



AOF

Atheists and Other Freethinkers

AOF News & Views – Newsletter for September 2018

✧ ✧ Upcoming AOF Events ✧ ✧

➤ Free Movie Nights!

Friday, Sept 7 & Sept 21, 2018, 7pm – 10pm

Twice a month, [Reason Center](#) (RC) and AOF join hands to host a **Free Movie Night** under an excellent [MPLC License](#). The License prohibits us from telling you the movie title. But we can hint.

The **first** is a 2015 British documentary, directed by John Dower, that replays violent incidents a former senior official and other ex-Scientologists witnessed in the Church of Scientology. (The Church has denounced the film, of course!) The **second** is a cerebral horror film, released in 2017, written and directed by Jordan Peele, about a gentleman of color who finds a disturbing secret when he meets his white girlfriend's family. It received or was nominated for numerous awards.

Can't guess? Don't worry. Just contact Reason Center (see contact info below). They'll tell you, then you can tell anyone.

Movie Night is an informal, picnic-style family evening. The venue has a huge silver screen and a dynamic sound system. Chairs are available, but it's OK to bring comfy blankets, pillows, lawn chairs and your own snacks & beverage. RC may provide fluffy, buttery theatre popcorn. Children are welcome if they're cool children -- and if you judge the movie appropriate for them.

This is especially for Reason Center members, but non-members are welcome too. RC may beg a small donation (voluntary) to cover costs. How can you become a member? Sign up at <http://reasoncenter.com/donate/>. Membership is a measly \$5 a month, is tax deductible if you itemize, and the perks (like this one) will fall to you like stardust.

Contact: Reason Center, 916-426-6416, or email <reasoncenter (at) gmail (dot) com>

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

Free Movie Nights occur two Friday evenings each month. Suggest your own fave film for next time!



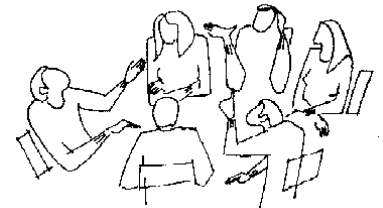
➤ AOF Directors Meeting

Tuesday, Sept 11, 2018, 7pm – 9pm

An AOF planning meeting for AOF Directors & officers, but open to all interested friends and members. These happen about every other month. You are welcome to join us, meet the Board, share your ideas, and keep an eye on those scallywags.

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

Contact: See <http://www.aofonline.org/contact.html>.



➤ Adopt-a-Highway Cleanup

Saturday, Sept 22, 2018, 9am - 11am

If you visit the two-mile stretch of Highway 99 from Elkhorn Boulevard to Elverta Road, you'll see that Sacramento-area freethinkers have "adopted" it. Since July 1995 we have cared for it and nurtured it, keeping it clean of litter and debris, and have received recognition for our work. It's one of our more successful civic efforts, proving that freethinkers can serve the community.

So join us, please join us! Enjoy a morning commune with nature, and do a good deed for the environment and local area wildlife. The refuse that we collect would otherwise ultimately be swept by the rain into tributaries and into the ocean, degrading habitat, and leading to a slow death for many sea creatures.

As usual, the stalwart activity captain will provide all safety equipment, including comfortable, natty hard-hats and gloves, stylish safety vests, collection bags, and handy trash pickers. The clean-up takes a scant two hours. Please dress for the season. It may be a good idea to bring a backpack or fanny-pack to carry 3 or 4 trash bags.

Contact: 916-447-2169 (Don Knutson), or see <http://www.aofonline.org/contact.html>.

Location: Caltrans Park-&-Ride lot, W. Elkhorn Blvd. Map: <https://goo.gl/maps/zw3Rwct9yR52>.

To find it, travel north from Sacramento on I-5, past the Sleeptrain Arena. Take the "Highway 99 - Yuba City, Marysville" exit. Exit at Elkhorn Boulevard less than a mile north. Turn left, cross the overpass, and the park-&-ride lot will be on your left.

Note: It is a great event for older children, but please leave smalls safe at home!



➤ TBA

Sunday, Sept 30, 2018, 1pm – 3pm

TBA means *To Be Announced*. For once the AOF Program Committee was stumped for a speaker- or meeting-idea. Exploring options, it will update the AOF website as details coalesce. If they coalesce. We like coalescing, and you can help! Know of a well-informed, talented, articulate speaker on any pertinent topic? Nursing a meeting idea? Send a message via the AOF Contact Page (see below) to the Program Chair. S/he's always eager to hear of new talent, new concepts, anything fun and interesting. Without coalescence, this meeting may default to an "open mic," in which case you may be a speaker. Brrr ...

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

Contact: See <http://www.aofonline.org/contact.html>.



✧ ✧ Other Upcoming Events ✧ ✧

➤ Writing Your Freethought Memoir

Saturday, Sept 29, 2018, 1pm – 4pm

Not an official AOF event. But you should know!

Think of your journey from dogma to reason. Was it a single "aha" moment or a slow tidal change? In fact, pop media are soaked & soggy with stories of faith, but you rarely hear the other side. Now Reason Center will host a workshop on writing your journey, so others can share the epiphanies, the eureka moments, and perhaps find their own enlightenment. This workshop will show how to bridge faith-based divides, how dismantle biases, and how to manage the fear of revealing your personal details. At the end you will have a rough draft of a memoir, story or personal essay, and a clear direction for its completion. But note: *Pre-registration is required, see below.*



Your guide will be Joey Garcia – the same wise Joey who writes the "Ask Joey" relationship advice column for the *Sacramento News & Review*, and has spoken to AOF previously. She is a talk show host with NewsRadio KFBK, the on-air Relationship Expert for Fox 40 News, and the author of the award-winning book, *When Your Heart Breaks, It's Opening to Love*. Originally from Belize, Joey launched the first-ever Belize Writers' Conference in 2018.

Workshop Costs:

- * **Early-bird: \$30 through Sunday, Sept. 23.**
- * **Regular fee: \$35 after Sept. 23.**
- * **Registration closes Thursday, Sept. 27 at midnight.**
- * **To register see: <https://www.paypal.me/askjoey>**

Contact: Joey Garcia at joey@newsreview.com, or call Reason Center at 916-426-6416.

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

➤ California Freethought Day

Sunday, October 14, 2018, 10am

Mark your calendar for the 17th Annual **California Freethought Day Festival**, a public jubilee, a gala, and a salute to independent and rational thought. As ever it is open to all and free as your mind. It will feature music, tablers, speakers, and so much more ... really, you must be there to experience it.

For details on this event, please see <http://freethoughtday.org/>.

AOF encourages you to [sign up now](#). But, sign up *why*? It's free, isn't it? Yes, the main event (Sunday) is free to attend, but advance registration (just as free) makes you eligible for delightful & toothsome prizes. Also a fun Supporters Reception (less free, but worth it) will occur the evening before, and a secular leadership seminar that morning.

Location: Capitol Park, State Capitol Bldg North Steps, map: <https://goo.gl/maps/EtFcJBjBzi>.

Contact : 209-610-0651, or email: Chair (at) FreethoughtDay (dot) org.



➤ Los Angeles Secular Day of the Dead

Thursday, November 1, 2108, starting 6pm

The Freethought Society in Los Angeles wants you to know that 2018's traditional Day of the Dead celebration, *Día de los Muertos*, has taken on a decidedly nonreligious atmosphere in LA as the ever-popular event goes Secular!

Secularists will gather on Thursday, Nov 1, 2018, at La Fonda Restaurant, 2501 Wilshire Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90057. The Freethought Society invites you to join them. Cost is **\$35**, and includes entertainment from a Mariachi band, dinner, speakers and surprise guests!

Reservation tickets are available through Eventbrite at this link:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/secular-day-of-the-deadsecular-dia-de-los-muertos-tickets-48251020100>



"Contrary to the name, the Secular Day of the Dead event is actually a celebration of life," said **Aurora Ignacio**, a Trustee of Sunday Assembly Los Angeles. **Margaret Downey**, a Secular Day of the Dead organizer and president of the Freethought Society said, "Nontheist Hispanics view the Secular Day of the Dead as a perfect way to remember the legacy of deceased loved one in a way that does not require prayer, church, or any religious dogma. To nontheists, our legacies are our afterlife."

Location: La Fonda Restaurant, 2501 Wilshire Blvd Los Angeles, CA 90057

Contact: The Freethought Society, Margaret Downey, (610) 357-9432, margaret@ftsociety.org, or visit www.FtSociety.org.

More events ...

We keep you busy. To discover yet more events, please see the Sacramento Coalition of Reason calendar at:

<https://unitedcor.org/event-calendar-2/>.

Support Reason Center

Since Reason Center opened in July 2014, it has hosted well over 200 freethought events. Currently it has twelve partner organizations. Its 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.

In other words, "RC" is here to serve *you*. To continue its work, it relies on support from members and donors. Please consider making a contribution to the Reason Center. To become an RC member, or to set up a monthly or one-time donation, visit the website, ReasonCenter.org.



When you donate blood...

Please consider donating blood at the BloodSource, and if you do, use AOF BloodSource 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 is good for public relations. And what can be more humanistic than donating blood?

Freedom From Religion TV Show in Sacramento

Beginning Sunday, September 2, the Freedom From Religion Foundation will air a weekly TV show "Freethought Matters" in 9 US cities. Sacramento is one! The show will air on KQCA-MY (58) each Sunday at 8:30am. (The first episode to feature Julia Sweeney.)

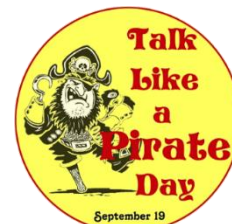
Tell friends about it, give it the support it deserves. Visit <https://ffrf.org/news/freethought-matters>, the "Freethought Matters" website, for more information.

✧ ✧ Secular Holidays ✧ ✧

➤ Talk Like a Pirate Day Wednesday, Sept 19, 2018

Avast ye lubbers. International **Talk Like a Pirate Day** is a day to show off your Piratude. Created in 1995 by John Baur and Mark Summers, promulgated to worldwide popularity by humorist Dave Barry in a syndicated column, we can celebrate this secular holiday in many ways: garb like pirates, talk like pirates, swill grog like pirates, stagger and fall down like pirates. Wait, what's grog anyway?

Never mind, just find some and swill. Then haul your keel, shiver your timbers, and do wha' ever else seem right and proper, 'cause it be a day to celebrate. Info ahoy at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Talk_Like_a_Pirate_Day.



➤ Banned Book Week

Sunday, Sept 23 – Saturday, Sept 29, 2018

September 23 marks **Banned Books Week**, a celebration of the Freedom to Read, established by the American Library Association in 1981 in response to growing attempts to ban books in public libraries across the country. First observed in 1982, we celebrate it each year during the last week of September, to remind our fellow citizens not to take for granted their freedom to read the written word.

Bookstores and libraries across the United States celebrate Banned Books Week with displays of and readings from books that have been banned or threatened throughout history. Such works range from the Bible and Thomas Paine's *The Age of Reason* to Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series, and has included books on atheism, science, tolerance, social issues, love and sex, and philosophy. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Thomas Paine, Voltaire, Aristophanes, Margaret Sanger, Mary Shelley, Ambrose Bierce, Charles Darwin, George Eliot, Mark Twain and John Locke were all victims of censorship during their lifetimes and still face censorship in some sections of the world today.



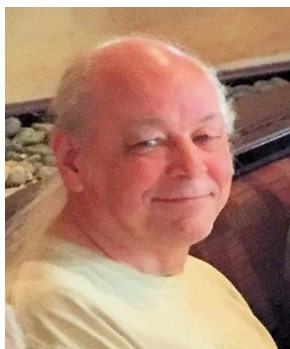
Banned Books Week stands as a reminder that freedom is precious, that without constant diligence and defiance we can lose it, even in the United States. If anything, this should motivate freethinkers everywhere to read banned books, discuss them, and protect the rights of all Americans to read what they want, when they want, in libraries across the country.

Banned Books Week sponsors include the ...

[American Booksellers Association](#),
[American Booksellers Foundation of Free Expression](#),
[American Library Association](#) (ALA),
[Association of American Publishers](#),
[American Society of Journalists and Authors](#), and
[National Association of College Stores](#).

It is endorsed by [the Library of Congress Center for the Book](#).

Visit AOF member Paul Charbonneau



Paul Charbonneau, active member of our freethought community, suffered a severe stroke in May 2018 and is currently (through September 2018) living at **Genesis American River Center at 3900 Garfield Avenue in Carmichael** for physical rehab.

You might remember him as one of the four artists who showed their skills at the AOF monthly meeting in February 2018. He's the one who made remarkably beautiful drawings of people.

His diligent participation in physical rehabilitation has restored his ability to move around on his own but his left hand never lost its strong grip. He rolls around the interior of the facility in his wheelchair, gets outside (with supervision) for some fresh air, writes messages with a pen or pencil, and can even message on his cell phone (which he advises is very tedious because his less-affected (left) hand moves slowly. That's remarkable progress.

He can't yet speak, but enjoys visits tremendously. His conversation skills are currently limited to yes or no answers and written answers. He clearly understands all he hears and his intellect is intact, so don't let language stop you from visiting.

Do visit. He'll be very grateful for your company. Visiting hours are from 7:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. at the address above. No need to make prior arrangements. He'll be there throughout September. *[Thanks to Susan Mclean for this notice.]*

For who that has understanding will suppose that the first, and second, and third day, and the evening and the morning, existed without a sun and moon and stars? And that the first day was, as it were, also without a sky? And who is so foolish as to suppose that God, after the manner of a husbandman, planted a paradise in Eden, towards the east, and placed in it a tree of life, visible and palpable, so that one tasting of the fruit by the bodily teeth obtained life? And again, that one was a partaker of good and evil by masticating what was taken from the tree? And if God is said to walk in the paradise in the evening, and Adam to hide himself under a tree, I do not suppose that anyone doubts that these things figuratively indicate certain mysteries, the history having taken place in appearance and not literally.

~ Origen of Alexandria, respected Church father, "De Principiis"

Petitionary Prayer

Comments by Ed T. Babinski (from 2004)

In modern scientific studies on the effectiveness of prayer in healing, even the most ardent prayer-advocates claim relatively meager physical results, and the overall interpretation remains controversial. You get far more significant results in the physical world from simply taking vitamin and mineral supplements, watching your diet and weight, and lowering your risks via rational means, such as not driving with bald tires in the rain, or not driving too fast to get to church or a prayer meeting on time.

One of the earliest serious studies of the effectiveness of prayer was by mathematician Francis Galton, who examined the longevity of clergy. He reasoned that clergy should be the longest lived of all since they were the most "prayerful class" and among the most prayed for. But when Galton compared the longevity of eminent clergy with eminent doctors and lawyers, the clergy were the shortest lived of the three groups. In this study of the clergy, he cited a previous study by Guy (Galton wasn't the first to think of analyzing prayer statistically but usually gets the credit) where Guy found prayer did not protect royalty, who were much prayed for, when compared to other members of the aristocracy. In analyzing the data on royalty, Galton concluded: "Sovereigns are literally the shortest lived of all who have the advantage of affluence."

Galton looked for other statistical data. He examined the insurance rates for ships. He reasoned that ships carrying missionaries and pilgrims should have lower rates since frequent praying by the occupants should decrease the number of accidents. He found that the rates were the same; ships with missionaries and pilgrims sank as often as other ships.

Following up on Galton's statistical studies on prayer, Rupert Sheldrake, a 20th century Cambridge-trained plant biologist, did one of his own, examining the effects of prayer in India. Most people there prefer having a son, and a tremendous amount of praying goes into the effort to produce one. Sheldrake examined statistics of live male births in India and used data from England as a control where the preference for sons was less strong. He found that in both England and India there were 106 males to 100 females, just as in every other country. He stated, "if this amount of psychic effort and praying of holy men were working, you would expect on average the percentage of live male births to be higher."

Also on the topic of the effectiveness of prayers, I might mention that recently over a hundred children were taken captive in a schoolhouse hostage situation in Russia (2004), which included several children of Baptist missionaries, who died in the final act of that hostage tragedy.

Prior to the children's deaths I had rec'd an email begging for prayers for the children sent out by the Baptist World Alliance (I am on their email list). I also read about a year ago in the magazine, Christianity Today, that four American missionaries went to Iraq and no sooner were they off the plane and driving through town than they were gunned down, all four dead. The article further explained that it was not the fact that they were missionaries that got them killed, but they had lost their way in the streets and simply driven into the wrong side of town and were gunned down simply for appearing to be Americans. I am sure those missionaries did not arrive in Iraq without many prayers having been said for them. In another case, a few years ago, on the television news show, 20/20, a South American missionary's small airplane was gunned down with the missionary inside by a military jet aircraft who mistook the tiny missionary's plane as a drug-runner's plane. In Pucuro, Panama, three missionary men were taken away from their families in 1993. After eight long years of praying for the safe return of the men, their families recently learned that they had been killed by their captors five years previously.



Not yet an AOF member? Please join us!

Atheists and Other Freethinkers 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 and parties! See what awaits you: visit www.aofonline.org.

AOF President & Editor: Fantastic Fran Evanisko

Vice-president: Marvelous Mynga Futrell

Secretary: Capable Christine Tweet

Treasurer & Registrar: Kinetic Ken Nahigian

Webmistress: Palpable Pat Kelley

Directors at large:

Dave Flanders

Roger Zabkie

Pamella Rivers

Linda Ostrofsky (Jetta)

... And the rest of the motley team.

How to Contact AOF:

- Call 916-304-3796 (voicemail)
 - Or write to PO Box 15182, Sacramento, CA 95851-0182
- Or visit <http://www.aofonline.org/contact> to e-message us

How to Join AOF:

Visit <http://www.aofonline.org/join>, or see the form below.

Where to find AOF's Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Atheists-and-Other-Freethinkers/533365556831322>

"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."

What's a Freethinker? One striving to form opinions of life, religion, politics and philosophy on the grounds of reason and experience, rather than tradition, authority or custom. He or she need not be an atheist, though in a religious society most atheists do tend to be freethinkers.

AOF supports a benign separation of Church and State as the means to protect the liberty and free intellectual commerce of citizens. "... to keep forever from these shores the ceaseless strife that has soaked the soil of Europe in blood for centuries" (James Madison, 1803).

Our vision: to serve as a venue for freethinkers and unchurched citizens to socialize, dialog, develop friendships and enjoy mutual company. AOF does not discriminate on such grounds as race, sexual orientation, age, gender, class, physical debility or religion. We welcome members and leaders of all political persuasion and preferences. Any who will treat other members with respect and dignity may join.

On the opposite hand, what of people who have actively opposed "prayer?" Sure, there was "Mad" Madeline Murray O'Hair, the atheist who opposed prayer in schools, and wound up murdered decades later. Her son, who was the plaintiff in that case later became an alcoholic and then converted to Christianity and became a spokesperson for the Religious Right. However O'Hair's court case was not the only one dealing with mandatory prayer in schools. Here's the story of another person who actively opposed mandatory Bible readings in schools, and whose longevity and long marriage and three kids speaks for themselves: Ed Schempp, 1908-2003 Supreme Court state/church victor Ed Schempp, 95, died in New Hampshire on Nov. 8, 2003 "surrounded by the beauty of nature," writes his son Ellery. The father/son pair launched the landmark lawsuit, Schempp v. Board of Education, ridding public schools of devotional Bible readings. In 1956, Ellery protested the mandatory Bible reading by reading from the Koran. After he was reprimanded, his father filed suit. Ellery was dropped from the suit after he graduated from high school. Madalyn Murray's similar case out of Maryland was joined with the Schempp case before the Supreme Court, with the high court reserving the bulk of its opinion for the Schempp case. The Supreme Court issued an 8-1 ruling on June 17, 1963, barring mandatory Bible reading in public schools, which followed its 1962 decision barring prayer. "In the relationship between man and religion, the state is firmly committed to the position of neutrality," Justice Clark wrote Schempp. Ed was a longtime member and honorary officer of the Freedom From Religion Foundation, and was featured in the FFRF film, "Champions of the First Amendment." A native Philadelphian, Ed took over his father's hardware business as a young man, and later worked in electronics. He was active in Unitarianism and peace groups. Ed Schempp is survived not only by the enduring legacy of his major court victory, but by his wife of 69 years (!), Sidney, and their children Ellery, Roger and Donna. Speaking of longevity: Freedom From Religion Foundation member Clara Carlson of Washington State is 96, and her husband Ralph is 100. The Peninsula Daily News recently ran a feature story about the long-lived couple, who have been married for more than 75 years. When asked her secrets to longevity and a long marriage, Clara replied: "Drink lots of champagne, eat lots of chocolate, and laugh a lot." "Everything we do is a partnership," Ralph told the newspaper. Clara also credited the "miracles of modern medicine" with helping Ralph survive four cancers, two heart attacks and two bouts with pneumonia. They have three daughters, nine grandchildren and 17 great-grandchildren. Both have longevity in their genes, and stayed physically and mentally active after retirement. Home health and chore service workers have enabled them to keep living at home. Clara remains active in freethought, humanist and feminist causes. She had planned to travel to a recent FFRF national convention, but had to cancel the trip to help celebrate her daughter's 50th wedding anniversary (!).

Other famous non-religious overachievers in today's news include: Bill Gates, and Lance Armstrong (bicycle racing champion). Lastly, millions of dollars are being spent in the US on researching whether the prayers of others can affect a patient's health. If researchers are struggling to prove that intercessory prayer has benefits for health, at least one study hints that it could be harmful. In a 1997 experiment involving 40 alcoholics in rehab, psychologists at the University of New Mexico found that although intercessory prayers did not have any effect on drinking patterns, the men and women in the study who knew they were being prayed for actually did worse. "It's not clear what that means," said Dr William Miller, one of the study's authors.

<http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2004/10/11/1097406506362.html?oneclick=true> [or try googling the exact title "Say one prayer three times daily" The New York Times, October 12, 2004]

Debunking Medical Prayer Studies, <https://ffrf.org/legal/item/19354-let-us-pray-that-people-stop-praying>

Subscription / Membership Form

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

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E-mail address (please print!) _____

E-mail is required for newsletter delivery.

Questions, concerns? Call AOF, 916-304-3796.

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Additional Donation : \$ _____

Total enclosed : \$ _____

☐ 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).

AOF is a 501(c)(3) Educational Association, EIN 68-0325762. Dues & Donations are tax-deductable as permitted by law. Non-members may receive the AOF Newsletter for free on request (email only).

OCCAM'S RAZOR

