

AOF News & Views - Newsletter for May 2019

♦ ♦ Upcoming AOF Events ♦ ♦

➤ Free Movie Nights!

Friday, May 3 & May 17, 2019, 7pm - 10pm

Twice a month, Reason Center (RC) and AOF host a **Free Movie Night** under a fine MPLC License. The License prohibits us from telling you the movie title. But we can hint.

The first (May 3) will be a double-decker documentary, episodes 5 & 6 of actress Leah Reminis's ongoing exposé and public critique of Scientology. On May 17, we present a 1971 black-comedy classic about a wealthy, somewhat morbid, death-obsessed young man forever transformed when he meets lively septuagenarian lady at a funeral.

Marie * Algit *

What, can't guess? [Face-palm] Then 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. The chairs may be a bit uncomfortable, so it's OK to bring blankets, pillows, lawn chairs and your own snacks & beverage, non-alcoholic please. RC often 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. RC *may* beg a small donation to cover costs. How can you become a member? Sign up at http://reasoncenter.com/donate/. Membership, a mere \$5 a month, is tax deductible if you itemize. And the perks (like this one) will descend to you like ... little descending thingies.

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 our list!

> Adopt-a-Highway Cleanup Saturday, May 11, 2019, 9am - 11am

In July 1995, Sacramento-area freethinkers "adopted" a two-mile stretch of Highway 99 from Elkhorn Boulevard to Elverta Road. Since then we have kept it clean of litter and debris, receiving recognition for our work. In fact it is one our more successful civic efforts, showing that freethinkers can also serve the community.

So, 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 https://www.aofonline.org/contact.html.

Location: Caltrans Park-&-Ride lot, W. Elkhorn Blvd, see map: https://goo.gl/maps/Rx1dS1ANk18LpdDE9.

(To find the site, travel north from Sacramento on I-5, past the Sleep Train 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: This is a great event for older children, but please leave smalls safe at home.

> Freethought Dinner Social Saturday, May 11, 2019, 5pm – 7pm

The Freethought Dinner Social is a casual dine-out for friends and members of the local community of reason + any who wish to join us. Join your hungry friends at **Andy Nguyen's Vegetarian** for fine food, good drink and bright conversation. (But *please* tell the contact person, see below, because she has to make reservations!)



For the menu, click here.

Location: 2007 Broadway, Sacramento, California 95818, 916-736-1157. Map: https://goo.gl/maps/iFBtcgTxJ4Nn3bX7A.

Contact: 916-457-9123, or email: "thelynnster55 (at) comcast (dot) net"

Freethought Dinner Socials occur at various Sac-area 'raunts. Family friendly and all are welcome. (And don't be shy, suggest your own favorite eatery for next time!)

Board of Directors Meeting

Tuesday, May 14, 2019, 7pm - 9pm

Boooring, you think? But really, BoD meetings are great fun! It's 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, and keep us honest with your gimlet eye.



Speed-friending

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

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

➤ Rapid Friending without Facebook Sunday, May 26, 2019, 1pm - 3pm

Back by popular demand! Previous Rapid Friending events were hugely successful, so we are at it again.

Note, this is not speed dating, but a respectful way to connect with fellow travelers and compatible minds. Folk you can hang with, talk to, be solid with.

Why? Because relationships are tough. Because building friendship is a slog.

Because people don't connect with neighbors and don't acknowledge strangers. The effort of acquaintance, or simple shyness, is a barrier comparable to electrified razor wire. Here's your chance to get through it without blood loss or burns.

The genial, lovable moderator will provide a topic list, match you to a partner, and set a timer for some minutes of free-form chat. Hear a story; tell yours. Ask questions; answer some; bat ideas around. Then everyone will change partners and do it again. OK, it's a bit like speed dating but without the mush and baggage of romance. Give it a try. WCGW?

The anti-social are also welcome of course. Many freethinkers have a slight dusting of shyness or misanthropy, and that's OK. You can sit aside and watch others interact, until (if & when) you feel comfortable enough to jump in.

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

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

Reason Center welcomes donations. Crumpled dollars, and food too! Bring a snack or beverage to share if you will. Friends get hungry. Nom-nom



♦ ♦ Other Upcoming Events ♦ ♦

Critical Thinking Workshop Thursdays, May 2 & May 16, 2019 7pm - 9pm

A semi-monthly workshop series to help you learn, practice, and explore concepts of critical thinking. Each workshop will begin with a video or reading that teaches a fundamental concept and then you apply it to current/ relevant topics in a group discussion format. The plan is to meet on the first and third Thursday each month. Price to attend: \$1



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

Contact: Angelo Niosi of the Sacramento Area Skeptics, ph. 831-419-7225, <skimmer (at) mail (dot) com>.

Or RSVP at: https://www.meetup.com/sacskeptics/events/hnzdwgvzhbdb/.

Compassionate Humanists Sunday, May 5, 2019 10am - 12pm

A group for those that value kindness and compassion in their lives, those interested in enhancing their relationships with loved ones, their communities and the larger world.

The Compassionate Humanists are pondering the option of becoming a book club. The group lead writes, "I propose that we implement this plan, but draw out the book reading slowly. Like one (or two) chapters per month. This gives each of us, who all have busy lives to lead, the time to read and absorb it properly. It would also give us the ability to go deep into each chapter during our discussion of it and go off on all the tangents that we want to chase. ... I have two books in mind, and I am open to other suggestions. Democracy rules in our little club, so we will vote on the matter after nominations and considerations.

The first is Sapiens by Yuval Noah Harari.



• Second nomination: Wicked Company by Philipp Blom.

"One is focused on science and natural history, and how we came to be. The other is a historical account of the French Revolution, the Enlightenment, and the freethinkers and atheists of the time. ... Please seek some reviews of these books (including negative reviews) to properly and thoroughly form your opinions. I will bring both with me to this meeting. We will also work through details and ground rules and anything else on anyone's mind."

Location: Roseville Labou, 1730 Santa Clara Drive, Roseville. Map: https://goo.gl/maps/UC4975CE19P2.

Contact: Ph. 916-836-5269, or email info@compassionatehumanists.com.



Reason Center needs your support!

Since 2014, Reason Center has hosted hundreds of events. Its mission is to support an intellectual and social community for freethinkers, contribute to society via education and community service, advance the civic understanding of freethinkers, and uphold a separation of religion and state.

But Reason Center needs *your* support to continue. Please stand up for RC – visit <u>ReasonCenter.org</u> to join or donate. Why? Because RC stands up for *you*.



When you donate blood...

Blood donors save lives! See the Donation Center list at https://www.vitalant.org/Our-Organization/Locations.aspx. Then if you donate, please use AOF ID# **4857**. AOF gets no perks for it, but it saves lives and shows we serve the public good. What's more humanistic than donating blood?

Also, please support AOF!

Did you know, you can support AOF without spending a dime? When you shop at Amazon.com, simply use this link: https://smile.amazon.com/ch/68-0325762. Prices & service will be the same, but AOF will receive a small kickback for whatever you purchase. Bookmark it; remember it; use it.





♦ ♦ Secular Holidays in May ♦ ♦

➤ National Day of Reason Wednesday, May 2, 2019

The <u>National Day of Reason</u> (NDoR), endorsed first in 2003 and honored by U.S. secularists, occurs on the first Thursday of May. NDoR is a rejoinder and counterbalance to the National Day of Prayer, designated by the US Congress since 1952. On this day all humanist Americans can join hands to celebrate rational thinking—a concept all can or should support. The goal: to raise public awareness of



the persistent threat to religious liberty posed by government intrusion into the sphere of private worship. For details, and to learn about events in your area, see http://www.nationaldayofreason.org/.

Other organizations such as the <u>Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia</u> have designated this the **Rational Day of Care**, a day to donate home-cooked meals to the Aid for Friends project, or perform other acts of humanistic charity.

On January 23, 1808, in a letter to the Reverend Samuel Miller, our Founding Father Thomas Jefferson had these words:

"Fasting and prayer are religious exercises; the enjoining them an act of discipline. Every religious society has a right to determine for itself the time for these exercises, and the objects proper for them, according to their own particular tenets; and right can never be safer than in their hands, where the Constitution has deposited it. ...civil powers alone have been given to the President of the United States and *no authority to direct the religious exercises of his constituents*." [emphasis added]

The National Day of Reason is a mobile secular holiday, i.e., a movable feast. This year it occurs May 2.

> Towel Day

Saturday, May 25, 2019

<u>Towel Day</u> is the annual celebration of the life and writings of Douglas Adams (1952-2001), humorist, humanist, conservationist, science fiction writer, and social gadfly. On that day, fans around the universe proudly carry a towel in his honor. Why a towel? Don't panic, go to the website to see - or better yet, read *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. It's a great book!

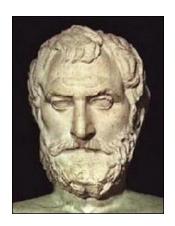


➤ Birthday of Science

Tuesday, May 28, 2019

The **Birthday of Science** marks when Thales of Miletus (in 585 BCE) correctly predicted a solar eclipse. A better choice might be the discovery of fire or the wheel, but we don't know exactly when that was or who did it. We *do* know about Thales. His prediction was significant because the idea of cause and effect (causality) applies to all science. Given any phenomenon, with the exception of a purely random quantum event, we can in principle trace its cause or causes, and the cause of those causes, back through time -- until all cause-tracks merge at the "Big Bang," beyond which, presumably, no tracks remain. The seeds of our life and future were sewn then. The Large Hadron Collider is an effort to re-create those first moments.

Science desires a beginning that applies to the big picture, and a sense of order and predictability. That is where causality leads us.





The Gospels were not written by Jesus' disciples

Expanded from a Reddit post + linked comments (see original here)

- 1. The source was Greek. All early manuscripts and fragments are in Greek, an educated Greek at that, and nearly all scholars agree the tone or tenor is not "translation Greek." But Jesus, his family, friends and disciples would have spoken Aramaic. The first scribe was almost surely a Christian Greek-speaker setting down stories passed through oral tradition.
- 2. Internal clues show the Gospels were written long after the traditional crucifixion date. Most scholars think Mark was around 65-70 CE (35-40 years after), followed by Mathew and Luke around 90 CE, and John likely even later.
- 3. The earliest manuscripts are anonymous, untitled. The names *Mathew*, *Mark*, *Luke* and *John* popped up about A.D. 200, assigned by the church father Irenaeus (who wanted four gospels because the world had "four winds" and "four corners"). An earlier church father, Papias, mentions "writings" by Matthew and Mark, but we have no way to know if these were the familiar Gospels.
- 4. Imagine a game of "telephone" played for 40 years; each time a Jesus story is told, it changes. By the time it gets to the scribe, the original story would have been unrecognizable. Then consider the 1,400 years of transcription errors/changes that occurred before the first printing press in 1455. As NT scholar Bart Ehrman writes, "Not only do we not have the originals, we don't have the first copies of the originals. We don't even have copies of the copies of the originals,"
- 5. In each Gospel, the perspective is third person, "they." A personal account would use "I" or "we."
- 6. The Gospels describe secret events no third person could know, such as Jesus' private words to God at Gethsemane (Mark 14:35-36). It is storytelling, not reporting.
- 7. Luke's Gospel even admits to being hearsay (Luke 1:1-3).
- 8. Mathew and Luke derive largely from Mark. They tell many the same stories in the same order and similar wording. Of the 661 verses in Mark, about 350 appear in Luke and about 454 in Matthew with the same words or minor variations; likewise of the 95 distinct "scenes" in Mark, 67 are in Luke and 77 in Matthew (the *Synoptic Problem*).
- 9. But when Mathew or Luke relate something not found in Mark, they almost always contradict, as in the contrary birth narratives, or the different genealogies for Jesus (Matt 1:1-17 vs Luke 3:23-38).
- 10. Mark is a pastiche of midrash, drawing from the Old Testament, and ideas from Homer and Euripedes. For example, Jesus' 40 days in the wilderness is a palpable midrash on the ancient Jews lost in the desert for 40 years. Regardless of source, numerous vignettes are clearly allegory due to the convenient fitting of events to a story built for theological purposes. Many of the smaller walk-on parts are clearly "narrative men," invented for a point they make or supposed prophecy fulfilled. For example, Simon and his sons Rufus and Alexander. Joseph of Arimathea, in addition to having a Greek model, also acts like a narrative man.
- 11. Mark contains basic geographical errors (such as Mark 7:31, which describes a crazy route for a journey from Tyre to the Sea of Galilee) and absurdities of Jewish jurisprudence (such as the Sanhredrin convening at night or beating a suspect).
- 12. Given the issues in Mark, Matthew and Luke are on shaky ground to start with, due to reuse of Mark's material. They make it worse with their similar cut-and-pasting from scripture or fabricated additions.
- 13. John has Jesus address theological issues from the early church, and it incorporates Gnostic mysticism ("In the beginning was the Word ... and the Word was God").
- 14. Each Synoptic Gospel portrays Jesus in its own light, attempting to recharacterize someone they have never met. For example, Mark plays on the "suffering messiah" idea while Luke emphasizes his Jewishness.

"The argument ... that the texts of our Gospels are close to the eyewitness reports of the words and deeds of Jesus-runs counter to almost all recent scholarship. As we have indicated from time to time, the prevalent view is that a long period of oral transmission in the churches intervened between whatever the eyewitnesses said and the Jesus traditions as they reached the Evangelists [authors of the Gospels]. No doubt the eyewitnesses started the process of oral tradition, but it passed through many retellings, reformulations, and expansions before the Evangelists themselves did their own editorial work on it."





Sturdy freethinkers ready to clean our adopted stretch of highway at the March Cleanup. Why not join them in May?



Not yet an AOF member? Please join us!

Atheists and Other Freethinkers is a 501(c)(3) non-profit association, FEIN 68-0325762, incorporated in 1993. Meetings are free and open to the public. AOF also hosts civic service projects, dinners, movies and parties! See what awaits you at www.aofonline.org.

AOF President & Editor: Fantastic Fran Evanisko

Vice-president: Marvelous Mynga Futrell

Secretary: [currently vacant]

Treasurer & Registrar: Kinetic Ken Nahigian

Webmistress: Palpable Pat Kelley

Directors at large:

Dave Flanders, Roger Zabkie, Pamella Rivera, Linda Ostrofsky (Jetta), Kaeleigh Pontif

... 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 come to a meeting. We have forms.

AOF's Facebook page:

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

AOF is affiliated with the Alliance of Secular Humanist Societies (ASHS), Atheist Alliance of America (AAA), American Atheists (AA), American Humanist Association (AHA) and the Sacramento Coalition of Reason (SCoR).

AOF Mission Statement:

"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 is 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 best means to protect the liberty and 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 be a venue where secular and unchurched citizens can socialize, dialog, develop friendships and enjoy shared company. AOF does not discriminate on such grounds as race, sexual orientation, age, gender, class, physical debility or (*cough*) religion. We welcome the fair-minded of all political persuasions and preferences. Any who will treat others with respect and dignity may join.

Donations to AOF are tax deductible, and the newsletter is free by email. Please share with sympathetic friends.

Letters, submissions? We love them! See: http://www.aofonline.org/read/submission-guide.html.

Other Groups of Interest

Reason Center, a freethought venue and safehouse for all. 1824 Tribute Rd, Suite A, Sacramento; ph. 916-426-6416 Email reasoncenter@gmail.com; https://reasoncenter.org/, https://www.facebook.com/reasoncenter/

United Coalition of Reason Sacramento (SacCoR)

A group of all the groups.

Ph. 916-572-7020 or email <u>sacramentocor@gmail.com</u> https://unitedcor.org/coalition-of-reason/sacramento-area/

Humanist Association of the Greater Sacramento Area

Meets 3rd Sunday most months at Reason Center. POB 216223, Sacramento, 95821-8223; ph. 916-514-9974 http://hagsa.org/; email president@hagsa.org

Sunday Assembly Sacramento

Church alternative, each 2nd Sunday at Reason Center. http://sacramento.sundayassembly.com/, https://www.facebook.com/SundayAssemblySacramento_or https://www.meetup.com/Sunday-Assembly-Sacramento/ Email david@LodiUnited.org

Compassionate Humanists

Meets 1st Sunday each month in Roseville.
PO Box 769, Newcastle, 95658; ph. 916-836-5269
https://compassionatehumanists.com/discussion-groups/roseville/ or https://www.meetup.com/Compassionate-Humanists/; email info@compassionatehumanists.com

Think Atheist of Sacramento

A social network and discussion group.

http://www.thinkatheist.com/group/sacramentocalifatheists

Americans United chapter in Sacramento (AU-Sac)

Church/State Separation and issue advocacy. P.O Box 163418, Sacramento CA 95816; ph 916-684-4730 http://www.au-sac.org/; email president@au-sac.org

Central Valley Alliance of Atheists and Skeptics (CVAAS)

438 E. Shaw Ave #221, Fresno, 93710, ph. 559-335-3228 http://www.cvaas.org/ or https://www.meetup.com/Fresno-cvaas/events/; email info@cvaas.org

Sacto Atheist-Agnostic Gatherings & Events (SAAGE) †

Online social group (Yahoo ID required).

https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/SAAGE/info or https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/SEINE/info

First Atheist Church of True Science (FACTS)

PO Box 233345, Sacramento, 95823; ph. 707-739-6837 http://www.factschurch.com/; email factschurch@gmail.com

Sacramento Area Skeptics (SAS)

Meets monthly for critical thinking, science advocacy, beer! https://www.meetup.com/sacskeptics/ or https://www.facebook.com/groups/sacskeptics/ Email sacskeptics@gmail.com or sbaker81@comcast.net

Greater Sacramento FFRF Chapter

Church/State watchdog, secular advocacy. http://sac.ffrf.org/; email sacffrf@gmail.com

Sacramento Freethinkers, Atheists and Nonbelievers

https://www.meetup.com/SacFAN/ or https://www.facebook.com/groups/SacFAN/

Sacramento Brights Action Meetup

https://www.meetup.com/Brights-Action-Sacramento/Email the-brights@the-brights.net

Black Humanists and Non-Believers of Sacramento

Multiple meetings each month, breakfast parties, outreach! https://www.facebook.com/blackhumanistsofsacramento or https://www.meetup.com/bhnb-sacramento/ Email BlackHumanistsNonBelievers@gmail.com

Sacramento Area Multi-Belief Discussion Meetup

Meets monthly each 2nd Saturday in Roseville. https://www.meetup.com/Sacramento-Area-Multi-Belief-Discussion-Meetup/members/

Stockton Area Atheists and Freethinkers (SAAF)

Ph. 209-610-0651 or email david@LodiUnited.org http://www.stocktonaaf.org/ or

https://www.meetup.com/StocktonAtheists/

UC Davis Agnostic & Atheist Student Assoc (AgASA)

Secular student association.

457 MU Bldg, One Shields Avenue, Davis, CA 95616 https://www.facebook.com/groups/DavisAgASA/ Email davis@secularstudents.org or agasadavis@gmail.com

CSUS Secular Student Alliance

Secular student association.

https://www.facebook.com/SacStateSSA/ or https://sacstatessa.wordpress.com/ Email csus@secularstudents.org

Sacramento City College Freethinkers

Secular student association, meets each Tuesday. https://www.facebook.com/SSAatSCC/
Email SacCityFreethinkers@gmail.com or secularstudentssaccity@gmail.com

Sierra College Secular Student Alliance

5100 Sierra College Blvd, Rocklin, CA 95677 Email <u>freethinkersofsierra@gmail.com</u> or <u>sierra@secularstudents.org</u>

Yuba Community College Freethinkers †

2088 N Beale Rd, Marysville, CA 95901

https://www.facebook.com/ssayc/

Email yccd@secularstudents.org or tsmith@yccd.edu

Waldorf School Secular Students

3750 Bannister Rd, Fair Oaks, CA 95628 Email sacwaldorf@secularstudents.org

Laguna Creek High School Secular Students †

9050 Vicino Drive, Elk Grove, CA 95758

Email <u>lagunacreek.hs@secularstudents.org</u>

† Possibly in abeyance. If you have new info, let us know please!







