

Upcoming Events

AOF dates in black

- **Sun Sep 30** Observe Blasphemy Day
- **Fri Oct 5-7** Free-thought Day Festival
- **Sun Oct 7** Ancient Xian Study Group
- **Thu Oct 11** Richard Dawkins in Berkeley
- **Fri Oct 12** Observe Freethought Day
- **Sat Oct 13 9:00AM** Highway Cleanup
- **Tue Oct 16** Atheist Book Club
- **Thu Oct 18** Free-thought Dinner Social
- **Sun Oct 21** Blasphemy Brunch Sacramento, and Blasphemy Brunch El Dorado Hills
- **Sun Oct 28** Ancient Xian Study Group
- **Tue Oct 30**—Davis Community Feed, St. Martin's Episcopal Church, 640 Hawthorne Lane, Davis
- **Fri Nov 9** Observe Carl Sagan Day
- **Sun Nov 11** Potluck & Politics Open Mic
- **Thu Nov 15** Board Meeting

AOF Calendar:

aofonline.org/calendar-of-events

SacFAN Calendar:

meetup.com/SacFAN/#calendar

Sac Coalition of Reason

Calendar: sacramento.unitedcor.org/sacramento/page/events

Atheist Events Calendar:

tinyurl.com/714afyc

AOF News & Views

October 2012

Sacramento Freethought Day Festival—Oct. 5, 6, 7

Do not go to the usual AOF meeting site in this month -- AOF won't be there! Instead we will join hands with the rest of the local freethought community for the Eleventh Annual Sacramento Freethought Day Festival.

What is Sacramento Freethought Day? A jubilee, a party, an annual salute to independent minds and rational thought, brought to you here by the Sacramento Coalition of Reason (SCoR), of which AOF is a part. The traditional day is October 12. As usual, for the festival itself, we try to select the closest workable weekend.

The Freethought Day Festival will combine the fun and atmosphere of a fair with the education and activism of a conference. It will feature speakers, entertainment, food, contests, family activities, vendors, exhibits, films, panels, workshops ... and more.

It will span three days, Friday to Sunday. Friday evening, a reception and fundraiser will kick off the fun. Saturday speakers will include Mikey Weinstein (MRFF), student activist Jessica Ahlquist, Secular Coalition lobbyist Chris Lombardi, Michael Werner of AHA, Rebecca Hensler (founder of Grief Beyond Belief), and others. Rounding up Sunday will be Leadership Workshops for those interested in advancing the freethought movement.

Admission is free as always, though we encourage donations (those pesky expenses). Plans are unfolding, so do visit the event website for up-to-date info. We accept your generosity with amazingly good cheer. And if you'd like to help hands-on, even better -- please contact us!

Location : Campus of the Ben Ali Center, 1600 Los Robles Blvd, Sacramento

Contact : 916-447-3589 or email David (at) LodiUnited (dot) org

The Ben Ali Center is across from Hagginwood Park, a mile from Hwy 80. It has plenty of parking, trees, lawn, and a mostly-enclosed activity area.



New Atheism? You're Doing it Wrong *by Lindsey Campbell*

Members of the Backyard Atheists, an Orange County Atheist organization who recently had to remove billboards for controversial content, are now planning to tear out pages of the bible in a public place to display their rejection of certain passages (read about it here: http://blogs.ocweekly.com/navelgazing/2012/08/look_for_an_atheist_v_christia.php).

According to the article above, the purpose of the ceremony is to reenact a demonstration by Thomas Jefferson in which he removed pages from a bible that contained immoral content, eventually whittling the book down to 88 pages. Is a demonstration of opposition on this scale really serving the atheist community though? Must we participate in ritualistic and superfluous theatrics to cast aside superstition and gain respect in a religiously diverse society? How does defacing a book prove to the religious sector of society that their beliefs are immoral? Perhaps we should stick to better thought-out plans and leave the dramatics to the superstitious.



WEDDING CONGRATULATIONS!

AOF congratulates members Wendy Hoffspiegel and Tom Ikleman, who were wed Monday, September 17 in Hawaii, "with the most fantastic Humanist officiant" they report!



Know Your Scripture

What's with all this fuss about head hair? How many do you know who follow all this? Anyone? Bueller? Bueller?

You shall not round off the side-growth of your heads nor harm the edges of your beards. -Lev 19:27

They shall not make bald patches on their heads, nor shave off the edges of their beards. -Lev 21:5

If the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn
1 Cor 11:6

Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him? But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her. 1 Cor 11:14

Hanun took David's servants and shaved off half the beard of each ... and sent them away. When it was told David, he sent to meet them, for the men were greatly ashamed. 2 Sam 10:4-5

Do you sin manually or with an electric?

October 2012

Facebook.com/SacramentoAOF Snippets

AOF maintains a Facebook page where you will find a daily variety of news, humor, insights and tools. Below are a few of the dozens of items posted in the last month. ([sign up!](#))



The so-called "Alliance Defending Freedom" intends to overwhelm the resources of the IRS by defiantly preaching politics, telling thousands of congregations across the nation which candidates to vote for. This is in violation of their elite tax-exempt position, but they are out to topple the status quo of separation of church and state. Read more: <http://www.addictinginfo.org/2012/09/24/over-1000-pastors-set-to-defy-irs-redefine-seperation-of-church-and-state/>

What's happening in America is not what you think. Once it is explained to you, then you will understand why all this apparent nonsense is taking place. To those pulling the strings, it is not nonsense, and it is working. Read about Dominionism: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/09/01/5-facts-about-dominionism_n_945601.html

That's it. This year for Halloween my costume will be the scariest of them all: I'm going to wear my t-shirt that says I'm an atheist. I don't think people get more frightened by anything else in the universe. "Booga booga! Defend yourselves against reason or you yourselves might fall into the evils of thinking!"



Sometimes the chains that prevent us from being free are more mental than physical



Millions of people are good

without bowing to a torture device every Sunday.... You can be, too.

Learn more about atheism.

Be On The Board Next Year

Each November AOF elects board members for the following calendar year. With November not terribly far away, it's time to solicit candidates. I hope everyone reading this will consider giving a little time to this great organization. We have board meetings every other month and they last only a couple hours. We also discuss things via email regularly. The actual investment of your time per year could be as little as fifteen hours. We can't operate without input from our membership and serving as a board member is a great way to have your voice heard and to shape AOF's future. If you'd like to toss your hat in the ring, or if you'd like more detailed information, drop us a line at aofboard@aofonline.org. Thank you!

Potluck and Politics, Nov. 11, 1:30—4:00

Come hear strident words as AOF friends and members look back at the November election results, raging, raving, venting, laughing. You may weep in your beer or dance on the tables, depending on your own leanings. No chair-throwing please. But do prepare a small speech or comment, story or poem or even song, to suit the day, if you can. This will be an "open mike" event. Sierra 2 Center, Room 10, 2791 24th St, Sacramento. Contact: (916) 447-3589.



Visible Atheist

Regular Feature

Buy an atheist t-shirt.

It's time for America to realize atheists are good, moral people. In order to dispel damaging myths about atheists it is time we make ourselves visible within our communities. Buy your atheist shirt from either cafepress.com or the above shirt from AOF member [Judy Saint](#). Wear it while shopping! Judy reports she mainly gets a thumbs-up, often on the sly so no one can see.

Atheist Book List

Need a few suggestions for your next book? Come see the [list of 87 books](#), all atheist-themed, non-fiction and fiction. Keep this list for future reference. If you would like to attend a Book Club meeting on any of these books, feel free to attend the next SacFAN Book Club meeting on Tuesday, Oct. 16, at Coffee Garden, 2904 Franklin, 6:30 to vote for your selections. The book being reviewed at the next meeting is "Attack of the Theocrats". See the list of 87 books at: <http://www.meetup.com/SacFAN/files/>

October 2012

Junk Science in a Modern World... A Closer Look at Pseudoscience

By Dave Flanders

Lewis Thomas remarked, "The greatest discovery of modern science was not of the dimensions, not of cosmic space and time, but of human ignorance." To widen the circle of firelight in this deep darkness that seems to pervade society, AOFers at the September meeting were provided a panel of experts that agreed to share their thoughts: Glen Branch, Liam McDaid, Sarah Strand, Shane Trimmer, and Bob Carroll. Included in their talks was the idea of the Savannah principle, where pseudoscience may have originated to deal with survival. Today, we are stuck with a stone-age brain which assumes that we are still hunter-gatherers on the African Savannah. So most people tend to avoid the "complex", and an unnatural mode of thought-- science.



A minority of people today--the scientifically literate--aspire to be better scientists, astronomers, neuroscientists, etc., but these pursuits are evolutionarily novel. Climate change, the energy crisis, nuclear proliferation--many of the most urgent problems of the twenty-first century require scientific solutions, yet America is paying less and less attention to scientists. Panel experts spoke of evidence, astronomy, the Skeptic's Dictionary, early education, the brain, animal behavior, and more. Great panel! Thanks!

Perspective, My Favorite Thing *Regular Feature by Judy Saint*

"What's the harm of going to church?" people ask. Even just showing up in church on Sunday does harm. It encourages other people to follow the Bible literally, such as acting on God's command to let a son die of appendicitis, painfully writhing for a week. (A few days ago in Oregon.) Or pouring bleach down a daughter's throat to rid demons. Without all of their neighbors showing up each week, swaying together, holding hands, singing false words together, throwing \$20 in the plate... without all of that mind-bending support, no parent would ever think to stand back and watch their child die in pain. Just showing up in support of holy goofiness causes harm. Some may say it's only the fundamentalists who fall prey to such strict adherence to dogma, but here's my perspective: If those taking the writings literally are doing the worst damage, shouldn't people realize it's time to rethink what it is they're praising? As long as people show up in church there will be those on the fringe who feel supported to follow the writings as they are written. And that's when good people are enabled to do bad things. That's the harm of going to a church that follows goofy writings. I'm all for people singing and feeling humility together, but not in the name of supporting ancient writings with dangerous ideas.



Visiting a Red State

By Judy Saint

Of all the family photos and down home sayings on the refrigerator, “God Bless America” takes center stage. This is a Red State. We’re visiting my partner’s dear Aunt Betty Lynn.

Politics is not discussed, but Christianity is everywhere. As you look across the top of town you see crosses notably erected higher than anything else. Religious references sprinkle almost every conversation, such as, “They’re up at church bingo tonight” or “After church they visited Uncle Fred”, not to mention always announcing one’s intent to pray for this and that. If political interest in religion is brought up, it ends with Aunt Betty Lynn throwing up her hands as she delivers what is understood to be the conclusive remark that “Everyone has a right to vote as they please.” Further discussion would not be socially acceptable. After all, one must respect Aunt Betty Lynn. She is kin. One does not challenge kin, especially elderly kin. They represent tradition, and therein, authority.

It’s humorous, yet symbolic, that we ate ethnically out-of-place frog legs and crawfish at the local Chinese buffet. Symbolic because it shows how these rural folks see things. If it’s what you grew up with then it fits in just fine. No analysis of what should be at a Chinese buffet matters. In fact, analysis itself doesn’t matter. Analysis, being intellectual, thinking for yourself, re-evaluating your traditions; these aren’t Bible belt values. Education is fine if you still have time to grocery shop for mama every day, but as soon as it cuts into family responsibilities it’s scrutinized. You’re a good boy if you kiss Aunt Betty Lynn goodbye every day when you visit, taking with you a homemade meatloaf sandwich. Compare that with a West Coast family value of being a good boy if you moved away to pursue your PhD in philosophy.

Just as frog legs and crawfish become Chinese food, so do all other religions become Christianity. Cousin Erma Sue complained she can’t say “Merry Christmas” on the job unless a customer says it first. Aunt Betty Lynn cries out how all their religious rights are being taken away. “You just can’t do anything anymore. You can’t even put up a tree.” [referring to a Christmas tree on government property] “They’re taking away our rights.” Of course the Republicans are pandering to this large voting demographic, calling it a “War on Religion”, confirming their feelings of victimization, stoking the fire of fear.

As the old joke goes, in the Bible belt an Eastern religion is a Methodist in New York (“East”). I tried to explain to Aunt Betty Lynn that some people don’t have the same religions, and the government isn’t allowed to promote one over another. She insisted again that not being allowed what they could always do in the past amounted to taking away their rights. Period. Then, tellingly, she looked for validation by adding, “Well, it all started with Adam and Eve and sprouted from there.” She almost asked it as a question. Her voice trailed off as she honestly looked bewildered at how religion could see anything else. It’s all Christian. Everyone believes the Adam and Eve stories. Just as frog legs and crawfish become Chinese food, so do Islam, Buddhism and even atheism become Christianity.

Even though they verbalize clearly their love of caring for the poor, acceptance of gay rights, peace among countries and women’s rights – and seemingly all the Democratic Party platforms – they will vote Republican because they hear Republicans pronounce the word “God” more often in their speeches. It all comes down to that. Thinking be damned, analysis be damned, facts be damned; those don’t register. They’re on the side of their traditional rearing, and that tells them to vote alongside their church folk. That’s part of showing respect for authority, kin, and tradition. And those are the notions they understand.

So, to Aunt Betty Lynn, her right to say “Merry Christmas” and her community’s right to erect a Christmas tree in the town square are rights removed. Tradition becomes a right. Traditions are, indeed, being removed. She is losing something. That it’s not a “right” doesn’t register. Other religious beliefs don’t register. That she can’t do something traditional, *that* registers.

I learned how the religious right sees politics. It’s not the same way I do. How anyone votes is, of course, their own decision. However, I see a looming division between those who vote by down home reflex to tradition versus those who vote by analysis. Both patterns of living have value. I just cringe to think our government rulers could be voted into office on the fear of losing one’s traditions, without regard to what those rulers actually enact once in office. This voting bloc will not be aware of the laws introduced, even if contrary to their down home core values. Once Aunt Betty Lynn votes, she will settle back to watching Dr. Oz and stringing beans for family that always drops by.

Oh, that we would all be a world of free thinkers. With meatloaf sandwiches.

Freethought Dinner Social—Oct. 18 6:15 pm

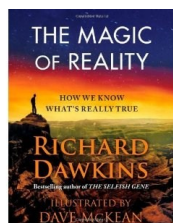
A fun dinner social for friends and members of the local community of reason. Feed your mind and feed your body, at the **Pita Kitchen**. Fine Greek food, good drink and sparkling conversation about all things freethoughty! Recommended plates: maqlooba, babaganouj, and baklava.

Yelp gives it 4 stars: <http://www.yelp.com/biz/pita-kitchen-plus-sacramento>

Pita Kitchen: 2989 Arden Way, Sacramento, ph (916) 480-0560



Hear Richard Dawkins



Thurs, Oct 11, 7:30pm
1st Congregational Church, 2345 Channing Way, Berkeley

"We currently face very powerful and excessively well funded organizations that have another vision of America, a theocratic America that prefers the laws of a 2,000 year old document to the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. It is an opportunity for me to meet those of you who are active in a movement who are fighting to return to the traditional secular values set forth by America's founding fathers."

Tickets \$12: <http://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/264727>

Highway Cleanup

Oct 13, 9:00 AM
Elkhorn Blvd Park-n-Ride (W of 99 one mile N of I-5/99 split)

Come help intercept glass, plastic and other debris, keeping them out of tributaries and ultimately, the ocean. Gloves, vests, pickers and bags are provided. Wet conditions cancel.

October 2012

SURVEY—"How do you live without hope?"

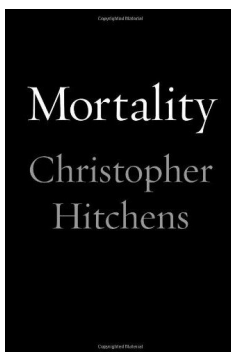
Regular Feature by Lindsey Campbell

I was surfing the blogosphere and came across a blog written by an Evangelical Christian Adrian Warnock in which he asked "The One Question Atheists Can't Answer" (See the article here: <http://adrianwarnock.com/2012/06/the-one-question-atheists-cannot-answer-how-do-you-live-without-hope/>).

He assumes that without the belief in an afterlife, secularists have no hope. The definition of hope is expectation, desire, and wanting of something good to come about in the future. So tell us, members, how do YOU live "without hope"? Send your 1-3 sentence answer to the editor at newsletter@aofonline.org. Look for selected answers here next month.

Associated Reading: *Mortality*, by Christopher Hitchens

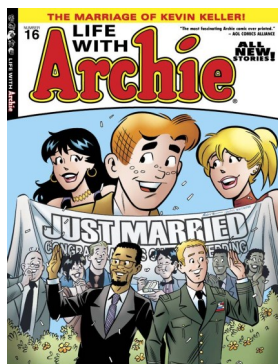
The fluent titan of the atheist movement, with his upper British accent, slew any contrary debaters to the core so simply that it became known as the "Hitchslap". Once diagnosed with terminal cancer, he sought to write what his vocal chords could no longer state. His courage and unwavering atheism remained until the end. His bout with cancer, the one opponent he couldn't Hitchslap so easily, is here chronicled for anyone in need of a friend who is "living dyingly".



"Reading and responding to the Hitch is ceaselessly inspiring and seldom less than exhilarating. More, it is an instigatory experience: it compels you to get involved more deeply with the world around and inside you. Reading any worthwhile writer is an act of celebration, a shared reaction to the act of creation. More, it is an exercise in how to write, read, think and live." (PopMatters.com)

Use the link on Page 6 to Amazon. AOF receives an Amazon donation for each linked purchase.

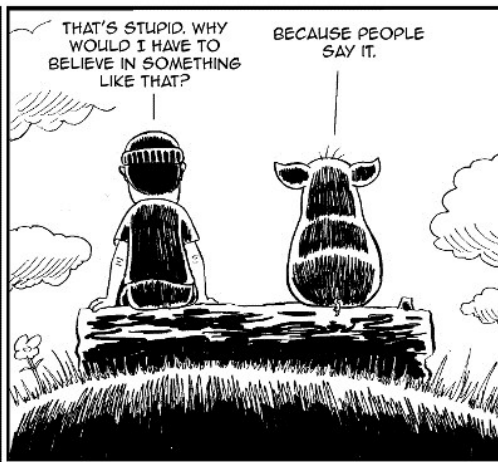
It's a Whole New Generation Out There



Archie Comics was proud to announce that the company sold out of LIFE WITH ARCHIE #16, and ordered a second printing. The issue, which received widespread media attention around the world, featured a historic moment for Kevin Keller, the first gay character in Riverdale: He got married and it was on the cover!

Even the phrase "that's so gay" is not heard much anymore. It seems our younger generation has been well trained in the area of acceptance.





theadtheistpig.com

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AOF

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AOF meetings are open to the public. Next [General Meeting](#) is replaced by Freethought Day Festival, see Page 1.

AOF [Planning Meeting](#) Nov 15, open to the public, Hoppy Brewing Company, 6300 Folsom Bl, 7:00-8:30pm, 916-447-3589.

Membership Form: <http://www.aofonline.org/images/PDFs/aof-membership-app.pdf>

AOF website: <http://aofonline.org>

LIKE our Facebook Page "[Sacramento AOF](#)"

Audio of meetings can still be heard at: <http://aofonline.org/av-scrapbook.html>

AOF EIN for tax write-off: 68-0325762
DONATE with PayPal: [Click Here](#)

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Secretary: Jillian Stanley
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Newsletter Editor: Lindsey Campbell
Newsletter Co-editor: Judy Saint

2012 AOF Board of Directors : Kristi Craven, David Flanders, Mynga Futrell, Ken Nahigian, Mario Sandri, Jerry Sloan, Vincent Wales

The purpose of this organization, AOF, is to promote civic understanding and acceptance of atheists in our community.