



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 21, 2010

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Darwin Day Speaker Features Brain Scientist

Noted brain research scientist Dr. Julian Paul Keenan of the Montclair State University Cognitive Neuroimaging Laboratory, will be the featured speaker at the Red Bank Humanists' Darwin Day celebration, presenting his lecture: "**It's Only a Brain: The Evolution of a Misplaced Organ.**" The event is free and open to the public and is set for Sunday, February 14 at 10:30 a.m. at the Red Bank Charter School, 58 Oakland Street in Red Bank, and will include a question and answer period following the talk.

Last year was the international celebration of the 200th Birthday of Charles Darwin and the 150th Anniversary of his seminal work, On the Origin of Species, and hundreds of organizations and universities celebrated the life and discoveries of Darwin. This year will be the 6th annual Darwin Day celebration presented by Red Bank Humanists.

Professor Keenan's cutting edge research is directly related to the current and ongoing debate over the exact nature of human consciousness. His research is in the areas of neuroimaging, self-awareness and theory of mind, deception and deception detection, and evolutionary cognitive neuroscience.

Dr. Keenan said, "The brain still remains largely unexplained. We hope to further the knowledge of the brain relating to higher-order cognitive and social abilities. The brain of the modern human provided some adaptive advantage, and carrying 'baggage' such as self-awareness must allow for benefits that outweigh the costs. It is the analysis of this cost/benefit ratio that will lead to a clear understanding of the ultimate origins of consciousness," said Dr. Keenan.

"My research has taught me that the brain is unfairly valued. The brain makes us 'us' and therefore we elevate it, calling it the greatest mystery of the universe. Just like we thought our planet was special, or that our species was special, we STILL think our brain is special. It isn't. It's a flawed organ, no more special than the liver."

(more)

Keenan laughed, "It's not new to point out the brain's flaws. However, what is exciting is the deconstruction of the brain. What IS new is the demonstration that there are only a few subroutines in the brain, and they are basic. We constantly rerun the same scripts, simply inserting new characters."

This will be the second presentation by Dr. Keenan for a Red Bank Humanists Darwin Day. Several years ago Keenan's presentation documented his research on deception and how it has been a driving force in the evolution of the human brain.

Red Bank Humanists is a chapter of the American Humanist Association and is a 501(c)(3) non-profit educational organization presenting various forums and discussions about the philosophy of humanism. The monthly Forums are held on the second Sunday of the month at the Red Bank Charter School, with other events offered throughout the year, such as a Humanist Salon featuring classic philosophical discussions, a winter holiday for Humanists called HumanLight (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gsiYANxesTo>), a monthly book club, and an August picnic to celebrate the universalism of Humanism.

Humanism seeks to understand the universe through science and critical thinking and represents an overall objective of developing a more humane society. More information about Humanism and RBH events is available at

www.redbankhumanists.org.

(Link to hi-res photo)

<http://www.steelmanonline.com/hires/DrKeenan.jpg>

(Caption: Dr. Julian Paul Keenan, Montclair State University professor and director of the Cognitive Neuroimaging Laboratory.)

(Photo Credit: Mike Peters, Montclair State University)

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