



Happy AOF Members at AOF's Fall Picnic, Sept 24. If you weren't there, we missed you!

## ✧ ✧ This month's Main Events ✧ ✧

### ➤ California Freethought Day ☆

**Sunday, October 8, 2023, 11 am – 5:30 pm**

**Location:** West steps, California State Capitol, map at

<https://maps.app.goo.gl/UunFFCc4UwHoXRGq9>.

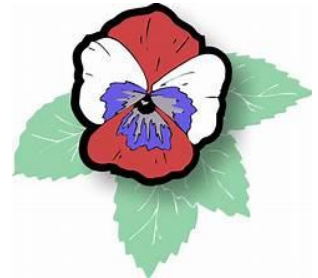
**California Freethought Day (CFD)**, the **Twenty-second Annual Freethought Day Festival** will bring you a menagerie of wonders and a fabulous flight of free minds, along with music, speakers, awards and more. Attendance is *free*. Please join us!

AOF founded CFD in 2002, a rather rag-tag gathering on the Sacramento courthouse steps. It grew. Year by year it grew, until it left the nest and took wings. No longer strictly an AOF event, we still promote and sponsor it. Now it is hosted by the independent [Freethought Day Committee](https://freethoughtday.org/main/). It will feature exhibits, speakers, music, prizes, panels, performance art, and tons of fun. See all the details at <https://freethoughtday.org/main/>.

So register now. But wait, register why? It's free, isn't it? Yes, the main event (Sunday) is free to attend, but advance registration (at no cost) brings delightful & toothsome benefits, including door prizes and updates. **Registration is at:** <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/california-freethought-day-2023-registration-650404606687?aff=oddtcreator>.

Of course, **AOF will have an exhibit table at CFD**. Please stop by and chat with us. We get lonely and we mope.

**Contact for details:** <https://freethoughtday.org/contact/>.



### ➤ Raising Secular Humanist Kids Today

**Sunday, October 29, 2023, 2 pm – 4 pm**

**Location:** Reason Center, 1300 Ethan Way, Rm 675, Sacramento, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/RwiUgEJ5ESHRhrPu8>.

AOF presents [Angela Garvie](#), an engaging and dynamic speaker who will make us smart about navigating family life as a humanist. Via vignettes from her essay, ***So There I Was***, Angela Garvie will share her journey of becoming an atheist and raising her two sons as secular humanists in the new millennium. So join your freethinking & humanist friends to hear her.

The story begins with Angela getting kicked out of Sunday school at age 4; it winds through the ups and downs of being non-religious in our society as an individual and a parent – and how to plow a path for our secular children so they can be good without God.

**Angela Garvie** is active in the Secular Community in Sacramento as the Greeter with Sunday Assembly and the Scholarship Chair on the California Freethought Day committee.

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

*Free parking in the lot, as always. OK to bring personal snacks & beverages – or to share – as you wish. (AOF will provide cool water.)*



## ✧ ✧ Other Upcoming AOF Events ✧ ✧

### ➤ Film and Discussion Night at the Reason Center

**Friday, October 13, 2023, 7 pm – 9 pm**

**Location:** Reason Center, 1300 Ethan Way, Rm 675, Sacramento, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/RwiUgEJ5ESHRhrPu8>.

In-person Movie Nights are back at the new Reason Center in Sacramento, in a quiet room with cozy plush chairs and a huge screen. The actual movie is a bit of a secret, but you'll like it, we promise. AOF sponsors this event. We provide delicious popcorn; feel free to bring your own snacks as well. No fee to join us, but Reason Center does appreciate your donations.

**Contact for details:** See <http://reasoncenter.com/contact/> or contact Nancy Sneed at <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/members/13951445/>.

*Free Movie Nights occur a Friday evening each month. Suggest your own fave film for next time!*



### ➤ Davis Community Meal – Feed the Hungry

**Tuesday, October 31, 2023, 4 pm – 7 pm**

**Location:** St. Martin's Episcopal Church hall, 640 Hawthorne Lane, Davis, map at <https://maps.app.goo.gl/m24JXVrgKVrKhjzy6>.

The **Davis Community Meal** serves meals to the hungry, the poor, the indigent, the outcast. It all happens in bucolic Davis city, so near to us, where compassionate citizens have developed a secular solution for the problem of hunger, and need our help.

So join us, join us in this effort! Your reward will be an opportunity to meet new minds and hobnob with your freethought friends, a likely free meal, jazzy music, and the rosy hearts-glow of benevolence. Also, seriously, it's a blast!

Cooking? Dish washing? Pshaw, none required. The Davis Community Meals team will perform all the food prep and kitchen work. Our job is simply to set up chairs & tables, serve, smile, 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's OK, any help is good help. Setup begins about 4:30 p.m., food service at about 5:45. At 6:30 we clean up, leaving the hall as we found it.

For details, please see [Davis Community Meals](#). For a map to the site, see: [Martin's Episcopal Church](#). (Yes, a church hall, so what?)

**Contact for details:** See <https://www.aofonline.org/contact.html>, or call the Service Coordinator (Don, 916-805-9337). *Carpooling may be available. For info, please contact the Service Project Coordinator.*



## ✧ ✧ Upcoming non-AOF Events ✧ ✧

Jump back: but Sacramento has other freethought groups. AOF is just one minnow in a big pond. Here are highlights of non-AOF events, which we broadcast as a courtesy. Give them a try.

### ➤ Open Library Hours at Reason Center

**Thursday, Oct 5, 3:30 pm – 6:30 pm**

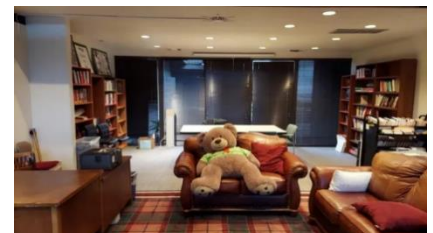
**Thursday, Nov 2, 3:30 pm – 6:30 pm**

**Location:** Reason Center, 1300 Ethan Way, Ste. 675, Sacramento, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/S5MR1e8ZodBzb4TG8>.

The Reason Center library is open for browsing. We have an extensive collection of fascinating books; you can even borrow them if you are a Reason Center member.

See [reasoncenter.org](http://reasoncenter.org) to join, or you may join up at the event.

**Contact for details:** Call 916-426-6416, or see <https://reasoncenter.com/contact/>.



### ➤ Game Day



**Saturday, Oct 7, 2023, 2pm – 5pm**

**Location:** Nr.Highlands-Antelope Library 4235 Antelope Rd, Antelope, map: <https://goo.gl/maps/rAVPSjMZnCKTwikDA>.

A gaming and social program for adults. Casual board & card games will be played. If you have a favorite game then you are welcome to bring it, even "Twister". Bring your own snacks too, but no alcohol. No money bets either.

**Details:** See <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/296347777/>.

### ➤ **Blasphemy Breakfasts - and a Brunch**

**Sunday, Oct 8, 2023, 9:30 am – 11:30 am (midtown Sacramento)**

**Saturday, Oct 14, 2023, 10 am – 11:30 am (Folsom)**

**Sunday, Oct 15, 2023, 9:30 am – 11 am (Rocklin)**

**Oct 8 location:** Mel's Diner, 3000 J Street, Sacramento, CA, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/toijMkseMWmTanVP7>.

**Oct 14 location:** Mel's Diner, 13399 Folsom Blvd, Folsom, CA, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/ri6JvaBoSZVHTdnU6>.

**Oct 15 location:** Mel's Diner, 6708 Lonetree Blvd, Rocklin, CA, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/ZUY2gg72KkmcC4bU6>.

Like to hang out with like-minded people? Want to meet freethinkers in smaller groups? Or do you just get the morning munchies? Join us for our "Blasphemy Breakfast." We really don't blaspheme all that much, but dark mutterings may emerge ... be warned. A great place to speak your mind, and a good starter if you are new to meetups. Please RSVP.

**Details for Oct 8,** see <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/btpcgyfncnblb/>.

**Details for Oct 14,** see <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/znwwgtyfncnbsb/>.

**Details for Oct 15,** see <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/pwwnssyfncnbtb/>.

### ➤ **Suicide Loss Survivors Discussion and Support**

**Tuesday, Oct 10, 2023, 5 pm – 7 pm**

Online survivor support in a compassionate, secular way. Attendance link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82683645189>.

**Details:** <https://www.meetup.com/rfr-sacramento-ca/events/294782832/>

### ➤ **Recovery from Religion (RfR) Virtual Support meetings**

**Saturday, Oct 14, 5 pm – 7 pm** (for women & non-binary, attendance link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87403436249>)

**Sunday, Oct 15, 12 noon – 2 pm** (for LGBTQA+ folk, attendance link <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/7287067292>)

**Saturday, Oct 21, 7 pm – 9 pm** (attendance link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/7287067292>)

Providing ongoing and personal support to individuals letting go of religious beliefs. Please be sensitive and tolerant, and cut others some slack, because *slack* binds us together. "RfR" is here to help you.

**Details for Oct 14,** see <https://www.meetup.com/rfr-sacramento-ca/events/294782152/>.

**Details for Oct 15,** see <https://www.meetup.com/rfr-sacramento-ca/events/294781781/>.

**Details for Oct 12,** see <https://www.meetup.com/rfr-sacramento-ca/events/291877092/>.

### ➤ **Oak Park Black Film Festival**

**Saturday, Oct 14, 2023, 5 pm – 9 pm**

**Location:** The Guild Theater, 2828 35<sup>th</sup> Street, Sacramento, map at <https://maps.app.goo.gl/LQ1xbdCges7MeViv9>

Join us at the 2023 Oak Park Black Film Festival. The festival is a celebration of African-American stories and history through cinema showcasing independent features, documentaries and short films by African-American filmmakers. The full festival runs Oct 11 - 15. The Black Humanists and Non-Believers of Sacramento will attend on this date.

The event's ticket website: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/2023-oak-park-black-film-festival-vip-all-access-passes-tickets-621198249687>.

Save the date and support BHNBS, as well as the art and culture of the African-American community!

**Details:** see <https://www.meetup.com/bhnb-sacramento/events/295492776/>.



### ➤ **Sacramento Skeptics in the Pub**

**Saturday, Oct 14, 2023, 6pm – 8pm**

A social meetup for the skeptical minds, a community of people, friends, and families that champion the methods of science and critical thinking. Visitors and new skeptics most welcome!

For details see <https://www.meetup.com/sacskeptics/events/lzkdqtyfncnbsb/>.

**Location:** Duke's Pints & Plates, 510 La Sierra Dr, Sacramento; map at <https://goo.gl/maps/aNzV4j33cnizW9j77>.

### ➤ **Ancient Christian Study Group**

**Sunday, Oct 15, 2023, 12 noon – 2 pm**

**Location:** Shine Café, 1400 E Street, Sacramento, map at <https://maps.app.goo.gl/fFgfsvK3ky2RvdWs6>.

The history of ancient Christianity is an endlessly fascinating topic. Don Fox and Steve Thoreson will facilitate this review of the history of Rome, religions of the Roman Empire, Gnosticism, Mystery cults, history of Christian persecutions,

biographies of major Christians, the history of the Bible and many other related topics. If you ever wanted to sort out Eusebius from Clement, or Constantine from Diocletian, or the Vulgate from the Septuagint, then this group is for you. Previous biblical knowledge is not required to participate.

This meeting will rake through Bart Ehrman's book, "The Triumph of Christianity." So what was the special sauce? And why does he open the book with an anecdote about that time in his junior year in college when he read Matthew Arnold's poem, "Dover Beach"?

Details: see <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/ndfzqyfcnbtb/>.

### ➤ Games at Reason Center

**Friday, Oct 20, 6 pm – 9 pm**

**Location:** Reason Center, 1300 Ethan Way, Suite 675, Sacramento, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/S5MR1e8ZodBzb4TG8>.

A fun evening of games and food. Please bring a small dish to share for our potluck. Feel free to bring some of your own games to share. We have a good variety, both board games and card games. (Here are a few: Ticket to Ride, Azul, Camel Up, Labyrinth, Rummikub, and more.)

But no gambling allowed. Be nice, people.

**Details:** see <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/ggslftyfcnbcc/>.

**Contact:** See <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/members/380483831/>, or call 916-426-6416.



### ➤ Coffee and Community

**Sunday, Oct 22, 2023, 10:00 am – 11:30 am**

**Location:** A videoconference; to attend, just wait for the meeting time, and then click this link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88317332021?pwd=OVI6M3IRQm52L0hQUmhwd0pucENEQT09>.

Meet for open-topic conversation, brew your own coffee. Get to know new folk or visit with some old friends! Hosted by Nancy Sneed and Lucila, such friendly people!

**Details:** see <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/ssgcqtyfcnbdc/>.

### ➤ Porch Talk

**Wednesday, Oct 25, 7 pm – 8:30 pm**

**Attendance link:** <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88417809715?pwd=UGx1Q3hpU25iWkwrZjZaTWZFMEMxZz09>.

A social gathering on the virtual front porch. Join online (via your personal computer) for a videochat on topics of the day; just click the link at meeting time and follow the instructions. Discussion suggestions are welcome. Host: Nancy Sneed.

**Details:** see <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/xcnkftyfcnbhc/>.

### ➤ Black Humanists & Non-Believers Book Club

**Saturday, Oct 28, 2023, 3:30 pm – 5:00 pm**

An online book discussion open to all. Book topic to be announced. RSVP to attend, and the location will be revealed.

**Details:** see <https://www.meetup.com/bhnb-sacramento/events/whnfftyfcmbfc/>.

### ➤ More Events – See the Event Calendars

Migosh that's a lot. But there's more! And plans keep changing, so don't trust the static list above. To keep track of all those other events, bookmark & follow these links:

- Sacramento Freethinkers, Atheists and Nonbelievers, <https://www.meetup.com/SacFAN/events/calendar/>
- The Reason Center calendar, <https://www.meetup.com/ReasonCenterEvents/events/calendar/>
- Black Humanists of Sacramento events, <https://www.meetup.com/bhnb-sacramento/events/calendar/>
- Recovery from Religion Sacramento, <https://www.meetup.com/RfR-Sacramento-CA/events/calendar/>
- Sacramento Skeptics events, <https://www.meetup.com/sacskeptics/events/calendar/>
- Compassionate Humanists of Roseville, <https://www.meetup.com/compassionate-humanists/events/calendar/>
- Sunday Assembly Sacramento events, <https://www.meetup.com/sunday-assembly-sacramento/events/calendar/>
- Central Valley Alliance of Atheists & Skeptics, <https://www.meetup.com/fresno-cvaas/events/calendar/>

## ✧ ✧ Secular Holiday ✧ ✧

### ➤ Freethought Day

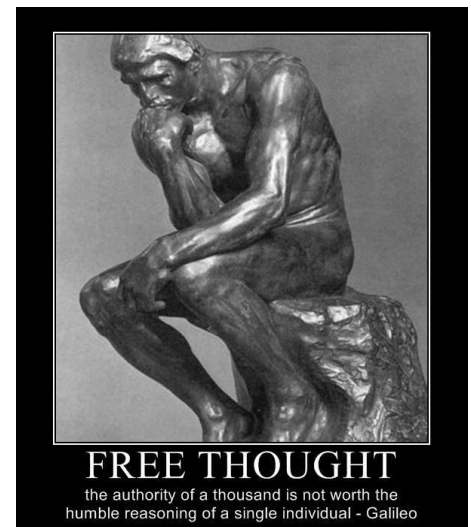
**Thursday, October 12, 2023**

October has one Secular Holiday, but it's a doozy. **Freethought Day** or "Freethought Coming-Out Day" is a day that gives closeted freethinkers a platform for declaring themselves. The formal holiday is October 12, but many 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 brought an end to 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 intent 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.



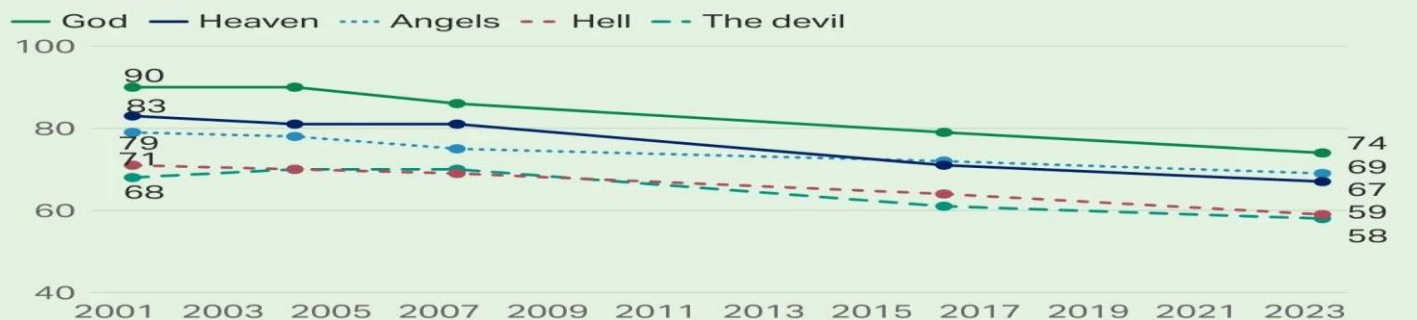
## Why America's secularization is good for Democracy

By Phil Zuckerman, dean of faculty at Pitzer College, August 2, 2023 ([source](#))

### Americans' Belief in Five Spiritual Entities, 2001-2023

For each of the following items I am going to read you, please tell me whether it is something you believe in, something you're not sure about, or something you don't believe in.

% Believe in



*The decline of religion in America continues.*

GALLUP®

Last week, Gallup released new data showing that standard Christian beliefs are at all-time lows. Back in 2001, 90% of Americans believed in God; that figure is now down to 74%. Belief in heaven has gone from 83% down to 67%; belief in hell from 71% down to 59%; belief in angels from 79% down to 69%; belief in the devil from 68% down to 58%. These declines in personal belief are tracking with church attendance, which is at an all-time low (even when accounting for the pandemic's social distancing). Religious wedding ceremonies are similarly at an all-time low, as the percentage of Americans claiming to have no religion has hit an all-time high.

Some readers will despair at this sweeping secularization. They know the value of strong congregational community, the meaningfulness of sacred rituals, the comfort of spiritual solace and the power of religiously inspired charitable works.

But even those who experience and treasure these benefits of belief should take solace in the fact that the decline of religion in American society is nonetheless good for our democracy.

There are two basic types of secularization: The oppressive kind comes from the barrel of an atheist dictator's gun. Think of the former U.S.S.R. or Khmer Rouge Cambodia, where the communist regime, seeking to stomp out any and all ideological rivals, repressed religion systematically and often violently. Such forced secularization is to be resisted and condemned.

The other type of secularization is organic. It emerges naturally as societies become more modern, educated, prosperous and rational. Think of Scandinavia or Japan. When secularization occurs naturally within free societies and people simply stop being religious by choice, such a change comes with many positive correlates — not least healthier democratic values and institutions.



This is what we are seeing here in the United States: No one is being forced to become secular. Millions of Americans are simply choosing to do so. And this will be good for our republic, as the existing data shows.

A healthy democracy requires active participation in the very enterprise of self-governance. On that front, atheists and agnostics stand out. When it comes to attending political meetings, protests and marches, putting up political lawn signs, donating to candidates, working for candidates or contacting elected officials, the godless are among the most active and engaged. Americans who are affirmatively secular in their orientation — atheists, agnostics, humanists, freethinkers — are more likely to vote in elections than their religious peers.

Another crucial pillar of democracy is tolerance, the acceptance of people who are different from us, or behave and believe differently. In a diverse and pluralistic nation such as ours, civic tolerance of difference is essential. In study after study, nonreligious people are found to be much more tolerant than religious people.

For example, when Americans are asked if they would grant the same rights that they enjoy to political groups they personally oppose, secular people are much more likely than religious people to say yes. When it comes to supporting civil liberties for various stigmatized minority groups, the secular are, again, notably more tolerant than the religious.

Additionally, atheists have markedly lower levels of in-group bias than religious people, which actually makes them more accepting and tolerant of religious people than religious people are of them.

A third component of a healthy democracy is for its citizens to be informed about current events, to be critical thinkers and to be able to differentiate between fact and fiction. This is especially in our social-media-saturated world, in which we are bombarded with fake news. Research shows that secular people are on average more analytically adept than religious people. Religiosity, especially strong religiosity, is significantly correlated with greater acceptance of fake news.

The very first sentence of the U.S. Constitution's very First Amendment states that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." This principle of our democracy, which bars the government from either promoting or persecuting religion, is essential in a society that contains millions of people with multiple religious faiths, and no religious faith at all. In recent years, the U.S. Supreme Court has shown a willingness to bulldoze this safeguard, threatening one of the founding premises of our nation.

The best hope for our democracy may be the growing number of secular Americans, who are by far the most supportive of repairing this principle.

Naked Woman Chases Jehovah's Witnesses Off Of Her Porch And Down The Street Yelling, "Succumb To My Devil Vagina Magic!"



See <https://tinyurl.com/2p8zbrxx> for the full story



## 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](http://www.aofonline.org).

AOF President: Prolific Pamela Rivers  
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, Kaeleigh Pontif

### 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 pages (two):

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1525411971087089/>  
<https://www.facebook.com/Atheists-and-Other-Freethinkers-AOF-104763721971742>

### 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. Be respectful, and you 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>.