

OUT!

Objectives: To create a positive grassroots campaign to raise consciousness about the many issues surrounding supernatural beliefs, as well as create an environment where people can express their rationalism without discomfort or fear.

Message: By using a single word, **OUT**, we identify several meanings:

OUT! with supernatural beliefs

OUT! with giving religion a 'free pass'

OUT! with labeling children

OUT! with politicians catering to religious groups

OUT! with fears of atheism

OUT! with religious bigotry

OUT! with obsessing about everyone else's sex life

OUT! with ignorance of science

OUT! with blind obedience to faith

And come OUT! of the closet - it's cool to be an atheist

The writings and lectures of Dan Dennett, Sam Harris, and Richard Dawkins seem to be creating ripples across not only the US, but the world as well. At the beginning of the year, Christopher Hitchens will have published his book 'God is Not Good' adding to the growing voice of rationalism. We are in a position to either allow this wave of enthusiasm to languish and die out or we can push it onward. Not only can we make our voices be heard, we can make rationalism cool!

Atheism and rationalism are often seen as the possession of elitist intellectuals. The **OUT!** campaign will be an effort to change that view. Atheism is cool - it is not just for Ivory Tower Scientists. Atheism is Smart and Sexy. Atheists vote, atheists work, atheists contribute to society, and atheists don't give a damn what you do in bed, what you eat, drink or how you make merry (or Mary).

The Christian Fundamentalists are very clever at using every marketing technique available to them - and with great success. We can learn from

them. We need to start being clever about this. Unfortunately, moaning about Nativity scenes, In God We Trust on bills and coins, and the Ten Commandments has sort of given the impression that we are a bunch of whiners.

Cooperation (herding cats)

Unfortunately, for as small a group as atheists appear to be – we still manage to do more than our fair share of in-fighting. This is devastating and is a great disadvantage. If we cannot come together for the common cause of rationalism, how can we ever expect to make progress in terms of political power, education, and minimizing the effect of religious zealotry?

There are several organizations, that with Richard's goodwill and influence, should be involved in the campaign. This list is by no means inclusive:

- American Atheists
- American Humanist Association
- Apostates of Islam
- Atheist Alliance International
- The Brights
- British Humanist Association
- Center For Inquiry / Campus Freethought Alliance
- Center For Inquiry Transnational
- Council for Secular Humanism
- Freedom From Religion Foundation
- Institute for the Secularization of Islamic Society
- James Randi Educational Foundation
- Secular Student Alliance
- The Skeptics Society

All the organizations that have linked themselves to us (by sending us information concerning their organizations) would eventually be involved. However, because part of the success of the campaign relies on stealth – we must be very careful how we approach the various organizations. This is why (sorry Richard) the initial approach should and must be handled by Richard as he has personal contacts with the key people in these organizations.

Once most of these organizations are on board, we can work with them to organize a launch date for the campaign and devise a way to alert all of the smaller organizations just prior to launch.

Additionally, The Richard Dawkins Foundation, will play a pivotal role in so far as we tap into a portion of the population who would not normally affiliate themselves with an atheist group. We therefore are well poised to truly create a grassroots movement – especially among young people.

Planning

Website: An **OUT!** domain should be sought. Unfortunately ‘OUT’ seems to have been snapped up – except for .ws; however, OutCampaign is available* and we can grab all of them (which could prevent some wingnut group getting any play with our campaign). As the domain names are not terribly expensive, I suggest if we have any inclination to take this on that we grab them now.

The website could be hosted on our server (all the more reason to have our own), and perhaps Josh could find a trusted volunteer to maintain it.

All of the various organization could link to the **OUT!**Campaign website, and of course there would be reciprocal links. However, the site would not be an attempt to replicate the richness of the RDRS sites – rather it would host materials and information for ordinary people to help with the **OUT!** campaign. It would provide information for people coming **OUT!** as well as to people who are curious what all the hoopla is about (as with the very clever ‘Moo!’ campaign). The website would also be used for sending out alerts, posting updates, and press releases. There could also be a Photo page (sort of like the I’m so sorry pages after the election) where people can post the photos of where they left **OUT!** cards, flyers, or anything else.

Materials: Use the same wonderful idea as the Imagine No Religion flyers – individuals can print as many leaflets, flyers, cards, bumper stickers as they like. We should also provide transfers for T-shirts that can be downloaded.

Eventually it would be nice to include pins, keychains, coffee mugs, or other such items – but this of course takes money up front (more on that later)

We had talked once about making available booklets with quotations from TGD to leave in hotels. This could be a part of the **OUT!** Campaign. We could provide a PDF for people to download, print, fold and staple in order to take with them to leave in hotel rooms.

The web-materials can be posted on anyone’s site. We may want to do the little TM initially.

Artwork: Because we are relying on a single word to express a great deal, we should really consider the importance of the symbolism we create. We also want to have the artwork complete before approaching the other organizations to prevent squabbles over it. If we spend any initial money

on anything, this would be where we should do it. We want the symbol to be transferable to a wide variety of media, and to be easily recognizable. The whole point is that the word **OUT!** will become inextricably linked to the cause of rationalism. Just as the word 'gay' became linked with homosexuality. The word is positive, forceful, and will become meaningful throughout the world (yes, I am thinking BIG).

Media: Richard, Sam Harris, Dan Dennett and Christopher Hitchens are 'hot' right now. If each of them would write an article about the concept of '**OUT!**' to be released the same week – that would be dynamic. Press releases from all the atheist/humanist/secular organizations about the campaign would be key (we would write a few as templates) would be key.

Once **OUT!** began to gain legs, Richard and others would probably have more than enough interviews – that is if our plan works.

Tour: Richard, I realise you just returned from a grueling tour so I even hate mentioning the idea – but if only at a few key places – an **OUT!** tour would be spectacular. You have a plethora of invitations from around the world, so perhaps we can capitalize on that. Travel expenses are an issue – if the foundation were as well funded as The New Life Church, we would be making plans this minute. While not essential to the success of the campaign, Richard's ability to motivate and inspire large numbers of people would certainly be beneficial.

Funding: If we do get charity status in the US soon perhaps Richard can tap into some of that goodwill to launch the **OUT!** campaign. It is something tangible that would encourage donations. Perhaps also, George Scales would be willing to throw in a bit of financial help since he would get to see it all come together. If we get support and cooperation from the larger organizations, they can also contribute directly to the out campaign. This of course would mean we would need a committee to oversee and approve spending. Certainly a representative from RDFRS (Karen Owens perhaps) and three or four others from outside would be reasonable. No more than that. The financial aspects would need to be set up, especially how donations to the **OUT!** campaign are tracked.

Don't Label Me: As part of the **OUT!** campaign, we can simultaneously launch the 'Don't Label Me!' campaign – raising the consciousness concerning religious or other labels on children. While we would not encourage parents to have their children wear **OUT!** pins, they could certainly wear a 'Don't Label Me!' pin.

Let's Teach the Controversy: there is no god. This can also be a fun sort of campaign – why not make them stop using the phrase by hijacking it for ourselves?!

This is meant to begin a conversation about the possibility of an **OUT!** campaign. Please consider this a framework with much need for expansion, discussion, and criticism.

I would suggest, however, that we flesh out this idea as much as possible so that when it is handed over to the Trustees, and later key individuals outside of RDFRS, we have a well laid out plan. I know we are all busy, but if we

* Available domain names: outcampaign.name; outcampaign.info;
outcampaign.us; outcampaign.com; outcampaign.net; outcampaign.org;
outcampaign.ws; outcampaign.tv; outcampaign.cc; outcampaign.biz;
outcampaign.mobi