

Sacramento Reason

COR

Shine the Light of Reason!

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Sac Coalition of Reason
Calendar: [sacramento-
to.unitedcor.org/
sacramento/page/events](http://sacramento.unitedcor.org/sacramento/page/events)

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Volume 11, Issue 1

Issue Theme: Alternative to Church

January 2014

"Out of the Closet" Billboards Stir Pride



Photo by Matt Martin

When you make a loud enough statement, the bullies back off. That's the feeling felt in Sacramento when 55 professional, cheerful and unambiguous billboards went up in December. Those who took the risk to appear in a billboard all stood together to send a unified message: We are freethinkers, we are your neighbors, and we are organized. Did anyone else notice the lack of Letters to the Editor of the Bee, or the lack of protests by churches? It's pretty quiet, which is unusual for a campaign such as this. News of this local campaign trended #3 in national news coverage, so it's not for lack of visibility - it's for lack of any vulnerable place to push back. Congratulations to everyone who participated and supported this massive event. Your voices have been heard. Your unity has been powerful.

Starting on Page 11 you can read more about the individual stories and feedback from others. The amazingly cathartic Meet and Greet, covered by news media, was recorded for broadcast on FFRF's Freethought Radio over the next few months. Many participants remained in our reserved lunch room sharing and feeling the support of each other long after we had finished eating. What a strong group of wonderful people. Our community is so proud. See all billboards at this link <http://ffrf.org/get-involved/bus-sign-billboard-campaign/out-of-the-closet-campaign>



Facebook.com search for 'Sacramento Area Coalition of Reason'. 'Like' the Sac CoR Facebook page, where you will find a daily variety of news, humor, insights and tools for every person of reason. Our readers represent 20 countries. 40% live in the Sacramento area. Sign up to keep informed! ([Click Here](#)) or go to <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Sacramento-Area-Coalition-of-Reason/376151155788191>



The Catholic Pope recently dressed up in his finest spotless gown and told throngs of people who were off from work to find world peace, even atheists. HE is asking ATHEISTS to join HIM? We have never started a war in the name of atheism. Not many of us are in jail, relatively. We condemn or outcast nobody. I mean really, Francis? You think atheists need you, of all people, to tell us to wish for peace? REALLY?

Freethought Dinner Social

La Rosa Blanca
2813 Fulton Ave
[Map here.](#)

Jan 9, 6:15 PM

Join us for conversation and good Mexican food. Good parking, big portions. Try their killer chicken mole and a great margarita!

"Ask The Social I.Q. Lady"

This year, let's work on tolerance.

Working together for the common good of humanity is something we all should strive for. This means not only should we all as individuals enjoy the same rights, but those rights should transcend race, religion, nationality, creed, class, sexual orientation, and ethnicity.

So why is there so much bigotry in the world today?

Ignorance. Fear. Anger. Everyone is prejudiced in one way or another. Sometimes it is very subtle, but prejudiced is not the same as bigoted. Bigotry involves hate.

We can help those who are bigoted overcome their fear and ignorance. The best way is to help them recognize the particular behavior of people they don't like. When they appear to be bigoted toward a certain group, have them pinpoint the behaviors of that group which bother them or make them feel uncomfortable, angry or fearful. Once people can recognize the behaviors that bother them they can learn to direct their anger toward the behavior and not the person or group.

Find out why the behavior is bothersome. Oftentimes we find that certain behaviors are not based on bigotry but ignorance. For example, some cultures stand in close proximity, greet with a kiss, or deliver a strong bear hug. These may come across as invasive, but aren't meant to be. By learning about a group's culture and understanding the customs of others, we can appreciate the 'whys' behind the behavior.

It's not easy to recognize one's own bigotry, but if one is to grow as a person one must learn to be insightful and be aware of one's actions and words.

Never allow yourself to be mistreated. By the same token, don't mistreat others. We all deserve to be treated fairly and by doing so that is how we learn to work together.

Andrea Griffith is a Social Intelligence expert. Learn what to say and do to get the results you want.

This Issue's Theme: Alternative to Church

We are starting to see attempts at atheist churches, some in jest and some real. As you know, especially women cling to their churches for sense of community. See what our columnists have to say about that, and more... Also, welcome two new columnists, Sara Long ("< 30") and Cleo Kocol ("Listen Up").



Ancient Christian Study Group - January 19, at Noon

Shine Cafe, 1400 E St. [Map here](#). For atheists who want to know the foundations of Christianity better than Christians do. Previous biblical knowledge is not required to participate. Review the history of Rome, religions of the Roman empire, Gnosticism, Mystery cults, history of Christian persecutions, biographies of major Christians, the history of the Bible and many other related topics. Everyone welcome.

HumanLight/Winter Solstice Party - Warm Togetherness



Tom and Wendy Ikelman host our HumanLight/Winter Solstice Party each year. This year was bigger and better, a sold-out event with young and old delighted and entertained.

Heather Applebury received the first-ever Caring and Hope Award, possibly a new annual feature of the HumanLight Party,

for an outstanding display of compassion and support in time of grief, after a friend suffered the sudden loss of her sister.

Photos by David Diskin



Little faces played outside and inside. Tom used balloons, including a large yellow sun balloon, to give a hands on demonstration of winter solstice.



Cleo seems happy with a nice plate of goodies. We loved the professional dancing by Roger and Pam, songs by The Mockingbirds and great raffle items. As one person wrote, "Thanks to Tom & Wendy for taking the initiative to host such a large and inclusive party fitting for the season." Great community spirit!



Some popular 'Meet, Eat n Drink' Addresses and Maps:

- Jan 11 10:00 am Brunch and Atheism, Panera Bread, 10718 Trinity Pkwy, Stockton [Map here](#)
Jan 17 6:30 pm Drinking Skeptically, The Valley Brewing Co, 157 W Adams St, Stockton [Map here](#)
Jan 19 9:30 am Blasphemy Breakfast, Mel's Diner, 6708 Lonetree Blvd [Map here](#)
Jan 19 11:00 am Blasphemy Brunch, Mel's Diner 565 Howe Ave [Map here](#)



Blaspheming With Food Every 3rd Sunday!

Every 3rd Sunday of the month, in two locations: Rocklin and Arden/Arcade. Come have breakfast or brunch with us. Everyone is welcome! It's a nice way to meet like-minded friends. No topics, just have fun. [See the calendar](#) for all the details, also at top of this page.

Book Clubs

Sacramento

Doubt; historical legacy of doubters. Jan. 20, 6:30p, Coffee Garden. See [details here](#).

Ceres

Doubt; historical legacy of doubters. Jan. 7, 7:00p, private residence. See [details here](#).

"Ask an Atheist" Gets a Fist Bump!

Our blue-shirted team has never had so many overt gestures and thanks come to us so loudly as at our December event walking Arden Fair Mall. People gave us fist bumps, loud thanks in front of everyone, and seemed genuinely proud to see us out there wearing "Ask an Atheist" shirts in public. The support was incredible, compared to the typical quiet or hidden thumbs up we often get.

Here's a fun story from Robbie, who joined us for the first time.

Robbie Ferrell wrote: "Had a fun time out there today! Actually had a real conversation with a security guard as I was leaving (Judy spotted us.) He kind of just asked what the shirts were about and why I wasn't a believer. I told him the divinity of Christ is unconvincing and gave a few miracles as examples. He told me Christ can do anything. I replied, 'Well why shouldn't I believe that about any of the other gods?' His response, 'Because they don't have books.'"

Book Club List for 2014 - Sacramento

January 20: *Doubt: A History: The Great Doubters and Their Legacy of Innovation from Socrates and Jesus to Thomas Jefferson and Emily Dickinson* - by Jennifer Michael Hecht

February 17: *A Universe from Nothing: Why There Is Something Rather than Nothing* - by Lawrence M. Krauss

March 17: *Religious Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know—And Doesn't* - by Stephen Prothero

April 21: *Alcoholics Anonymous: Cult or Cure?* - by Charles Bufe

May 19: *Godless: How an Evangelical Preacher Became One of America's Leading Atheists* - by Dan Barker

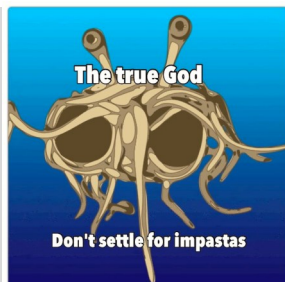
June 16: *The Canon: A Whirligig Tour of the Beautiful Basics of Science* - by Natalie Angier

July 21: *Sea of Faith: Islam and Christianity in the Medieval Mediterranean World* - by Stephen O'Shea

August 18: *The Great Agnostic: Robert Ingersoll and American Freethought* - by Susan Jacoby

September 15: *Towing Jehovah* - by James Morrow

October 20: *Revelations: Visions, Prophecy, and Politics in the Book of Revelation* - by Elaine Pagels



Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster

By any standard one can come up with, FSM religion is as real and legitimate as any other. And *that* is the point. [Website here.](#) See miracle appearance on a [Grilled Cheese Sandwich here.](#) Sacramento Church of the FSM on [Facebook here.](#) City Council opened with FSM [prayer here.](#)

Upcoming Events cont'd from pg 1

20 [Book Club Doubt](#)

24 [Sac Skeptics in the Pub, SAS](#)

24 [Godless Game Night, Lodi](#)

24 [Karaoke at Torii's, Modesto](#)

26 [Freethought Movie Night, Lodi](#)

May 1 National Day of Reason

May 30 FFRF's Andrew Seidel

Apr 20 Dan Barker

APR 20 FSM Party

Film and Discussion in Modesto

Third Fridays
7:00pm

1905 Kienitz Ave
Modesto

Watch a documentary then talk about it with fruit, coffee and soft drinks provided. Come at 6:30 to chat before the movie. [Map here.](#)
[Details here.](#)

Finally!

The Skeptic's Annotated Bible is in Print!
[Buy it here.](#)

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Secular Family Days - 3 to Choose From!

Railroad Museum 111 "I" Street, Jan 5, 10:30. See 225,000 sq ft of railroad history! The museum has 21 full locomotives and cars, and currently has a photography exhibit with images from 1839! [details here.](#)



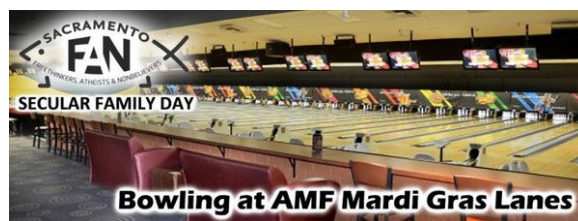
Family Ice Skating, Stockton

Saturday, January 18,
2:00 - 4:00
Oak Park Ice Arena,
3545 N. Alvarado
St, Stockton.

Come skate with us! Public ice skating is available from 2-4 PM. [Details here](#)

Bowling, Sacramento

January 18, 3:00. Mardi Gras Lanes. [Map here.](#) We have two lanes reserved, one for older kids ages 5 and up, and one for ages 4 and under. If an adult wants to bowl, he/she can join either of those two games. \$11/game.



Support for Atheists

Without a church for emotional support through our life's traumas, atheists do instead have many established avenues for us to help each other, such as the family events listed above. Here are two good articles for you to take a look at.

- Grief as an atheist: <http://www.atheistrepublic.com/blog/makeesha/atheism-and-tragedy>
- Atheist support groups: <http://www.alternet.org/belief/7-atheists-support-groups>

Game Nights

Atheists and theists are all welcome. Bring a friend, roommate or honeypie. Chatting, eating, playing, laughing. Sound good? Several to choose from. Be sure to check the calendar for updates.

[Sacramento Jan 18 at 6:00 pm](#) or [Lodi Jan 24 at 7:00 pm](#) or [Oakdale Jan 10 at 7:00 pm](#)



New Members Meetup & Coffee

Feb. 5, 6:30 PM
Coffee Garden
2904 Franklin Blvd
[Map here.](#)

For new and current members of SacFAN. A casual event with an overview of the group and plenty of time to just hang out and get to know each other.

- What SacFAN is
- Recent news and announcements
- Other local, related groups of interest
- Upcoming Events

After that, everyone is invited to continue to socialize and stay as long as you like. Buy some great drinks and snacks, and make some new friends!

Activist Corner By Julie Wedge

When moving to a new city, as my husband and I did last year, it is always tough to find community. People of faith just “find the right church” and they easily fit in.

Non-theists have to do a bit more work, but it really is worth it!

To combat some of that feeling that non-believers have in assimilating and creating community, some in Southern California have created Atheist Mega Churches. In San Diego, they are holding “church” one Sunday per month. Reason and science are the “sermon”. There is music. And they are even taking up “collections” to find a permanent brick and mortar “church”.

Now I am not opposed to a bunch of non-theists gathering for the sake of community. Believe me, I sought out the non-believer community just as soon as I was able. But there is something about the traditional trappings of religion that leaves a bad taste around the Atheist Mega Church concept. I love our community here in the greater Sacramento area, and I found us online! I loved the idea of Blasphemy Breakfast right near my house in Rocklin...at a restaurant.

If the idea of Atheist Mega Churches is as British founders Sanderson Jones and Pippa Evans suggest – that non-believers need to be out there and showing we are not people who put babies on pikes – then a nice public restaurant is a great location. How many believers will come to our churches? How many will come to see for themselves we are not worshipping Satan in Wiccan ceremonies? Non-theists are intelligent people who know how to use that scientific wonder that is the computer. We don’t need a brick and mortar building to espouse the amazingness of science – in fact; it is almost mandatory to go outside!

How Do I Find My Representatives?

US Senate: http://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm

House of Representatives: <http://www.house.gov/representatives/find/>

State Senate/Assembly: <http://findyourrep.legislature.ca.gov/>

Local representatives can always be found on your City or County websites.

Local Groups to Visit or Join

Name	Emphasis		Tax Ded		Website
Agnostic & Atheist Student Association (AgASA)	UC Davis student group Socialize with like-minded students.	Y		<u>Y</u>	agasadavis.wordpress.com
Americans United for Sep of Church and State (Sac Chapter)	Promotes individual activism, confronts violations	N	Y	<u>National only</u>	au-sac.org
Secular Student Alliance @ Sacramento State University (CSUS)	CSUS student group to socialize and promote freethought.	Y		<u>Y</u>	csusaso.wordpress.com
Atheists and Other Freethinkers (AOF)	Events both social and presented, for growth and fun.	Y	Y	N	aofonline.org
Brights Action	Translate our naturalistic worldviews into constructive actions for school/library/media	Y	Y	<u>Internat'l only</u>	the-brights.net/
FACTS Church	Church-like hymns, rituals, all the trappings in secular form.	Y	Y	N	factschurch.com
Greater Sacramento Chapter of Freedom From Religion Foundation	Protecting the constitutional principle of separation of state and church.	Y	Y	N	sac.ffrf.org
Humanist Association of the Greater Sac Area (HAGSA)	Humanist events, speakers, focus is on doing good.	Y	Y	<u>Y</u>	hagsa.org
Sacramento Area Coalition of Reason	Directing the community to the various groups of reason.	Y	N	<u>Y</u>	SacramentoCoR.org
Sac Area Skeptics (SAS)	Promotion of skeptical thinking, awareness of reality, logical skills.	Y	Y	<u>Y</u>	http://www.meetup.com/sacskeptics/
Sac City Freethinkers	Sac City College student group. Meet, question, promote, unite.	Y		<u>Y</u>	saccityfreethinkers.wordpress.com
Sac Freethinkers, Atheists and Nonbelievers (SacFAN)	Meetup for variety of fun, learning, singing, projects, games, activism.	Y	N	<u>Y</u>	SacFAN.org
Sac Organization for Rational Thinking (SORT)	Discussions of rational thinking and science over mysticism and anti-rationalism.	Y	N	N	home.comcast.net/~kitray2/site/?/home
Sac Think Atheist	Events, podcast, and forum to fight anti-atheism and gain tools.	N		N	thinkatheist.com/group/sacramentocalifatheists
Secular Coalition for California	Train to engage media and lobby state politicians. Activist resource.	N	N	<u>Y</u>	Secular.org/states/chapters/california
Secular College Student Alliance	Sierra College student and faculty group for non-belief in religion.	Y		<u>Y</u>	secularstudents.org/sierra
Stockton Area Atheists and Freethinkers (SAAF)	Meetup events and philanthropy, from Galt to Modesto.	Y		<u>Y</u>	StocktonAAF.org
Sun City Roseville Humanists	Humanist opportunities for our Sun City residents. Meets 1st Sundays from 1:00 to 3:00.	N	N	N	scres.org/sub_category_list.asp?category=98



Looking back at 2013: "This is the year atheists started meeting communally just like churchgoers! Let's nip that shit right in the bud."
-- Bill Maher



FACTS Church

First Atheist Church of True Science

Wear a hat. Not because other religions all have funny hats, but to remind us to have fun.

Pass the plate. But only use secular money without mention of In God We Trust. The plate is typically returned empty.

Moment of Science. When I attended, we extracted DNA from strawberries.

Sermon: short, but a good message, since even atheists have good messages.

Sing Herms!

What a load of fun.

[Website here.](#)

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By Sara Lone

Who needs church when you've got Doctor Who? Seriously?!

After watching the Doctor Who x-mas special, I understand even more now that I don't need a churchy "community" feeling in my life. You get one, and it's full of living, struggling, crying, laughing, everything. If you can find like-minded people to do that with, you're solid. And it doesn't have to be at a church with the ancient "bait-and-switch" routine.

Sometimes, the hardest decisions you'll ever have to make in this world will be on your own... be ok with that. Be ok with yourself, figure it out, think for yourself, be yourself, stay true to yourself.

Ask yourself, "Why is this religious organization playing heavy metal music with subliminal messages telling me to fear and love a creepy invisible man in the sky?" You can bet your bottom dollar it's not because they actually enjoy said music — it's a ploy! I used to love a band when I was younger, Underoath. My own mom told me, "That sounds like devil music," which is funny because they are a "Christian" band. That was about... 10 years ago, I was 15, and clearly unaware of the scheme, like so many are today.



New Atheist megachurches, although I understand their inspiration, aren't cool. It's not a new-age, hipster, I have huge too-big-for-my-face glasses movement.

We, secular people, 'we', are different because we always ask why. We're always questioning everything and that has brought us to the conclusion that there is no creepy invisible man in the sky — so don't act like it! Don't pretend, like religious people do. They're already pretending for us, right? You want community? I'll meet you at Comic-Con and we can talk Doctor Who.

Sacramento Reason





NATIONAL SECULAR NEWS - LISTEN EVERY WEEK

Call (559) 726-1300 every Thursday at 9:00 AM Enter Code: 953064. Or, if you prefer getting your national secular updates by email, then [sign up here](#).



The Science of Everyday Thinking

-Free Course-

[Enroll here.](#)

Learn how to think better, argue better, and choose better.

We will explore everyday thinking: why people believe weird things, how we form and change our opinions, why our expectations skew our judgments. We discuss and debate topics such as medical diagnosis, paranormal phenomena, placebos, miracles, and more. You will learn how to evaluate claims, make sense of evidence, and understand why we so often make irrational choices.

Let's all start this in March together, as a group! [Sign up now!](#)

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Family Time By Rick Tracewell



Those of us former religious or ex-churchgoing people, may fondly remember the wonderful sense of community and family that went along with being a member of a local church. Even if you've never been associated with a church, surely you've seen the many benefits of those who are.

Family picnics, carnivals, holiday and charitable events, helping church members in need, etc. It's very appealing. Of course, unlike what religious leaders will tell you, this has ZERO to do with religion. In reality, it's simply a modern day version of small towns where everyone helped each other out because it was the right thing to do (chicken soup to someone who's sick, casseroles to a recent widower, lending a truck to someone who needs to make a run to the dump, etc.)

Just like morality, religion didn't *invent* a sense of community, rather they use it as a sales "feature". In order to get decent people to believe everything written in quite possibly the worst work of fiction ever, they've got to use diversions not unlike those utilized by magicians. I'm half kidding here.

In our current social culture, it IS a bit more difficult to create that sense of community *without* joining a church and getting that *instant* close-knit community vibe – let's face it, most of us hardly know our neighbors further than two doors down.

But there's hope for us! With the advent of the Internet and social media (Facebook, Meetup, etc.), atheists are finding that they are not only not alone, but there are many others seeking out like-minded people to hang out with and talk to.

Meetups are cropping up everywhere for all kinds of atheist/freethinker get-togethers. Locally, SacFAN has regular Meetups (www.meetup.com/SacFAN/) such as the Blasphemy Breakfast, Sing with the Mockingbirds, Book Club and the newest addition, the Sacramento Secular Family Facebook page which encourages family outings and events. Oh, and who says that Atheists aren't community-minded? I've seen many Meetups to feed the homeless, roadside garbage cleanup and much more. I am very proud to be a part of this fast-growing community.

Let's make that extra effort (myself included) and try to attend at least one meetup per month. We'll all make new friends and – just like church – do good things with people who look at the world the same way you do! The more we all get together, the stronger our own sense of community will be, and there's nothing but greatness to come of that.

Should we atheists somehow find a way to publicize the random acts of kindness we do locally? It's not for the ones doing the good deeds - we know we don't do good to be seen - but to help the rest of our local neighbors see the good atheists do? I'm interested in your thoughts. Write admin@sacramentoreason.org.

Atheist Church in the UK

Launched last month, as a gathering for non-believers, it is, in the words of emcee Sanderson Jones, "part foot-stomping show, part atheist church, all celebration of life".

A congregation of more than 300 crowded into a de-consecrated church to join the celebration one Sunday.

More like standup comedy, these atheist churches are popping up in the US. Is this a new religion? Will others be able to pull it off as well as these professional comedians?

Attendee, Gintare Karalyte, says: "I think people need that sense of connectedness because everyone is so singular right now, and to be part of something, and to feel like you are part of something. That's what people are craving in the world."

[Details here.](#)

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Highway Cleanup



Saturday, January 4, 9:00 to 11:30 AM

Elkhorn Blvd exit off Highway 99

Find us at the Park and Ride on the west side of that exit. Let's start the New Year off right by doing a favor to the environment and cleaning up a two-mile stretch of Highway 99 North of Elkhorn Blvd.

We provide everything you need to do an effective job including pickers, vests, trash bags, etc. Wet conditions cancel.

[Details here.](#)

Sacramento Reason



Coffee Church - Vespers at 3:00 pm

Panera Bread

2731 Del Paso Rd, Sacramento [Map here.](#)

Sunday, January 5, 3:00 to 6:00 pm.



Ring in the new year with too much caffeine and scintillating conversation!

Says Miss Karla, "I will keep having these coffee church meetings until I've converted EVERYONE to the glories of caffeine and conversation!" [Details here.](#)

Random Acts of Kindness.... From Atheists

When KXTV recently asked what Random Acts of Kindness atheists do over the holidays, many of you responded. Here are just a few of the things we did:

- Paid off overdue layaway bills for strangers (several of us did that)
- Pulled over to help an old man change a tire who seemed unable
- Traveled abroad to help with a project building toilets for children in poverty
- Larger tips to our restaurant workers during the holiday season
- Seven hours gift-wrapping at a charity table, unplanned
- Topping off strangers' gas tanks who aren't filling up
- Extra cash given for disaster relief
- Hundreds of pounds of people and pet food donated at HumanLight
- "Homeless Packs" made by hand and delivered to the needy

A religious leader interviewed on TV news said the atheist billboards don't make sense to him. Good first step! Keep thinking about things that don't make sense!

Proud of Our Community - Continued from Page 1

Let's hear from some of our community:

Will Scharff: I wrestled with the God concept for years, I only wish I could have seen billboards like these earlier in my life. If there were people who answered my questions, in my youth, by stating, "Yes, there may not be God after all" I could have saved many years of searching for a God and searching for some enlightened state of knowing this God. The one idea that I was indoctrinated to was not religion but the idea of God. After working with a monk for 10 years, I slowly came to the conclusion that the practices and the God idea were not fruitful in my life.

Mashariki Lawson

I was raised in the A.M.E. church and have fond memories of the love and sense of community I found with my

church family. However, from a very young age, the teachings of the Bible didn't ring true to me. I would sit in the pew fearing I was a bad person for questioning my pastor and the scripture. As I got older, I was able to see that faith in any particular religion or "higher power" didn't make someone better or worse than the next. People believe because deep down it feels right; I do not believe for the same reason: deep down it just feels right. Since accepting that about myself I have been a happier person. I hope this billboard campaign will let others who feel like I did know they are not alone or crazy. They are still a good person



Catherine Roy outside the Meet and Greet with her replica billboard.



Meet and Greet. Judy Saint addresses a standing room only crowd.



The Board of the Greater Sacramento Chapter of FFRF.

Participants in the billboard campaign explained their backgrounds, life without religion, and why they went up on a billboard.





Freethought Movie Night

Sunday, Jan 26, 5:00 - 8:00 pm

David's Clubhouse, 2250 Scarborough Drive, Lodi

\$10 chip in for dinner, bring your drink.

[More details here.](#)

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Karaoke at Torii's

Jan. 24, 8:00 PM
2401 East Orangeburg Avenue
#590, Modesto

Come sing, dance, or heckle with us at Torii's Japanese Restaurant.

For those of you with children, Torii's is a family restaurant until 10, so the kids can eat and sing with us if they like. Some of us are also known hit the dance floor at the first beats of Love Shack. [Details.](#)

Drinking Skeptically

January 17, 6:00p

Valley Brewing Co.
157 W. Adams Street, Stockton.

VB is a restaurant and bar located just off the Miracle Mile.

Don't drink? That's okay. Valley Brew has a wide selection of appetizers and entrees, even for the vegetarians in our group. [Details here.](#)

Listen Up By Cleo Kocol

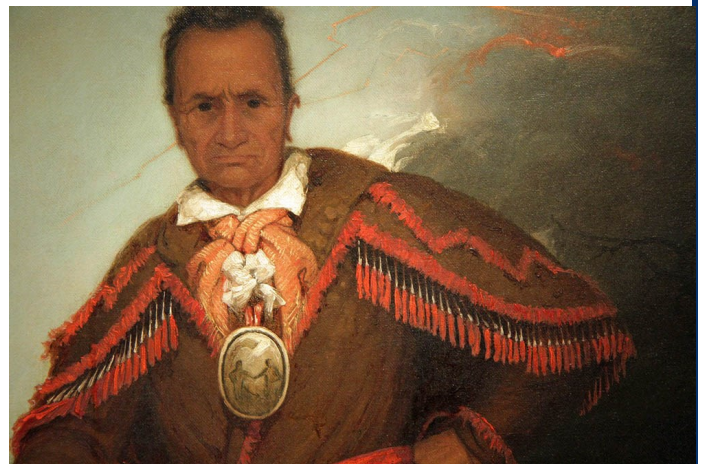
Sometimes we wonder what to say when challenged by religionists with their beliefs. We can and do put our own spin on words first uttered by Deist, Thomas Jefferson. "Question with boldness even the existence of a God." But Jefferson also said things that the "Born Again" crowd recite as evidence that he was a rooting-tooting Christian. We can also get as basic as Red Jacket. A Seneca chief and orator in upstate New York, Red Jacket spoke at Freethought meetings in New York State. I've excerpted the following from a speech he gave after a missionary had spoken in 1820.

"We understand that your religion is written in a book; if it was intended for us as well as you, why didn't the Great Spirit give it to us, and not only to us, but why did he not give to our forefathers the knowledge of that book, with the means of understanding it rightly?

"We only know what you tell us about it; how shall we know what to believe being so often deceived by the white people? You say there is one way to worship and serve the Great Spirit; if there is but one religion, why do you white people differ so much about it; why not all agree as you can all read the book?

"We also have a religion...it teaches us to be thankful for all the favors we receive, to love each other and to be united; we never quarrel about religion...."

During the early part of our country, many Americans were Deists, meaning they believed that some force, or god, created the world and then departed. Such Deist beliefs were necessary in a world where science had not yet uncovered the Big Bang or Evolution. But people could reason, and many did.



Thomas Paine Day, January 29

Read a wonderful article about one of our most important outspoken Founding Father freethinkers, Thomas Paine, by Ken Nahigian:

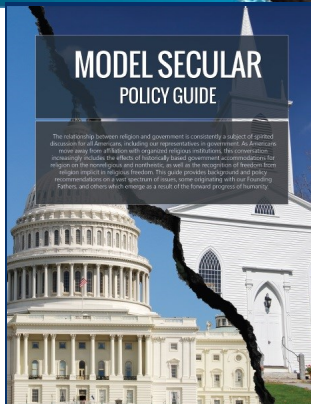
<http://sacmentoreason.org/TPaine.pdf>



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Secular Policy Guide

Finally, we can tell our elected leaders exactly what a secular America would look like. Here are our issues and concerns, put together by the Secular Coalition for America.

[Link here.](#)

The policies we advocate help to promote a religiously-neutral government. They are solid policies that are good for the country as a whole—both the religious and non-religious alike.

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Legal Watch By Arash Khosrowshahi

While Freethinkers often focus on the Wall separating Church and State via the Establishment Clause, issues of free exercise of religion are not as dwelled on. This makes sense, since many of us do not view our secularism to be anything resembling religious belief. But should this be the case? Why not try to benefit from laws that expand free exercise rights, especially if religious groups reap the benefits from such legislation?

One such statute that is relevant in current affairs is the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (or "RLUIPA"). RLUIPA enhances the burdens governments (whether federal, state, or local) have to meet before they can restrict the religious practices of a group, even if that law is neutral and does not target any particular religious group or practice. As its name implies, *RLUIPA* applies to prisoners (such as worshiping rituals that conflict with prison safety) and land use restrictions (such as city zoning ordinances that may interfere with existing churches, mosques, synagogues, etc.)

Some atheist groups are using the benefits of RLUIPA to operate their very own atheist "mega-churches," which is causing a dialog within the Freethinking community about whether this is an exercise in hypocrisy about our philosophical position, or whether this is an appropriate and necessary political tactic to utilize in order to strengthen the movement. While courts view non-belief as a type of religious belief in Establishment Clause cases, it is not as clear whether they would in the context of RLUIPA, or the Free Exercise Clause more generally. Would we want our legal system to adopt such a fiction about our position just because it may be politically expedient? This is a question the movement should have a unified answer to if we are to make our mark in litigation and politics.

Disclaimer: The statements here reflect the opinions of Arash Khosrowshahi, Attorney at Law. None of these statements should be construed as creating an attorney-client relationship, nor do they constitute legal advice. The statements are provided for educational purposes only.

AA Magazine in Barnes & Noble

American Atheist magazine made a deal with Barnes & Noble to be displayed prominently this month in every store. If we buy one, and thank the store managers, they might just keep stocking this valuable resource that helps atheists find sense of community in a monthly magazine, just like other special interest groups.



HAGSA Now on Facebook

Our local chapter of AHA, Humanist Association of the Greater Sacramento Area (HAGSA) now is on Facebook. Help us get the word out by joining us online. Find the page at [this link](#) then click "Join".



Letter to the Editor

"Regarding Page 2 of your December Newsletter: I understand your choice to be Religion Free, but it paints a very grim and untrue picture of how many Religions view life. It appears that there are undertones of hatred in the newsletter(s). Even worse is your group's view on Prayer that people only pray to god when they want something and don't want to work for it." *(Edited for space, name withheld)*

(Social I.Q. Lady responds) "Dear Peter, You are absolutely right. There are undertones of hatred in my article; hatred for religions that harm people.

I am 100% against religion. I stand by what I said that religion is an epistemological disease that permeates one's thinking process. It undermines the very core of what I find to be necessary for successful living: our brain's capacity to think rationally. If an adult wants to participate in a harmful activity, so be it. Unfortunately, religion is fed to innocent children. It is forced upon them in a seductive way until they are brainwashed; unable to think for themselves. This angers me. At its core, it is child abuse. Religion rebels against life. We have a wonderful and incredible opportunity to live a purposeful life here on earth, yet the religious live for a 'next' life. As a Humanist, I look for ways to embrace THIS life and in so doing I also want to take care of our home: Earth. We believe in the now-life, not the after-life.

Religion is based on the primacy of emotions. It is the opposite of critical thinking. It's based on the fear of the unknown. As atheists, we have to be ok with not knowing everything. In fact, it's one of the things that drives us to learn. We're curious and thirst for knowledge – real knowledge."

Social I.Q. Lady

Editor's Note: Articles with bylines reflect author opinions. Sacramento Reason is pleased to allow latitude to our columnists to express themselves, and welcomes reader input.

Proud of Our Community - Continued from Page 11

Name Withheld

"People are saying that the billboards are 'proselytizing' and 'evangelical atheism.' Many are asking why this campaign is necessary.

It's necessary for people like me. When I was 15 I realized that I didn't believe in (a) god(s). I spent YEARS thinking something was wrong with me. I searched for a higher power/religion that fit me - maybe I hadn't found the right one yet.

This campaign is out there for people who may be feeling like I did. It's necessary so that people like me don't feel so alone. You don't believe in (a) god(s) and that's okay. It's perfectly fine. Here are some others who are like you, and we have a community here in Sacramento.

It's not an affront to religion. It's an affirmation that not believing in (a) god(s) is okay.

I want this to be published anonymously. Although this runs counter to the goal of the campaign, I'm not at a place in my life that allows me to be openly atheist on a forum like this.

My family would not be very happy with me if my name were published and well, I guess this is a testament to the part of the article about the fear behind coming out."

In response to such an overwhelming show of freethinking in our community from the billboards, a Letter to Editor in the Sacramento Bee, upset with us apparently, wants us to know she is a free-thinker, too, because she is free to think the way her church does. Someone needs to explain to her what freethinker means... :-)

Proud of Our Community - Continued

Francesca Reitano

"It is important that like-minded people – especially those with minority views – find each other, know we are not alone. It is hard to describe the gratitude and joy of the moment when I realized I had a place among other like-minded atheists, freethinkers, nonbelievers, and humanists. People that are intelligent, informed, engaged, thoughtful, moral, and compassionate. That I was part of a wonderful 'we.' Maybe my friends' billboards will help someone else have such a freeing moment. It is my sincere hope.

To anyone who believes we do not have a right to express our lack of belief publicly, please look beyond yourself. You are entitled to your views and beliefs; I do not wish to change or marginalize them. I ask for the same consideration. We live in a wonderful, diverse world. I no longer wish to hide my views in a closet."

Paul Cox

"The billboards are a way of introducing atheists to theists. Most theists at best have presupposed atheist positions on a number of things without ever having actually met one of us. This campaign lets them know what type of people we are. It also helps immensely in letting those who may be doubting religion know that they don't have to choose between belief and community. That indeed they can have a community with which they share common viewpoints and interests and they don't have to be ostracized because of their doubt."

Dina Nolte Botello

"I was raised Presbyterian and was especially close to my grandmother, a devout member of her church. When I was 13, I began to question the Christian tenet that people who aren't Christian will go to hell. I mean, whole nations of people are going to hell? That is an idea I could not and cannot believe. After that, all my beliefs in a God or religion disappeared.

I was frightened though because I thought I was the only one. It was only when I saw atheists on the Phil Donahue Show about a year later that I knew I wasn't alone. I felt at peace with the fact that I have different beliefs than my family, and that's OK.

The important thing is how we treat others, not what we believe. I believe the intent of the atheist billboards is to let people know this."

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"Every reporter pushed to know how much money the billboards cost, but I wouldn't let them control the message by going there. My response was, 'If a group spends even 5 cents, that just shows you how important it is to that group.' They also kept repeating the word 'offensive' a lot. Reporters do try to create division and controversy. It helps their bottom line. You can't let them control the message."

-- Judy Saint, President, Greater Sacramento Chapter of Freedom From Religion Foundation

“Did you notice that in each on-camera interview I did, I wore the same ‘Ask an Atheist’ t-shirt? I wanted the word atheist out loud and proud. But after doing 4 interviews with different stations over 2 weeks, I was waiting for some church somewhere to take up a collection for that poor atheist woman who only has one shirt! Heh heh. I’d have taken them up on it, then promptly spray painted ‘atheist’ on the new shirt as well!” -- Judy Saint, President, Greater Sacramento Chapter of FFRF

Proud of Our Community - Continued

Janet Thew

“I come from Quaker pioneer stock, but was raised generic Protestant. I believed in God because that's the default position for most Americans. College opened my mind to new ways of thinking. I came to believe no loving god/parent would allow such endless suffering, and that the universe was awe-inspiring in its own right, no need for creators. Nature became my touchstone.

If Americans were truly as welcoming as we claim, I would not have felt the need for billboards. If I were treated as an equal, in society and in our deliberately secular government, without religious people constantly trying to impose their beliefs, I would have remained quiet. But all despised groups have had to leave the closet, from blacks to feminists to gays...now us. We're basically good folks, just like you. Please don't allow religious dogma to make us less equal.”

Brian Lambert

“For those of us who question religion, these billboard confirm that we are not alone. They are expressing thoughts that can be awkward to share with strangers. Did the Bee question those “Judgment Day is Coming” billboards with the same gusto these are getting? One single religion and talk of its god permeates many parts of our culture and government functions. This is surprising, as there are at least twenty one different religions practiced in the USA today according to Wikipedia. Worldwide the number is almost one hundred, not counting all the long lost gods such as Saturn. With every church displaying some kind of proclamation about sin, Jesus, heaven, limbo, a soul, a devil, god, hell, or saving something, it's great to hear the brave voices in these billboards. This is especially true now that the majority of us do not belong to any organized religion.”

Rick Tracewell

“While I have my private opinions on religion and those who follow its doctrine, the public side of me is laser focused on the absolute separation of church and state.

I believe that the more people who see atheists as regular, caring, responsible, loving parents and members of their community, the more progress we will make against the religious dogma they've been forced to live their entire lives.

With more awareness, logic and reason shown to those who have likely always privately questioned their faith with the thinking part of their brain, the more allies we will gain at the polls and our own community of non-theists.

I may not see religion put in the place it deserves (a place of little to no political power) in my lifetime, but I hope that my children and grandchildren will see a more peaceful United States of America filled with logic and reason. That would be an amazing legacy for us to leave.”

FREEDOM DEPENDS UPON FREETHINKERS.

Join FFRF, the largest freethought association in North America

Response to the billboards is unusually quiet. Some believers have even thanked us for putting them up - seriously. They say it is important for them to learn about us. Other than some crazies who love to comment under online articles, there was almost no response to speak of. After the first day, not a single letter to the editor of the Bee, for example. Probably this is due to the large number of happy faces - 55 beautiful, vibrant, happy billboards, and everyone's very clear message.

Proud of Our Community - Continued

Name Withheld *(edited)*

"I was raised religious and I began to question the Christian tenet that people who aren't Christian will go to hell. That is an idea I could not and cannot believe. After that, all my beliefs in a God or religion disappeared. I was frightened, though, because I thought I was the only one. It was only when I saw other atheists speaking out that I knew I wasn't alone. I felt at peace with the fact that I have different beliefs than my family, and that it was OK. The important thing is how we live our lives, not what we believe. I believe the intent of the atheist billboards is to let people know this."

Joshua Benjestorf A few things that might change as a result of these 55 billboards is public awareness that: 1) There exists a network of non-believers reaching out to other non-believers who may be unaware that such a network exists 2) atheists are not immoral people, a very common misconception that needs to change, 3) atheists can lead lives full of meaning and purpose by making their own and therefore don't need to depend on God for it, 4) to bring some balance to the public scene by letting the public known that the religious do not have a monopoly on this holiday season, ..., etc. The list goes on. I'm sure that there are others who can add to it."

Keith Lowell Jensen

(He was asked why do a billboard for atheism)

"If I were to list my complaints about religions, the evangelizing would be very low on my list. If you believe something is good, share it. If I wasn't on that billboard what would be? A beer ad?

And I remember realizing I didn't believe when I was 14 or 15. It was very lonely. To me, billboards like this say, 'Having doubts? Don't believe? It's okay. You're not alone.'"

This Facebook post sums it up: "I would love to be a part of this movement. So exciting!"

And another, from elsewhere in the country: "Makes me want to move to Sacramento!!"

Judy Saint

"My favorite Facebook comment: **'I can't feel prouder of my community.'**

We've gone from hiding in the closet to so many of us feeling proud. I'll treasure that quote forever."

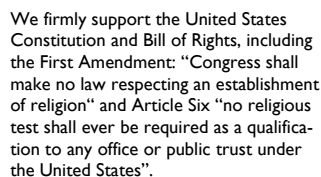


Special Treat - Click Below and Listen

From Rick Tracewell, who writes our Family Time column (see page 9). Rick says he does sing professionally, doing voice overs and so on. This is a duet with his daughter, Kelsey, which they recorded for our winter solstice listening. "Baby, It's Cold Outside."

<https://soundcloud.com/rick-tracewell/baby-its-cold-outside-duet-w>





Can I make tax deductible donations?
Yes! Many freethinking groups are 501c3. See Page 7 for details.

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Truth does not demand belief.

Scientists do not join hands every Sunday,
singing 'yes, gravity is real! I will have faith!
I will be strong! I believe in my heart that
what goes up, up, up must come down. Amen!'

If they did that, we would think they are pretty insecure about it.

~ Dan Barker

Sacramento Area's Freethinking Calendar

The Sacramento Area has its own event calendar for atheists, skeptics, humanists, and all other freethinkers. Sacramento Area groups love to cooperate and mingle, all supporting each other in these times of religious zeal. The Sac Coalition of Reason, which maintains this automatically-updated calendar, is not a club or group with a Board, or rules, but is a resource directing anyone interested to find local freethinking groups that suit them. Bookmark this calendar on your devices. It's a handy one-stop reference for almost everything going on up and down the valley.

<http://unitedcor.org/sacramento/page/>

