

## Religion & DV Issues Committee Meeting

Minutes for September 28, 2021

Meeting was called to order by Co-Chair Bernita Walker, Co-Chairperson. Introductions found present Varsha N., Co-chair; Cecelia Walker, Co-chair; Evan Clark, Speaker; Darrel Ray, Speaker; Carol Tantau, Isabel Checa, Nada Yorke, Melinda Oakley, Takiya Benjamin, Marci Pateri, Greg Cornell, Stacy Vargas, JP, Jerilyn Stapleton, Hong Zhao, Sheetal Ayyathan.

Guest Speaker Evan Clark (atheistunited.org) provided history of his interaction with faith-based institutions, and the factors that led to his decision to identify as an atheist. Evan likened the experience of revealing one's identity as an atheist to the "coming out" experience of a member of the LGBTQ community due to stigma attached to both. He stressed being inclusive of people of all beliefs.

Guest Speaker Darrel Ray (recoveringfromreligion.org) shared "religion made no sense to me" even after attending seminary. Darrel focused on the "DV that happens as a direct result of Religion". Darrel shared insights on the trauma experienced by people who leave the religious institutions. Darrel identified as a Quaker Atheist and noted the non-denominational focus as key in his decision.

Some points mentioned:

1. Language use that may trigger those who have experienced religious abuse creates a barrier to access
2. Practice of some organizations to offer basic needs such food and shelter as a reward for attendance and participation in services (e.g. prayer and worship)
3. Stigma surrounding atheist identity creates barriers to seeking, and to provision of equitable services
4. No "Higher Power", therefore individualistic perspective is prioritized and all are seen as equals.

Resources:

Evan Clark

<https://www.atheistsunited.org/>

Darrel Ray

<https://www.recoveringfromreligion.org/>

Darrel Ray provided the link to a recent survey

[U.S. Secular Survey | Largest Study of Non-religious Americans](#)

Attendees were invited to please respond to survey questions sent in Zoom chat and via email.

Matters not posted on the agenda: none

Next meeting is October 26, 2021

Meeting adjourned at 3:00pm