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Supreme Court of the United States
1 First St NE
Washington DC 20543

12 March 2004

Re: 02-1624 Elk Grove Unified School District and David W. Gordon, Superintendent, Petitioners v. Michael A. Newdow, et al.

Dear Justices Rehnquist, Stevens, O'Connor, Scalia, Kennedy, Souter, Thomas, Ginsburg, and Breyer:

I grew up in the 1960's and '70's in the village of Deerfield IL, north of Chicago, raised in a Jewish household at a time when there were only about twenty Jews in that hamlet of twenty thousand. In the public schools of Deerfield, IL, I was required to sing Christmas carols, and I was berated and sent to the principal's office for singing them wordlessly. I was required to bow my head when the official pastor said "let us pray" at pep rallies, graduations, and other supposedly purely civic events. And indeed I was singled out for ridicule for skipping the phrase "under God" when reciting the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America. Other than these "offences", I earned top marks, served on the editorial board of the literary magazine, and earned a series of fellowships to college and graduate school.

Civics—or, as we called it then, Constitution Class—was a requirement for graduation from middle school at Wilmot Junior High School (now renamed Caruso Junior High School) in Deerfield, and again from Deerfield High School. The meaning of the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States of America, and the history of disestablishment in Virginia, stood in stark contrast to my experience of being treated as a second-class citizen for being not a Christian. From the moment that I stepped into Mrs Rettig's Kindergarten class at South Park Elementary School in Deerfield to the moment I graduated from Deerfield High School, I was effectively pressed into service in an ideological war against the Soviet Union, a war in which all proper Americans supposedly were Christians, in which the only acceptable way to counter the tyrannical mind-control of the Soviet state was to voice support for a tyrannical official American Christianity, and in which the unique values on which the United States were founded amounted to a cruel joke. The constitutional freedom of religion was designed at a finer grain than was implemented by the public schools since 1954. In my childhood, it was the freedom to conform to American majority religious views rather than Soviet official religious views—but the constitution allegedly protected individual consciences, one person at a time. It followed logically that most American politicians and educators were not sincere about American values.

Despite this experience, I have long held that the original American ideal—in which our founders *separated* themselves and *distanced* themselves repeatedly from King George and the official Church of England—was the start of a worthy experiment in democratic republican government, subsequently furthered in the 1860s with the citizenship of Black people, and in the 19-Teens with universal suffrage.

Though as a non-Christian I was subjected in the public schools to official national religious indoctrination coupled with inevitable punishment for having a non-conforming opinion, that doesn't mean all children should be subjected to that experience, and it doesn't mean that we as a nation cannot do a better job of sincerely implementing our most fundamental values as expressed in the Constitution of the United States of America.

Every American who has been humiliated in public school for not belonging to the local religious majority **has standing in 02-1624**. I beseech you to **find for Michael Newdow** et alia, on the basis of the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States of America, and the state's interest in training children in the useful arts and sciences which are so essential to individual empowerment, the national economy, and our nation's international stature, while leaving matters of metaphysical doctrine to non-governmental organizations subject to free association and assembly.

Sincerely,

Dr. Matthew H. Fields, classical composer, computer programmer, and philosophical/religious/metaphysical independent, in Ann Arbor, Michigan