

✧ ✧ Upcoming AOF Events ✧ ✧

➤ Free Movie Nights!

Fridays, Mar 6, Mar 20 and Apr 3, 2020, 7pm – 10pm

Twice a month, [Reason Center](#) (RC) and AOF join hands to host a **Free Movie** under an excellent [MPLC License](#). The License prohibits revealing the movie title – but we can hint.

The first (Mar 6) is the 2016 movie about the long-repressed story of female African-American mathematicians who served a vital role in NASA during the early years of the U.S. space program. The second (Mar 20) is the 1995 story of an albino off-the-charts genius with strange powers, shunned and abused after his last relation dies, who eventually teaches everyone about connection awareness and generosity of the spirit. Then next month, on April 3, it is the 2014 musical drama about a grieving father who finds his deceased son's demo tapes and lyrics. Shocked to discover this unknown talent, he forms a band to seek closure.

Can't guess? Don't worry, just contact Reason Center (see 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 may be a bit uncomfortable for a two-hour sit, so it's OK to bring blankets, pillows, lawn chairs and your own snacks & beverage, non-alcoholic please. RC often provides fluffy, buttery theatre popcorn. Children are welcome if they're cool children -- and if you judge the movie appropriate for them.

Movie Night is especially for Reason Center members, but non-members are welcome too. RC *may* beg a small donation 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 shower you like ... a really nice shower.

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>.

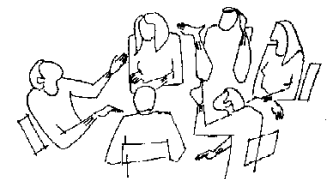
Free Movie Nights occur two Friday evenings each month. Suggest your own fave film for next time!



➤ Board of Directors Meeting (event planning)

Tuesday, Mar 10, 2020, 7pm – 9pm

An AOF planning meeting for AOF Directors & officers, but open to *all* interested friends and members. Yes, you too. These happen about every other month. Please join us, meet the Board, and keep them honest.



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

Contact: See the AOF Contact page (<http://www.aofonline.org/contact.html>).

➤ Adopt a Highway Cleanup

Saturday, Mar 14, 2020, 9am – 11am

If you visit the two-mile stretch of Highway 99 from Elkhorn Boulevard to Elverta Road, you might notice, it looks pretty tidy! That's *us*. That's the Sac-area freethinkers who "adopted" it in July 1995. We've cared for it, nurtured it, lovingly removed litter and debris, and received recognition for our work. As one of our successful civic efforts, it proves freethinkers can also serve the community.

So join us, please join us! Enjoy a morning commune with nature and do a 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 ever, 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 cleanup 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.

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

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

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

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

➤ **Freethought Dinner Social**

Sunday, Mar 15, 2020, 6pm – 8pm

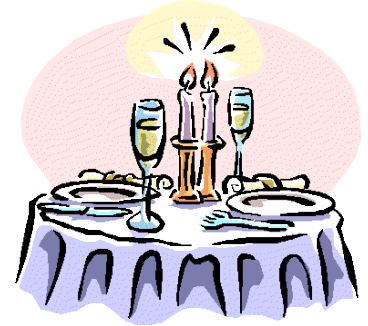
Come dine out with friends and members of the local community of reason – meet at the **de Vere's Irish Pub** for fine food, good drink and sparkling conversation. (But *please tell* the contact person, see below, because she must make reservations!) For the beautiful menu, see <https://www.deverespub.com/lunch-dinner>.

Notes from the activity host: Just walk in and join the group. Some may be a bit sensitive to colognes and perfumes, so except for personal pheromones, please be chemical free. (Maybe ease up on those pheromones. Honestly, people.)

Location : DeVere's Irish Pub, 1521 L St, Sacto, ph. 916-231-9947, map: <https://goo.gl/maps/WcxLJBUSiooNqC6A8>.

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

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



➤ **Michael Caton on Delusional Thinking**

Sunday, Mar 29, 2020, 2 pm – 4 pm

People *still* think strange things. Some of the things have names. Our speaker will open your eyes to the peculiarities of these weird and often regrettably moist syndromes. Join us for a talk on the wild side by our favorite dissector of shipwrecked minds: psychiatrist Michael Caton, whose fascination with delusions has led him behind mental hedges and down rust-stained synaptic stairwells to explore some jaw-droppingly false beliefs, fallacies, social signaling, the evolution of thought, and the eerie connects between language, belief, truth and authority. The info may weird you out. But someday, sadly, you may need it.



Mike grew up outside Philadelphia. After developing cardiac and cancer medications in the Bay Area, Mike attended medical school at UC San Diego and served his residency in psychiatry at UC Davis. His research interests are delusions and neuroimaging. He now sees patients in Santa Rosa. In addition to psychiatry, Mike enjoys trail running, blogging, linguistics, and travel. He has a wife and child who keep him honest and mostly non-delusional.

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

Contact: See the AOF Contact page (<http://www.aofonline.org/contact.html>).

Maybe bring snacks or a beverage to share, or a buck or two for the Reason Center donation jug. All voluntary of course! RC survives on your generosity.

➤ **Davis Community Meal: Feed the Hungry**

Tuesday, March 31, 2020, 4:30pm – 7pm

In nearby, bucolic Davis city, compassionate citizens have a secular solution for the problem of hunger -- and they need our help! Join local freethinkers in an ongoing effort to feed the poor, the hungry, the indigent, the outcast. Your reward? The opportunity to meet new minds and hobnob with your freethinker friends, a likely free meal, jazzy music, and the warm hearts-glow of benevolence. Also, seriously, it's a blast!

No cooking required. The Davis Community Meals team will perform food prep and kitchen work. Our job is simply to set up chairs & tables, serve, put things away at the end, and clean a bit (with a minimum of mopping).

Extra points if you can arrive for setup, but if you can't, that is OK, any help is good help. Setup begins about 4:30 p.m., buffet food service about 5:45. At 6:30 we clean up, leaving the hall as we found it.

Location: St. Martin's Episcopal Church, 640 Hawthorne Lane, Davis, CA, map: <http://binged.it/1uBpi57>.

Contact: See AOF Contact page (<http://www.aofonline.org/contact.html>), or call the event captain (Don, 916-447-2169). *Carpooling may be available. For info, please contact the event captain.*



➤ Critical Thinking Workshops

Thursdays, Mar 5, Mar 19 & Apr 2, 2020, 7pm – 9pm

A bi-monthly workshop series sponsored by the Sacramento Area Skeptics, to practice and explore the concepts of critical thinking. Each workshop begins with a video or reading to teach a fundamental concept; students then apply it to current/relevant topics in a group discussion format. Possible \$1 fee for costs.

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

Contact: See <https://www.meetup.com/sacskeptics/events/268913401/>, or call 831-419-7225 (Angelo).

➤ Sunday Assembly

Sunday, Mar 8, 2020, 10:30am

The Sunday Assembly, a secular congregation that celebrates life. Radically inclusive - all are welcome, regardless of beliefs or lack thereof, sexual orientation, age, gender, politics, or bad haircuts. Come join the fun!

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

RSVP and details at <https://www.meetup.com/Sunday-Assembly-Sacramento/events/sbwhbrybcfblb/>.

Maybe bring a little something for the post-Assembly potluck (optional).

➤ Sunday Morning Coffee and Community

Sundays, Mar 15, 22 & 29, & Apr 5, 2020, 10am – noon

Come and warm up with hot coffee, goodies and conversation with fellow freethinkers on the first and third Sundays of each month. Check out the Reason Center library and the latest FFRF newspapers. Enjoy stimulating conversation and snack, and just schmooze.

You need not be a Reason Center Member to attend, of course, but we encourage joining.

How? Sign up at <http://www.reasoncenter.org/p/donate.html>. Membership is just \$4 a month.

We would love to see all RC members at the Coffee and Community events!



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

Contact: ph. 916-426-6416, email "reasoncenter (at) gmail (dot) com", or see <https://reasoncenter.org/contact/>.

➤ Yet more ...

Is that all? No way! Learn about many other freethought events in the area from the Sacramento Coalition of Reason general calendar, <https://unitedcor.org/event-calendar-2/>. We just ran out of room.

❖ ❖ Secular Holidays ❖ ❖

➤ International Woman's Day

Sunday, Mar 8, 2020

International Women's Day (IWD) is an international celebration of the social, economic and political achievements made by women everywhere.

This holiday dates to the early 1900's, a time of turbulent growth in the industrialized world that saw growing demands for women to have the right to vote. Among other relevant historical events, it commemorates the "Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire" on March 25, 1911 in New York City, where over 140 women lost their lives.

Born from the socialist and labor movements, International Women's Day has grown to become a global day of recognition and celebration across developed and developing countries alike.

Promoted by the United Nations since 1975, International Women's Day is, in the words of the UN, "a day when women are recognized for their achievements without regard to divisions, whether national, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, economic or political. It is an occasion for looking back on past struggles and accomplishments, and more importantly, for looking ahead to the untapped potential and opportunities that await future generations of women."

Women's organizations and governments around the world have celebrated IWD annually on March 8th by holding large-scale events that honor women's progress and highlight areas where women's rights still need to be advanced. Each year hundreds of International Women's Day events occur all around the world. All celebrate women's advancement and highlight the need for continued vigilance and action. The day is about honoring all women and their accomplishments.



➤ Pi Day

Saturday, Mar 14, 2020

Pi, Greek letter (π), is of course the symbol for the ratio of the circumference of a circle to its diameter. $\pi = 3.1415926535\dots$ (That's *pi* to just ten decimal places; it's an irrational number, so the digits continue *infinitely* without repeating.) Math enthusiasts around the world celebrate Pi Day on March 14th, i.e. 3/14 in the American dating convention, since the first three digits of Pi are 3.14 (March 14 also happens to be Albert Einstein's birthday). "Pi Moment" occurs on that day just before 3:10 pm, more precisely, at 15:9:26.5.

The San Francisco Exploratorium celebrated the first **Pi Day** in 1988, with staff and public marching around one of its circular spaces, and then consuming fruit pies. Since then, the museum has added pizza pies to its Pi Day menu. The founder of Pi Day, the "Prince of Pi," is Larry Shaw, now retired from the Exploratorium, but still helping with the celebrations. The Massachusetts Institute of Technology often mails out its acceptance letters to be delivered to prospective students on Pi Day.

Celebrate Pi Day by doing anything to get students interested in mathematics. Teachers can organize many unique activities for students to generate interest. It is also used to inform students as well as the rest of the public about Pi, its history and applications. Pi Day parties in math and science classes are common, utilizing different types of pies, all the while teaching students about Pi.

Happy Pi Day



Being rational is hard.
Take the day off.

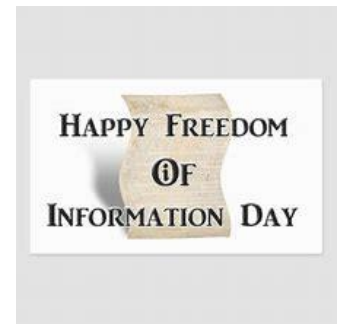
➤ Freedom of Information Day

Monday, Mar 16, 2020

[Freedom of Information \(Fol\) Day](#) is an annual event on March 16, the birthday of James Madison, widely regarded as the Father of the Constitution and a foremost advocate for openness in government.

On this day, the [American Library Association](#) presents the James Madison Award and the Eileen Cooke State & Local Madison Award to recognize those individuals or groups that have championed, protected, and promoted public access to government information and the public's right to know.

- The [James Madison Award](#) – established in 1986 and presented annually on the anniversary of James Madison's birth. That award is designed to celebrate an individual or group that has championed, protected and promoted public access to government information at the national level.
- The [Eileen Cooke State & Local Madison Award](#) – named for Eileen Cooke, former director of the ALA's Washington Office, this honors an extraordinary leader who has built local grassroots awareness of the importance of access to information.



➤ Sunshine Week

Monday, Mar 16 – Sunday, Mar 22, 2020

[Sunshine Week](#) begins with Freedom of Information Day (March 16), the birthday of James Madison, and runs through March 22. Madison was the principal author of the US Constitution and the Bill of Rights which guarantee the rights of citizens. So Sunshine Week stands as a national initiative to open discussions about the important or open government and the freedom of information.



Sunshine Week dates to 2002 when the Florida Society of Newspaper Editors launched Sunshine Sunday in response to efforts by some Florida legislators to create new exemptions to the state's public records law. After Florida's initiation on this topic, other states followed its course. The American Society of Newspaper Editors launched Sunshine Week in March 2005. It has become an annual event.

Sunshine Week is not restricted to journalists. Anyone can be involved: students, teachers, bloggers, private citizens, public officials and non-profit groups. The only requirement is to engage in a public discussion either small or large about the importance of open government. A discussion can take many forms: a large public forum, a classroom discussion, an article or an editorial. The idea of participation is not about how much, but about actually being involved.

To participate in Sunshine Week, contact the [state or regional coordinators](#) for your area. Examples of the myriad ways journalists, students, lawmakers and public groups marked Sunshine Week in 2005 and 2006 are collected in "[Bright Ideas for Sunshine Week 2007](#)" and "[Bright Ideas for Sunshine Week 2006](#)".

➤ Atheist Coming-Out Day

Monday, March 23, 2020

[Atheist Day or Atheist Coming-Out Day](#) is a relatively new global secular holiday declared in 2019 by the [Freedom From Religion Foundation](#) in partnership with the [Atheist Republic](#). In the words of the declaration:

"We atheists and atheist allies hereby declare that from now on, March 23rd is Atheist Day. We recognize the struggle of atheists to live authentic lives in many parts of the



world. The struggle to openly affirm one's atheism. The fear of intolerant governments, mobs, and religious zealots.

"On March 23rd we shall take a stand for our right to be treated equal and for those of us in countries where atheists are persecuted and live under a threat of death. From every city in every country in the world we shall be one voice, a voice of reason."



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: Rapid Ruth Rezos
Treasurer & Registrar: Kinetic Ken Nahigian
Webmistress: Palpable Pat Kelley
Directors at large:

Dave Flanders, Roger Zabkie, Pamela 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>.

How to help:

• Support Reason Center

Reason Center opened in July 2014. It has hosted hundreds of events and accrued 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.

But to continue, "RC" relies on support from members and donors. Please stand up for Reason Center, because it stands up for *you*. To set up a monthly or one-time donation, visit ReasonCenter.org.

• Support AOF

You can support AOF without spending a dime. How? When you purchase goods at Amazon.com, simply use this link: <https://smile.amazon.com/ch/68-0325762>. Bookmark it now! Prices & service will be the same, but AOF will receive a small kickback for whatever you purchase. Sweet!

• Suggest a Meeting

Know a good speaker, have a great meeting idea? Tell AOF's Program Committee! Go to <http://www.aofonline.org/contact.html>, click "Program Committee" in the drop-down line, and enter your wise, thoughtful suggestion.



Winning sand sculpture - 2019 Texas Sandfest

[Researcher] Sherry Cho compiled statistics on the 10 countries with the highest percentage of religious people and the 10 countries with the lowest percentage based on a 2017 WIN/Gallup International survey of 68 countries. The least religious are either Asian nations where monotheism never took hold (China, Japan) or Western nations such as Australia, Sweden and Belgium, where secularism is much more advanced than in the United States. The most religious countries represent various faiths: ... predominantly Christian countries (the Philippines, Papua New Guinea, Armenia), Muslim Pakistan, Buddhist Thailand, Hindu India — and countries of mixed faiths (Nigeria, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Fiji).

Indicators suggest that less religious nations are much better off. Average GDP per capita in the least religious countries is more than five times higher, while the unemployment rate is more than twice as low and the poverty rate is one and a half times lower. The homicide rate is five times lower. Life expectancy is 22 percent higher, and infant mortality is 1,000 percent lower — in part because the least religious nations spend 50 percent more per capita on health care. The least religious countries are also better educated, with a mean 12 years of schooling per capita vs. 7½ years in the most religious countries. Income inequality is 24 percent lower in the least religious countries, and gender inequality (as measured by the World Bank) is more than 400 percent lower. Finally, the least religious countries are freer, with an average score of 87.6 from Freedom House, compared to 56.5 for the most religious countries.

Gallup notes that “levels of religiosity diminish as income and education levels of the interviewees increase.” Put another way: Declining religiosity is not the result of a leftist plot. Capitalism has done more than the Supreme Court to break down traditional beliefs.

The United States is unusual not because religious observance has declined over the years but because it remains much higher than expected. A 2018 Pew Research Center survey found that 55 percent of American adults say they pray daily, compared with only 22 percent of Europeans. U.S. church attendance is down from its peak in 1960 but about the same level as in 1940. Pew concluded that “the U.S. is the only country out of 102 examined in the study that has higher-than-average levels of both prayer *and* wealth.” But, perversely, the United States does worse in critical areas — such as the rate of homicides by firearms and the rate of children living in single-parent households — than Western nations that are less religious. How does Barr explain this if he thinks religion is a social elixir?

Fundamentalists may be unhappy that religious observance has declined over the decades, but the data shows that, by most measurements, life has gotten much better for most people. There is little evidence that a decline in religiosity leads to a decline in society — or that high levels of religiosity strengthen society. (Remember, Rome fell after it converted to Christianity.) If anything, the evidence suggests that too much religion is bad for a country.

Less religious nations are better off

How the 10 top most religious nations compare with the 10 top least religious nations.

	Top 10 most religious countries	Top 10 least religious countries
Gross domestic product per capita	\$7,955.	\$44,278
Unemployment rate	7.9%	4.4%
Poverty rate	29.2%	13.7%
Homicide rate per 100,000 people	5.1	1.01
Life expectancy (years)	66.4	80.9
Infant mortality per 1,000 births	36.3	3.25
Years at school (mean)	7.5	12.1
Income Inequality (Higher numbers mean more unequal)	38.6	31.1
Gender Inequality (Lower numbers mean more unequal)	0.49	0.2
Current health expenditure Percent of G.D.P.	4.24	9.06
Freedom Index Higher score is better	56.5	87.6

Sources: Top 10 most and least religious countries from WIN/Gallup International End of Year Survey 2017. These questions were asked in 68 countries. Other data from International Monetary Fund, the United Nations Development Programme, Human Development Reports and U.S. Census Bureau's 2017 estimates.

