September 2016

The September AFS Meeting

Ed Buckner & Amjad Taufique "The Problem With Religion"

The September meeting of the Atlanta Freethought Society will center on a discussion of "Religion, Violence, and Religious Liberty" led by our own Ed Buckner and by Amjad Taufique, a Muslim leader who has been identified as one of the 100 Most Influential Muslims in Georgia. Each of them will offer a brief few minutes of talk on the subject, and this will be followed by questions from members and discussion. Amjad Taufique, a leader for the West Cobb Mosque, is a Cobb County resident who has lived in the US for 47 years and whose children were all born here. He has worked with a variety of leaders of different religious groups, including Christian, Jewish, and Unitarians, to encourage peace and denounce violence.

The commenter Nixons BACK on Reddit wrote about the post 9/11 world: The US had such a preponderance of power pre 9-11 that we were the hegemon. No combination of actors could beat us. And no would would dare to attack the US because as a rational actor they would realize that they could not possibly win. We were as safe as any actor could ever wish to be. Or so we thought. 9-11 showed us that actors who could not be tied to a specific state could attack us and cause significant harm because there is no threat of retaliation. Terrorists don't have a country or a base we can bomb or take over, so all of our military might does us no good. This sent us into a panic of trying to figure out how to handle terrorism, and our world has never been the same, nor will it continue to be. Realism is dead for us, as it now holds no truth or meaning

The September Potluck

Before the September 11th meeting we will have a Potluck Lunch, starting at noon. Join AFS members and guests for some good food and great socializing. Please bring food according to the first letter of your last name:

A-G: Bring a side dish H-P: Bring a main dish Q-Z: Bring a dessert

AFS will provide drinks, plates and silverware.

Calendar

9/9 Ed Buckner & Wallace Marshall at GA
Tech pm

9/10 An Evening with Shelly Segal 7-10 pm

9/11 Potluck Lunch 12:00 pm

9/11 AFS General meeting 1:00 pm

9/11 Game Afternoon 2:30 pm after meeting

9/14 Ed Buckner at GA Tech 6:30 pm

9/30 Game Night 7:00 pm

10/2 Barry Lynn from AU: Fellowship of Reason/AFS joint event 10:00 am

10/9 AFS Board meeting 11:00 am

10/9 AFS General meeting 1:00 pm

All events are at AF Hall unless noted and are subject to change.

Be sure to like AFS's Facebook page: www.facebook.com/AtlantaFreethought

in a world of terrorism, and we have been unable to fill the void. In the process we have engaged in fruitless wars and violated the rights of our people repeatedly. We're still grasping at straws and trying to understand how to deal with this unanswerable security threat.

Ed Buckner in free events at GA Tech

• On Fri., Sept 9 at 7:00, Room 144, Clough Undergraduate Learning Commons (CULC), Ed Buckner and Wallace Marshall of Reasonable Faith/Charleston will settle, once and for all,

Is America a Christian nation?
Was it ever? Should it be?

(event sponsored by Why Should I Believe at Georgia Tech)

• On Wed, Sept 14, 6:30, Howey Physics, Room L5, Ed Buckner will talk with—and answer questions from—the Campus Freethinkers of Georgia Tech about the debate and, more specifically, about the 1796-1797 Treaty with the Bey and People of Tripoli.

For the latest in upcoming AFS events, join our Meetup group!

meetup.com/Atlanta-Freethought-Society I

Programs and Speakers

All programs are on the second Sunday of each month at AF Hall, 4775 N. Church Lane SE, Atlanta, GA, 30339 unless otherwise noted. Programs start at 1:00 PM, but feel free to arrive at 12:00 for socializing. Visitors are always welcome.



The views and opinions expressed by speakers at AFS do not necessarily reflect those of AFS members or its policy.

Sep II: Ed Buckner and Amjad Taufique "The Problem With Religion"

Oct 2: Fellowship of Reason, Freedom From Religion Foundation, & Atlanta Freethought Society present **Barry Lynn** of Americans United for Separation of Church and State

Oct 9: Konrad Hayashi "Public Health in the USA"

AFS Email List

The AFS Announcements email list provides subscribers with reminders and updates on AFS activities. Send an email to <u>AFS-Announce-subscribe@yahoogroups.com</u> to subscribe. The AFS Forum email list is a place for discussions of freethought, atheism, agnosticism, church-state separation and religion. To subscribe to this list, send an email to <u>AFSForum-subscribe@yahoogroups.com</u>. The AFS Facebook page is at <u>facebook.com/AtlantaFreethought</u>. For calender information on AFS activities, please join the <u>Meetup group</u>. The AFS website is <u>www.atlantafreethought.org</u>.

To keep up to date on the Atlanta Freethought Society calendar of upcoming events, please join our Meetup group: meetup.com/Atlanta-Freethought-Society.

The Atlanta Freethought Society is a member-run organization dedicated to advancing freethought and protecting the rights and reputation of freethinkers, agnostics, atheists and humanists.

We welcome anyone who is interested in learning about living a good life free from religion through attending AFS speeches, debates, and discussions. We employ protests, letters to the editor, broadcast appearances, and any other reasonable and civil means available to achieve our mission.

We define freethought as "the forming of opinions about life in general and religion in particular on the basis of reason and the evidence of our senses, independently of tradition, authority, or established belief."

We actively support a strict separation of church and state as the best means to guarantee liberty for all, regardless of religious belief or lack of belief.

We seek to educate ourselves on many topics but especially on religion and non-religion. We do this through a series of thought-provoking speakers and programs, and by maintaining a web forum and an extensive library of freethought, religious, and related books, pamphlets, videotapes, and audiotapes.

We provide an organization where freethinkers and non-theists can develop friendships, talk freely, socialize and enjoy each other's company. We do not discriminate against anyone on such irrelevant grounds as race, sexual orientation, age, gender, class, or physical disability. We welcome members and leaders of all political parties and preferences.

Because we are designated by the IRS as a 501(c)(3) educational organization, contributions to AFS are tax deductible. Any who are like-minded are welcome to join us.

Views, opinions, positions or strategies expressed by authors are theirs alone and do not necessarily reflect the views, opinions, positions or strategies of the Atlanta Freethought Society or any member thereof. The editors of Atlanta Freethought News reserve the right to edit or alter in any manner it sees fit any articles deemed to be obscene, offensive, defamatory, threatening, in violation of trademark, copyright or other laws, or is otherwise unacceptable; and also to correct grammar and to conserve space.

Atlanta Freethought News An AFS Publication

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Atlanta Freethought News

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Membership in AFS is \$50/year per person, \$20 for low income.

Membership includes AFNews by email or mail. (Tell us which one you want.)

Sustaining Membership is \$100. Life Membership is \$1000. Subscriptions only are \$30 for 12 issues.

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See AFS events and member views at: facebook.com/AtlantaFreethought.

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Atheists Reach \$41,000 Settlement with Tennessee County Sheriff

http://news.atheists.org

Chattanooga, TN—American Atheists and Bradley County and the Bradley County Sheriff's Office have reached a settlement in a federal lawsuit alleging First Amendment violations of the U.S. Constitution by Bradley County and Bradley County Sheriff Eric Watson.

As part of settlement agreement, the new official Bradley County Sheriff's Department Facebook page will not be used to "promote or further any

religion, religious organization, religious event or religious belief." Additionally, the sheriff's office has decided to not allow any comments on this Facebook page, making it an informational Facebook page only. The office's original Facebook page was deactivated earlier this year and will be permanently deactivated.

While the county and sheriff admit to no wrongdoing under the agreement, the county will pay a total of \$15,000 in damages to American Atheists and the local plaintiffs, Joshua Stevens and Jane Doe, and \$26,000



in attorney's fees. Plaintiffs were represented by attorney **Perry Craft** of Nashville.

"This settlement is a clear win for the plaintiffs, whose First Amendment rights to free speech and to be free of government establishment of religion were infringed upon," said Amanda Knief, National Legal and Public Policy Director of American Atheists. "We are pleased the sheriff has agreed to do the right thing by no longer using this official government social media account to promote religion."

"What is unfortunate, is that it took a lawsuit and more than \$40,000 in taxpayer money for the county and sheriff to put this common sense policy in place," Knief said. "We would have preferred that the sheriff allow citizens the freedom to comment and interact with the sheriff's office on the Facebook page, but we were not able to reach agreement on that during mediation."

The anonymous Bradley County resident represented by American Atheists added, "I have always said that Constitutional rights are worth fighting for, and I am proud that when tested, I stood by that principle. It was not easy to stand up to the county sheriff and some people in my community who disagreed with me. Despite some negative backlash, I do not regret taking action against government censorship. If you don't stand up for yourself, you risk losing your rights."

Sheriff Watson will be allowed to maintain a personal Facebook page that is clearly marked as containing only his personal opinions and not those of the department.

The lawsuit arose in May after Sheriff Watson posted an explicitly religious Easter message on the sheriff's office's official Facebook page. American Atheists sent a letter to the sheriff advising against such religious messages on a government-sponsored social media site. The sheriff responded by telling a local newspaper that he intended to use his position as sheriff to proselytize. After posting the local newspaper article on the sheriff's office's Facebook page, commenters began criticizing the sheriff's statements. The sheriff and employees of the sheriff's department began deleting and blocking critical comments and users who were critical of the sheriff while leaving favorable comments on the governmental Facebook page.

Nonbelievers grant \$10,000 to flooded public school district

http://ffrf.org/news

A freethought charity is providing financial assistance to a flood-hit Louisiana public school district.

Nonbelief Relief, which functions as the charitable arm of the Freedom From Religion Foundation, has just donated \$10,000 in flood relief to the Livingston Parish Public Schools. The group, which represents nonbelieving donors nationwide, has asked that it be used for the repair or rebuilding of public school infrastructure or buses.

NonBelief Relief, Inc., is a humanitarian agency for atheists, agnostics, freethinkers and their supporters "to improve this world, our only world," says its administrator, **Annie Laurie Gaylor**, who also serves as co-president of FFRF.

On the same day \$10,000 was funneled to help the Livingston public school district, which suffered loss of many school buses and other major flooding damage, Gaylor also sent a polite but pointed letter to Superintendent Rick Wentzel.

The letter says, "It has come to our attention that the parish public schools website has a banner message reading in part, 'Praying for all of our Livingston Parish people – Superintendent Rick Wentzel." FFRF, extending "sincerest sympathies for the tragedy facing the school district" and greater area, notes that the school district has an obligation to concentrate on secular, not religious, needs.

"A famous freethinker of the 19th century, Robert Green Ingersoll, once wrote, 'The hands that help are better far than lips that pray,'" Gaylor adds. "To that end, Nonbelief Relief is very pleased to provide the practical assistance of \$10,000 in flood relief to the Livingston Parish Public Schools."

"We have a saying around our office: Nothing fails like prayer. We humans need to join together to make this a better world, to get off our knees and get to work," she further states.

Nonbelief Relief seeks to remediate conditions of human suffering and injustice on a global scale, whether the result of natural disasters, human actions or adherence to religious dogma. Such relief is not limited to but includes assistance for individuals targeted for nonbelief, secular activism or blasphemy.

In other action this month, Nonbelief Relief voted to give a \$5,000 stipend to a major Bangladesh atheist author whose life is under threat, and is holding stipends in reserve for two other endangered bloggers. The charity this year has now spent about \$50,000 in grants to individuals whose lives have been imperiled because of public atheist activism.

Humanist Groups Collaborate to Promote International Volunteering

http://americanhumanist.org/news

The American Humanist Association is a proud 2016-2017 program sponsor of Foundation Beyond Belief's Humanist Service Corps, a one-of-a-kind initiative that promotes international volunteering guided by humanist principles. Humanist Service Corps volunteers currently support Songtaba, a women's rights organization in northern Ghana that works to end gender-



based discrimination and violence, including the entrenched custom of accusing women of witchcraft and forcibly exiling them into lives of extreme poverty and isolation.

"The American Humanist Association encourages humanist charitable giving and volunteerism through Foundation Beyond Belief as a way to improve our world and dispel the erroneous idea that secular individuals are less generous than their religious counter-

parts," said **Roy Speckhardt**, executive director of the American Humanist Association. "We look forward to promoting the Humanist Service Corps this year to inspire others in the humanist community to live out their humanist values of compassion and kindness through volunteering."

"Foundation Beyond Belief is grateful to the American Humanist Association for supporting the Humanist Service Corps," said **Noelle George**, executive director of Foundation Beyond Belief. "HSC's culturally responsible support of human rights organizations is an embodiment of humanist principles, which makes it an important opportunity for the individuals represented by the AHA and a visible symbol of the good that can be done without belief in any gods."

In 2013, Foundation Beyond Belief instituted Pathfinders Project to establish a humanist service corps that would give volunteers the opportunity to put their humanist values into action by working internationally with well-established nonprofit organizations. The American Humanist Association

collaborated with Foundation Beyond Belief on this project by advertising a call for volunteers and featuring the project in its Humanist magazine. In 2014, Foundation Beyond Belief created its Humanist Service Corps to collaborate with locally-led partner organizations around the world to alleviate poverty, increase access to healthcare, empower women, promote education, ensure environmental sustainability and advance human rights.

In addition to providing an outlet for charitable giving and volunteering, the Humanist Service Corps also facilitates intercultural exchange, trains humanist leaders, increases engagement in service in the secular community and also improves the global perception of nontheists.

The American Humanist Association is matching up to \$10,000 that Foundation Beyond Belief raises for the Humanist Service Corps. As a program sponsor, the American Humanist Association will receive regular volunteer reports and stories from the field to remain updated about the positive impacts the Humanist Service Corps is having on the lives of the people served by the program. The American Humanist Association will publicize this information to its members to encourage them to support the charitable work of Humanist Service Corps and Foundation Beyond Belief.

Founded in 1941 and headquartered in Washington, D.C., the American Humanist Association (AHA) works to protect the rights of humanists, atheists, and other nontheistic Americans. The AHA advances the ethical and life-affirming philosophy of humanism, which—without beliefs in any gods or other supernatural forces—encourages individuals to live informed and meaningful lives that aspire to the greater good of humanity.

Foundation Beyond Belief (FBB) was founded in 2009 in Georgia, USA, by Dale McGowan. FBB unites the humanist community in charitable and volunteer efforts, and advocates for compassionate action throughout the world. It's up to us to make this world a better place. Foundation Beyond Belief is humanity at work.



Michele Bachmann Says God Chose Donald Trump To Win GOP Nomination

by Rokia Hassanein in Wall of Separation

https://www.au.org/blogs/wall-of-separation

Four years after running unsuccessfully for president, former U.S. Rep. Michele Bachmann (R-Minn.) is back in the news cycle in yet another election year – this time for saying that God chose Donald Trump to become the Republican presidential nominee.

"God raised up, I believe, Donald Trump who was going to be the nominee in this election,"

Bachmann told CBN, a conservative Christian network owned by TV preacher Pat Robertson, in an interview released Tuesday. "I don't think God sits things out. He's a sovereign God. Donald Trump became our nominee. I think it's very likely that in the day that we live in, that Donald Trump is the only individual who could

win in a general election of the 17 who ran."

Bachmann, who's currently an advisor on Trump's Evangelical Executive Advisory Board, a group of right-wing evangelicals who back Trump, continues her streak of taking far Religious Right positions. She's previously taken stances against LGBTQ+ rights and feminism and promoted Islamophobia.

"Maybe I'm wrong, I don't know, but I do know that the Bible is true and that Daniel teaches the most high God, which is one of God's names, is the one who lifts up who he will and takes down who he will," Bachmann continued. "And so that's why my prayers and my actions and my work on a daily basis is to make sure that Donald Trump becomes President Trump the first Tuesday of November this 2016."

Bachmann is certainly entitled to believe that God, for whatever reason, is using a thrice-married nominal Presbyterian who has bragged about his affairs with married women as his instrument. The problem is, Bachmann couldn't stop at trumpeting The Donald; she had to question the spiritual commitment of politicians who oppose him.

She cast doubt on President Barack Obama's commitment to Christianity and inquired whether Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton is even a woman of faith – despite the fact that Obama has

been a member of the United Church of Christ for years, and Clinton has long been a Methodist. (Perhaps those denominations don't count as "Christian" in Bachmann's book, but most Americans would see them that way.)

"If you look at Barack Obama, by contrast, if you look at Hillary Clinton, by contrast, tell me where the strong people of orthodox Christian faith or orthodox Jewish faith who believe that the Bible is true, who believe that God is who He says who He is ... I don't know of any. Maybe [Clinton] has some, but I don't know of any," Bachmann rambled on.

Not only did she narrow America's religious demographic to people "who believe that the Bible is true," but her criticism of how religious Obama and Clinton are goes back to a point Americans United's Executive Director Barry Lynn wrote in an op-ed this month.

"A politician's religious views have little or nothing to do with how he or she does the job," Lynn wrote. He added that it only becomes an issue when far-right fundamentalists like Kim Davis become convinced that their faith gives them the right to refuse to do the jobs they were elected to do.

Instead of promoting her narrow version of

Christianity as a qualifier for president, Bachmann would do better to look inwardly. It's time for Bachmann and other Religious Right leaders to admit an uncomfortable truth: They're willing to back any candidate who proclaims support for their right-wing political agenda, even if he has virtually no fealty to the faith they claim to treasure.

Shelly Segal Returns!

The Atlanta Coalition of Reason is proud to present Australian secular musician Shelly Segal, who will be back performing for a third time at Atlanta Freethought Hall! An artist, an activist, and an explicit story-teller, Shelley uses her music not only to express the way she sees the world, but to create the world that she wants to see.

"Thoughtful lyrics celebrating life, love, and reason" –Julia Burke



Desirous of all expressions, Shelley flirts with elements of jazz, folk, pop, blues, reggae & electronica, imparting a pure joy about music and its power.

Admission is \$5 at the door and light refreshments will be provided. The doors will open at 6:00 and the concert will start at 7:00. Shelley will also have music for sale at the event.

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Other Meetings of Interest in Metro Atlanta

The SOS (Secular Organizations for Sobriety) meets on Tuesdays at 7:30 p.m. in Roswell. For more information, send an email to donnajgore@yahoo.com.

We Agnostics Atlanta meets on Tuesdays at 7:30 p.m. at the Galano Club, 585 Dutch Valley Rd NE, Atlanta, GA 30324. Clubhouse phone number: (404) 881-9188. This is like an Alcoholics Anonymous group.

Marietta Skeptic/Humanist Meetup has various gettogethers and discussion groups. Several upcoming events. (www.meetup.com/Marietta-Atheists-Meetup)

The Peachtree City Humanists meet often for discussions at Starbucks, lunch, dinner at She's Bistro, and more. Several upcoming events each month. (www.meetup.com/Peachtree-City-Humanists-PTCH)

The Southern Crescent Freethinkers sponsor Navigators, Owl & Ibis: A Confluence of Minds, and meet for dinner, etc. Several upcoming events each month. (www.meetup.com/Southern-Crescent-Freethinkers)

N. Georgia Freethinkers Secularists & Humanists

Non-religious freethinking adults who, at times. feel somewhat isolated in this little corner of Georgia to forge friendships, meet for drinks, have dinner parties, chat over coffee, practice debating skills, laugh, hold game nights, etc. (www.meetup. com/North-Gwinnett-Freethinkers-Atheist-Agnostic-Meetup)



Atlanta Astronomy Club is scheduled to have their general meeting on Sat. Sep 17 3-5 pm at Fernbank Science Center, 156 Heaton Park Drive, Atlanta, GA 30307. Lots more events are available so check out the website (www.atlantaastronomy.org)

Sunday Assembly Atlanta will have a general meeting on Sunday Sep 18 at 6 p.m. at The Phillip Rush Center Meeting Annex, 328 Mell Ave NE, Atlanta. At press time, the meeting is still in the planning stages, so be sure to check back.

Assemblies, and the potlucks afterward, are open to the public and free to attend! They are an extremely active community with a large number of upcoming events including rock chorus, secular support, mindfulness meditation, wonder club, urban wonder, book club, makers night out, volunteering, queer beyond belief group, public speaking series, trivia nights, etc. (www.meetup.com/Sunday-Assembly)

Black Nonbelievers will have a special Margarita Monday at No Mas! Cantina, 180 Walker Street Southwest, Atlanta on Mon, Sept 19, 6-8 pm. (www.meetup.com/Black-Nonbelievers)

The Atlanta
Science Tavern
has a meeting 7pm
on Sat. Sept 24
at the reopened
Manuel's Tavern. The topic is
"Microbes Get Sick,
Too: Unveiling the
Viral Ecology of
Earth" by Joshua
S. Weitz (www.
meetup.com/
AtlantaScienceTav-

Another meetup for Atlanta Atheists is scheduled for

GUST (Gwinnett: Understanding Secular Truths)

meets on the second Monday of every month at 7:00 pm at UUCG, 12 Bethesda Church Road, Lawrenceville, unless otherwise indicated. Check the meetup page for more information. (www.meetup.com/brights-295)

Recovery from Religion - Morrow Chapter

meets on Sat, Sep 10 at 1 p.m. at Barnes & Noble Booksellers Southlake, 1939 Mount Zion Road, Morrow, GA. There is no proselytizing of any kind allowed at these meetings. For more information and resources, please visit www.recoveringfromreligion.org. (www.meetup.com/Recovering-From-Religion-Morrow-Chapter)

There will be a **meetup for Atlanta Atheists** on Sunday, Sep II, at 6:00 p.m. at Thinking Man Tavern, 537 W. Howard Ave, in Decatur. (www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Atheists)

Sun., Sep 25 at 4:00 p.m. at Five Seasons Brewing, 5600 Roswell Rd, Sandy Springs. (www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Atheists)

Atlanta Skeptics meets fairly often. Be sure to check the meetup page. (www.meetup.com/AtlantaSkeptics)

Atlanta Atheists has first Sunday meetups each month: the place varies. Check Meetup for info on the get-together. (www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Atheists)

Fellowship of Reason meets on the first Sunday of every month at 10:30 AM at AF Hall. There are meetings for book discussion, philosophy, a classic film course, and other events. (www.fellowshipofreason.com)

Freedom From Religion Foundation of Geor-

gia meets on the first Sunday of every month at 2:00 at AF Hall, with a lively meet and greet starting at 1:30 pm. FFRF is back from its summer break! (www.meetup.com/Freedom-From-Religion-Foundation-of-Georgia)

Become a Member!

(Or renew your membership with this form or online at www.AtlantaFreethought.org!)

as the social and activist events that we sponsor! voting rights in the organization—and enjoyment of the superb speakers we have coming up, as well Society. Every month you will get our acclaimed monthly newsletter, the Atlanta Freethought News, If you've enjoyed what you've read, we enthusiastically invite you to join the Atlanta Freethought

Individual memberships: One person can become a member for \$50 per year.

Sustaining memberships: One person can become a sustaining member for \$100 per year.

Life memberships: Avoid the hassle of renewing every year. A life membership lasts a lifetime.

and mailing expenses. But if you really want the paper version of the newsletter, just let us know and we will send it to you at no additional charge. (You can also pick up a paper newsletter at any AFS meeting.) Paper newsletter: We encourage members to receive the newsletter by email. This avoids the printing

Thank you for your support! We look forward to your being with us in the coming months!

Annual dues are:

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AFS Art Display Program

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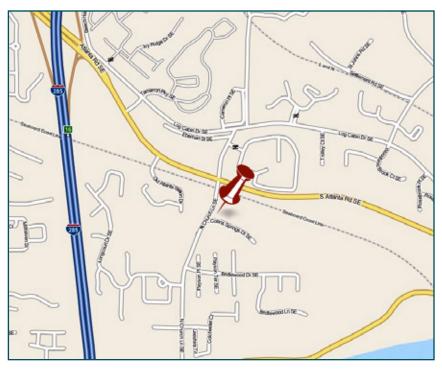
Person or entity displaying art:

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| Is artwork for sale? Yes / No \$Upon sale owner agrees to pay AFS a 33.3% fee. |
| Terms: All artwork displays will be submitted to Atlanta Freethought Society art committee for approval (afs@atlantaf-reethought.org). Installation & removal will be done by artist/owner overseen by AFS art committee. Damage to building |
| will be repaired by artist/owner. The owner assumes all risk for artwork at all times. AFS will not be responsible for any damage or loss while artwork is in our posession. |
| Owner agrees to terms: Signature/date |



I:00 at AF Hall, 4775 N. Church Lane SE Atlanta, GA 30339

Ed Buckner & Amjad Taufique



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