

September 15, 2016

Governor John Kasich
Riffe Center, 30th Floor
77 South High Street
Columbus, OH 43215-6117

Dear Governor Kasich,

Let me begin by stating I am not a resident of the State of Ohio. Despite that fact, I did feel compelled to write and address certain comments from you that were brought to light in a video that was posted on Salon.com. I did find these comments quite disturbing.

While campaigning for Republican Chris Sununu, who is running for governor of New Hampshire, you for some reason felt the need to mention the actor Daniel Radcliffe in order to make a point about his atheism. If I understood your comments correctly, you apparently feel there is something wrong with Mr. Radcliffe simply because he has critically thought his way out of belief in a god. You seem to feel that atheism is some kind of “weird thing.”

My question to you is: What evidence have you seen among the non-religious population that would indicate this is some type of human fault?

You stated you believe Radcliffe’s career has “not taken off,” primarily because he’s an atheist. You ask: “What the hell is wrong with him?” You appear to wonder with astonishment why he would declare himself to be an atheist. With such a question, do you mean to imply there is something inherently wrong with anyone who identifies as an atheist? Do you think atheists are amoral? Do you think atheists are mentally unstable? Do you think atheists are evil? Or do you think atheists just lack intelligence because they choose not to share your beliefs?

Given the extremely derogatory nature of the comments you had made about Mr. Radcliffe, and atheism in general, perhaps it might be best that you provide greater clarification regarding your feelings on this subject.

As non-theists, while we may question the validity of religious beliefs, we certainly do acknowledge their right to believe what they wish. Just as those of religious faith should respect the right of those to not believe. But what we would not do is suggest there is something “wrong” with theists just because of those beliefs.

Christianity is the largest religious tradition in the world, but yet makes up less than one-third of the planet’s entire population. Far from being a majority, it is important for those of religious faith like yourself to always remember that, no matter what religious tradition one chooses to ascribe to, most of the rest of the world disagrees with them. As a Christian yourself, do you believe the other two-thirds of the world’s population, which is non-Christian, also has something wrong with them – whether they believe in a god or not?

If your rationale for speculating that Daniel Radcliffe's career has "fallen flat" as a result of his atheism (which is far from the truth I might add), consider the film careers of the following individuals, past and present, who have identified as atheist/agnostic or have simply rejected religion. You will find Mr. Radcliffe in some stellar company:

Jack Nicholson, Brad Pitt, Kevin Bacon, Meryl Streep, Julianne Moore, Jodie Foster, James Cameron, Johnny Depp, Matt Damon, Angelina Jolie, Woody Allen, Rodney Dangerfield, Katherine Hepburn, Helen Mirren, Burt Lancaster, Gene Wilder, Emma Thompson, Morgan Freeman, Paul Giamatti, Richard Dreyfuss, George Carlin, Robert Altman, John Huston, Ingmar Bergman, Stanley Kubrick, Stellan Skarsgard, Sir Ian McKellen, John Malkovich and Bruce Willis, just to name a few.

I don't think one can honestly say the careers of these people suffered due to their lack of religious faith.

To be sure, non-theists endure much divisive rhetoric from elected officials who piously show their preference for religion over non-religion, and use this piety to treat non-believers as outsiders in their own country. But for one to actually proclaim atheism as a fault in someone's character, as well as a detriment to their livelihood, displays not only ignorance but what many would consider intolerance. A person holding such a high position in public office should show more respect for the differing views of others.

Like Daniel Radcliffe, I am an atheist. If you had known me throughout my life, my guess is you would probably consider me a fairly decent person. Nor would you have seen my atheism having had a negative effect on my 30-year career as a marketing professional.

But yet, according to you, there must be something wrong with me. I would beg to differ, and suggest you make the effort to actually talk with those from the non-religious community. You might find them to be quite rational, hard-working, caring, and also very politically well-informed. And some may have even voted for you.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Tom Cara
Director
Freedom From Religion Foundation Metropolitan Chicago Chapter