



# DULUTHINK

NEWSLETTER OF THE LAKE SUPERIOR FREETHINKERS

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## NEWSLETTER

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## LAKE SUPERIOR FREETHINKERS

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FIRST SUNDAY

PLEASE JOIN US JULY 7TH

# Kalevala-More than just a town South of Cromwell

Guest Speaker—Rachael Martin

**F**ind out more about Finland's national folk epic, the Kalevala. In this slide presentation we will explore the origins of these oral folk poems, the main heroes and some stories included in the epic, and what scholars say about the meaning of the Kalevala. Discover what life was like in pre-Christian Finnish culture and the role of mythology in a culture's development.

Rachael Martin is a historian and scholar focusing on the local history of the Western Great Lakes region. She earned her MA from the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis in American Studies. As an outgrowth of her studies, Rachael developed a course and wrote a textbook on the history of northern Minnesota women. This course has been offered at all U of M campuses throughout Minnesota.

Rachael teaches other local history classes at



Rachael Martin

the University of Minnesota, Duluth, at the University of Wisconsin, Superior, the College of St. Scholastica, Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College and for Community Education programs in Duluth and Superior and writes a monthly column on local history for the Senior Reporter magazine. She recently retired after 30 years as a museum director and educator in various museums throughout the region and now serves on the board of the Finnish American Historical Society.

Rachael is a native of northern Minnesota, where her Finnish grandparents

homesteaded land on the Prairie River. Her mother was born on this homestead and grew up in Wright. Rachael grew up in Duluth and now lives on forty acres outside Superior, Wisconsin, where she and her husband maintain three vegetable gardens, 15 colonies of honeybees and a sauna.

JOIN US SUNDAY JULY 7TH FOR RACHAEL MARTIN'S PRESENTATION

The Radisson Viking Room, 505 West Superior Street

- 9 AM – COFFEE AND CONVERSATION
- 9:30 AM – BREAKFAST BUFFET AVAILABLE
- 10 AM – REFLECTION AND PRESENTATION

# FFRF: Bladensburg cross decision shameful legacy for Roberts Court

It should have been an easy call, but the U.S. Supreme Court blew it. The government-owned, government-maintained, 40-foot-tall Christian cross dominating the landscape in Bladensburg, Md., does not violate the First Amendment, seven justices inexcusably decided today.

One would expect to find a Christian cross — the pre-eminent symbol of Christianity — on government property in a Christian theocracy, not in a country that was first among nations to separate religion from government.

The decision was fractured into seven separate opinions, concurrences and dissents over 87 pages, with seven justices eventually voting in favor of the cross. The majority opinion written by Justice Samuel Alito and joined by four other justices, declares that the Bladensburg cross, originally erected on private ground to commemorate several World War I soldiers, does not violate the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment. Alito argues that World War I history, community and sacrifice can obscure the religious sentiment of the Christian symbol, changing the purposes of the monument over time.

Ominously, instead of focusing on legal principles, Alito looks to “history for guidance,” trotting out typical Religious Right examples — such as legislative prayer, the day of thanksgiving Washington declared (which the court erroneously called a “National Day of Prayer”), some religious language in the Northwest Ordinance, and George Washington’s Farewell Address’ “religion and morality.” The central test for determining these violations, known as the Lemon test, was set aside in favor of the argument from history, though not explicitly overturned by a majority of the justices.

“The passage of time gives rise to a

strong presumption of constitutionality,” writes Alito.

In an elegant and thoughtful dissent joined by Justice Sonia Sotomayor, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg gets it right.

“Using the cross as a war memorial does not transform it into a secular symbol, as the Courts of Appeals have uniformly recognized,” the dissent states. “By maintaining the Peace Cross on a public highway, the [Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning] Commission

treat non-Christians as outsiders.

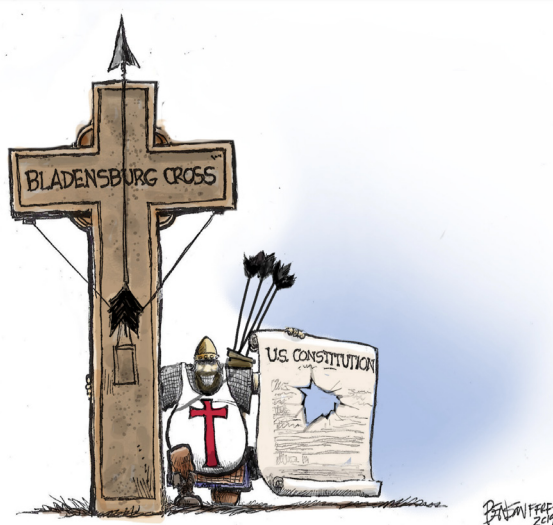
Most disappointingly, Justices Stephen Breyer and Elena Kagan joined in a concurrence that Breyer took the lead in writing: “I have long maintained that there is no single formula for resolving Establishment Clause challenges.” The pair argued that the 40-foot-tall concrete cross now on public property “cannot reasonably be understood as ‘a government effort to favor a particular religious sect’ or to ‘promote religion over nonreligion.’”

Breyer and Kagan did reject the idea that the majority opinion adopted a “history and tradition test.” Justice Brett Kavanaugh, however, concurred to add that “the court today applies a history and tradition test.”

It was a troubling sign that the Supreme Court even agreed to review the cross case because an appeals court had properly ruled the cross unconstitutional. “Watch out,” we had warned. The Freedom From Religion Foundation was aware, for instance, that Kavanaugh, the court’s newest justice, had dismissed the Jeffersonian metaphor describing a “wall of separation between state and church” as “wrong as a matter of law and history.”

As we wrote in February, “The constitutional wall of separation has long been chipped away at, bored through, tunneled under, climbed over. But it still stands.” The question is how much damage today’s ruling has inflicted on that revered wall?

The Supreme Court abandoned its sacred duty today: Its duty to uphold the secular principles in our Constitution. The justices seem to have forgotten that when they took their oath of office, they placed their hand on the bible and swore to uphold the Constitution — not the other way around. What a shameful legacy for the Roberts Court.



elevates Christianity over other faiths, and religion over nonreligion.”

Ginsburg persuasively lays out how such public crosses alienate a large and fast-growing segment of the U.S. population. “To non-Christians, nearly 30 percent of the population of the United States (Pew Research Center, America’s Changing Religious Landscape 4 (2015)), the state’s choice to display the cross on public buildings or spaces conveys a message of exclusion: It tells them they ‘are outsiders, not full members of the political community,’” she writes.

FFRF has been making this exact argument for years, using the same wording and statistics, and has met with success suing over religious symbols that

# FFRF pro-choice NY Times ad faults religion

**T**he Freedom From Religion Foundation has run a full-page ad today in The New York Times proclaiming that abortion rights can only be secured by honoring the separation of state and church.

The dramatic ad depicts a stark image of the Statue of Liberty transformed into a "Handmaid" who is holding a help sign instead of a torch. The image is drawn by Pulitzer Prize-winning cartoonist Steve Benson. Headlined "It could happen here. It is happening here," the ad warns that Roe v. Wade and privacy rights are in grave peril due to emboldened Christian Nationalists.

The ad has appeared in Tuesday's edition, to be followed later by a digital Times ad campaign.

"Many groups are laudably working for reproductive rights," says Annie Laurie Gaylor, FFRF co-president. "But the root cause of the denial of those rights is religious in nature. That's why the battle for reproductive liberty will never be secure if we allow politicians to impose their personal religious views on the rest of us."

FFRF's ad notes that organized opposition to abortion and contraceptive rights is exclusively religious in nature, predicated on the unscientific, religious concept of "ensoulment," a view most Americans reject.

The ad links to FFRF's myth-dispelling brochure, "What the bible says about abortion."

"Don't let narrow-minded theocrats destroy our rights, our lives, our secular laws, Constitution and nation . . . Support FFRF in our work for emancipation from religious dogma," FFRF urges.

The Freedom From Religion Foundation is a national state/church watchdog organization with more than 31,000 nonreligious members and several chapters all over the country.



## Upcoming LSF Social Dinners with Sue Anderson

July 17th	Golden Inn Restaurant	24 "E" Street, Superior WI 54880	(715) 395-2565
Aug 24th	Pier B Resort Hotel	800 W. Railroad St., Duluth MN 55802	(218) 481-8888
Sept 18th	Little Angie's Cantina	11 Buchanan St., Duluth MN 55802	(218) 727-6117
Oct 16th	Grandma's Saloon	522 South Lake Ave., Duluth MN 55802	(218) 727-4192
Nov 20th	Clyde Iron Works	2920 W. Michigan St., Duluth MN 55806	(218) 727-1150
Dec 18th	J.J. Astor (Radisson)	505 W. Superior St., Duluth MN 55802	(218) 727-8981



# Bible shortages could result from Trump's trade war with China

**C**ONCERNED US book publishers fear that a 'Bible tax' may be an unintended consequence of the Trump administration's plan to impose tariffs totaling \$300 billion on Chinese imports.

Increased tariffs, according to Fortune, would affect printed materials, which would especially affect Bibles and children's books predominantly produced in China because of the unique paper, printing technology and skills the Chinese possess.

Mark Schoenwald, Chief Executive Officer of HarperCollins Christian Publishing, warned a panel of officials at the US International Trade Commission of the consequences of higher tariffs.

We believe the administration was unaware of the potential negative impact these proposed tariffs would have on Bibles and that it never intended to impose 'a Bible tax' on consumers and religious organizations.

A 25 percent tariff would make it difficult to continue printing some formats and raise prices, leading to a Bible shortage that would hurt the Christian bookseller market, as well as ministries, churches, nonprofits, and other religious organisations that



couldn't afford them, Schoenwald said.

There also is no viable alternative to the US children's books printed in China because of the waterproof and non-toxic materials used in some cases, as well as China's investment in recent decades in advanced technology, said Daniel Reynolds, CEO of Workman Publishing in New York.

If tariffs are imposed, there will be fewer books available to American kids.

Publishers try to use US printers when possible, but capacity has become extremely constrained since the 1980s, said M Luisa Simpson, Vice President for global policy at the Association of American Publishers. Because of thin margins in the industry, higher prices would mean some books would be discontinued, publishers might have to scale back, and book stores, schools, and libraries would be affected, she said.

Trump has broad political support from evangelical Christians. Publishers are hoping he'll be receptive to sparing Bibles from tariffs, said Stan Jantz, head of the Evangelical Christian Publishers Association.



## Upcoming LSF Presentations

DATE	PRESENTER	TOPIC	HOST	REFLECTION
July 7th	Rachael Martin	Kalevala	Tom Patten	Charles Gessert
Aug. 4th	Bob Tammen	Mining in the Iron Range	Bill Guse	David Cole
Sep. 1st	Katherine R. Welsh	Women's Health Center	Charles Gessert	Jim Lyttle
Oct. 6th	Frans de Waa	Moral Behavior in Animals		