



AOF

Atheists and Other Freethinkers

AOF News & Views – Newsletter for March 2021
(Edited by Fran Evanisko)

✧ ✧ Upcoming AOF Events ✧ ✧

➤ Free Movie Night!

Fridays, Mar 5 & Mar 19, 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 movie, but we can hint.

The first (Mar 5) is a 2001 Netflix original movie about a pilot (Damson Idris) sent into a war zone in the near future, who finds himself paired with a top-secret android officer (Anthony Mackie) on a mission to stop a nuclear attack. (What could be better? War, an android, huge explosions!) The second movie (Mar 19) is as-yet undecided.

Alas, the regular movie venue, [Reason Center](#) (RC), is closed. 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 RC can reopen its doors. 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 just before movie time.
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 too. RC *may* request a small (voluntary) donation to cover costs. How to be a Reason Center member? Sign up at <http://reasoncenter.com/donate/>. Membership, a measly \$5 a month, is tax deductible if you itemize. And the perks (like this one) just get better.

Location: A Netflix tele party link, see above.

Contact: See <https://reasoncenter.org/contact/> or email "programs (at) aofonline (dot) org".

Free Movie Nights generally occur two Fridays each month. And you can suggest your own fave flick for next time.

➤ Adopt-A-Highway Cleanup

Saturday, Mar 13, 2021, 9am - 11am

A tidy stretch of Highway 99 runs two miles from Elkhorn Boulevard to Elverta Road – *our* stretch. Sac-area freethinkers "adopted" it in July 1995. It's tidy because we have cared for it, nurtured it, lovingly rescued it from litter and debris, and received recognition for this. As one of our more successful civic efforts, it proves freethinkers can also 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 sea 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 cleanup 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 get there, travel north from Sacramento on I-5, past the old Sleeptrain Arena. Take the "Highway 99 - Yuba City, Marysville" exit. Exit at Elkhorn Boulevard less than a mile north. Turn left, cross the overpass. Park in the park-&-ride lot if possible, else somewhere on Elkhorn Blvd near it. (Note: Please review the CalTrans Highway Cleanup guidelines at <https://dot.ca.gov/programs/maintenance/adopt-ahighway/covid19>.)

Location: Near W. Elkhorn Blvd & Hwy 99, see map at <https://goo.gl/maps/kU6AWDPwibacKX3q9>.

Contact: 916-447-2169 (Don Knutson) or email "don (at) aofonline (dot) org".

In case of rain, excessive mud, rapture or locust plague, the Cleanup will be rescheduled. If unsure, ask the Activity Captain (Don).



➤ Who Are We?

Sunday, March 28, 2021, 2:00 pm - 4:00 pm

A meeting for new folk needing an introduction, but also for old-timers bewildered by all the freethought and secularist groups in Sacramento. Why this higgly hodgepodge, this tumbling tangle of wrangling felines? Why not merge into a single, amorphous, freethoughty blancmange?

Sigh. If only it were so simple.

First we'll explain (*try* to explain) the vasty differences, legal and otherwise, between AOF, [SacFAN](#), and some of the other groups. Who organizes California Freethought Day? Who does Darwin Day? What about the Humanists? What's the connect to [Sunday Assembly](#)? The [Sacramento Skeptics](#), who are they? If the local scene seems a maze to you, you're not alone, and we'll answer questions ... some of which might be, ahem, unanswerable. Expect hawing & hemming. Leaders will describe their groups and we might even flash a few Venn diagrams. You remember your set theory, right?

For part two, we'll look at humorous nonbeliever memes collected over the past few years. You might have a few, so have 'em ready to screen-share with the group! Another fine AOF Speaker Series event.

How to attend:

Reason Center is still 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.) (Note, this is *optional* -- it just makes the teleconference a bit easier.)
- **Moments before the meeting,** click this link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82768439243?pwd=R0lWMWJ5YWZjWEo1VWN5ZHdHMTRZZz09>. It will take you to a "Zoom Page." Click the blue box that says **Launch Meeting**.
- **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 **827 6843 9243**.
- **If it wants a passcode** (it probably won't), the passcode is **269811**.
- If necessary, click the line that says **Join from Your Browser**.
- The videoconference should begin. Speakers on, please! Sit back and enjoy.

Or listen in by phone at 1-669-900-6833. Same meeting ID (**827 6843 9243**) and same passcode (**269811**).

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

Contact: Email "programs (at) aofonline.org", or see <https://www.meetup.com/SacFAN/events/276064925/>
To support the Speaker Series, join AOF at www.aofonline.org/join. Because without AOF, it wouldn't happen.

❖ ❖ Other Upcoming Events ❖ ❖

➤ Sacramento-area Online Meetings

All those other groups? They're also meeting via free online videoconference. Join the party, share your thoughts!

- **Wednesdays, Mar 3, 17 & 31, 6:30pm – 8:30pm: What's Your Story?** Meet other freethinkers, atheists, agnostics, nonbelievers and humanists in the greater Sacramento area; discuss beliefs and philosophy, and what led you to this place. Attendance link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85489607519?pwd=a1V2eEVKb3hnWXhZMVZRMm04Wk5BQT09>.
- **Sundays, Mar 7 & Mar 21, 10:30am – Noon: Online Coffee & Community.** Join fellow freethinkers on the 1st and 3rd Sundays for coffee (BYOC) and conversation. Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84984111659?pwd=cThkaGdTK0FCdXJpWnB3MVZ1R213Zz09>.
- **Monday, Mar 8, 5pm – 7pm: The Existential Crisis of Parenthood.** [Recovery From Religion, Sacramento chapter](#), with the help of [Danielle LaSusa, PhD](#), will discuss how parenthood comes with a host of profound philosophical concerns around what it means to make, raise, and be a person. Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/186729414>.
- **Tuesdays, Mar 9 & Mar 23, 7pm – 9pm: Porch Talk.** A social gathering on a virtual front porch, a chat about topics of the day. Your topic suggestions are welcome. Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86401692746?pwd=NWhrdHpEellNblRiR0w4RGtmQ2ZLUT09>.
- **Wednesdays, Mar 10 & Mar 24, 6pm – 8pm: Black Lives Matter and Me.** Talk, read, watch videos; discuss social justice, reforms, privilege, power and oppression. Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82590278514?pwd=K1pzaXA0dGVESzlvS1UcEs4RnE2UT09>.
- **Monday, Mar 15, 6:30pm – 8:30pm, Online Book Club: Humankind: A Hopeful History by Rutger Bregman.** Every third Monday, join freethought friends for a discussion of a favorite book. For details, see <https://www.meetup.com/SacFAN/events/cmqldsyccfbtb/>.
- **Wednesday, Mar 17, 8pm, Guinness and Goodness.** ☆☆☆ Join Sean O'Brien in an irreverent Paddy's Day celebration of Irish poetry and song. Link: <https://us04web.zoom.us/j/75830524553?pwd=aEhES1TeElpbNjGSXhZc0dZRWJqUT09>.
- **Thursday, Mar 18, 7pm – 9pm: Recovering from Religion Virtual Support Group.** Providing personal support to individuals as they let go of their religious beliefs. You may share or just listen. Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82268955990>.
- **Friday, Mar 26, 6:30pm – 9:30pm: Virtual Skeptics in the Pub.** A social meeting for the Sacramento Area Skeptics, welcoming new Skeptics and folk who champion science and critical thinking. Details, see <https://www.meetup.com/sacskeptics/events/276681986/>.
- **Saturday, Mar 27, 7pm – 9pm: Wine, Cheese, and Litera-cheer.** Share your thoughts about any book of choice, one you like or one you hate, one you've read recently or long ago. Just be nice (focus on the "cheer"), and BYO wine & cheese. Attendance link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83532894913?pwd=TkozeE0wVWtpMzRuMml5azRQTzVBUT09>.



➤ More Events

There's more of course! For other freethought events in the area please see the Sacramento Coalition of Reason general calendar at <https://unitedcor.org/event-calendar-2/>. Click an event for details, and try not to stay calm.

Online Thomas Paine Celebration – You're invited!

The Freethought Society (FS), Thomas Paine National Historical Association (TPNHA), Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF), Center for Inquiry (CFI) and American Humanist Association (AHA), invite you to the 2021 **Thomas Paine Day** via Zoom on **Tuesday, June 8, 2021, at 3:45 PM Pacific Time (6:45 PM EST)**. Register now via this link: https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_OAX2WWk3S0CpEVO_i4n5yw

It will begin with a 15-minute Thomas Paine-themed concert by songwriter and recording artist **James Klueh**. BYOB to participate in toasts throughout the event. **Melissa Myers** (of CFI) and **Margaret Downey** (of FS) are the event co-hosts.

After a welcome from the co-sponsors, a summary of the life and work of Paine will be presented in sections by co-sponsor representatives: **Mandisa Thomas** (AHA), **Tom Flynn** (CFI), **Andrew Siedel** (FFRF), **Margaret Downey** (FS) and **Gary Berton** (TPNHA).

Sculptor **Zenos Frudakis** will show the progress of the Thomas Paine statue project and **Dan Barker**, co-president of FFRF, will perform his original song *The World is My Country* to open the question-and-answer portion of the event. Toasts and favorite Paine quotations are welcome.

Margaret Downey, Founder and President, Freethought Society

Phones:

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610-357-9432 Cell

Email "Margaret (at) FtSociety (dot) org"

www.FtSociety.org



Judas: still on for Friday?

Jesus: Friday?

Judas: yeah, the last supper

Jesus: the what?

Judas: supper. Normal supper with the fellas

✧ ✧ Secular Holidays ✧ ✧

➤ International Women's Day

Monday, Mar 8, 2021

International Women's Day (IWD) honors the social, economic and political achievements made by women everywhere.

This secular holiday dates back to the early 1900's, a time of turbulent growth in the industrialized world that saw growing demands for women to have the right to vote. Among other relevant historical events, it commemorates the "Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire" on March 25, 1911 in New York City, where over 140 women lost their lives.

Born from the socialist and labor movements, International Women's Day has grown to become a global day of recognition and celebration across developed and developing countries alike. Promoted by the United Nations since 1975,

International Women's Day is, in the words of the UN, "a day when women are recognized for their achievements without regard to divisions, whether national, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, economic or political. It is an occasion for looking back on past struggles and accomplishments, and more importantly, for looking ahead to the untapped potential and opportunities that await future generations of women."

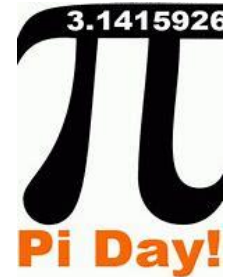
For decades, IWD has increased in strength annually. Women's organizations and governments around the world have celebrated IWD annually on the 8th of March by holding large-scale events that honor women's progress and highlight areas where women's rights still need to be advanced. IWD is an occasion that can be celebrated by all community groups that believe women's rights are human rights.

Each year on March 8, hundreds of International Women's Day events occur all around the world. IWD events range from small random informal gatherings to large-scale highly organized events. All celebrate women's advancement and highlight the need for continued vigilance and action. The day is about honoring all women and their accomplishments, this can be done by taking part in a large organized activity or by simply honoring the women in one's life with flowers, a small gift, or even a thank you.

➤ Pi Day

Saturday, Mar 14, 2021

Pi, Greek letter (π), is of course the symbol for the ratio of the circumference of a circle to its diameter. $\pi = 3.1415926535\dots$ (This is π to just ten decimal places; it's an irrational number, so the digits continue *infinitely* without repeating.) Math enthusiasts around the world celebrate Pi Day on March 14th, i.e. 3/14 in the American dating convention, since the first three digits of π are 3.14 (March 14 also happens to be Albert Einstein's birthday). "Pi Moment" occurs on that day just before 3:10 pm (more precisely, 15:9:26.5).



The San Francisco Exploratorium celebrated the first **Pi Day** in 1988, with staff and public marching around one of its circular spaces, and then consuming fruit pies. Since then, the museum has added pizza pies to its Pi Day menu. The founder of Pi Day, the "Prince of Pi," is Larry Shaw, now retired from the Exploratorium, but still helping with the celebrations. The Massachusetts Institute of Technology often mails out its acceptance letters to be delivered to prospective students on Pi Day.

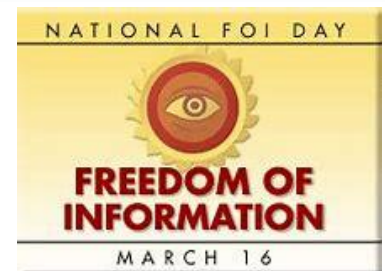
Celebrate Pi Day by doing anything to get students interested in mathematics. Teachers can organize many unique activities for students to generate interest. It is also used to inform students as well as the rest of the public about Pi, its history and applications. Pi Day parties in math and science classes are common, utilizing different types of pies, all the while teaching students about Pi.

➤ National Freedom of Information Day

Tuesday, Mar 16, 2021

[Freedom of Information \(FOI\) Day](#) is an annual event on March 16, the birthday of James Madison, widely regarded as the Father of the Constitution and a foremost advocate for openness in government.

On this day, the [American Library Association](#) presents the James Madison Award and the Eileen Cooke State & Local Madison Award to recognize those individuals or groups that have championed, protected, and promoted public access to government information and the public's right to know.



- The **James Madison Award** – Named for President James Madison, the award was established in 1986 and is presented annually on the anniversary of his birth. That award is designed to celebrate an individual or group that has brought awareness to these issues at the national level.

- The **Eileen Cooke State & Local Madison Award** – Named for Eileen Cooke, former director of the ALA's Washington Office, this award honors an extraordinary leader who has built local grassroots awareness of the importance of access to information. Cooke herself was a tireless advocate for the public's right to know and a mentor to many librarians and trustees.

➤ Sunshine Week

Tuesday, March 16 – Monday, March 22, 2021

[Sunshine Week](#) begins with Freedom of Information Day (March 16), the birthday of James Madison, and runs through March 22. Madison was the principal author of the US Constitution and the Bill of Rights which guarantee the rights of citizens. Therefore Sunshine Week stands as a national initiative to open discussions about the important or open government and the freedom of information.



Sunshine Week dates back to 2002 when the Florida Society of Newspaper Editors launched Sunshine Sunday in response to efforts by some Florida legislators to create new exemptions to the state's public records law. After Florida's

initiation on this topic, other states followed its course. The American Society of Newspaper Editors launched Sunshine Week in March 2005. It has become an annual event.

Sunshine Week is not restricted to journalists. Anyone can be involved: students, teachers, bloggers, private citizens, public officials and non-profit groups. The only requirement is to engage in a public discussion either small or large about the importance of open government. A discussion can take many forms: a large public forum, a classroom discussion, an article or an editorial. The idea of participation is not about how much, but about actually being involved.

To participate in Sunshine Week, contact the [state or regional coordinators](#) for your area. Examples of the myriad ways journalists, students, lawmakers and public groups marked Sunshine Week in 2005 and 2006 are collected in "[Bright Ideas for Sunshine Week 2007](#)" and "[Bright Ideas for Sunshine Week 2006](#)".

➤ Spring Equinox Saturday, Mar 20, 2021

The **March Equinox** is one of two days in the calendar year when day and night hours are nearly equal; in the northern hemisphere, it is also the first day of Spring (Gregorian calendar).

Annual seasons exist because of two planetary occurrences:

- 1) a 23.5° tilt of the earth's axis, which makes the earth rotate like a gyroscope, pointing continuously in a fixed direction-toward the area of space near the North Star;
- 2) the earth continuously revolves around the sun in an elliptical orbit-once every 365.25 of our solar days.

So for half of the year the Southern Hemisphere is more exposed to the sun than the Northern Hemisphere, and for the other half of the year the reverse is true. At noon in the Northern Hemisphere the sun appears highest in the sky during summer and lowest in the sky during winter.

The Vernal (Spring) Equinox is almost exactly halfway between the winter and summer solstices, and in the sky the sun appears about midway between its highest and lowest points. It is one of the two times during the year when day and night are almost exactly 12 hours long, and very close to being equal to one another. The other day is the Autumnal Equinox, which usually falls on or near the first day of Autumn (September 22-23 northern hemisphere / March 20-21 southern) in the Gregorian calendar.

The First Day of Spring has been a time of celebration throughout recorded Western history. Most ancient Mediterranean Pagan religions had some sort of festival at or around the time of the Vernal Equinox. The celebrations were a way to rejoice in the rebirth of nature and to ritually act out this seasonal change, from the symbolic death of the earth in winter to its resurrection through the budding and blooming that came after the equinox. Many of these religions had stories of a man-god, born of a virgin, who was killed and reborn at this time each year, and this day was often connected to the worship of many fertility goddesses with such names as Ostara, Astarte, Eostre, Ishtar, and Ostra. The name for the modern Christian Easter holiday originated from these spring celebrations.

In every culture the Vernal Equinox signals the return of weather that favors our ability to grow agricultural crops, and for this reason we have associated it with the "rebirth" of our ability to perpetuate ourselves. It is understandable why we have chosen to celebrate such a momentous occasion, and why it has come to represent "rebirth" in a variety of contexts. For freethinkers the Vernal Equinox is a great time to celebrate the rebirth of Western art, philosophy, and culture with secular themes after centuries of religious domination. It is also a perfect day to celebrate the accomplishments of intellect, reason, and logic, and a time to renew connections to our intellectual past as well as renew promises to continue striving to enlighten and improve the human condition.

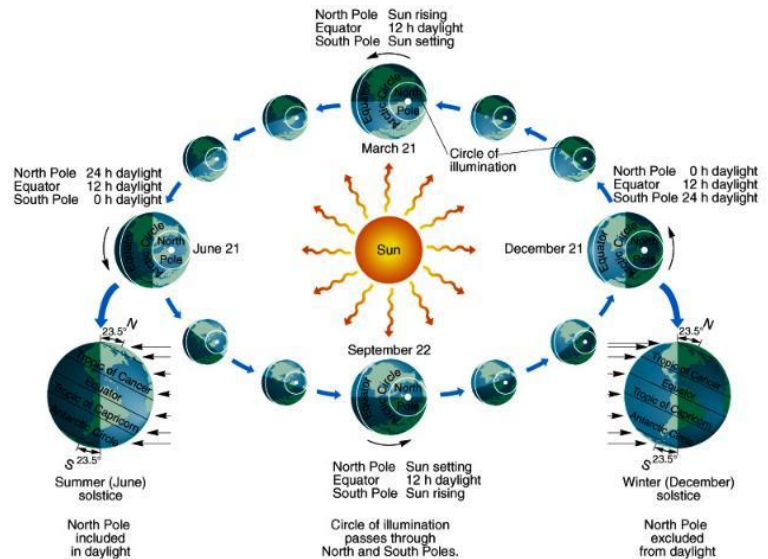
Another freethought holiday to celebrate around this time, and as an alternative to Easter, is the [Excitement of Life Week](#).

➤ Atheist Coming-Out Day Tuesday, Mar 23, 2021

[Atheist Day or Atheist Coming-Out Day](#) is a relatively new global secular holiday declared in 2019 by the [Freedom From Religion Foundation](#) in partnership with the [Atheist Republic](#).

In the words of the declaration:

"We atheists and atheist allies hereby declare that from now on, March 23rd is Atheist Day. We recognize the struggle of atheists to live authentic lives in many parts of the world. The struggle to openly affirm one's atheism. The fear of intolerant governments, mobs, and religious zealots.



"On March 23rd we shall take a stand for our right to be treated equal and for those of us in countries where atheists are persecuted and live under a threat of death. From every city in every country in the world we shall be one voice, a voice of reason."



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>.



Are you passionate about humanism? Are you a dynamic speaker who can present on a topic of interest to humanists in the United States? If so, please submit a speaking proposal for the 80th Annual Humanist Conference occurring virtually on July 24th and 25th.

The Evaluation Process

Proposals will be reviewed for overall quality, relevance to humanism, well-defined focus, practical applications of material, timeliness and originality of the topic, and the speaker's qualifications. Presentations are expected to provide valuable and high-quality educational ideas and engage the audience.

Program Guidelines

Your topic should be relevant to humanism, science, social justice, religion, activism, or similar topics. Presentations should be either one hour or thirty minutes in length. Length of presentations are subject to change.

To Apply

To be considered, please fill out the application before March 26, 2021. See: <https://americanhumanist.org/callforspeakers/>.

Spots do fill up quickly, so submit your proposal as soon as possible. This is an opportunity to immerse yourself in the secular community, meet like-minded people, gain visibility, and express yourself.

The Freethought Society (<https://www.ftociety.org/>) seeks your "journey" story. We treasure submissions and our proofreaders can help make stories flow while catching typos and grammatical errors. We work with the writer to express important life moments. Samples of journey stories can be found here: <https://www.ftociety.org/menu/journey-stories/>

I tell my own story here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UJBxSlwNFil>

Margaret Downey, Founder, Freethought Society