

✧ ✧ Upcoming AOF Events ✧ ✧

Video of Recent Online Meeting

The Nov 29 presentation by [Braver Angels](#), topic Reuniting America, is available for viewing at this link: https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/3fdgFLeYhFXsDSmMRF_7Lxd17OHrWbBN0Cbb0ZX8ArwPGdjNBL_PGaRZlqX3_B1.VZQXPiaWgeHFzyT (Visit soon! Available until late December.)

The meeting starts at 00:10:25. The 50-minute embedded documentary is somewhat jerky due to slow internet, but you can skip it and see a smoother version at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u6kZpN5T3IU>. Following it, at about the 01:09:02 mark, is a lively discussion facilitated by local Braver Angels facilitator, Ed Jaszewski. Thanks to everyone.

➤ Free Movie Nights

Friday, Dec 4 & Dec 18, 2020, 7pm – 10pm

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

The first movie, from 1980, is one of the best all-time, roll-with-laughter, disaster-parody movies, starring Leslie Nielsen ("Don't call me Shirley!"), with Robert Hays and Julie Hagerty. Classic spoof humor. The second, from 2003, is the true drama of an undersized and overlooked racing horse, whose unexpected successes made him a media sensation during the Great Depression (nominated for seven Academy Awards).



How can you attend? You'll need a personal Netflix account + a laptop or desktop computer with the [Google Chrome web browser](#). If you don't have these we apologize -- please be patient until we have a physical movie venue. Else, here's how to join us:

1. Open your Chrome web browser right now and install the Netflix Teleparty Extension. Get it at: <https://www.netflixparty.com/>. (Really, do it *now*, don't wait till movie night!)
2. Just before show time, fire up the Chrome browser again and go to the very special Netflix Movie Teleparty link, which will appear on the AOF website.
3. **Click that link.** The Movie Teleparty page will open. Log into Netflix (if not logged in already). At the top right of the browser frame check your "Extensions" list. Find the letters **TP** in red. You may need to click on the letters.
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.

Free Movie Night is especially for Reason Center members, but non-members are welcome too. How can you become a Reason Center member? Sign up at <http://reasoncenter.com/donate/>. Membership, just \$5 a month, is tax deductible if you itemize, and the perks (like this one) keep rolling.

Location: A Netflix Teleparty link, see above.

Contact: See <https://reasoncenter.org/contact/>.

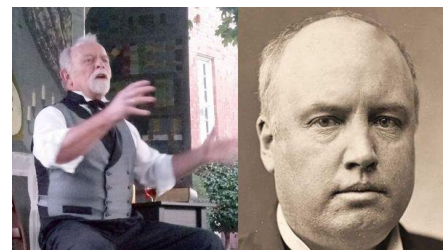
Free Movie Nights generally occur two Friday evenings each month. And you can suggest your own fave film for next time, how cool is that?

➤ Sean O'Brien is Robert Ingersoll

Sunday, Dec 27, 2020, 2pm – 4pm

The 21st Century ... a great time to be a freethinker. Skeptical "unchurched" celebrities dance in the limelight: Isaac Asimov, Carl Sagan, Bill Maher, Richard Dawkins, Debbie Goddard, Jen Aldrich, Tim Minchin... Articulate and charming, they draw crowds, they seize minds, they inspire us.

The 19th Century ... not so much. But it had [Robert Green Ingersoll](#).



Never heard of him? (*face palm*) Well now you have. Ingersoll ("the Great Agnostic," 1833-1899) was America's greatest orator: an Illinois Attorney General who toured the nation after leaving office, enlightening thousands about agnosticism, separation of religion and government, women's rights, the value of science, and much we hold dear today. (He even came to the Metropolitan Opera House in Sacramento, on June 4, 1877!)

Now our favorite Ingersoll impersonator, local dramatist Sean O'Brien, will teach us about the Great Agnostic, presenting passages from some of Ingersoll's most memorable speeches, including his strong 1885 declaration about the rights of women. Join us on December 27 for a stirring presentation.

Would you be shocked to learn that [Ingersoll was a staunch Republican](#)? How about that!

How to attend:

Reason Center is currently closed, so this meeting will be by online videoconference.

- **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.)
- **Moments before the meeting:**
Go to <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83110309200?pwd=QjVNSU1Ba3ByRjNlc0dmbm5WYTY1UT09>. It will take you to a Zoom Page.
- **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 free Zoom account, but this is not necessary.
- **If it wants a Meeting ID** (it probably won't), the ID is **831 1030 9200**.
- **If it wants a passcode** (it probably won't), the passcode is **264760**.
- The videoconference should begin. Speakers on, please! Sit back and enjoy.

Or listen in by phone at 1-669-900-6833. Same meeting ID (**831 1030 9200**) and same passcode (**264760**). This is for the Northern California region.

Location: An online Videoconference via Zoom - see link above.

Contact: Email "programs (at) aofonline.org", or see <https://www.meetup.com/SacFAN/events/274792839/>.

To support the Speaker Series, join AOF at www.aofonline.org/join. Because without AOF, it wouldn't happen.

✧ ✧ Other Upcoming Events (non-AOF) ✧ ✧

➤ Sacramento-area Online Meetings

Other local groups are meeting via online videoconference. Join them and share your worthy thoughts!

- **Sundays, Dec 6 & Dec 20, 10:30am - 12 noon: Online Coffee and Community**, hosted by Nancy Sneed. BYO beverage & snacks. Attend via video link <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84984111659?pwd=cThkaGdTK0FCdXJpWnB3MVZ1R213Zz09>.
- **Monday, Dec 7, 5pm – 7pm: Shunning**. Cathy S. Harris, a Clinical Social Worker with over 20 years' experience, will discuss this traumatizing practice of high-control religious groups. Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/186729414>. For details click [here](#).
- **Wednesdays, Dec 9 & 23, 7pm – 9pm: What's your story?** Meet other local freethinkers to discuss beliefs, philosophy and what led you to where you are now. Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85489607519?pwd=a1V2eEVKb3hnWXhZMVZRMm04Wk5BQT09>.
- **Wednesdays, Dec 16 & 30, 7pm – 9pm: Black Lives Matter and Me**. Online discussion of social justice, hosted by Nancy Sneed. To attend, use link <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82590278514?pwd=K1pzaXA0dGVESzlvS1IUcEs4RnE2UT09>.
- **Friday, Dec 25, 6:30pm – 9:30pm: Virtual Skeptics in the Pub**. An online social gathering of skeptics. Details at <https://www.meetup.com/sacskeptics/events/tsvpxybcqbhc/>.
- **Saturday, Dec 26, 3pm – 4pm: Book Club**. Discussing *Doubt: A History*, by Jennifer Michael Hecht. For details click [here](#).
- **Wednesday, Dec 30, 7pm – 9pm: Recovering from Religion Support Group**. Providing ongoing and personal support to those letting go of religious faith. Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82268955990>. For details click [here](#).

➤ Still more!

Did you know, a general calendar exists of skeptical or freethought events in this Central Valley area? Yes, see the Sacramento Coalition of Reason site at <https://unitedcor.org/event-calendar-2/>, and kiss your spare time goodbye.

✧ ✧ Secular Holidays ✧ ✧

➤ International Human Rights Day

Thursday, Dec 10, 2020

"IHUD" promotes, defends, and helps us remember the basic human rights every person in every country has as a result of being born into this world. The basic document that outlines these rights is known as the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#), as adopted by the United Nations in 1948.

The Declaration came about as a result of the atrocities of World War II. As the United Nations came into being its charter gave human rights a new international legal status, and the need to codify human rights as a means to prevent such atrocities took shape.

It created a Commission on Human Rights, which spent three years drafting the declaration with the help of such members as Eleanor Roosevelt, John P. Humphrey, Charles Malik and Rene Cassin. Adopted without dissent on December 10,



1948, the declaration has grown in stature and respect over the years since its adoption as it continues to assert the human dignity and worth of every human being on the planet.

Since its adoption countries around the world have celebrated this anniversary, but it has only been since the 50th anniversary celebrations in 1998 that the holiday has gained in popularity.

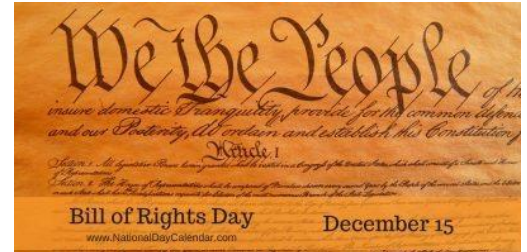
Eleanor Roosevelt once said that the fate of human rights lies in the hands of everyone in every community. Freethinkers know the importance of this statement. It can often be a challenge for many of them to be given the same rights and opportunities as others in their own communities, much less in the world. They, of all people, understand the importance of keeping human rights the center of focus and attention in the world at large. Celebrating International Human Rights Day is a way to show how everyone, religious or not, is connected in ways that run deeper than the nature of belief.

➤ Bill of Rights Day

Tuesday, Dec 15, 2020

Bill of Rights Day (by Presidential Proclamation):

Now, Therefore, I, Franklin D. Roosevelt, President of the United States of America, do hereby designate December 15, 1941, as Bill of Rights Day. And I call upon the officials of the Government, and upon the people of the United States, to observe the day by displaying the flag of the United States on public buildings and by meeting together for such prayers and such ceremonies as may seem to them appropriate.



To view the official proclamation, see: <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/proclamation-2524-bill-rights-day>.

The first 10 amendments to the United States Constitution make up the Bill of Rights. Passed by Congress on September 25, 1789, these rights place limits on government power.

Did you know ...?

- The bill was introduced by James Madison. He later became the 4th President of the United States.
- The Bill of Rights initially had 12 proposed amendments. One concerned the number of constituents for each Representative. The other addressed compensation of Congressman. Neither were ratified.
- In 1992, compensation of Congressman was ratified 203 years later and is now the 27th amendment.
- The Bill of Rights is displayed in The Rotunda of the National Archives Building in Washington, DC.
- There were 14 copies of the Bill of Rights, one for each of the 13 states to sign and one for the federal archives. Only 12 copies survive today.

HOW TO OBSERVE:

Display the flag of the United States at home and on public buildings. Read the Bill of Rights. See if you can pass a [quiz](#) about the Bill of Rights. Use #BillOfRightsDay to post on social media.

➤ Solstice (December)

Monday, Dec 21, 2020

The December Solstice is the *real* Reason for the Season. Called Winter Solstice in the northern hemisphere, Summer Solstice in the southern, humans have marked this event for thousands of years. Many religions link seasonal holy days or celebrations to the day. It is when the Northern Hemisphere has less daylight than at any other time of the year (we call it *the shortest day*), and the Southern Hemisphere has more (*the longest day*).



The precise date of the December Solstice varies from year to year, but will occur between the 20th and 23rd of December.

"Solstice" derives from two Latin words: *sol* (meaning sun) and *sistere* (to cause to stand still). In either hemisphere the sun's arc will be low in the sky during the winter season, high in the sky during summer. The day with the least daylight is the Winter Solstice, where sun has the lowest elevation. So in the Northern Hemisphere, the December Solstice is officially the first day of winter, sometimes called Midwinter.

To the ancients, it marked a key point in the cycle of life. For modern astronomy enthusiasts, it offers an opportunity to celebrate what we have learned about the cosmos, and allows us to revel in the excitement of space exploration and the complexity of the universe.

➤ Human Light

Wednesday, Dec 23, 2020

HumanLight is a holiday to celebrate the values of tolerance, compassion, empathy, honesty, free inquiry, reason and rationality, and more. The event began in New Jersey in 2001, established by by Joe Fox and Gary Brill of the [New Jersey Humanist](#)



[Network](#). The event provides an excellent alternative to Christmas celebrations. Joe & Gary described it as follows:

*"The very first HumanLight celebration was held in New Jersey on December 23, 2001 at a gala event attended by close to 100 people. **HumanLight is December 23rd**, and should always be celebrated on or around this date. This date was chosen for several reasons. A critical objective was to be part of the peak celebration time of the holiday season, yet to have a distinct date of our own that did not coincide exactly (and thus interfere) with other holidays such as the Winter Solstice, Christmas, or Kwanzaa. We liked December 23rd because it was close to the shortest day of the year, a natural event of note, as well as very close to vacation days that typically lead to family gatherings. We wanted Humanists at family gatherings and other holiday social events to be able to say "Happy Holidays" and mean it; to have a positive, constructive way to start a conversation in which they could explain to loved ones what Humanism is about."*



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: Kaeleigh Pontif
Directors at large:
Roger Zabkie, Pamela 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>.

☞ **Watch your email for the AOF Board of Directors Ballot, coming this month. Exercise your rights as a member and keep AOF strong for another year. (And if you can serve AOF as a director in 2021, happy you, there's still time! Email "officers (at) aofonline (dot) org".)** ☞



JOURNEY FREE NOW OFFERS

Religious Recovery Bootcamp

GIFT YOURSELF FIVE MONTHS TO:

- Understand and heal from Religious Trauma Syndrome
- Create your own holistic trigger management system
- Connect with others reclaiming their lives from harmful religion

Coming this January 2021, Journey Free will offer **Religious Recovery Bootcamp**.

A 5-month immersive online course to provide rapid relief from Religious Trauma Syndrome, covering

- Insights and strategies for healing that involve the whole person: intellectual, emotional, social, and physiological
- Trauma-informed body practices
- Presentations, readings, exercises, videos
- Virtual group interaction and support

Taught by Emily Hedrick, religious recovery coach and Program Director at Journey Free, and Dr. Marlene Winell, psychologist Meeting Thursday evenings, beginning Jan. 7, 2021

For more info and to sign up, go to the Journey Free website, <https://journeyfree.org/new-religious-recovery-bootcamp/>.



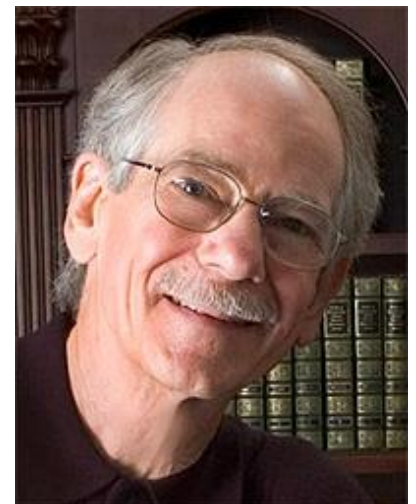
Family News

Farewell to AOF Founder Paul George Geisert (Mar 1932 - Nov 17, 2020)

He coined the term Bright, co-founded the [Brights movement](#), and was a one-time Chicago biology teacher, professor, entrepreneur, and writer of learning materials. He disliked the label "godless" because he thought it might alienate the general public, and sought a new, positive word that might be well accepted and improve the image of those who did not believe in the supernatural. A few weeks after attending the Godless Americans March on Washington in 2002, he came up with the noun "Bright." He then ran into another room and told his wife: "I've got the word, and this is going to be big!"

Geisert and Mynga Futrell made their proposal in Spring 2003 at an atheist conference in Florida attended by Richard Dawkins. On June 4, 2003, they launched the Brights' Net website. The movement gained early publicity through articles by Richard Dawkins in *The Guardian* and *Wired*; and by Daniel Dennett in *The New York Times*.

"I don't wish to confirm a second rate status for persons who have a naturalistic worldview," said Paul. "I want to claim equal status on social and civic terms."



Paul died peacefully last night. His long downhill due to Alzheimer's spanned about a quarter of our 46 years together.

The neurodegenerative disease produced 11 years of "subtractions" from the guy who had been my brilliant partner in work and play for the other three-quarters of our relationship.

Since 2010, I've had plenty of sadness and numerous challenges, but there have been many good times, too. Some rather hilarious circumstances mixed in.

Now, thanks to Covid, the caregiving "journey" has ended. The Alzheimer's was tough enough, but that virus has produced eight months of wrenching isolation and loneliness ... Thankfully, it's all over now.

[Mynga Futrell, Nov 18, 2020]

How to Help Us

First, support Reason Center

Reason Center, now closed due to the COVID-19 lockdown, will re-open in late 2021 (we hope!). Meanwhile it still relies on support from local freethinkers. Please visit <https://reasoncenter.org/donate> to donate or, better yet, become a member.

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. You want all that, right?

Also, support AOF

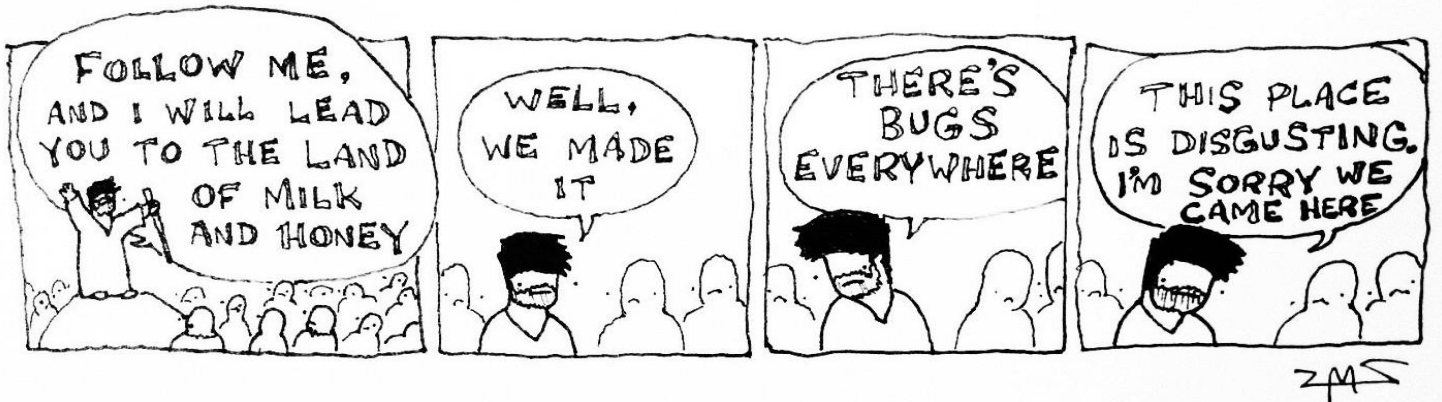
You can support AOF *without spending a dime*. How? When you shop at Amazon.com, simply use this link: <https://smile.amazon.com/ch/68-0325762>. Bookmark it now! Prices & service will be the same, but AOF will receive a small kickback for whatever you purchase. Sweet!

Maybe 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 thoughtful suggestion. (Reasonable honorariums paid to speakers.)

And volunteer?

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



Last-Minute Message For a Time Capsule

by [Philip Appleman](#) from *New and Selected Poems, 1956-1996* (University of Arkansas Press).

I have to tell you this, whoever you are:
that on one summer morning here, the ocean
pounded in on tumbledown breakers,
a south wind, bustling along the shore,
whipped the froth into little rainbows,
and a reckless gull swept down the beach
as if to fly were everything it needed.
I thought of your hovering saucers,
looking for clues, and I wanted to write this down,
so it wouldn't be lost forever -
that once upon a time we had
meadows here, and astonishing things,
swans and frogs and luna moths
and blue skies that could stagger your heart.
We could have had them still,
and welcomed you to earth, but
we also had the righteous ones
who worshipped the True Faith, and Holy War.
When you go home to your shining galaxy,
say that what you learned
from this dead and barren place is
to beware the righteous ones.