

**Upcoming Events** ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖

➤ **Freethought Day Festival ★ ★**

Changes are brewing, and have brewed, for this annual festival of reason. For one, it had a growth spurt. No longer "Sacramento Freethought Day," it is now [California Freethought Day](#), a larger, grander, more freethinky event. And it is no longer AOF's baby. It left the nest, it has spread its wings. We are so proud ... excuse us a moment (\*sniff\*).

Of course AOF continues to support the annual event we began in 2002. So grab a Sharpie now and mark your calendar for the **Fifteenth Annual Freethought Day Festival**, when our bright community joins hands to bring you a menagerie of wonders, an arabesque of dreams, a fabulous flight of free minds, and so much fun you'll want to get the t-shirt. (Ohyes, there'll be a t-shirt.)

**California Freethought Day** is a jubilee, a party, a gala, a celebration of secularism, a salute to independent and rational thought, open to the public, free (that's to say, *freeeeee*), combining the fun and festivity of a fair with the education and activism of a conference. It features speakers, entertainers, food, prizes, a "family fun zone," vendors, exhibits, panels, art ... and more.

Planners have packed the day with events to entertain you as much as uplift you, and to nourish you with

knowledge. For now, projected speakers/panellists/entertainers will include podcaster & AAA President [Aaron Ra](#), activist Nas Ishmael of [Ex-Muslims of North America](#), Indian rationalist [Sanal Edamaruku](#), author [David McAfee](#), rock-goddess [Shelley Segal](#), comedian [Steve Hill](#), poet [Victor Harris](#), [David Silverman](#) of American Atheists, [Tom Manger](#) of the Secular Coalition for California, [Amanda Metskas](#) from Camp Quest, student whistle-blower [Cindy Fisk](#), and many more -- a spectrum of noted writers and activists, all bright candles to light the darkness.

*Note*, the main event (Sunday) is *free to attend* (though CFD accepts donations with blinding smiles), and advance registration (also free, see <http://freethoughtday.org/>) will make you eligible for delightful & toothsome door prizes. Also a fun Supporters Reception (less free, but worth it) will occur the evening before, with a leadership seminar for secular leaders, and a Secular Advocacy Day the final day.

To learn more, visit <http://freethoughtday.org/> (or see contact info below).

If you like to staff a table at CFD, vend, volunteer, sponsor, help promote, help plan, set up, clean up - then please do contact the chairman now. Sooner is better. Because hands that help ... are beautiful hands.

**Location:** Capitol Park, North steps of the State Capitol Bldg, map: <http://tinyurl.com/j9c6qob>

**Contact:** 209-610-0651, or email: [Chair@FreethoughtDay.org](mailto:Chair@FreethoughtDay.org)

➤ **Philosophers' Table: Omniscient, omnipotent & ... mean**

October's Philosopher's Table will tackle one of the Great Questions. If a benign Big Guy exists who knows all, can do all, why do little babies suffer and die of disease or starvation? Why do millions experience unending misery every year? Why can't I find my car keys? And most baffling: Why worship a cosmic being who *can* help, but *doesn't*? As pain piles on pain, we might expect the willing suspension of disbelief to collapse ... or should it?

These are tough chews, and don't assume either believers or skeptics have the answers. We don't, we just like to chew on them.

**Sunday, October 16, 2016 11AM – 5:30PM**



**Sunday, October 30, 2016, 12-1PM**



The basic rule at AOF's Philosophers' Tables: respect each other's opinions and feelings, listen, think, and no denying your own existence--it makes our head hurt.

**Location:** Reason Center, 1824 Tribute Rd, Suite A, Sacramento. Map: <https://goo.gl/iVQL8z>.

*Is it solipsistic in here, or is it just me?*

➤ **Halloween Wild Food Day: A Haunted Potluck**

**Sunday, October 30, 2016, 1-3PM**

*... hullo, my name is ... I don't have a name, they took it. i live here, at reason center, in the walls ... deep in the walls with the whispers, with the spiders. sometimes i come out at night. i rearrange the chairs and ... do things. i used to work here, but they said people who talk to spiders and do not wash just weren't right for rc. i tried to answer that, but then i vomited blood. so they said, go. and so here i am ... in the cool, deep walls ...*

*but now the spiders tell me rc will have a party, a halloween party. what fun! i like that. because halloween food tastes like ~~the hearts of children~~ candy corn and fluffy clowns. i mean nice clowns, not the evil ones. so i want to help. i have ideas for you. aren't i nice? he-he-he-heh*

*like dried pears, slice them up just right and they become ears ... hard-boil some eggs to make the scaffolding for little skulls or eyeballs ... use hot dogs wrapped with biscuit dough to make mummies, see the picture, so cute! ... or cut a banana in half, dot with raisens, and suddenly, ohmy, two ghosts! ... join string cheese to pretzel sticks to make witchy brooms ... or, or, olives are eyes ... even a watermelon, sculpt it just right, it can be just about anything nice-awful ... guacamole, well, you can imagine how pretty ... and gelatin? add some milk and food-coloring, find the right mold (not fungus mold, a container mold), and it's a masterpiece!*

*it will be a halloween potluck feast for you and your freethinking friends, so come costumed or not, be as daring as you care, and create & bring your favorite autumnal dish or beverage ... hot food? it's OK if you have a hotplate or electric crockpot or something like that ...*

*oh, shh, i have to go, but do look at [Google Images for "halloween food"](#) for more ideas, and don't be scared ...*

*we will nosh, enjoy haunted music, and tell halloween tales ... the hook, the hook! ... maybe I'll even come out and join you. he-he-he-heh ...*



**Location:** Reason Center, 1824 Tribute Rd, Suite A, Sacramento. Map: <https://goo.gl/iVQL8z>.

*Bring a haunted dish, and your favorite 'ween story to tell!*

➤ **Board of Directors Meeting**

**Monday, November 14, 2016, 7-9PM**

Another AOF planning meeting for AOF Directors and Officers, but open to all interested friends and members. Especially those with ideas!

You are welcome to join us, meet the board, and share your wisdom with AOF.

**Location:** Reason Center, 1824 Tribute Rd, Suite A, Sacramento. Map: <https://goo.gl/iVQL8z>.



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**Book Review: The Great Mortality : An Intimate History of the Black Death**

By John Kelley (Harper Perennial, 2006, 400 pgs)

Take a guess at humankind's worst disaster. Was it World War II, Maoism, Stalinism, the fall of Rome, the Dark Ages, the Church? Nope. In terms of proportional economic loss, cultural chaos and body count, it was likely the Black Death, which stormed across Europe from 1347 to 1352, erasing up to 60% of the population. In *The Great Mortality*, John Kelly chronicled the Death's grim surge and ebb: how it began, the scars it left, and what it must have been like to live while the world was ending.

The plague had three forms: Bubonic, Pneumonic and Septicemic. The worst was the last, often killing within hours. It rose first in Mongolia, or perhaps northern China, around CE 1300. A climate shift had encouraged a population boom of marmots, and new trade routes invited the bacteria (*Yersinia pestis*) to make a leap to humans. A tendril of it drifted to

Crimea, jumped to Constantinople, then darted to Sicily, Italy and Spain. From there it metastasized madly across Europe, raging as far as Iceland and Norway, everywhere killing, killing, killing, fading back a bit, then rising to kill again, before it sauntered off at last, sated, into the Russian steppes (but revisiting well until the 1600's).

For us resting in our soft chairs, armed with some knowledge of sanitation, vaccines and antibiotics, it may be difficult to imagine, but envision villages and cities depopulated, carts piled with stinking bodies, mass graves, "death ships" crewed by corpses careening into ports; and imagine black waves of diseased rats boiling off those ships, drooling bloody froth, a death warrant for the city. Think of panics, purges and pogroms, anti-Semitic riots kindled by rumors of poisoned wells. The worst of it was the fear of helping the sick—even touching a victim's clothing could be fatal. So families deserted their own fathers, mothers, children. Those who stayed with loved ones were often sealed within their houses, healthy and sick alike, a communal death sentence.

Here is horror in zero gauge, sprawled larger than life, full of petty gestures and heroism, cowardice and courage, all etched in lapidary detail. Most fascinating for freethinkers are the fractures left in religious devotion, as people realized, eventually, that prayer and supplication were useless, and the clergy seemed even more susceptible than laymen. So the Plague may have planted the seed of the Renaissance, to bloom a century later.

The Great Mortality is a great read. Recommended—if you are feeling well today.

*Ken Nahigian, reprinted from July 2006*

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### So Far, So Good

- James C. Davis, from Epilogue to *The Human Story*

From Labrador to Coral Sea  
Our lives were stunted, bleak, unfree.  
We shared our huts with rats and fleas  
And lost our children to disease.  
(Our holy men would sigh and nod  
and tell us, "That's the will of God.")

But then, with steam, vaccines and votes,  
Our fortunes rose like tide-raised boats.  
We'd more to eat; drew breath more years;  
Dethroned (or worse) our tsars, emirs;  
Sent men and mirrors as our eyes  
To search the black galactic skies.  
And in our cells, till then unseen,  
We found our Fates, our djinns: our genes.

The world's still cruel, that's understood.  
But once was worse! So far so good.



## When you donate blood...

Don't wait for a vampire. Donate at Sacramento's BloodSource. And if you do, use AOF Blood Source ID# 4857. Numerous BloodSource Donation Centers exist -- find them listed at: <http://www.bloodsource.org/Locations>. AOF gets no perks when members donate, but it saves lives, and shows we can serve the community. And what can be more Humanistic than donating blood?

## Support Reason Center

Reason Center opened in July 2014. Since then it has hosted over 200 freethought events. Currently the Center has twelve partner organizations.

The Reason Center mission is to support a social and intellectual community for freethinkers, contribute to society through education and community service, advance the civic understanding and acceptance of freethinkers, and uphold the separation of religion and government.

To continue its good work, "RC" relies on continued support for its members and donors. Please consider making a contribution to the Reason Center. To set up a monthly or one-time donation visit ReasonCenter.org. It's easy. It will amaze you how easy.



## Support AOF

If you shop at **Amazon.com**, try this: do the shopping at [smile.amazon.com/ch/68-0325762](http://smile.amazon.com/ch/68-0325762). What's the difference? Nothing, prices are identical, service as sweet. But AOF will receive a small residual for every dollar you spend. This will enable AOF to bring in more smoking great speakers from out of Sacramento. Be smart, try it!

## ☞ Are you a voting member of Atheists and Other Freethinkers?

Big news. AOF is updating its bylaws—and needs your help! As a democratic association, AOF requires a membership vote on major bylaw revisions. Please see [http://media.aofonline.org/AOFBylaws\\_SuggestedChanges\\_2016.pdf](http://media.aofonline.org/AOFBylaws_SuggestedChanges_2016.pdf) for the proposed changes. AOF will host a special business meeting soon to discuss and vote on these. (If you have no Internet access, call AOF, we will *mail* you a copy of the new bylaws. That's how eager we are for your ideas!)

<h2>Subscription / Membership Form</h2> <p><i>Mail to: AOF, PO Box 15182, Sacramento CA 95851-0182 (Attn: Membership)</i></p>	
Name(s) _____	Phone: _____
Street _____	Apt. # _____
City _____	State _____ ZIP + 4 _____
E-mail address (please print!) _____	
<i>E-mail is required for newsletter delivery.</i>	
Questions, concerns? Call AOF, 916-304-3796.	
<b>Your Membership Level (annual, please circle):</b> Patron (\$50) Family (\$30) Individual (\$20) Low-income (\$10)	
Basic Dues : \$ _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Please check here if you do NOT want your name on lists occasionally provided to groups similar to AOF.  <input type="checkbox"/> Please check here if you DO want to be an AOF Activist (e-mail address required).
Additional Donation : \$ _____	
Total enclosed : \$ _____	
<small>AOF is a 501(c)(3) Educational Association, EIN 68-0325762. Dues &amp; Donations are tax-deductible as permitted by law. Non-members may receive the AOF Newsletter for free on request (email only).</small>	

## Not a member? Then join us! (See form above.)

AOF is a 501(c)(3) non-profit association, FEIN 68-0325762. General Meetings are free and open to the public. AOF also hosts civic service projects, dinners, movie outings, parties. To see what awaits you, visit the website, [www.aofonline.org](http://www.aofonline.org); or contact AOF at our 24/7 voice-mail: 916-447-3589; or write to PO Box 15182, Sacramento, CA 95851-0182. Telepathic? Think loudly.

AOF Acting President: Kristi Craven. Vice-president: Mynga Futrell. Editor: Fran Evanisko. And all the rest of us, their elves, their daemons, their minions.

"The purpose of Atheists and Other Freethinkers (AOF) 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."



Thanks to xkcd.com  
(If you understand this, you're a nerd.)