

And that's not justification.
So of course there have to be checks and balances.

0:12:07.060,0:12:11.160

But what the Religious Right and the Trump administration is saying

0:12:11.160,0:12:14.280

is that if you are religious the rules don't apply to you.

0:12:14.280,0:12:18.059

And not only that, but you're allowed to force your religious views on others.

0:12:18.060,0:12:26.000

(AL) If that is someone's view of what religious freedom means, and, obviously, I think we hold

0:12:26.000,0:12:29.720

quite a philosophically similar view of what religious freedom actually means,

0:12:29.720,0:12:33.560

how can we resolve these two understandings?

0:12:33.560,0:12:40.520

(ALG) Well, I think through education and persuasion and common sense. You know, it would be,

0:12:40.520,0:12:46.200

like, if at the Freedom From Religion Foundation, we said "we're all atheists here

0:12:46.200,0:12:51.900

and you're not allowed to get pregnant, you're gonna have to have an abortion".

0:12:51.900,0:12:54.399

That's our religious freedom.

0:12:54.400,0:13:01.500

It's absurd. I think you have to show examples of how absurd it would be if we

0:13:01.500,0:13:11.420

forced our views on religious people. And more education about why the United States

0:13:11.420,0:13:15.300

was the first among nations. I mean talking to people in this country,

0:13:15.300,0:13:19.180

to separate religion from government it's something that we should

0:13:19.190,0:13:26.480

be proud of, and for years we have seen it stigmatized and we have seen public

0:13:26.480,0:13:32.210

officials make remarks against it.
It's like they are even afraid to say

0:13:32.210,0:13:39.620

anything that is pro separation of church and state.
We have lost a lot of ground since Robert Kennedy,

0:13:39.620,0:13:43.440

as a candidate, felt compelled to make his famous speech,

0:13:43.440,0:13:47.540

before Houston ministers, saying
I believe in an America where the

0:13:47.540,0:13:52.070

separation of church and state is
absolute. And he went on in great depth

0:13:52.070,0:13:55.900

and detail to say why religion should
not be in government.

0:13:56.040,0:14:01.680

We don't see anybody saying this anymore.
There's been quite a disinformation campaign.

0:14:01.800,0:14:06.740

And even among progressive causes it always seems like the secular principle gets to the

0:14:06.740,0:14:11.540

bottom of the list of to Do's.
You know, first there's protect abortion rights,

0:14:11.540,0:14:15.620

and then there's protect LGBT, and
this, and that, and the other, and nobody's

0:14:15.620,0:14:19.490

thinking about the overall picture, that
so many of these attacks, are really

0:14:19.490,0:14:23.810

attacks on secularism.
(AL) So what do you think the biggest challenge is to

0:14:23.810,0:14:28.400

freedom of and from religion are today?
(ALG) The biggest challenges, I think, are

0:14:28.400,0:14:37.240

conveying why we adopted it, why it's essential for secularism and freedom to prosper.

0:14:37.240,0:14:41.780

I think maybe the history has
been forgotten in the United States.

0:14:41.780,0:14:46.420

i don't think children get civics lesson anymore
They're not taught to revere

0:14:46.420,0:14:50.800

some of these constitutional principles
as they were in my mother's time,

0:14:50.800,0:14:54.840

growing up in the 1930s, for example, the
education I received was very different.

0:14:54.840,0:15:00.580

In the United States we have seen incursions that have miseducated the public,

0:15:00.580,0:15:06.940

such as the adoption of other words under God in our Pledge of Allegiance,

0:15:06.940,0:15:11.840

that tie piety to patriotism,
putting the motto In God We Trust on

0:15:11.840,0:15:15.920

money and saying it's it's a second
motto for our nation. That all happened

0:15:15.920,0:15:21.260

in the 1950s, and we get continually
asked these questions by the media and

0:15:21.260,0:15:25.610

the public: How can you say that America
isn't a religious nation?

0:15:25.610,0:15:29.940

Our motto is 'in god we trust'
and we always say "Well, it was a Johnny-come-lately,

0:15:29.940,0:15:33.140

it doesn't belong there, it's not even accurate."

0:15:33.140,0:15:36.860

To be accurate it would have to say
" in God some of us trust" and that would be a

0:15:36.860,0:15:43.240

very silly motto. It's exclusionary and I think this these things have miseducated the public

0:15:43.240,0:15:46.360

and we need to remind them of our secular heritage.

0:15:46.460,0:15:51.440

(AL) On the surface of it ,that having the national motto being 'in god we trust',

0:15:51.440,0:15:59.740

kind of seems like a minor religious privilege, a concession to the majority .

0:15:59.740,0:16:06.920

How does that trickle down into
tangible restrictions on religious freedom?

0:16:06.920,0:16:10.850

(ALG) Well, it is used as precedent to
excuse everything else that entangles

0:16:10.850,0:16:14.450

religion and government, and we know this
from 41 years of experience dealing with

0:16:14.450,0:16:20.640

public officials and dealing with a hostile public.
They all turn to these kinds of examples

0:16:20.640,0:16:26.150

to justify worse violations.
The symbolic violations are

0:16:26.150,0:16:31.360

among the worst in terms of the harm
they create, and they're among the top 10,

0:16:31.360,0:16:36.400

or 3 even, that we get complaints of from
our many members around the nation.

0:16:36.410,0:16:41.420

And it's it's justified a lot of violations and it's a lot of ignorance

0:16:41.420,0:16:49.040

that we need to confront, and I would also blame religion, the religiosity

0:16:49.040,0:16:54.940

of the American public, in my opinion, is how we got to where we are today politically.

0:16:54.980,0:17:00.880

It has dummed down our nation, it isn't that surprising that

0:17:00.890,0:17:07.520

we would have a president who plays with facts and talks about, you know

0:17:07.520,0:17:15.400

alternates facts and fake news, when religion is basically the original fake news.

0:17:15.400,0:17:18.920

And when people are taught to believe it's fine to believe anything

0:17:18.920,0:17:22.820

that makes you feel good. It doesn't matter whether there's evidence for it.

0:17:22.820,0:17:28.240

(AL) Okay, and for those who don't share that perspective, for that those who are religious,

0:17:28.240,0:17:39.360

either culturally or in terms of belief, how can they be persuaded to support separation of church and state?

0:17:39.360,0:17:44.320

How can they be shown that that's good for them, as well?

0:17:44.320,0:17:48.600

particularly if they are a member of the currently privileged majority?

0:17:48.620,0:17:53.400

(ALG) Separation of church and state is good for everybody. All we have to do is look

0:17:53.400,0:18:00.600

at history to see whenever you get one sect in power, it

0:18:00.600,0:18:05.690

goes after all the others.

So, we have seen historically all kinds of

0:18:05.690,0:18:10.320

discrimination, religious wars, pogroms,
you name it.

0:18:10.320,0:18:16.680

against the wrong religion. To
be Catholic used to be practically a

0:18:16.680,0:18:22.260

crime in some countries and in some
colonies here in the United States, much

0:18:22.260,0:18:26.910

less to be Jewish.

The Protestants have been themselves

0:18:26.910,0:18:30.300

discriminated against when they're
living in what is basically a Catholic

0:18:30.300,0:18:35.460

theocracy. The only way to protect
everybody is to have a neutral

0:18:35.460,0:18:39.300

government. And we have a bumper sticker
at the Freedom From Religion Foundation

0:18:39.300,0:18:45.480

that's applicable here in the United States:
Protect the First Amendment - It Protects You.

0:18:45.560,0:18:51.520

So we all can live in harmony if our government stays out of the religion business.

0:18:51.520,0:18:56.040

But once it enters religion, as I said,
watch out!

0:18:56.040,0:19:03.960

(AL)What role do you think that schools can play in improving the public understanding of religious
freedom

0:19:03.960,0:19:08.420
or the separation of church and state?
(ALG) Well, in the United States I would say

0:19:08.420,0:19:13.000
better civics lessons about the Constitution and how it was developed.

0:19:13.000,0:19:19.140
I guess that, globally, when we study history

0:19:19.140,0:19:25.620
and study the history of law,
history of democracy, it's very important

0:19:25.620,0:19:29.930
that the negative role that religion has played,

0:19:29.930,0:19:36.860
in suppressing rights and starting wars,
be objectively analyzed and discussed.

0:19:36.860,0:19:42.270
There shouldn't be this assumption
that everybody is religious, and perhaps

0:19:42.270,0:19:48.220
that doesn't happen in some of the other nations, certainly happens in the United States,

0:19:48.220,0:19:53.240
where we're just sort of excluded,
non-believers are just excluded.

0:19:53.240,0:19:57.500
It's just assumed everybody is religious.
That's why politicians and every speech

0:19:57.500,0:20:05.020
with "God bless you", even liberal ones.
It becomes kind of a political gotcha issue,

0:20:05.020,0:20:10.560
for most politicians in the United States,
to wear religion on their sleeves.

0:20:10.560,0:20:15.750
(AL) So how does the FFRF reclaim or
defend freedom of/from religion?

0:20:15.750,0:20:20.010

(ALG) Well we spent 41 years trying to reeducate the public and politicians

0:20:20.010,0:20:25.560

about the secular roots of our government and our nation.

0:20:25.560,0:20:29.940

And we now have a strategic response team and we also are starting to do much more

0:20:29.940,0:20:34.440

lobbying in Congress. And we also have our members lobbying at their state legislators

0:20:34.440,0:20:40.600

when these bills come up, that are all based on the lie that America is a Christian nation

0:20:40.600,0:20:46.720

or that America is based on God. And our members are continually educating

0:20:46.720,0:20:51.140

about the importance of keeping religion out of government,

0:20:51.140,0:20:56.360

and and why that developed in the United States, looking at the colonies,

0:20:56.360,0:21:00.460

and all the persecution in most of the thirteen original colonies.

0:21:00.460,0:21:05.980

And so much of the religious warfare strife persecution in the old world.

0:21:05.980,0:21:13.500

And it's just going to take continual education to debunk this idea that religious liberty is something

0:21:13.500,0:21:18.000

that you use as a weapon against someone else. (AL) Okay thanks so much

0:21:18.000,0:21:21.680

Before you go, we always like to

ask our guests for some recommendations

0:21:21.680,0:21:28.480

Are there any books or films you'd recommend, that do a good job of exploring freedom of religion?

0:21:28.480,0:21:31.640

(ALG) We would like to see a film made about the

0:21:31.680,0:21:38.090

McCullum case of 1948, which was the first lawsuit before the Supreme Court,

0:21:38.090,0:21:43.480

in which the court got rid of religious instruction in the public schools.

0:21:43.480,0:21:49.000

And there's a wonderful book, by Vashti McCollum, who took that case, called One Woman's Fight.

0:21:49.000,0:21:57.600

And hard to get now, but it's as readable as a novel, and it really explains the toll

0:21:57.600,0:22:02.340

that is exacted on schoolchildren, when religion creeps into our public schools.

0:22:02.340,0:22:06.960

And it should be made into movie. It would be a very good movie. We're working on that.

0:22:06.960,0:22:10.860

Another book, that will be coming out in April or May,

0:22:10.860,0:22:17.640

is called Unamerican, and it's by Andrew Seidel, who is our Director of Strategic Response.

0:22:17.640,0:22:20.580

And he's a constitutional attorney who works for us.

0:22:20.580,0:22:25.360

And he explores not only the judeo-christian nation myth,

0:22:25.360,0:22:31.160

but he also explores why the Bible itself doesn't jive with American principles,

0:22:31.160,0:22:35.200
that are found in the Bill of Rights.
So, it's called "Unamerican"

0:22:35.200,0:22:40.640
(AL) Okay. Well we'll put what links we can in the show notes the.

0:22:40.640,0:22:45.020
Annie Laurie, thank you so much for
taking the time to speak to us today and

0:22:45.020,0:22:50.660
for exploring these issues with us.
Before you go is there anything you'd like to plug?

0:22:50.660,0:22:56.180
(ALG) A couple of things I would like to plug.
I would like to thank you, and thank NSS

0:22:56.180,0:23:01.360
for what it does, and has been doing
for more for than a century,

0:23:01.360,0:23:09.640
and to ask listeners to come out of the closet,
as atheists or agnostics and secularists,

0:23:09.640,0:23:16.720
and do what they can to support others.
And we work right now with Center for Inquiry

0:23:16.720,0:23:23.900
and Bonya Ahmed, the widow of Avijit Roy,
to help endangered free thinkers

0:23:23.900,0:23:27.840
around the world, where it does become a
matter of life and death, because they live

0:23:27.900,0:23:32.340
in what's essentially, usually,
an Islamist based theocracy.

0:23:32.340,0:23:35.600
And we have seen people murdered,
we have seen people jailed,

0:23:35.600,0:23:41.940

we have seen great injustice toward non-believers who are called blasphemers or apostates.

0:23:41.940,0:23:46.950

And the Freedom From Religion Foundation is working to try

0:23:46.950,0:23:51.960

to actually get people out of these countries, or help them once they leave,

0:23:51.960,0:23:56.580

and we see this is going to become a bigger issue. And we're seeing more

0:23:56.580,0:24:03.030

countries engaged in persecution of atheists and agnostics. And this is

0:24:03.030,0:24:06.960

something that you can support through the Freedom From Religion Foundation, or

0:24:06.960,0:24:12.300

a group of your choice, or maybe start doing something in your own group.

0:24:12.300,0:24:17.940

We work with an international group, that kind of vet the needs,

0:24:17.940,0:24:21.440

and so we're secure that we're helping people who really need that help.

0:24:21.440,0:24:27.100

But it's going to become a bigger issue and it's something I'm very concerned about.

0:24:27.100,0:24:30.400

(AL) Thanks for sharing that, and we'll have links in the show notes.

0:24:30.400,0:24:34.360

Anne Laurie, thank you very much.
(ALG) Thank you.

0:24:34.400,0:24:41.640

(AL) I hope you found that interesting, listener.

I think what Annie Laurie Gaylor and

0:24:41.640,0:24:46.640

the Freedom From Religion Foundation show is that it is possible to combat religious freedom, or

0:24:46.640,0:24:52.159

secularism, from a specific religious, or in this case irreligious perspective, as

0:24:52.159,0:24:55.070

long as you still defend it as a right for everyone.

0:24:55.070,0:25:00.110

You can fairly promote your own worldview and still be a consistent

0:25:00.110,0:25:07.020

activist for freedom of and from religion, as long as you don't expect that worldview to then be privileged.

0:25:07.020,0:25:13.780

This is a series leading up to our major conference: Secularism 2019 - Reclaiming Religious Freedom.

0:25:13.780,0:25:17.180

That's in May at the Tower Hotel in Central London.

0:25:17.180,0:25:21.320

Tickets are just £50 and members get an additional 50% discount.

0:25:21.320,0:25:29.300

You can find out more about the speakers and book your tickets at secularism.org.uk/2019

0:25:29.300,0:25:34.060

Before I go I normally ask my guests for any book recommendations they have,

0:25:34.060,0:25:37.700

and I'll put links in the show notes.

But if you're looking for a good read that explores

0:25:37.700,0:25:41.260

themes relevant to secularism, then we also have a collection of fiction and

0:25:41.260,0:25:46.580

nonfiction reviews on our website at

secularism.org.uk/reviews

0:25:46.580,0:25:51.740

you can find God, Guides and Guns, a review of
The Handmaid's Tale by Margaret Atwood,

0:25:51.740,0:25:55.100

my review of Christian Nation by Frederic C. Rich,

0:25:55.100,0:25:57.640

and reviews of nonfiction books like

0:25:57.640,0:26:02.100

The Rage: The Vicious Circle of Islamist and Far-right Extremism

0:26:02.160,0:26:05.860

This podcast is produced by the
National Secular Society.

0:26:05.860,0:26:10.940

The NSS works for the separation of religion and state and the equal respect for everyone's human
rights,

0:26:10.940,0:26:15.080

so no one is either advantaged or disadvantaged
on account of their beliefs.

0:26:15.080,0:26:19.360

Make a stand for freedom fairness and human rights
by joining the NSS today.

0:26:19.360,0:26:22.620

Until next time, goodbye.