

# Speaker demands exclusion of religious references from government institutions

By Bhavisha Patel  
CONNECTION STAFF

Rev. Dr. Michael Newdow, the man who argued his case against the words "under God" in the pledge of allegiance before the supreme court, gave a speech at Cosumnes River College on Tuesday.

Newdow filed two lawsuits in 2005 stating that all references to God and religion should be removed from any connections with the government.

"We say that all men are created equal, but to take this saying and say that all people believe in God is not right. It violates the equality and degrades the equal rights of citizens," Newdow said.

Newdow said he not only wants the words "under God" removed from the Pledge of Allegiance, but he would also like to remove "In God we trust" from U.S. currency.

"It's prejudice to have references to God everywhere," Newdow said. "Could you imagine a pledge where we said, 'one nation under white people?' That's prejudice and the government enforces it."

Over 100 people showed up to hear Newdow speak and students said they were impressed.

"He's a very intelligent person and a great speaker," said 19-year-old mathematics major Bradley Kelsey. "I'm glad I came to hear him speak. I was very impressed."

Newdow talked about the history of the constitution and how it relates to the struggle of removing references to religion from governmental institutions.

"God was never in the constitution to begin with. If they wanted God in our government, they would've put God in the constitution," Newdow said.

Newdow said that he is not trying to convert people to Atheism, but trying to establish equality for everyone.



Photo by Martin Chavez

**Rev. Dr. Michael Newdow gave a speech entitled, "Restoring the Pledge of Allegiance: Why the words 'under God' violate the doctrine of separation of church and state," on the Cosumnes River College campus Tuesday. Over 100 people were present for the lecture.**

"We need to go from the ideal religion to a point where we just respect people equally," Newdow said.

Students said that they can understand Newdow's opinion.

"He had a good point," said 23-year-old kinesiology major Laura Tinker. "I never realized how someone who is not Christian would feel. I can see how he feels excluded."

Some students said Newdow's speech gave them a new perspective.

"I honestly didn't want to attend the speech today, but once I did, I felt overwhelmed with new knowledge," said

22-year-old sociology major Matthew Banks. "I understand his arguments and although I didn't before, I agree with him now. I just feel bad that he feels excluded by the government."

Newdow said although there are people who disagree with him, he still has some supporters on his side.

"I've gotten bomb scares, devices in the mail, bad phone calls," Newdow said. "But I also get a lot of supporters who are not Atheist. There are a lot of religious Christians who agree with me."

In addition to his contributions toward the separation

of church and state, Newdow has recently started a church.

The beliefs of the church lie under the umbrella of the golden rule of treating people the way one would like to be treated. To enforce this, they have three suggestions: question, be honest and do what's right, according to the church Web site. Newdow said people's preconceived notions about him are untrue.

"I am not anti-God," Newdow said. "These aren't my religious views, they are my political views."

Deliberations for Newdow's case will be held Dec. 4 in San Francisco.



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