

AOF News & Views

Sacramento, California

October 2010

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Sunday, October 10, Noon-4:00 p.m. Freethought Day: "Equality For Everyone!"

Do *not* go to the Sierra 2 Center for the October AOF general meeting. AOF will not be there. Instead we will join hands with other local freethought and humanist groups to bring you the **9th Annual Sacramento Freethought Day**.

Featured speaker and guest of honor will be **Bruce Maiman**, radio personality, commentator, educator, concert pianist and Sacramento celebrity.

Sacramento's Freethought Day is a local annual festival of **reason, freethought**

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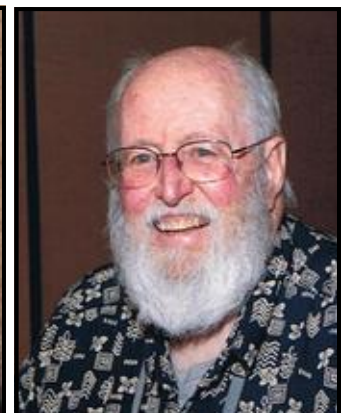


AOF in November

Coming in November: Jerry Sloan and Cleo Kocol on, "Gay Stereotypes and Gender-Role Perceptions in Modern Media"

Save the Date:

AOFers **Jerry Sloan** and **Cleo Kocol** will present on the topic of "Gay Stereotypes and Gender-Role Perceptions in Modern Media" at the November AOF general meeting, to be held on Sunday, November 14, at 1:30 p.m.



(Continued from page 1)

and church-state separation, open to the public. It is an opportunity for us to celebrate values and freedoms we too-often take for granted today, but which were once seen as radical or outlandish, and to commemorate the independent thinkers who led us to a policy of governmental neutrality in matters of faith and conscience.

Sacramento's 9th Annual Freethought Day Fair will go forward as a joint activity of local freethought, humanist and independent-minded groups. As ever it will feature speakers, live music, entertainment, tablers and vendors, an education expo, and children's activities.



Live music by **Roberta Chevrette** (pictured, above) and **The James Israel Band**; Words, Logic, and Games of Mind; Freethought Vendors; Gallery of Independent Thinkers; Critical Thinking Activities.

If you would like to help, please contact the steering committee at:

freethought-day-committee@googlegroups.com.

Come join us, bring your free minds and hearts.

For additional information, please see the Freethought Day web site, at <http://freethoughtday.org>

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AOF Board (2010)

President: Beverly Church

Vice President: Mynga Futrell

Secretary: Jillian Stanley

Treasurer: Ken Nahigian

Directors at large: David Flanders, Paul Geisert, Ken Nahigian, Mario Sandri

AOF Standing Committees

All AOF members are urged to volunteer in the organization. There are openings in every committee listed here. Please contact the chair or coordinator of any area of interest to you to learn details of getting involved. We would love to have your participation! Phone AOF 916-447-3589 or e-mail aofboard@aofonline.org for direct contact to relevant personnel.

Programs and Events Committee

Program Planning (Team Coordinator, *Open*)

Meeting Matters / Logistics (Team Coordinator, *Open*)

Social Activities (Team Coordinator, *Open*)

Membership Committee

Members Tracking (Team Coordinator, Ken Nahigian)

"Freethought Friends" (Team Coordinator, Jillian Stanley)

Outreach / Recruiting (Team Coordinator, Steve Campbell)

Communications Committee

Beverly Church, Chair

AOF News Team (newsletter editor, events editor, public editor, postmaster, webmaster)

Education, Activism and Service Committee

Service Projects Coordinator: Don Knutson

Education/Action Coordinator: Mynga Futrell

Building / Reason House Committee

Beverly Church, Chair

Paul Geisert, Mynga Futrell, Mario Sandri

Freethought Day 2010: October 10

Beverly Church, Chair. (Save the date! – It's a celebration of reason and church/state separation)

Darwin Day 2011: Date to be announced

Mynga Futrell and Bronda Silva, Co-Chairs

(Save the date! – It's a celebration of science and humanity)

AOF Voluntariat

Affiliation Liaisons

Mynga Futrell, Atheists Alliance International (AAI), <http://atheistalliance.org/>

Kevin Schultz, American Atheists (AA), <http://atheists.org/>

Beverly Church, American Humanist Association (AHA), <http://americanhumanist.org/>

Hank Kocol, Council for Secular Humanism (CSH), <http://secularhumanism.org/>

AOF News Team

Newsletter Editor: Kevin Schultz

Postmaster: Jerry Sloan

Webpeoples: Pat Kelley, Robert Poeschel (Openings for Events Editor and Public Editor)

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R.S.V.P. Today For the Saturday, October 9 Freethought Day Fundraiser!

By Ken Nahigian

The fundraiser/reception will occur **Saturday, October 9, 7:00 p.m., at the home of Beverly Church** in North Natomas, folk should call AOF Voicemail (916-447-3589) for details.

For a minuscule donation of \$25 (tax deductible!), the Freethought Day committee will ply you with fine champagne and food.

Guest of honor [Bruce Maiman](#) (radio luminary, commentator, educator, concert pianist and Wikipedia-status celebrity) will entertain you with brilliant words.

Schmooze with the usual array of bright, free minds.

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Note, FTD now has a [Sacramento City Resolution](#), signed by the entire city council *and the Mayor* this year. For the full text of the resolution, please see page five.

Freethought Day

10/10/10

Cesar

Chavez

Park

This year's theme
Equality for Everyone

Live Music from:

Roberta Chevrette

The James Israel Band

Magic, Logic, and Mind Games
Gallery of Independent Thinkers • Critical Thinking Activities
Free Admission and Street Parking • Rain or Shine

Noon to 4 PM

10th & I, Downtown Sacramento

Atheists and Other Freethinkers



AOF is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit educational organization. It is one of 50 member societies of the **Atheist Alliance International** ("a positive voice for atheism"). AOF also maintains affiliations with the

Council for Secular Humanism, American Atheists, and the American Humanist Association.

AOF's Statement of Purpose

The purpose of the association, Atheists and Other Freethinkers, is to promote the civic understanding of atheism and the acceptance of atheists in our community. Through educational programs, projects, and publications, AOF will extend secular perspectives, including the separation of religion and government and the right to think and speak freely on these perspectives.

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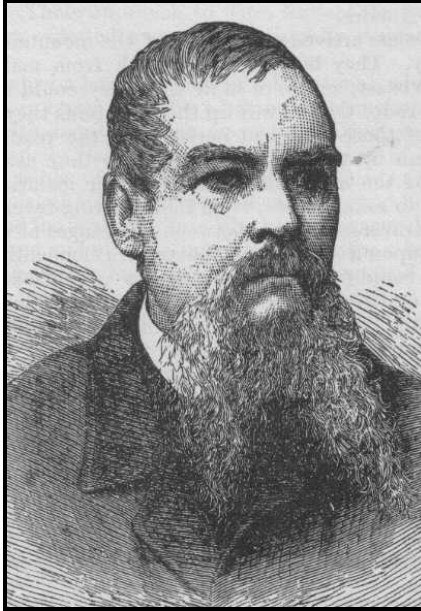
Reprinting of original material in this newsletter is granted to atheist, freethought, rationalist, skeptical, and secular humanist groups as long as acknowledgment is given. Exchange of newsletters with aforementioned organizations is solicited.

Historical Figures Series

Sir Richard F. Burton

By Ken Nahigian

Not the actor—*that* Richard Burton, often muddled with his namesake, was wild in his way, but nothing like the famed explorer, swashbuckling adventurer, poet and author, ethnologist and linguist, spy, soldier, duelist, diplomat, scandal monger, human rights advocate, British knight, free mind and cultural iconoclast born a century before. Captain Sir Richard Francis Burton was larger than life, a Victorian reply to Indiana Jones, if Jones had soaked a year in steroids laced with methamphetamine. He had a laser-hot temper, spoke a mind-melting 29 languages and dialects, wrote over 50 books, translated the sex-charged *Kama Sutra* and *Arabian Nights* into English, explored uncharted byways of Africa, India and Arabia, and would risk his life as routinely, as casually, as we might pour a bowl of oatmeal. Women swooned, men envied, teachers ground their teeth. If the two met in a caged match, Sir Richard could have rabbit-punched the other while head-butting a tribe of Zulu warriors, and writing sonnets. Good ones.



Richard F. Burton. From: *Stanley and the White Heroes in Africa (etc.)* (H. B. Scammel, 1890). Public domain.

R.F. Burton was born in Devon on March 19, 1821. His father was a military man, his mother an heiress. He was a strong-willed, brawling child, but his family kept moving, never in one place long enough to let the young Burton get into much trouble. He tracked across Europe and the British Isles. He had a string of tutors. They must have been good, because he showed an aptitude for language; he picked up French, Italian, Latin and Neapolitan, with dialects. By rumor he had an affair with a Gypsy girl, thereby learning rudiments of the Roma tongue. The heady diet of bookish study, adventure and scenery changes must have fostered his “outsider” self-image and sense of strong personal sufficiency. “Do what thy manhood bids thee do,” wrote Burton, but “from none but self expect applause.”

Sheer intellectual incandescence got him into Oxford Trinity College in November 1840, where he studied fencing, Arabic and falconry, while antagonizing teachers and dueling with at least one classmate who had mocked his mustache. In 1842 he attended a steeplechase, a dangerous and forbidden kind of horserace. Trinity expelled him. On his way out, with his horse and carriage, Burton ground the university flowerbeds

into mud. (Admit it, you always wanted to do something like that.)

Burton then enlisted in the private army of the East India Company, hoping to fight in the first Afghan war, “to be shot at for sixpence a day.” He missed the war but used the post to polish up his Arabic and learn more languages: Hindi, Gujarati, Panjabi, Marathi and Persian. He also studied Shi’ite Islam and Hindu mysticism until, reputedly, local spiritual leaders named him an honorary Sufi and Brahmin (though this claim is in some dispute). Fellow soldiers saw him as an odd duck that had “gone native,” but respected his “demon ferocity as a fighter,” and how he had met more enemies in single combat than any of them.

While in India he also kept pet monkeys, learned to survey, smoked opium, and worked undercover as a spy for his commanding general. He developed a fine finesse in disguise and subterfuge, which would come in handy. Burton returned home in 1849 to write his first book. His career had barely started.

In 1851, Burton set out on his second greatest adventure, and the one best known: to be one of the first Europeans (not *the* first, though) to enter the holy forbidden cities of Mecca and Medina as part of the *Hajj*, the holy Muslim pilgrimage. It was no small thing, since discovery meant a sure, unpleasant death. But with typical audacity he brazened his way through this hair-raising stunt, to stand in awe before the *Ka’aba*, the holy cubic stone artifact within the Grand Mosque in Mecca. He then went home to write about it. His travelogue (published in 1855) stormed the British bookstalls, selling thousands. Back in Mecca, faintly, you could hear ten thousand Muslims sharpening their knives.

For Burton it was not enough. His greatest quest began in 1854 when he joined the Royal Geographical Society on two major expeditions to Africa. An unspoken goal was to find the source of the Nile. They found it eventually (Lake Victoria), and on the way he had more harrowing thrills, including a walkabout week alone in the desert, a disguised foray into another forbidden city (the Somali capital Harar), ten days a prisoner of the Emir, charting of new territory and waterways, the discovery of Lake Tan-

(Continued on page 7)



Resolution

Recognizing Freethought Day

WHEREAS, the Enlightenment and the individuals who thought freely concerning the relationship of natural law and government is a cherished history; and

WHEREAS, October 12th marks the anniversary of the date on which it was declared in the Massachusetts colony that "spectral evidence" would no longer be admissible in court, terminating the infamous Salem Witch Trials; and

WHEREAS, this declaration by Governor William J. Phipps of the Colony of Massachusetts was the first of its kind requiring that evidence admitted in court be observable by the natural senses rather than supernatural; and

WHEREAS, this day commemorates our nation's Constitution and Bill of Rights, courts and judges, heritage of a fair trial for all, the Enlightenment values of our nation's founders and the establishment in our public courts that evidence of innocence or guilt lies in the domain of natural reason rather than supernatural beliefs.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Mayor and Council of the City of Sacramento, that we do hereby proclaim October 12, 2010 as Freethought Day in the City of Sacramento.

ISSUED: This 12th Day of October 2010.

KEVIN JOHNSON, MAYOR

STEVE COHN, DISTRICT THREE

KEVIN MCCARTY, DISTRICT SIX

RAY TRETHEWAY, DISTRICT ONE

ROBERT KING FONG, DISTRICT FOUR

ROBBIE WATERS, DISTRICT SEVEN

SANDY SHEEDY, DISTRICT TWO

LAUREN R. HAMMOND, DISTRICT FIVE

BONNIE J. PANSELL, DISTRICT EIGHT

AOF Subscription / Membership Form

Mail to: AOF, PO Box 15182, Sacramento CA 95851-0182 (Attn: Membership)

Name(s) _____ Phone: _____
 Street _____ Apt. # _____
 City _____ State _____ ZIP + 4 _____
 E-mail address (please print!) _____

Membership Level (please circle one):

Patron (\$50) Family (\$30) Individual (\$20) Low-income (\$10)

Note: Membership does not include a newsletter subscription

Newsletter subscription:

- ___ Send my printed newsletter by postal mail (\$12 extra)
 ___ Send my newsletter by email (*Free!*) – my email address is above

Additional Donation: \$ _____

Total enclosed: \$ _____

AOF is a 501(c)(3) Educational Association – Dues & Donations are tax-deductible as

permitted by law. Non-members may receive the AOF Newsletter (same rate - \$12 printed, free via email).

☐ Please check here if you do NOT want your name on lists occasionally provided to groups similar to AOF.

☐ Please check here if you DO want to be an AOF Activist (e-mail address required).

Of Flounders and Flyers Upcoming AOF Elections By Ken Nahigian

Are you an AOF member?

Do you want AOF to **thrive**?

If so, please, please **stand up for it!**

Consider serving as a director in 2011.

Serving is exciting and simple: merely one meeting a month, a few hours to share your personal wisdom and help with strategic decisions, and occasional emails.

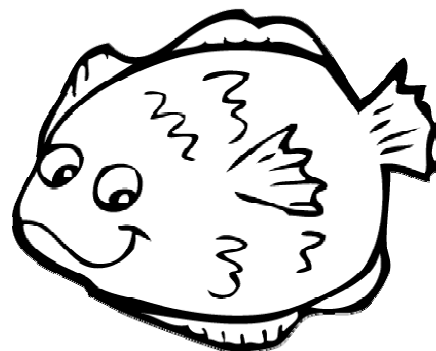
If interested, contact Ken Nahigian via treasurer@aofonline.org or the AOF voicemail (447-3589).

Then—this is important—**prepare a few words (300 max) for the November newsletter**, something to introduce and describe yourself, tell us why you are a freethinker, and your vision for AOF in the next year.

Send your candidate statement to newsletter@aofonline.org and to vice-president@aofonline.org.

Remember, **AOF is your organization.**

With you, it will fly—without you, flounder!



(Continued from page 4)

ganyika, hunger, disease, quarrels, and almost incidentally, a javelin through his face when 200 blood-lusting Somali warriors attacked his expedition. Burton had never had so much fun.

Home again, he settled down to a slightly more prosy life. He married, wrote, and served as the Crown's ambassador, regional diplomat and consul to Guinea, Brazil, Damascus and Austria-Hungary (he hated Brazil). He also co-founded the Anthropological Society of London. Queen Victoria knighted him. His edgy work brought the most renown, of course: "pornography" (like the *Kama Sutra*, *Ananda Ranga*, *Arabian Nights* and *Perfumed Garden*) and his pull-no-punch rants against British imperialism and ethnocentrism. These won few friends, but Burton was never one to care.

Now and then someone would try to kill him. Burton accepted this as part of life. On October 20, 1890, in Trieste, he died—of a heart attack. His wife got a priest to perform last rites, although Burton was not a Catholic believer, and most likely a deist. Sadly, she then burned Burton's journals and unpublished work, including his new translation of *The Perfumed Garden*. It was to protect him, she said, though he was never less in need of protection.

Snubbed by Westminster Abbey, Burton was buried at Mortlake in London. An obituary said he "was ill-fitted to run in official harness, and he had a Byronic love of shocking people, of telling tales against himself that had no foundation in fact." It was true: Burton loved controversy, to shake people from their narrow precepts. He lived in the world and he celebrated it, *all* of it. Was any mind more free?

Adopt-A-Highway Cleanup Report

Going It Alone On Highway 99

By Don Knutson

I have been AOF's **highway cleanup coordinator** for the last 10 years and for the very first time, September 18, I had to clean the highway **by myself** (other than in the company of several snowy egrets, who were not in the mood to help).

Of course, the **absence of others was affecting**. When there is company, I feel an obligation to do as much as I can in the two hour allotment I make for the event in order to avoid anyone burning out. As a result, I often carry a pleasant sort of fatigue for several hours afterward. This time, there was no such obligation and no such pleasant feeling afterward. I have often made points in the past that cleaning up the highway is one of the **most significant periodic environmental activities we can engage in**.

Recently, I learned of a study on NPR involving those who believed in a deity and that they believed this entity was watching them constantly and keeping track of all of their good deeds. The study found that this was effective motivation for the believers to act for charitable causes. But for atheists like you and me, **we only have logic and reason to guide us**, which suggests that as social beings, action instead of inertia is more rewarding for us all.

I am reminded of seeing Tim Wise, the author of "White Like Me"(2008), speak at CSUS last year. He recounted an experience at Tulane University when he was a graduate student and living in a communal house where shared meals were prepared. One resident was departing and prepared a last meal for the house--a big pot of shrimp gumbo. It wasn't very good and it seemed to everyone to be a hassle to clean up and it was left for several days with other meals prepared around it. It developed quite an odor and Wise decided to clean it up but he asked, why should I? After all, he didn't play a role in causing the problem but logic and reason indicated that cleaning it up was for the good of the community. Similarly, **please consider making the rational response** when there is a perceived need as we view an unsightly, littered highway.

Another attempt will be made at a successful highway cleanup event **Saturday, November 6 @ 9a.m.**

Newsletter Submissions

Submit your newsletter items to the N&V submissions editor at this e-mail address:

newsletter@aofonline.org

or mail item to the AOF mailbox: PO Box 15182, Sacramento, CA 95851-0182.

Preference is given to material in a word processing format. (To submit, attach your file to the e-mail and send.)

AOF welcomes succinct and substantive letters to the editor. Note: All letters are prioritized by AOF 's publishing criteria deriving from the organization's Statement of Purpose.

Newsletter Freebie Policy

This newsletter is free by e-mail to everyone. Just send your e-mail address. If you prefer printed copy by postal mail, AOF will send one free issue on your request; after that, please subscribe at \$12 per year. For details, see the signup form on page six.

Want to send a letter to the Editor?

E-mail **newsletter@aofonline.org**





P.O. Box 15182
Sacramento, CA 95851-0182

We're on the Web!
aofonline.org

October/November Calendar of Events

AOF Dinner Social: **Centro Cocina Mexicana**, 2730 J Street. Contact: 419-2105 or shastaseer@sbcglobal.net

Thu, Oct 7, 6:30 p.m.

Freethought Day Fundraiser: RSVP Today!

Sat, Oct 9, 7:00 p.m.

**Freethought Day @ César Chávez Park
(in lieu of AOF October Meeting)**

Sun, Oct 10, Noon-4:00 p.m.

AOF Adopt-A-Highway Cleanup

Sat, Nov 6, 9:00-11:00 a.m.

AOF General Meeting in November

Sun, Nov 14, 1:30 p.m.

Davis Community Meals (Setup, service, and light cleanup)

Tue, Nov 30, 4:30-7:00 p.m.

AOF meetings are open to the public and are generally held on the second Sunday of the month, from 1:30 - 4 PM at the Sierra 2 Community Center, Room 10. Note: The months of February and October are exceptions, since AOF co-produces two public education events: (1) an outdoor fair in October - "Sacramento's Freethought Day" (Oct 2010), and (2) a science and humanity celebration - Sacramento's "Darwin Day Educational Gala" (Feb 2011). Watch the newsletter for details.

Directions to AOF's General Meetings

The Sierra 2 Center is located at 2791 24th Street in Sacramento, just south of Broadway and the Department of Motor Vehicles. Visitors are welcome. Parking is available on the street or in the rear, off 4th Avenue. AOF Board meetings are held at alternating sites, so please inquire about the location. For AOF's 24-hour recorder, call 447-3589. Leave your name and a number (repeat for clarity) and someone will phone back to answer your questions about AOF.

