

If you missed AOF's July 26 presentation by Dr Sarah Strand on the Evolution of Religion (due to buggy technology, many did), you're in luck, because the recorded talk is *now available* to view at this web link:

https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/xtxNAOHu2GxOcqvH6xz_S6guRoa9aaa8gylK_fmNyEZCwa9Npw_hVWBTzl0wnRod

Passcode: v1fX6U^g

It will be there for about a month, so don't dawdle, don't lollygag or wool-gather, catch it now.

✧ ✧ Upcoming AOF Events ✧ ✧

➤ Free Movie Nights!

Fridays, Aug 7 & 21, 2020, 7pm – 10pm

Twice a month, [Reason Center](#) (RC) and AOF join hands to host a **Free Movie Night** under an excellent [MPLC License](#). We can't say the movie title, but we can hint.

Plans change, but the first (Aug 7) may be the 2010 action/comedy about a down-on-his-luck bounty hunter who gets a call to bring in his bail-jumping ex-wife; but nothing is quite what it seems. The next (Aug 21) is the ever-popular TBD (to be decided).

Alas, our regular movie venue is now *closed* due to the Coronavirus lockdown. So to attend, you'll need a personal Netflix account, the [Google Chrome web browser](#), and a bit of Internet magic. If you don't have Netflix, please be patient until this lockdown is over. Else, here's how to join us:



1. Open your Chrome web browser now and install the Netflix Party Extension. Get it at <https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/netflix-party/oocalimimngaihdkbihfgmpkpcpnmlaoa>.
2. Just before show time, fire up the Chrome browser again and visit the AOF website (<http://www.aofonline.org/>) to get the special Netflix Movie Party link. (Or go to <https://www.meetup.com/SacFAN/events/> to get it.)
3. Click the link. The Netflix Movie Party page will open. Log into Netflix (if not logged in already). At the top right of the browser frame, see a small circle with the letters **NP** in red. You may need to click on the "NP".
4. The Netflix movie party should begin. You'll be watching it along with the rest of us. As it plays we can chat on the side of the screen and make silly, snarky comments.

Location: A Netflix Movie Party on your Chrome Browser. Get the Movie Party extension at the link above.

Contact: Email "programs (at) aofonline.org" or contact Reason Center (<https://reasoncenter.org/>).

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

➤ Incarceration or Education?

Sunday, Aug 30, 2020, 2 pm

Welcome to Steve Hill! Bitten by a radioactive stand-up artist, he now uses his comedic superpowers to open minds to important issues, letting you address problems in a dialogue-conducive environment while reveling in the absurdity ... of everything.

After ten years in aerospace, Steve, a comedian and former Marine sergeant (!), decided to work within the California prison system. That is, he was a guard for about 10 more years. The experience was ... educational. Now he will share what he learned about incarceration versus education, an issue possibly relevant for a nation with the *highest incarceration rate in the world*.

The amazing Mr. Hill ran for California State Senate District 21 in 2016 and garnered 12% of the vote (over 13,000 votes), pretty remarkable considering a well-advertised membership in The Satanic Temple. He ran again in 2020 in a more crowded field and pulled 10,863 votes, showing an ability to tap into the public's attention and earn their confidence.

Trust us, he is a good guy -- look at that smile. Would butter melt?

An event of the AOF Speaker Series, and another patchwork piece in our delirious farrago of allusion, rebellion, and cheerful subversion. Save the date, mark your calendar, tell friends, and avoid holy water.

How to attend: Our usual meeting venue is closed due to the COVID-19 lockdown, so this meeting will be online.



- First, any time before the event, go to <https://zoom.us/download>. Download & install the "Zoom videoconference tool" if you haven't already. (Do it just once, it will be good for all future online Zoom meetings.)
- Then moments before the meeting, visit this link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83936058220?pwd=WFQ1dUhSKzlwL2w0NFFGMnFmTnoxzd09>. It will (should) take you to a Zoom Videoconference Page.
- If *that* doesn't work (the system is buggy), go to <https://us02web.zoom.us/join>, and enter the Meeting ID in the big box (it is **839 3605 8220**). Click **Join**. Then click the **Launch Meeting** link
- If it asks you to sign in: If you have a Facebook or Google account, or even an SSO account, just click one of the buttons for those, then sign in with your Facebook or Google info. Or create your own Zoom account, but this is not necessary.
- If it requests a Meeting ID (it probably won't), the ID is **839 3605 8220**.
- If it requests a passcode, the code is **565813**.
- The videoconference should begin. Speakers on, please! Sit back and enjoy.

You can also listen by phone at 1-669-900-6833. Same meeting ID and passcode (**839 3605 8220** and **565813**).

Location: Videoconference via Zoom - see link above.

Contact: Email "programs (at) aofonline.org", or see <https://www.meetup.com/SacFAN/events/271538757/>.

Attend for free using the Zoom Videoconference tool, details above. If you enjoy it, we encourage you to join AOF at <http://www.aofonline.org/join.html>.

✧ ✧ Other Upcoming Events ✧ ✧

➤ Online Coffee and Community

Sundays, Aug 9 and 23, 2020, 10:30 am – 12 noon

Join us via Videoconference for coffee and snacks (BYO) with lively conversation. New folks are always welcome. To join us, follow these steps, similar to the Aug 30 event above:

- Any time before the event, go to <https://zoom.us/download>. Download & install the "Zoom videoconference tool" if you haven't already.
- Moments before the C&C meeting, visit this link, <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82894724662> (same meeting link for both Aug 9 and Aug 23).

Speakers on please! It's also best if your personal 'puter has a microphone.



In case of problems, go to <https://us02web.zoom.us/join> and enter the Meeting ID in the big box (it is **828 9472 4662**), click **Join**, then click the **Launch Meeting** link.

Location: Videoconference via Zoom - see above.

Contact: Email "programs (at) aofonline.org", or see <https://www.meetup.com/SacFAN/events/wktftrybclbmb/> for Aug 9, <https://www.meetup.com/SacFAN/events/wktftrybclbfc/> for Aug 23.

➤ Sacramento Skeptics in the Pub

Friday, Aug 28, 2020, 6:30pm – 9:30pm

A meeting devoted to skepticism, rational thought and good beer, designed to promote fellowship and camaraderie among skeptics, critical thinkers, freethinkers, rationalists and other gimlet-eyed individuals. Also, beer. (Note, pizza & sandwiches are available next door to the pub.) This is an in-person meeting! Please take all the usual precautions.

Location: Sactown Union Brewery, 1210 66th Street, Sac. Map: <https://goo.gl/maps/DY1yLewkpVASHnTa7>.

Contact: Email "sacskeptics (at) gmail (dot) com" or "sbaker81 (at) comcast (dot) net".

➤ More Online meetings

Others in the local community of reason are meeting via Zoom Videoconference these days, same basic procedure as above. If you are buggy from lockdown and hungry for human interaction, join these meetings of minds.

- **Monday, Aug 3, 5pm-7pm**, "Keeping Kids Curious," link <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/186729414>.
(Courtesy of the new meetup group, Recovering from Religion, see <https://www.meetup.com/RfR-Sacramento-CA/>.)
- **Each Tuesday starting Aug 4, 7pm-9pm**, "Black Lives Matter and Me," link <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82590278514?pwd=K1pzaXA0dGVESzlvS1UcEs4RnE2UT09>.
(Courtesy of Sacramento Freethinkers, Atheists and Nonbelievers, see <https://www.meetup.com/SacFAN/>.)
- **Each Wednesday starting Aug 5, 7pm-9pm**, "What's Your Story," link <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85489607519?pwd=a1V2eEVKb3hnWXhZMVZRMm04Wk5BQT09>.
(Also courtesy of Sacramento Freethinkers, Atheists and Nonbelievers.)

➤ General calendar of Sacramento Area Events

No rest for us wicked. Many freethought events are ongoing in the region despite the COVID panic. For a list, see the Sacramento Coalition of Reason site at <https://unitedcor.org/event-calendar-2/>. And practice safe distancing, please.

You can help. Here's how.

Support Reason Center

Since Reason Center opened in July 2014, it has hosted hundreds of events and accrued twelve partner organizations. Its mission: 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. All good work.

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 compelling speaker, have a great meeting idea? Tell the AOF Program Committee! Go to <http://www.aofonline.org/contact.html>, click "Program Committee" in the drop-down line, and enter your brilliant, thoughtful suggestion. (Reasonable honorariums paid to speakers.)

Volunteer?

We suggest it meekly. See <http://www.aofonline.org/learn/committees.html> for opportunities.

✧ ✧ **Secular Holidays** ✧ ✧

➤ **World Friendship Day**

Sunday, Aug 1, 2020

World Friendship Day (or International Friendship Day) is the first Sunday of August, which of course floats like the friendships in our lives, and can be any day from Aug 1 through Aug 7.

We humans are social creatures. We recognize the value of friendship, the invisible thread connecting our heart to heart. In 1935 the US Congress proclaimed World Friendship Day as a time to celebrate this humanist sentiment. Since then other nations across the world have adopted the noble idea of Friendship Day, honoring it on the first Sunday of August every year, making it a true international celebration.



How can you acknowledge Friendship Day? Call on your friends, invite them for food, embrace them, exchange cards and flowers, gift them with a friendship band or bracelet, or mark the day with programs celebrating human camaraderie.

Note, some groups and nations celebrate Friendship at other times of the year, with different customs and different emphasis. For instance:

National Friendship Day is the first Sunday in August
Women's Friendship Day, the *third* Sunday in August
International Friendship Month is February
Old Friends / New Friends Week is the third week of May

Remarkably constant amid this diversity is idea of the celebration of our connections. Everywhere, people express love for their friends and cherish their presence in life. For more information on this secular holiday, click [here](#).

➤ **Ingersoll Day**

Tuesday, August 11, 2020

Ingersoll Day marks the birthday of [Robert Green Ingersoll](#), honoring the life and work of one of the most noted freethinkers in US history. Ingersoll was also the most successful orator in nineteenth century America, heard by more Americans than any human before the advent of motion pictures and radio. A leading political figure, he campaigned against slavery and for the rights of women and minorities. They called him the "Great Agnostic." He attracted huge crowds to lectures that criticized religion and promoted freethought. Walt Whitman and Mark Twain greatly admired him. Celebrate Ingersoll Day with a visit to [the Robert Green Ingersoll Birthplace Museum](#), or by reading excerpts from [the Complete Works of Ingersoll](#).



The #oneAtheist Campaign wants you

Does anyone else find hashtags irksome? Yeah. But never mind that for now.

"#oneAtheist" is a campaign of the [International Atheists Association](https://www.internationalatheists.org), connecting non-religious individuals with the international community by creating a library of uplifting and inspiring stories of hope, resilience and determination.

Visit [#oneAtheist](https://www.internationalatheists.org/oneatheist) to share your own smiling visage and story of how the freethinker community helped you, or of how you tried to build bridges among nonbelievers. And pledge to make the community more welcoming for those who come after.

Website: <https://www.internationalatheists.org/oneatheist>

More details at <https://www.internationalatheists.org/post/what-is-oneatheist>

Or email: <info (at) internationalatheists (dot) org>

Or write to: #oneAtheist, IAA, PO Box 114, Summerland, BC, Canada, V0H1Z0



The Secular Student Alliance: Envisioning a Better World

The July 2020 virtual conference of the [SSA](https://secularstudents.org) presented four days of amazing speakers for secular students and the larger freethought community. Videos on demand of the speakers are now thoughtfully available. Enjoy all presentations at <https://secularstudents.org/conference/2020conference/schedule/>, or select from the list below:

A Conversation with Reps. Jared Huffman & Jamie Raskin, at https://youtu.be/g_vWCv8tq80.

Rachel Laser, **Taking Back Religious Freedom in the Aftermath of the 2020 Crises**, at <https://youtu.be/qlsOniPswUc>.

Dr. Anthony Pinn, **What You Need to Know about Humanism and Race**, at https://youtu.be/g_vWCv8tq80.

Katherine Stewart, **Religious Nationalism: A Threat to Democracy**, at https://youtu.be/J_v1T5L2CGA.

Andrew Seidel, **The Founding Myth**, at https://youtu.be/K04FhYhu_hM.

Christopher Cameron, **Black Freethought in the Civil Rights Era**, at <https://youtu.be/kB6slbens6s>.

Jason Lemieux, **How to Speak to Members of Congress**, at <https://youtu.be/pl2XDUX3u1k>.

Hemant Mehta, **Why Secular Students Should Run for Office**, at <https://youtu.be/aTMC4vxOwSo>.

Alison Gill, **Reality Check: Making Nonreligious People Count**, at https://youtu.be/x_yIUltzUbu.

Cara Santa Maria, **Staring Into the Void: Can Existential Therapy Help?**, at <https://youtu.be/m4ZCL4YBrys>.

Kavin Senapathy, **Vaccines and the Misinformation Hydra**, at <https://youtu.be/x-Tb3oVKjrE>.

Elle Harris, **Elle the Humanist: A Reading**, at <https://youtu.be/bK-OT2MC3Ms>.

Gary McLelland, **Humanists At Risk**, at <https://youtu.be/Ork-5xCW1G0>.

Chris Stedman, **Finding Realness, Meaning, and Belonging in Our Digital Lives**, at <https://youtu.be/7w0avf4jdY>.

Alex DiBranco, **Contesting Secular Male Supremacy to Build a Better World**, at <https://youtu.be/4QJZnfGccrw>.

Callie Wright, **How to Have Difficult Conversations**, at <https://youtu.be/B5bONqjylUw>.

Emily Newman & Kristin Wintermute, **Living Our Humanist Values**, at <https://youtu.be/62koZdlmjI0>.

Varun Soni, **Community and Resilience in Times of Crisis**, at https://youtu.be/Fsn_kTW7WUY.

Isaac Gilles, **Out of the Ashes: Imagining Better Communities**, at <https://youtu.be/m4ZCL4YBrys>.

Serah Blain & Evan Clark, **How to Make a Splash in the Media**, at <https://youtu.be/72aK9ab9rfY>.

Sean Rivera, **Mobilize Voters Like a Pro!**, at <https://youtu.be/dlkbTsFlzcc>.

Amanda Scott, **Fighting for Voting Rights**, at <https://youtu.be/n5AY0tX1UEg>.

J.T. Snipes & Gordon Maples, **Black Secular College Students**, at <https://youtu.be/u6eOrlg68nY>.

Mandisa Thomas & Kevin Bolling, **Supporting Secular Students at Home**, at <https://youtu.be/eVBf6BFgmww>.

Karma Alvey, **How Art Sustains Us**, at <https://youtu.be/Yv1XCkKnjcs>.



Varun Soni



Amanda Scott



Isaac Gilles



Gordon Maples



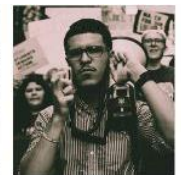
Alex DiBranco



J.T. Snipes



Callie Wright



Sean Rivera

New Local Group

Doubting your beliefs? Have questions about changing or leaving your faith? [Recovering from Religion](https://www.recoveringfromreligion.org) (RfR) is a support group for people letting go of religion. The transitional period is an ongoing process that can result in a tornado of emotions as well as a ripple effect of consequences throughout your life. As such the support meetings are safe and anonymous places to express doubts, fears, and experiences without biased feedback or



proselytizing. Head to <https://www.meetup.com/RfR-Sacramento-CA/> for resources. RfR even has a hotline and online chat to help you. Call (844) 368-2848 or go to <http://www.recoveringfromreligion.org/> to speak with someone.



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

Program chair: Super Susan McLean

Facebook page: Keen Kaeleigh Pontif

Directors at large:

Roger Zabkie, Pamella Rivera, Linda Ostrofsky (Jetta),
Kaeleigh Pontif, Ben Tuason

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>.



The Jehovah's Witnesses don't visit my house any more.

Thanks, SMBC
(<https://www.smbc-comics.com/>)

Five Years On, Dire Predictions About Marriage Equality Looking Pretty Silly

by [Rob Boston](#) of Americans United (<https://www.au.org/>), slightly condensed for space – see original [here](#)

June 26 marked the fifth anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court's landmark decision in [Obergefell v. Hodges](#), a ruling that had the effect of extending marriage equality nationwide.

Prior to the decision and after, Religious Right groups made a number of claims about marriage equality, predicting dire consequences from the ruling. Five years have passed. How many of these predictions have come true? Let's take a look.

Western civilization will collapse: In October 2014, Christian nationalist attorney Mat Staver told a right-wing radio show that if the Supreme Court were to uphold marriage equality, [the consequences would be devastating](#).

"This is something that I believe is the beginning of the end of Western Civilization," Staver said. "You can't simply redefine and pretend that ontological differences between men and women do not exist. This will have consequences."

Admittedly, Western Civilization has taken a bit of a hit lately – all civilization has. But due to the coronavirus pandemic and a reckoning over systemic racism, not marriage equality. In the main, Western Civilization is still plugging along.

The American people will rebel: As states began legalizing same-sex marriage and courts started striking down bans on it in 2013, Tony Perkins, president of the Family Research Council, was certain the American people were going to rise up.

"If you get government out of whack with where the people are ... you create revolution," [Perkins said while appearing on a conservative radio show](#). "I think you could see a social and cultural revolution if the court goes too far on this. [It] could literally split this nation in two and create such political and cultural turmoil that I'm not sure we could ever recover. ..."

It didn't happen. Instead, the country underwent a fairly rapid shift in public opinion on the question of marriage equality. A number of polls now show support for it hitting the [low to mid-60s](#). Among millennials, support for marriage equality [is even higher](#) at 70 percent. Stick a fork in this one; it's done.

Houses of worship will be forced to perform marriage ceremonies for same-sex couples: When it became obvious that marriage equality was coming to Alabama, Eric Johnston, president of the right-wing Southeast Law Institute, hit the panic button. "There will be a lot of lawsuits over whether ministers have to do it," he blathered. "It will be a clash between fundamental rights under the Constitution."

The flood of lawsuits never materialized, in part because it's obvious that houses of worship have an ironclad right to decide to whom they will extend their sacraments and religious services. Nothing about that has changed since June 26, 2015. The number of houses of worship that have been compelled to allow same-sex couples to marry stands at zero.

Religious conservatives will be imprisoned: James C. Dobson, the founder of Focus on the Family, seriously argued that people would be sent to prison for refusing to accept marriage equality. "Many of us will be dragged into court to be prosecuted or subjected to civil judgments," [Dobson groused in a column](#). "... Some may go to prison as the years unfold."

Wrong again. No one is sitting behind bars for refusing to accept marriage equality. (Kentucky county clerk Kim Davis was briefly in jail, but because she was [found guilty of contempt of court](#). Davis, a government official, defied court orders and refused to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples even after *Obergefell* had come down.)

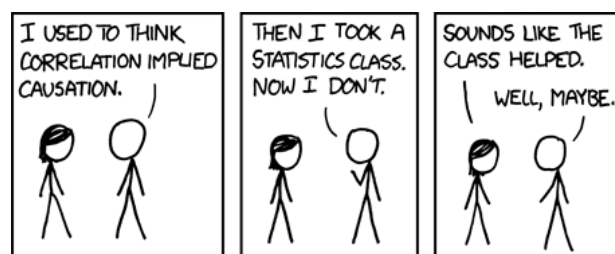
Religious freedom will be obliterated: After *Obergefell* was handed down, Bryan Fischer, a radio talk show host affiliated with the American Family Association, tweeted: "Every advance of the gay agenda comes at the expense of religious liberty. As of today, free exercise is toast."

Free exercise is not toast – it's not even scorched. In the post-*Obergefell* world, people remained free to meet in houses of worship for prayer and fellowship. Pastors who disliked the ruling had the ability to criticize it from the pulpit. No church had to admit LGBTQ members. Nothing changed. It's true that secular, for-profit businesses were expected to follow state and local anti-discrimination laws and serve everyone equally – but that doesn't stop anyone from worshipping as they please. It's a strange definition of "religious freedom" that allows one person to treat another like a second-class citizen.

People will start marrying animals, microwave ovens, lakes, etc.: U.S. Rep. Louis Gohmert (R-Texas) and former U.S. Sen. Rick Santorum (R-Pa.) were big fans of this [insipid talking point](#). Some assertions are simply too stupid to merit a reply. This is one.

Even as these claims were made, we at Americans United were debunking them. They just aren't true. Will the Christian nationalist groups that spread them take an honest look back five years later and admit they were wrong?

Don't hold your breath.



Thanks, XKCD
(<https://xkcd.com/>)