



# Kol Haverim

**The Finger Lakes Community for Humanistic Judaism**

Affiliated with the Society for Humanistic Judaism

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Newsletter #24

Spring 2006

Dear Friends,

Over the last few months, I have had occasion again and again to remember what it is that keeps me coming back to Kol Haverim, year after year. It is the feeling of community, and having connections to people who I can definitely schmooze with, but more, who I can also debate, laugh, and cry with. It is the opportunity to learn, and continually expand my understanding of what it means to be Jewish in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and of what it takes to be a citizen of the world in our challenging times. It is the occasions for celebration of Jewish heritage, in our many holiday observances and in our Shabbat programs, as we tell stories, sing, and break bread together. It is the excitement of watching my sons grow and mature as part of a unique Jewish community that imparts the values of compassion, reason, and humanism, and that opens their eyes to global possibilities and connections.

This year, we have been celebrating both our bonds as a community, and our commitment to others in a variety of events and activities. We have enjoyed Shabbat evenings devoted to building connections with each other, in a group sing-along, a family game night, and a family food sharing night. Later this spring we will continue this theme when members share with us their experiences traveling to different parts of the world. We have celebrated Jewish holidays that connect us to each other, to the wider Jewish community, and to the world, from the High Holidays to, most recently, Tu B'Shevat, the holiday of the trees that reminds us that we are part of the earth. We have challenged ourselves to think about peace and justice in the world, by collecting funds to donate to people whose lives were destroyed by Hurricane Katrina, and by honoring International Holocaust Remembrance Day and educating ourselves about the genocide in Darfur. And biweekly at our Sunday School, our children learn together about humanism, Judaism, caring, and commitment, and in the process knit themselves closer together as a community.

I know that the members of Kol Haverim share my enthusiasm for these many benefits of membership, and invite others to come see what we are all about. I hope you will join us as we continue to expand our horizons, welcoming people of diverse backgrounds and experiences, and celebrating a Jewish identity enriched by a commitment to humanistic values.

Stacia Zabusky  
Chair, Kol Haverim

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Kol Haverim publishes a bi-annual newsletter in print and electronic form in September and March. The electronic version is free. The print version is free to members. To receive the electronic version send an email message to [newsletter@kolhaverim.net](mailto:newsletter@kolhaverim.net) , asking to be put on the email list. For more information, email the editor at [newsletter@kolhaverim.net](mailto:newsletter@kolhaverim.net) . Our mailing address is Kol Haverim, P.O. Box 4972, Ithaca, NY 14852-4972.

You can find information about joining Kol Haverim at [www.kolhaverim.net](http://www.kolhaverim.net), or you can call 607- 257-4231 and ask to have a membership form mailed to you.

## *UPCOMING EVENTS IN SPRING 2006*

### ***Celebrating Freud***

**Saturday, April 1, 2006, 1pm at Lifelong**

*Editor's Note: Sigmund Freud, one of the most influential thinkers in history and an outstanding humanist Jew, has been chosen by the Society for Humanistic Judaism as the focus of study for the year 2006 (in 2005, that honor went to Albert Einstein). Our own Mark Silverman, who submitted this piece, is the national coordinator for SHJ programs on Freud this year.*

2006 marks the 150th anniversary of the birth of Sigmund Freud's birth. His contributions to the creation of a modern view of child development, personality, and psychotherapy are unparalleled. He developed psychoanalysis, a unique approach to a vast psychological terrain, and left a body of writings that has served as a point of departure for study in many fields. Freud's unique contributions to the world are often unacknowledged because much of his work has become part of our modern vocabulary.

Freud was a man of contradictions. Trained as a doctor, his theories alienated much of the medical establishment of his day. Inclusive of both genders in his approach, he nevertheless misrepresented women in his description of personality development. Although rigorously trained in empirical science, he chose to focus on a non-quantifiable realm, the unconscious mind, in his theoretical explorations: the unconscious mind.

Freud and psychoanalysis were vilified by many in the medical community because of his theory of childhood sexuality, part of an approach describing psychological development from birth through maturity. Nevertheless, almost from the beginning, he attracted an expanding group of professionals and lay people who responded to the vast explanatory power of the emerging approach. Carl Jung, Alfred Adler, and Wilhelm Reich began their careers as Freudians. Beyond the therapeutic world, it is easy to delineate the impact of psychoanalysis on American culture. Art, fiction, music, film, dance, and other fields have been greatly influenced by Freud, his followers and his many critics. Could we have Woody Allen without Sigmund Freud?

It dealing with religious experience, psychoanalysis placed Freud at the center of controversy because he was critical of any explanatory system that did not meet the standards of an empirical scientist. His scientific approach required clear explanations of society's institutions, and his view of religion was drawn from the child's early life, and interaction with paternal power. Salient in his writings is a formulation of the origins of religion, conceived of as the individual's attempt to overcome feelings of helplessness experienced as a young child. Institutionalized religious systems project an all-powerful deity suited to a child's state of mind, and also provides adults with a path through life's ambiguities, a supernatural protective shoulder for dealing with fear and uncertainty. In this context, Freud sees the, religious impulse as an illusion, and he was skeptical about the need for a deity. Yet, as a Jewish man, he also valued the historical legacy of his ancestors, a path that stretched back in time through stories in the Bible and other religious works, describing a courageous, durable people struggling through many generations of oppression.

Freud's perspectives on religion and on society are particularly relevant to modern Humanistic Jews who share his rational approach, and value his skeptical outlook. In celebrating Freud's non-theistic humanism, Kol Haverim will be commemorating Sigmund Freud Saturday, April 1<sup>st</sup>

at 1pm at Lifelong Center in Ithaca, when we will screen John Huston's film *Freud*, unavailable since its original release in 1962. The film will be preceded by a panel discussion of Freud's life and work by Kol Haverim members. A donation of \$3 is suggested for this event.

~Mark Silverman

### ***Passover***

**Saturday, April 15, 3-6pm**

Kol Haverim is hosting a humanistic family Passover seder, followed by a fully catered dinner, on Saturday April 15, 2006 in the Auditorium at Kendal in Ithaca. Plan on coming at 2:30 and the seder will start promptly at 3:00pm. Since this seder also includes a catered dinner, we need you to help us plan ahead — *so reserve your spot today!*

The Passover Committee has prepared a great celebration that includes a participatory family service with both traditional and non-traditional songs accompanied by live music. Children can participate in story telling, a dress-up musical parade as the “wandering tribe,” searching for the afi-komen and more. For everyone there will be all the traditional foods of the Passover seder, additional symbolic foods that are a part of the Humanistic Passover observance, as well as a buffet dinner (with vegetarian options).

Cost for members is \$30 per adult and \$14 for children age 4-18.

Cost for Kendal residents is \$30 per adult.

Cost for non-members is \$35 per adult and \$15 for children age 4-18.

Cost for college students only \$15.

Free for those with all-inclusive individual or family Kol Haverim memberships.

Free for children under 4, but please let us know if they will require a high chair, booster chair or regular chair.

To **RESERVE** your place at the seder table, contact Jonathan Joseph at [holidays@kolhaverim.net](mailto:holidays@kolhaverim.net) or (607)277-9744 **OR** send your check to Kol Haverim at P.O. Box 4972, Ithaca, NY 14852 (please indicate the number of adults and children attending). **Since this is a catered dinner, only pre-payment will confirm your reservation.** If you have an all-inclusive membership, please simply RSVP to Alla, [ail@Cbord.com](mailto:ail@Cbord.com).

**Please respond to reserve your spot by Tuesday, April 4 so that we may provide an estimate for the caterer. To confirm you reservation and ensure your place at the table, we must receive a check by Wednesday, April 12.**

## *FALL AND WINTER HOLIDAYS*

We've had a full calendar of holiday celebrations so far this year (5766). Some loud and raucous, some quiet and introspective, some joyful and some solemn.

The Hebrew calendar started late this year, and we celebrated Rosh Hashana with apples and honey on the evening of evening October 3. Carl West led the ceremony and we were lucky to have Elias Spector-Zabusky on hand to sound the appropriate blasts on the shofar. We've got him booked for the next 4 years. The following Sunday, we held a children's service at 4-H. There was a Tashlik ceremony down by the stream and everyone got to sound their own plastic shofars. My ears are still ringing. To round out the high holidays, we had an intimate Yom Kippur service and break-the-fast dinner at the home of Dee Thaler.

Sukkot also fell very late this year, and the weather did not cooperate on this cold wet autumn day. A few of us huddled together for warmth inside the apple barn at Littletree orchard to celebrate this harvest festival. Thank goodness for the hot cider and doughnuts! I don't think anyone braved the weather to pick apples after the brown-bag lunch.

The first night of Chanukah fell on Christmas day this year, so we celebrated early on Sunday, December 18. We were treated to a play by the Kol Haverim Sunday School Players, with special guest Brian as a giant latke. This type-cast Brian, and he is doomed to play an oversized food item from now on. The unexpectedly large turnout at this event resulted in a shortage of actual latkes for the masses. Some were eyeing Brian hungrily. We hope to rectify the situation for next year.

In January, we observed International Holocaust Remembrance Day with a service and viewing of the film "Paper Clips". Money was raised to support relief efforts in the Darfur region of Sudan.

In February, we gathered for a Tu B'Shevat seder and enjoyed different fruits and nuts to celebrate the New Year of the trees. David Levitsky led the seder, reprising his role from last year.

For Purim this year, the adults took on the roles of your favorite kings, queens and advisors in our annual Purim shpiel. Real-life spouses John Skrovan and Jennifer Orleans played King Ahasuerus and Queen Esther. Mark Silverman played Mordechai and Greg Sloan filled the shoes and three-pointed hat of Haman (noise! noise! noise!). And our favorite giant-food-portrayer, Brian, narrated the play dressed as an enormous hamantashen. There were plenty of actual hamantashen to go around.

And don't forget, our biggest holiday is yet to come. We will be holding our Passover Seder on Saturday, April 15. Please see the information above to reserve your place.

~Jonathan Joseph (Holiday Chair)

*Purim Fun!!*



## ***COMMITTEE NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS***

### ***Sunday School***

Kol Haverim Sunday School has been growing and expanding in leaps and bounds. At the end of the 2004-05 school year we had 21 students. Now, at the start of the spring 2006 semester, we have 28, which reflects the graduation of three students and the addition of 10 new students and 7 new families. Our student body is divided into four classes by grade level and because we are now offering instruction in traditional and folk Jewish music and dance, we have a teaching staff of five plus one teacher's aide (one of our first graduates, Antal Spector-Zabusky).

We are constantly working to refine and enlarge the curriculum. A parents' meeting was held at the end of the fall semester to encourage participation and input from all of the Sunday School families. We discovered that parents wanted their children to become acquainted with some Hebrew, and so this semester we have added Alef-Bet workbooks and introduction into the K-1 and 2-3 classes, while further delineating the curricular content of those grade levels. Additionally, we learned that parents would like more feedback in the form of report cards for their kids, so we have begun doing that as well. The amount and quality of the feedback we have received from parents was both encouraging and constructive.

There have been a few additional challenges. In particular, our B'nei Mitzvah program is in desperate need of mentors from our community to help guide Bar and Bat Mitzvah students through their community service projects, Torah portion analysis and biographical research. These aspects of the B'nei Mitzvah program have traditionally been intended as extra-curricular, but because of our congregation's small size finding enough dedicated mentors to serve has been difficult. If you are interested in helping to mentor a Bar or Bat Mitzvah student, please contact me.

The education committee is always interested in welcoming new members, and we still have much work to do in making our school all that it can be. It has been both challenging and rewarding for me to have had a hand in and see the growth that has taken place in the school over the last year, and I am confident that the quality of our school will only continue to improve.

~Teresa Galloway

### ***Social Action Committee***

Kol Haverim commemorated International Holocaust Remembrance Day on January 27th. On that date in 1945 the last Nazi extermination camp, Auschwitz-Birkenau, was liberated. On October 26, 2005 the General Assembly of the United Nations designated by member resolution this day to honor the victims of the Holocaust and to serve as an important reminder of its universal lessons. Member states were urged to develop educational programs to inculcate future generations to prevent acts of genocide, reject efforts to deny the Holocaust as an historical event, and condemn all manifestations of intolerance based upon ethnic origin or religious beliefs. We cannot continue to repeat "Never Again" when we have frequent reminders such as the perpetration of genocidal programs in Cambodia, Rwanda, Srebrenica, and the

Sudan. Our event featured the viewing of the movie *Paper Clips*, a documentary about middle school students in a small Tennessee town who undertook a project to better understand the diversity of the world beyond their community, learn about the Holocaust, and to appreciate the scale of the millions of deaths (for more information on this film, see Caren Cooper's article below). This film was educational, inspirational, and thought provoking. Following the movie we briefly discussed our thoughts on preventing future genocidal events as well as the current situation in Sudan's Darfur province. More than 400,000 people have died and 2.5 million have been displaced through a genocidal policy of the central government and their allied militia, the Janjaweed. Given the harsh environmental conditions in which people are living and the government's obstruction of humanitarian aid, millions are at risk in their weakened state due to famine and disease.

Kol Haverim collected more than \$175 in donations at the event for the Save Darfur Coalition which has been conducting awareness and advocacy programs in support of those endangered in Darfur. The American Jewish World Service was a founding member of the SDC which consists of many other Jewish groups as well as Muslim, Christian, and secular social justice organizations.

~Brian Eden

### ***Kol Haverim at the Movies***

Some of our members have together attended several topical movies of interest. As a member group of the Tompkins County Living Wage Coalition, we attended a benefit showing of *Walmart: The High Cost of Low Price*. This film focuses on Walmart's impact on host communities. This includes the loss of small local businesses, taxpayer subsidies in the form of Medicaid to cover health insurance needs of its employees, and the heavy reliance on sweatshop labor to produce low cost goods while increasing the United States trade balance deficit.

*Paradise Now*, winner of the Golden Globe award for best foreign film, follows two Palestinian childhood friends who are preparing to carry out suicide bombings in Israel. Naturally this film is controversial, with perspectives ranging from those who believe it provides an opportunity to discuss the underlying reasons for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, to those who regard it as an attempt to legitimate suicide bombing. Filming was completed in Israel since the film crew was forced out of Nablus by militants. Following the viewing, we adjourned to the Eden's home for a spirited, but respectful discussion.

~Brian Eden

## *MEMBER NEWS*

New members Michael Weiss and Michelle Kwinter have lived in Ithaca on and off since the 1980s. They have been permanent residents since 2000 with their daughter Lena. They have a broad range of Jewish interests and are looking forward to talking to people about them.

Denise Vivianne Duclos & Jason Soderblom were married last July on a sunny Saturday afternoon on the shores of Seneca Lake with a beautiful service lead by Barbara Behrmann. They are currently working towards our doctorates at Cornell and plan to be finished by the spring of 2007.



## *MEMBER FORUM*

### *International Holocaust Remembrance Day*

by **Caren Cooper**

(originally published in the *Ithaca Journal*, January 2006)

At first glance, the lessons of the Holocaust appear simple to grasp. It is the moral responsibility of all people to fight hatred, racism, and religious and ethnic intolerance. But this universal lesson continues to be denied. Today in Darfur, Sudanese soldiers and Arab militia (known as Janjaweed) carry out targeted violence (rape and murder) against specific African ethnic groups. Roughly 2 million have been driven from their homes, tens of thousands of civilians have been killed, and thousands more are dying each month.

On January 27, 1945 the Soviet army liberated the largest Nazi death camp, Auschwitz-Birkenau, in Poland. The United Nations recently designated January 27 as International Holocaust Remembrance Day. The U.N. resolution rejects any denial of the Holocaust as an historical event, encourages educational programs about the horrors of genocide, and condemns all religious or ethnic intolerance. This resolution is timely, given Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad recent claim that the Holocaust is European mythology.

While Holocaust denial is increasingly common in Arab countries, it is also present in the United States. One large US organization of Holocaust deniers, the Institute for Historical Review (IHR), translates their web site into German and Arabic as they attempt to unify groups with the same anti-Semitic goals.

Understanding the Holocaust is not easy. Yet denial is the worst possible response, tied to actively encouraging racism and bigotry. Others may struggle with trying to reconcile the existence of God with the existence of horrific evils. In fact, volumes of Holocaust theology have been written so that people can believe that horrible events are part of some unseen supernatural plan to be revealed one day, or that predetermined fate means our actions have no point. This type of reasoning is merely a different type of denial — a denial of human responsibility. Yet genocides will continue until we recognize that humans are responsible for them and that only humans can stop them. This is the Humanistic lesson about the Holocaust. We cannot rely solely on fate or prayers to protect people. We must rely on human effort and human vigilance to end all forms of hatred.

Perhaps the most common response to learning about the Holocaust is the struggle to grasp its magnitude. The larger the hatred, the less comprehensible it becomes. After a certain size, human understanding and the ability to visualize numbers becomes vague. Perhaps words are not enough to permit comprehension of approximately 11 million systematic murders (six million Jews and five million others, including gypsies, the disabled, and homosexuals).

The movie *Paper Clips* illustrates one town's response to this lack of understanding. Middle school students in a small Tennessee community had trouble grasping the magnitude of the Nazi-driven annihilation. To try to comprehend the extent of the crime, the students decided to collect one paper clip for each Holocaust victim. As their collection grew, the powerful lesson enriched their community and resulted in a permanent memorial to honor the victims.

One of the film's lessons is that we must continue to teach about the Holocaust. We cannot undo the tragedy. But we compound that tragedy if we fail to remember, educate against intolerance, and act to prevent genocide. Sadly, the genocide in Darfur means that collectively we are still failing to sufficiently honor Holocaust victims.

On January 27, Kol Haverim, the Finger Lakes Community for Humanistic Judaism, honored the victims of the Holocaust in a non-theistic memorial service, followed by a viewing and discussion of the film *Paper Clips*.

### ***Breastfeeding as a Humanistic Issue***

**by Barbara Behrmann, Ph.D**

(Originally published in the Machar Newsletter)

As humanists, we concern ourselves with the betterment of humankind. We recognize and respect the value, dignity and worth of each individual. We are committed to social justice, human rights, and environmental responsibility, and we believe in the importance of addressing social inequalities. Likewise, we rely on facts and evidence to guide our beliefs. Now, let's apply all this to breastfeeding. Yes, breastfeeding.

Most of what we hear about breastfeeding typically centers around the milk itself and its nutritional and immunological importance for babies health and well-being. Babies fed formula are more likely suffer from diarrhea, ear infections, allergies. They have compromised immune systems, no protection against SIDS, and are more likely to need braces, become obese, or develop certain childhood cancers. Approximately 13,000 studies document these and other benefits of breastfeeding and risks of formula.

Most women want to nurse. Yet breastfeeding rates in the U.S. are far below national goals. By six months, only 14 percent of babies are exclusively breastfed.

Why do breastfeeding rates in the U.S. plummet so dramatically? They plummet because women lack information, support, hands-on assistance and role models; because giving birth in hospitals often subjects women to many interventions that have been proven to interfere with breastfeeding; because our culture teaches women that their bodies are somehow inadequate; because despite formula companies' declarations that "breast is best" they continue to engage in aggressive, dishonest, marketing tactics that fly in the face of internationally established ethical standards; and they plummet because many women have to go back to work a mere six weeks after giving birth. The list of reasons goes on. The upshot is that these obstacles create a bottle-feeding culture that is often hostile to breastfeeding. And what is a unique relationship between a mother and her child remains misunderstood, devalued, and often invisible.

Many women, of course, do manage to overcome these obstacles. And they often discover that breastfeeding becomes one of the most significant experiences of their lives. And an empowering one. Breastfeeding enables a woman to become self-reliant; it helps her gain new appreciation and respect for her body; it forces us to remember what breasts are really for; it causes us to rethink and revalue women's work and contributions; and it helps us build a world in which relationships take precedence over profit.

Breastfeeding can't empower women, though, until women are empowered to breastfeed. This is no easy task, but one that clearly should interest anyone who values tikkun olam. It would involve changing the ways hospitals manage birth. It would mean making breastfeeding and post-partum support available to all women, not just those who can afford it. It would mean finding ways to integrate the world of employment with the world of parenting so that women

wouldn't have to choose one over the other. It would mean making people feel more comfortable with seeing mothers nurse their children.

I believe that breastfeeding is a feminist and human rights issue. And it's a belief supported by worlds of evidence. It contributes to the betterment of humankind. It is a relationship built around love, respect, and value. And promoting it means being willing to confront issues of social justice and equality.

Breastfeeding is also a fundamental issue of reproductive rights. As long as women have the right to bear a child, they should have the right to nurse that child. It matters not just to babies and children, but to women and to the kind of parent-child relationships women want to create.

Perhaps no one expresses a better understanding of nursing's potential than this mother and her three year old daughter. "My daughter knows we are planning to have a new baby someday soon," the mother explains. "The other day, she bent over, kissed my nipple and said, 'I put enough love in here to last for the baby when it nurses.' Why is it that children instinctively know what nursing is all about?" the mother asks. "And how did society get so far removed from the simple idea of nurturing and love?"

For more information visit, [www.breastfeedingcafe.com](http://www.breastfeedingcafe.com).

## ***NEWS FROM THE SOCIETY FOR HUMANISTIC JUDAISM***

### ***Million Voices for Darfur, SHJ Joins the Campaign*** **by Deb Godden**

In Darfur Sudan, since February 2003, over 400,000 men, women and children have died while another 2.5 million innocent civilians have been forced to flee their burned-out villages. In early September, 2004, President Bush declared the death and destruction in Darfur to be genocide, but there's been little change. The Society for Humanistic Judaism, and the Association of Humanist Rabbis have been part of the Save Darfur Coalition since November, 2004. Members of SHJ affiliates have written letters, held community meetings, raised money for humanitarian aid, and met with federal elected officials and State Department staff.

At last, the Darfur genocide crisis has become increasingly visible with more prominent coverage by high profile television news and on the front pages of major newspapers. We're getting close: the U.S. government is beginning to respond, and President Bush is beginning to speak about involving NATO. We need to keep up our efforts. Jerry Fowler of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum says, "Our work brings witness to today's crimes and injustices to challenge and sound the alarm."

The Save Darfur Coalition, in cooperation with over 150 faith-based, advocacy, and humanitarian aid organizations, has launched the Million Voices for Darfur Campaign to raise awareness of the genocide and promote the actions necessary to end it. The goal of the campaign is to generate one million hand-written and electronic postcards from Americans demanding a stronger and more effective U.S. response, all to be delivered to President Bush. Specifically, the campaign calls on the United States government to support a stronger multinational force to protect the civilians of Darfur. The Rev. Gloria White-Hammond, M.D., National Chairperson of

Million Voices for Darfur, exhorts us to “speak out for justice, or remain silent and be rendered irrelevant.” She says she “will not give up, get up, back up, or shut up.” Nor should we.

We invite all SHJ members to help with this push to make sure that the U.S. government acts. Becoming one of the Million Voices for Darfur is one of the quickest, easiest social action activities ever: We ask all SHJ members to log onto [www.savedarfur.org](http://www.savedarfur.org) or <http://action.ajws.org/campaign/millionvoices> to complete an on-line postcard. We intend also to do some postcard-writing at the SHJ Conference in Boston.

More information can be found on websites of the forefront organizations: Save Darfur Coalition ([savedarfur.org](http://savedarfur.org)), American Jewish World Service ([ajws.org](http://ajws.org)), as well as the International Crisis Group ([icg.org](http://icg.org)) and the Friends Committee on National Legislation ([fcnl.org](http://fcnl.org)).

***SHJ Joins Secular Coalition for America***  
**by Harriet Maza**

With the advent of the 2006 calendar year, the Society for Humanistic Judaism became an active member of the Secular Coalition for America ([www.secular.org](http://www.secular.org)).

According to its director Lori Lipman Brown, the Secular Coalition of America is “the nation’s first lobbying organization that works to increase the visibility and respectability of nontheistic viewpoints in the United States and to protect and strengthen the secular character of our government as the best guarantee of freedom for all.”

With the recent addition of the SHJ and also the Freedom From Religion Foundation ([www.ffrf.org](http://www.ffrf.org)), Herb Silverman, president of the Secular Coalition for America, expressed his delight: “I am thrilled that we now have seven outstanding national organizations from across the nontheistic spectrum. By working together, we hope to publicly promote our perspectives and take them to the political table.” Other members of the coalition include the American Humanist Association, Atheist Alliance International, Institute for Humanist Studies, Secular Student Alliance, and Secular Web (Internet Infidels).

SHJ asks its members to support our membership by sending donations to the SHJ office that are made out to the Secular Coalition for America. We are happy to forward them to the Coalition.

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