

If you missed the [AOF Potluck Picnic](#) in Westwood Park on Sept 26, you can at least enjoy a photo at [this link](#) or [this one](#). Have you ever seen such a motley, cheerful group? Thanks to Roger Zabkie and his clever timed soul-capture device.

✧ ✧ Upcoming AOF Events ✧ ✧

➤ California Freethought Day

Sunday, Oct 10, 2021, 11:30 am - 5:30 pm

It's [California Freethought Day](#), the **Twentieth Annual Freethought Day Festival**, a day when the freethought community joins hands to bring you a fabulous flight of free minds, with music, speakers, awards and more. That sounds gushy because we're gushing. We're very fond of "CFD"!

AOF founded it in 2002, a rather rag-tag gathering on the Sacramento courthouse steps. Somewhat to our bemusement it grew, year by year, until it left the nest and took silver wings. Not really an official AOF event these days, we still promote it, because we couldn't be more proud.

Today this public jubilee and gala, hosted by the independent [Freethought Day Committee](#), is a wide-ranging celebration of free speech and free thought, civic engagement, enthusiasm for science, social justice, and the separation of church and state. It is open to all and *free*. It combines "the fun and festivity of a fair with the education and activism of a conference," as the event chair fondly explains. It features exhibits, speakers, music, prizes, panels, performance art, and tons of fun.

Projected speakers and entertainers include [Yvette d'Entremont](#) (the "SciBabe"), Sarah Levin (founder of [Secular Strategies](#)), [Debra Deanne Olson](#), standup comedian [Leighann Lord](#), musician [Scarlett Rabe](#), musician [Joey Fabian](#), podcasters/comedians [Ian Harris and Ty Barnett](#), and more. This year's theme is "A Brighter Future with Reason".

So sign up now at <http://freethoughtday.org/registration.html>. But, sign up *why*? It's free, isn't it? Yes, the main event (Sunday) is free to attend, but due to the COVID resurgence, this year CFD will be a streaming, real-time teleconference. In other words you can enjoy it at home with a cat or puppy in your lap and the comfortable proximity of your pantry. Just register to get the video link. Also registration will make you eligible for delightful & toothsome benefits.

The seed of this festival, by the way, is [Freethought Day](#), a secular holiday that technically falls on October 12 (click that little link to learn a bit about it), and one of many celebrations held world-over at about the time.

Finally ... if you'd like to volunteer, sponsor, help promote, help plan, participate - or if you just have ideas - then do visit the event website now and contact the chairman (see below). Sooner = better. Because hands that help ... are beautiful hands.

Location: A streaming teleconference. Sign up at <http://freethoughtday.org/registration.html> to get the link.

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

More details at: <https://freethoughtday.org/>, the official event website.



➤ Free Movie Night!

Friday, Oct 15, 7pm – 10pm

Twice a month, [Reason Center](#) (RC) and AOF join hands to host a **Free Movie Night** under an excellent [MPLC License](#). 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 again. Else, here's how to join us:

1. Open your Chrome 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 is will appear on the AOF Website about then.
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 was made for Reason Center members, but non-members are welcome. RC *may* beg a small (voluntary) donation to cover costs. How can you become a Reason Center member? See <http://reasoncenter.com/donate/>. Membership, a measly \$5 a month, is tax deductible if you itemize. And the perks (like this one) are a blast.

Location: A Netflix TeleParty link, see above.

Contact: The Program Committee at <https://www.aofonline.org/contact>.

More details at: <https://www.meetup.com/SacFAN/events/fdnhpsycnbtb/>.

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

➤ **AOF Shorts: Judy Saint**

Sunday, Oct 31, 2021, 2pm - 3pm

"I can't wait to see what I do next," is Judy Saint's response to comments on her life so far. We just had to invite her for you to hear - you'll be inspired by her personal adventures as well as hear about her upcoming plans for the local chapter of Freedom From Religion Foundation. She will share the areas where religion most tries to infiltrate our government and some "easy activism" suggestions that concerned people can do from home. Judy will also tell us about their recently finished major activism project involving 18 volunteers, and will happily tell us about *The Pleasant Atheist Adult Coloring Book* she has coming out in a few months.



You might remember Judy from when 55 atheist billboards went up in Sacramento, or when she put an end to a popular Chili Cookoff that secretly funded an evangelical youth group for years. Both events made the news. Judy also created the AOF Speaker Series which brought such names as Seth Andrews, Matt Dillahunt, Jaclyn Glenn, Dan Barker, and others to Sacramento. She says it was also a lot of fun hosting the "Judy's Outrageous Interviews" series that you may remember.

During the Q&A you might get Judy to share some of her amazing personal stories, such as why she bought a BMW motorcycle over the phone from a dealership in Chesapeake Bay then flew back to pick it up, what it felt like to learn how to fly a small airplane coming across the country from Tennessee to California, why Encyclopedia Britannica asked her to help write their entry for Integrated Circuits, the counterintuitive feeling when she put on her black belt for the first time, or other personal stories that will inspire you to take your life by the horns, too. Join us for some fun

How to attend:

This short 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.) (Note, this is *optional* -- it just makes the teleconference a bit easier.)
- **Moments before the meeting:**
Go to <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83327989793?pwd=aXVNB1JjbDByckNjbFQwQ21EVHBqQT09>. It will take you to a "Launch Meeting" Page. Click the blue button (or click the line that says **Join from Your Browser**).
- **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 **833 2798 9793**.
- **If it wants a passcode**, the code is **965051**.
- The videoconference should begin. Speakers on, please! Sit back and enjoy.

Location: Online Videoconference via Zoom - see link above.

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

Not a Halloween event, but if you wear a costume, we'll be proud of you.

✧ ✧ **Other Upcoming Events** ✧ ✧

➤ **Sacramento-area Online Meetings**

Other local freethinkers are meeting by online teleconference. You can attend from the comfort of home, for free.

- **Monday, Oct 4, 5pm – 7pm: On Death, Dying and Disbelief.** Candace Gorham, LCMHCS, a health care professional, will discuss the struggle freethinkers face with the loss of a loved one, and offer life-affirming steps to remember and heal. Attendance link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/186729414>, or see <https://www.meetup.com/RfR-Sacramento-CA/events/280976026/> for details.
- **Tuesdays, Oct 5 & 17, and Nov 2, 7pm – 9pm: Porch Talk.** A gathering on a virtual front porch, a chat on the news of the day. Topic ideas welcome! Attendance link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86401692746?pwd=NWVhRDhpEellNblRiR0w4RGtmQ2ZLUT09>. (For details see <https://www.meetup.com/SacFAN/events>, and click the appropriate listing.)
- **Wednesdays, Oct 6 & 20, and Nov 3, 7pm – 8pm: Black Lives Matter and Me.** Talk, read, watch videos; discuss social justice, reforms, privilege and power. Meeting link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82590278514?pwd=K1pzaXA0dGVESzlvS1UcEs4RnE2UT09>.
- **Monday, Oct 11, 5pm – 7pm: The Biology of Religion.** Dr. Mark Reimers will describe evidence from neuroscience, genetics, anthropology and psychology about the propensity to be religious. Online attendance link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/186729414>.
- **Wednesdays, Oct 13 & 27, 7pm – 9pm: What's Your Story?** Meet other freethinkers, atheists, agnostics, nonbelievers and humanists in the Sacramento area; discuss beliefs and philosophy, and what led you to this peculiar place of mind. Attendance link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84976409310?pwd=YmlTWTVqcVM5TmFrVjFrQkU2c1I1Zz09>.

- **Thursday, Oct 21, 7pm – 9pm: Recovering from Religion Virtual Support Group.** Providing personal support to individuals as they let go of religious beliefs. Share your story or just listen. Attendance link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82268955990>, or see <https://www.meetup.com/RfR-Sacramento-CA/events/pjqkmsyccnbcc/> for details.
- **Saturday, Oct 25, 7pm – 9pm: Wine, Cheese, and Litera-cheer.** Share your thoughts about any book of choice, one you like or one you hate, a recent or one read long ago. Just be nice (focus on the “cheer”), and BYO wine & cheese. Online attendance link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89172845793>.
- **Saturday, Oct 30, 3pm – 5pm: BHNBS Book Club.** Discussing *The Deficit Myth* by Stephanie Kelton, the best seller that explains how the monetary system works in countries that have a sovereign currency. For details and to attend, see <https://www.meetup.com/bhnb-sacramento/events/281016728/>.

➤ Coffee and Community

Sundays, Oct 3 and Oct 17, 2021, 10:30am – 12 noon

Join us on the 1st and 3rd Sundays for coffee (BYOC) and conversation in a local park. New folks always welcome
 Oct 3: Miller Regional Park, 2701 Marina View Dr, Sac; for details see <https://www.meetup.com/SacFAN/events/281033507/>.
 Oct 17: Eastern Oak Park, 3127 Eastern Ave, Sac; for details see <https://www.meetup.com/SacFAN/events/ccmqpsycnbwb/>.

➤ Saturday Morning Hikes

Saturdays, Oct 16 and Nov 6, 2021, 8:30 am – 10:30 am

Sacramento is filled with gorgeous nature trails. Come hiking each 1st and 3rd Saturday of the month, meet new people, observe wildlife, and get bugs in your shorts. Locations to be announced.

Oct 16: see <https://www.meetup.com/SacFAN/events/lqjglsyccnbvb/>.

Nov 6: see <https://www.meetup.com/SacFAN/events/rrijglsyccpbjb/>.

➤ Other Sacramento Area Events

For more, ever more, see the Sacramento Coalition of Reason events calendar at <https://unitedcor.org/event-calendar-2/>.

Please help Sacramento Freethought. Here's how.

Support Reason Center

Ah, Reason Center. It opened in July 2014, hosted hundreds of events (even a wedding), and accrued twelve partner organizations. Its mission was 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. Then, in 2020, it closed.

But we can get it back! To re-open, “RC” needs support from members and donors. Please stand up for Reason Center, because it stands up for you. Visit ReasonCenter.org to set up a monthly or one-time donation.

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 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.)

Volunteer?

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

✧ ✧ **Secular Holiday** ✧ ✧

➤ Freethought Day

Tuesday, October 12, 2021

Freethought Day, aka “Freethought Coming-Out Day,” is a day to give closeted freethinkers a platform from which to declare themselves. The formal calendar holiday is October 12, but many groups celebrate it on the closest weekend. Some recognize the week as **Freethought Week**, or the entire month of October as **Freethought Month**. In this time, newly declared freethinkers can garner strength and support from fellow “declared” freethinkers.

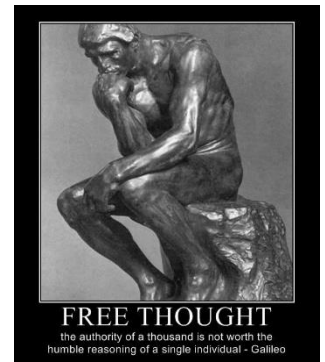
Why October 12? Because on the day in 1692, Colonial Massachusetts Governor William Phips wrote to the Privy Council of the British monarchs to take a stand against the legal use of “spectral evidence,” that is, evidence of a non-objective

nature, such as "feelings" and visions. His decision that evidence should be objective and verifiable essentially ended the Salem Witch Trials, saving scores of lives. (Click [here](#) to read Phips's two letters.)

In the modern United States, discrimination, hatred and bias against freethinkers continues. The freethought community, unlike the gay and lesbian community, lacks a powerful voice and activist population for ending such treatment. Reactions often stem from a misunderstanding of what it is to be a freethinker, or that freethought is a mindset often set in motion in childhood, like sexual preference, not something to change on a whim or with the right "religion." Others should not try to change it with bullying, ridicule or intimidation. Freethinkers must be allowed to declare themselves openly. The goal of Freethought Day is to change this situation for the better of all freethinkers, especially the young.

Today's world sees the emergence of younger and younger freethinkers who are often alone and isolated in their communities. The [Secular Student Alliance](#) and the [Campus Freethought Alliance](#) attempt through their projects to give voice to college and university freethinkers in the US and across the globe, while programs such as [Camp Quest](#), the country's first secular humanist summer camp, and the [SSA's High School Program](#) provide young freethinkers with a place to gain a sense of community and understand that there is a proud and illustrious history to their philosophy. However these programs are few, and without a united voice and a united commitment to change this situation, they may not be enough.

Every freethinker in every community should feel comfortable with his or her ideals, and part of that is a connection to like-minded individuals. Freethought Day gives our friends a chance to understand who we freethinkers are, what we believe, that freethought exists in every community, and that they should not view freethought with fear, but with respect as a positive, compassionate way to live life.



The 2021 Secular Day of the Dead – An Invitation

The Secular Day of the Dead (*Día de los Muertos Secular*) is a celebration of life. To nontheistic Hispanic/Latin people, it is a way to remember the legacy of dead loved ones without prayer, church, or religious dogma. To nontheists, our legacies are our afterlife.

The Secular Day of the Dead event will include many redesigned and religion-free Hispanic/Latin traditions and rituals that celebrate our one and only life, legacies, and cultural heritage.

This year it will be an online event on **Tuesday, November 2, 2021**, starting at **3:45pm PST**, with special attention to Spanish speaking participants. Cosponsors are The Freethought Society, Hispanic American Freethinkers, American Atheists, Center for Inquiry, the Freedom From Religion Foundation, Secular Student Alliance, and Atheists United.

To attend, simply register now (for free) at:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZAudOivqTqiHNEc74dIEMkCpa06UUWQVSjK>

Reservations are being taken for speakers who want to celebrate the life of a dead loved one. Reserve a 3-5-minute time slot through this email address: SecularDayoftheDead@FtSociety.org

Find more information at:

<https://www.facebook.com/events/4424167654288159>

<https://www.ftsociety.org/2021/09/22/2021-secular-day-of-the-dead/>

To see last year's event, please visit one of these links:

English Room:

https://youtu.be/N46al_yEDdU

Spanish Room:

<https://youtu.be/ILM1Ozp4-8Q>





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: Prolific Pamella Rivera
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, Fran Evanisko, Linda Ostrofsky (Jetta),
Kaeleigh Pontif, Christine Tweet

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>.

WANT TO VOLUNTEER TO HELP THOSE IN NEED?

Please check out the Sacramento Food Bank and Family Services.

Sacramentofoodbank.org/volunteer, ph. 916-456-1980, map: <https://goo.gl/maps/rTt8kgTxASu81S5h6>.

It is an amazing secular organization that provides assistance with and for food, clothing, adult learning, parent education, immigration, refugees, & more. *[From AOF's wise & gracious president, Pamella L. Rivera]*

The Empty Cathedrals of Europe by Brian Jay Stanley

Europe's cathedrals sublimely evoke the absence of God. They are temples that have decayed into museums. Tourists, not worshippers, fill their naves, driven by curiosity, not faith. One does not pay alms anymore but admission fees. The altar is roped off, not because it is sacred, but fragile. The silence of emptiness has replaced the silence of holiness.

Wandering past vacant pews and pulpits among guidebook-toting spectators, I become briefly nostalgic for the cathedrals' sacred past, until, opening my guidebook, I study that past and find nothing sacred. The glittering walls and shrines are decorated with ill-gotten gold, stolen relics, and war booty. The soaring domes and spires were raised to heaven not from piety but ambition, to outdo nearby cathedrals and show that Florence was better than Pisa, as modern Malaysian and Shanghai architects compete to build the tallest skyscraper. The niches are filled with the tombs of the rich, not because rich men were holy then but because they wanted to buy the best salvation for themselves, as today's rich use their millions to nuzzle up to power and buy the best laws and policies for themselves. In the cathedrals' history as opposed to their aura, I recognize the same political machinations, class inequality, greed, and immorality that rule the world today—the trademark signs of man curiously grafted onto religion. Life has left Europe's cathedrals, but God was never there.

A secular and a religious society are equally profane, for a secular society banishes the sacred, while a religious society defiles it with the human.

Brian Jay Stanley's gem-like little essays have appeared (or will appear) in *The Antioch Review*, *North American Review*, *The Hudson Review*, *The Sun*, *Pleiades*, *The Dalhousie Review*, *The Laurel Review*, *Connecticut Review* and other magazines. They were selected as notable in *The Best American Essays* in 2006, 2010, and 2011, and have been anthologized in *America Now*.

See his website, *Aphorisms and Paradoxes* (<https://brianjaystanley.com/>), for other reflections.