

Video of August AOF Meeting now available

Did you miss AOF's excellent August 30 presentation by Steve Hill on Incarceration vs Education? Lucky you, because the recorded talk is now available for viewing at this web link:

https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/ppArKZDsyEhlaaPfuXDAVa1wI6nZX6a80yMe_Vezxm4NFTjUDS0xAEEnYKuBDtQ5

Passcode: fxj%#1*q

It will be there for just a month, so catch it now. Bonus: the first five minutes consists of Susan McLean's adorable visage.

✧ ✧ Upcoming AOF Events ✧ ✧

➤ Free Movie Nights

Fridays, Sept 4, Sept 18 and Oct 2, 2020, 7pm – 10pm

Twice a month, [Reason Center](#) (RC) and AOF host a **Free Movie Night** under an [MPLC License](#). The License prohibits us from naming the movies. But we can hint.

The first (Sep 4), tentatively, is a classic 1950 American drama starring Bette Davis that received a 14 Academy Award nominations and won six, including Best Picture; critics consider it to be one of the greatest films of all time. The second (Sep 18), a 2007 romantic fantasy adventure about a small Victorian English town bordering on a magic land. A young man enters the magical realm to retrieve a fallen star, and has fantastic adventures (of course he does!). The third (Oct 2) might be an apocalyptic comedy.



Alas the regular movie venue, Reason Center (RC), is closed due to the Coronavirus lockdown. So how can you attend? You'll need a personal Netflix account + the [Google Chrome](#) web browser. If you don't have these, please be patient until RC can open its doors. Else, here's how to join us:

1. Open your Chrome web browser right now and install the Netflix Party Extension. Get it at: <https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/netflix-party/oocalimimgaihdhkbihfgmpkcpnmlaoo?hl=en>. (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 Party link, which will appear on the [AOF website](#) later. Probably at the last minute, because that's how we roll.
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. It's not easy to see, so look closely. 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.

The movies are especially for Reason Center members, but everyone is welcome. RC *may* beg a small donation to cover costs. To become an RC member, sign up at <http://reasoncenter.com/donate/>. Membership is a measly \$5 a month, is tax deductible if you itemize, and the perks (like this one) will fall to you like stardust.

Contact: Reason Center, 916-426-6416, or email <reasoncenter (at) gmail (dot) com>.

Location: An online Netflix Movie Party, see details above.

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

➤ Adopt-a-Highway Cleanup

Saturday, Sept 12, 2020, 9am - 11am

A certain stretch of Highway 99 runs two miles from Elkhorn Boulevard to Elverta Road – *our* stretch. Sac-area freethinkers "adopted" it in July 1995. We have cared for it, nurtured it, lovingly rescued it from litter and debris, and received recognition for our work. Our most successful civic effort, it proves freethinkers can serve the community.

So, join us please! Enjoy a morning commune with nature and do a deed for the environment and local area wildlife. The refuse we collect would otherwise ultimately be swept by the rain into tributaries and into the ocean, degrading habitat, and leading to a slow death for many creatures.



As usual, the stalwart activity captain will provide all safety equipment, including comfortable, natty hard-hats and gloves, stylish safety vests, collection bags, and handy trash pickers. The clean-up takes a scant two hours. Please dress for the season. It may be a good idea to bring a backpack or fanny-pack to carry 3 or 4 trash bags.

To find the site, go north from Sacramento on I-5 past the old Sleep Train Arena. Take the "Highway 99 - Yuba City" exit, then the Elkhorn Boulevard exit less than a mile north. Turn left, cross the overpass. The park-&-ride lot will be on your left.

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

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

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

➤ **Secular Mental Health – Candace Gorman**

Sunday, Sept 27, 2020, 2pm – 4pm

AOF brings Candace R.M. Gorham to you to talk about secular mental health---something some of us could use a bit more of. You in the tinfoil, you know who you are.

Candace has earned her chops. At age 18 she joined a charismatic church, which ordained her as an evangelical minister and prophetess. She cast out demons and conducted faith healings, and was determined to be the minister, wife, and mother that she was sure God wanted her to be. When financial hardship and depression drove her to consider suicide, she dove even more deeply into the Bible and quickly became disillusioned. Questions mounted about the similarities between Jesus and earlier god-legends, the nature of god, and the concepts of hell and evil. These and other issues prompted Candace to reject belief in a deity. She later founded the [Ebony Exodus Project](#) to explore why record numbers of black women are leaving religion.



Now a licensed professional counselor and the author of [The Ebony Exodus Project: Why Some Black Women Are Walking Out on Religion and Others Should, Too](#), Ms. Gorham is on the advisory council of the Black Humanist Alliance of the American Humanist Association and is a member of the Secular Therapist Project and the Clergy Project. She lives in Durham, North Carolina, with her 16-year-old daughter. No one in Durham wears a tinfoil hat.

Another outstanding event of the AOF Speaker Series.

How to attend:

Assuming Reason Center will still be closed due to COVID concerns, this meeting will be an online videoconference.

1. 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 video meetings.)
2. Moments before the meeting: Go to <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85617000610?pwd=bENDaUNpVFFMMGNvakVIWFR0UDExQT09>. It will take you to a Zoom Page.
3. It may ask 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 if necessary.
4. If it requests a Meeting ID (it might), the ID is **856 1700 0610**.
5. If it wants a passcode (it probably won't), the passcode is **658339**.
6. The video meeting should begin. Speakers on, please! Sit back and enjoy.

Or listen in by phone at 1-669-900-6833. Same meeting ID (**856 1700 0610**) and same passcode (**658339**).

Location: Online Videoconference via Zoom - see link above.

Contact: Email "programs (at) aofonline (dot) org", or see <https://www.meetup.com/SacFAN/events/272690372/>.

If you enjoy this, show us! Join AOF at <http://www.aofonline.org/join.html>. It will help us bring you more fine speakers.

❖ ❖ **Other Upcoming Events** ❖ ❖

For in-person meetings, please be safe, take all the usual precautions. Masks, masks!

➤ **Critical Thinking Workshops**

Thursdays, Sept 3 & 17, and Oct 1, 2020, 7pm – 9pm

A workshop sponsored by the Sacramento Area Skeptics to practice and explore the concepts of critical thinking. Each workshop begins with a video on a fundamental concept of critical thought; students then apply it to current/ relevant topics in a group discussion format. \$1 fee for costs.

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

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

➤ **Book Club: *The Equations of Life***

Monday, Sept 21, 2020, 6:30pm – 8:30pm

A discussion of [The Equations of Life: How Physics Shapes Evolution](#), by Charles S. Cockell, 352 pages, in which the biologist author argues that physics narrowly constrains how life can evolve, making evolution's outcomes determined and predictable. Requested donation: \$1. [Note, revised as an *online* discussion, please contact host for details.]

Location : Reason Center, 1824 Tribute Rd, Suite A, Sacramento. Map: <https://goo.gl/IVQL8z>. [See correction above.]

Contact: See <https://www.meetup.com/SacFAN/events/266907643/>, or contact Roberto Leibman, ph. 916-213-1969 or email <Roberto (at) leibman (dot) net>.

➤ Sacramento Skeptics in the Pub

Friday, Sept 25, 2020, 6:30pm – 9:30pm

Devoted to skepticism, rational thought and good beer, a gathering 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.)

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".

➤ Online meetings

Others in the local community of reason are meeting via videoconference, basic procedure like above. Join these meetings of marvelous minds and grow wiser. For details on most see <https://www.meetup.com/SacFAN/events/calendar/>.

- **Each Tuesday, 7pm - 9pm**, "Black Lives Matter and Me." Discussing social justice, needed reforms, privilege, power and oppression. Hosted by Nancy Sneed.
- **Each Wednesday, 7pm - 9pm**, "What's Your Story." Discussing belief and philosophy, and what led us to this place.
- **Sundays, Sept 6 & 20, 10:30am - 12 noon**, Online Coffee and Community. BYO beverage & snacks, natch!
- **Monday, Sept 7, 5pm - 7pm**, "Finding & Building Your Communities," hosted by Recovering from Religion Sacramento. See <https://www.meetup.com/RfR-Sacramento-CA/events/272919644/> for videoconference link.
- **Wednesday, Sep 23, 7pm - 9pm**, "Recovering from Religion Virtual Support Group." See <https://www.meetup.com/RfR-Sacramento-CA/events/tjswrybcmbfc/>.

➤ General Sacramento Area Events calendar

We could go on; many other events are happening despite the lockdown. For a list, see the Sacramento Coalition of Reason site at <https://unitedcor.org/event-calendar-2/>. Exercise your mind while staying safe.

You can help. Really, you can help us! Here's how.

Support Reason Center

Reason Center opened in July 2014; since then it has hosted hundreds of events and gained 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.

To continue its work, "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 get 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 thoughtful suggestion. (Reasonable honorariums paid to speakers.)

Volunteer?

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



✧ ✧ Secular Holidays ✧ ✧

➤ Talk Like a Pirate Day

Saturday, Sept 19, 2020

Avast ye lubbers. International **Talk Like a Pirate Day** is a day to show off your Piratude. Created in 1995 by John Baur and Mark Summers, promulgated to worldwide popularity by humorist Dave Barry in a syndicated column, we can celebrate this secular holiday in many ways: garb like pirates, talk like pirates, swill grog like pirates, stagger and fall down like pirates. What *is* grog? Never mind, just find some and swill.

Then haul your keel, shiver your timbers, and do wha' ever seem right and proper, 'cause this be a day to celebrate. Info ahoy at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Talk_Like_a_Pirate_Day.



Other Piratery links:

How to Talk like a Pirate, instructions at <http://www.yarr.org.uk/talk/>.

Translate text into Pirate Talk at <https://funtranslations.com/pirate>.

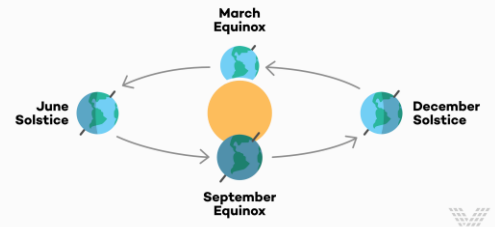
Google's Pirate Search engine is at <https://www.google.com/webhp?hl=xx-pirate>.

On this day, all pirates must talk like regular people.

➤ Equinox (September)

Tuesday, September 22, 2020

The **September Equinox** is one of two days in the calendar year when day almost equal the night hours. In the northern hemisphere it is also the first day of Autumn or Fall (Gregorian calendar), called the Autumnal Equinox. (In the southern hemisphere it is the first day of Spring.)



The Autumnal Equinox marks when green things begin to shed, when growth which was young in the spring has reached maturity. Animals prepare for winter, tree leaves turn colors, and the air takes a chill. In most cultures this a time for harvest and taking stock of life's fragility. It is a time when people begin noticing the waning hours of daylight in anticipation of the winter. Since this time of year is one of the most temperate, it is also a good time to reflect on the meaning of life.

In every culture the Autumnal Equinox signals the return of weather that favors slowing down, introspection, and conservation. Many cultures celebrate the harvest as a means to defeat the starvation brought on by winter. It is also a time closely associated with the dead. Though the dead do not return to life nor walk the earth this time of the year, it is well to remember or memorialize those who are no longer with us. For freethinkers the Autumnal Equinox is a great time to celebrate the lives of those who contributed to the freethought movement. It is also a perfect day to contemplate your own thoughts on the meaning you invest in life and share those thoughts with others.

➤ Banned Book Week

Sunday, Sept 27 – Saturday, Oct 3, 2020

September's end marks **Banned Books Week**, a celebration of the Freedom to Read, established by the American Library Association in 1981 in response to growing attempts to ban books in public libraries across the country. First observed in 1982, we celebrate it each year during the last week starting in September, to remind us not to take for granted their freedom to read the written word.

Every year bookstores and libraries across the United States celebrate Banned Books Week with displays of and readings from books that have been banned or threatened throughout history. Such works range from the *Bible* and Thomas Paine's *The Age of Reason* to Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and J.K Rowling's *Harry Potter* series, and has included books on atheism, science, tolerance, social issues, love and sex, and philosophy. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Thomas Paine, Voltaire, Aristophanes, Margaret Sanger, Mary Shelley, Ambrose Bierce, Charles Darwin, George Eliot, Mark Twain and John Locke were all victims of censorship during their lifetimes and still face censorship in some sections of the world today.



Banned Books Week stands as a reminder that freedom is precious, that without constant diligence and defiance we can lose it, even in the United States. If anything, this should motivate freethinkers everywhere to read banned books, discuss them, and protect the rights of all Americans to read what they want, when they want, in libraries across the country.

Banned Books Week sponsors include the ...

[American Booksellers Association](#),

[American Booksellers Foundation of Free Expression](#),

[American Library Association](#) (ALA),

[Association of American Publishers](#),

[American Society of Journalists and Authors](#), and

[National Association of College Stores](#).

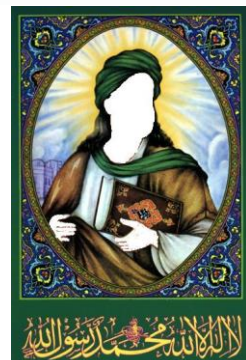
It is endorsed by [the Library of Congress Center for the Book](#).

➤ Blasphemy Day

Wednesday, September 30, 2020

Secularists and freethinkers worldwide celebrate [International Blasphemy Day](#) or "Blasphemy Rights Day" to mark the day when images of Muhammad appeared in the Denmark newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* in 2005. Conservative Muslims reacted to the drawings with worldwide protests, riots, embassy burnings and death threats.

Formally founded in 2009 by Ronald Lindsay, Director of the Center of Inquiry in Ahmherst, New York, and promoted by the [Campaign for Free Expression](#), this secular holiday now stands as a platform for individuals freely to express criticisms of religion and religious establishments. As Ronald Lindsay said in a television interview: "... religious beliefs should be subject to examination and criticism just as political beliefs are, but we have a taboo on religion."



Muhammad (actual photo)

"... we're against restrictions on speech based purely on the possibility that some people might be offended," he also said; "Because if you go down that path there's no end to it."

Participants have celebrated Blasphemy Day in various ways: with speeches, art exhibitions, feasts, poetry, music and song, and by taking the [Blasphemy Challenge](#). Use your imagination.

Note, this holiday has its own Facebook page. Visit it at <https://www.facebook.com/blasphemyday>.



Save the Date – California Freethought Day: Sunday, October 10, 2020

The 2020 California Freethought Day will be a free, broadcast-only event, which you can enjoy from the safety of home. For updates visit <http://freethoughtday.org/>. Please *take note now* of the **\$1000 scholarship high school student essay contest**, topic: what has the most impact on voting in America, and what change might improve the election process. Tell all your student friends. Submissions due by Sept 16 noon. See <http://freethoughtday.org/essay.html> for details.

Meanwhile you can support Freethought Day with a small donation (visit <https://paypal.me/FreethoughtDay>).

The Vegetarian Hermit

SOME OF ROBERT CRABB'S contemporaries were unsympathetic enough to connect his unorthodox religious career with the fact that his skull was cracked open by a battle axe in the English Civil War (1642–1651). Sheer scuttlebutt.

In fact, it had already started by then. The Spirit put him on a diet of vegetables, water and celibacy in 1641. Not the first person to go that way, but in Catholic-hating Puritan circles it was seriously unexpected.

Next, he moved to Uxbridge, where he became a hermit and dispensed herbal remedies to a constant stream of visitors, mostly women. He made his own clothes and enjoyed the humble art of prophecy rather more than the next person, getting denounced as a witch in the process.

His next career move was to start selling homemade hats. His inner light revealed that it was a sin to make a profit, but somehow, his business survived for three years, during which time he may well have bequeathed to the English language the saying, "as mad as a hatter". A further reading of the Bible convinced him to sell everything he had and give the money to the poor, which didn't help his reputation, or to be honest the poor all that much.

Next he felt convicted to eliminate the carnal extravagance of potatoes and carrots from his luxurious vegan teetotal lifestyle. He ended up on bran soup, turnips and bean pudding. Yet still he was not satisfied. Not many people would be, I suppose. But further revelation persuaded him that his problem was still, surprisingly enough, self-indulgence. He spent the rest of his life on dock leaves and grass, and an income of a penny every four months.

Regrettably, he only ever had one convert to this rather demanding way of life. The name was Captain Northwood, from Philadelphia. The Captain died shortly afterwards of malnutrition.

From <http://www.ship-of-fools.com/>, embroidered



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
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Linda Ostrofsky (Jetta), 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 page:

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Atheists-and-Other-Freethinkers/533365556831322>

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>.

Quora query:

Have you ever asked yourself "Who am I to reject the Gods of my fathers?"? [\[link\]](#)

Answer by Franklin Veaux, writer:

Yes. And the answer is:

"I am the person who also rejects the medicine of my fathers (bloodletting, leeches, exorcism), the cosmology of my fathers (the Platonic solids of the spheres, the earth at the center of the universe), the technology of my fathers (telegraphs, horse-drawn carriages), the economics of my fathers (slavery, indentured servitude), the politics of my fathers (feudalism, the divine right of kings), the clothing of my fathers, and the social systems of my fathers (only white landowning males can vote)."

The idea that we can't reject anything our fathers did is silly nonsense. As a reason for religion, it's one of the silliest I've ever seen.

Answer by Peter Flom:

No, and, now that I do think about it, I realize it is not just a stupid question, but an evil one.

It rejects our humanity. The essence of humanity is that we think. And one aspect of thinking is knowing that our ancestors could be wrong.

I am guessing from your name that you are a Christian. So, you rejected the Gods of your fathers. After all:

Roses are reddish
Violets are blueish
If not for Jesus
We'd all be Jewish.

Except, no, not really, because Abraham rejected the Gods of HIS fathers.

So, if you really don't want to reject the Gods of your fathers, you'd have to be some sort of pagan.

