

✧ ✧ Upcoming AOF Events ✧ ✧

A New Board of Directors for AOF. As a result of the recent election, AOF's directors in 2022 will be Fran Evanisko, Pamella Rivera, Roger Zabkie, Kaeleigh Pontif, Christine Tweet, Mynga Futrell and Rae Howard. Thanks to all who voted! A directors' meeting will occur on Jan 11, see below. We welcome you to attend and meet the new Board.

➤ Free Movie Nights

Fridays, Jan 7 and Jan 21, 2022, 7pm – 9pm

2X month, [Reason Center](#) (RC) and AOF host a **Free Movie Night** under an excellent [MPLC License](#). The License prohibits us from telling you the movie title. But we can hint.

The first (Jan 7) will be an edge-of-your seat action thriller from 2015. Fast-paced British military decisions as a failed ground mission needs drone assistance; impossible situations, amazing technologies, and surprises. Helen Mirren, Alan Rickman. Reviews were good. The second movie will be ... no idea yet. We're open to suggestions.

To 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 open 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 events calendar](#) about a half hour before.
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 everyone is welcome. RC *may* beg a small (voluntary) donation to cover costs. How can you become a Reason Center member? Sign up at <http://reasoncenter.com/donate/>. Membership is a measly \$5 a month and is tax deductible if you itemize. And the perks are a thrillride.

Location: A Netflix tele party link, see above.

Contact: See <http://reasoncenter.com/contact/>.

Details, Jan 7, see <https://www.meetup.com/SacFAN/events/dtmjqsydccbkb/>.

Details, Jan 21, see <https://www.meetup.com/SacFAN/events/zsmjqsydccbcc/>.

➤ Board of Directors Meeting

Tuesday, Jan 11, 2022, 7pm – 8pm

An AOF planning meeting, mainly for AOF directors & officers but open to all. These happen as required, and are more fun than they sound.

Join us, meet the Board, and keep an eye on the shenanigans. We love visitors. We have drinks & snacks. And maybe you'll have some good ideas.

Note, this will be an actual in-person meeting, so be sure your vaccinations are current, or wear a mask. Also the home has cats, so please do not be allergic.

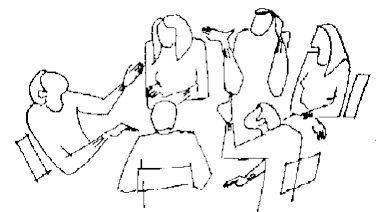
Location: Home, Ken Nahigian & Ruth Rezos, 9570 Harvest View Wy, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/e2s3igXYVcif47Q67>.

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

Bring your ideas for AOF, your strategies, your suggestions for events and activities -- most of all, your volunteerism. Helping hands are better than .. about anything.

➤ Adopt a Highway Cleanup

Saturday, Jan 22, 2022, 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 our work. A successful civic efforts, 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 sea creatures.

Also, the things you might find ...! Over the years volunteers have recovered many *highly esoteric* items: lacy undergarb, erotic equipment, drug paraphernalia, even \$100 bills -- yo, we don't kid, *actual C-notes* littered amid the highway detritus! -- and even stranger things. We are too delicate to say ... we blush, we drop our eyes ... but we promise, surprises always await.

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 Sleeprain 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.

This is a great event for older children, but please leave smalls safe at home. Also please review the CalTrans Highway Cleanup guidelines at <https://dot.ca.gov/programs/maintenance/adopt-a-highway/covid19>.

Location: Near W. Elkhorn Blvd & Hwy 99, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/zw3Rwct9yR52>.

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

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

➤ AOF Social and General Discussion

Sunday, Jan 30, 2022, 2pm – 4pm

Sad news – the presentation planned for this day has been overtaken, supplanted and steamrolled by circumstances. Instead AOF invites you to a general social, an "open mike" and discussion of ideas for the new year. Perhaps even a game or two. Please join us, speak your mind about us, hobnob with your freethought buddies, and just have fun.

This is an in-person event at a public eatery. See location below.

Location: Sam's Hofbrau meeting room, 2500 Watt Ave, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/Sf8o8QKV1WcDQcFQA>.

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

Park free in the lot. Meet in the private room at the back. Take time to get snacks! Sac County mask requirements will apply (see <https://dhs.saccounty.net/PUB/Documents/ME-HealthOrder20210729.pdf>).



Save the date. Sacramento [Darwin Day](https://www.sacdarwinday.org/) will occur February 13, 2022. Location & speaker still to be determined. Check <https://www.sacdarwinday.org/> for information later. Meanwhile, mark your calendar now with a big dark Sharpie.

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

➤ Sacramento-area Online Meetings

Local freethinkers continue to meet via online teleconference. Join them from the comfort of your cozy home, for free.

- **Saturday, Jan 8, 5pm – 7pm: Women's Recovery from Religion Support Group.** For those who identify as female, non-binary or gender-fluid. Providing support to individuals letting go of religious dogma. Meeting link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83041031349>.
- **Saturday, Jan 8, 7pm – 9pm: Word Confusion.** Wonder about a word or phrase? Meanings pass into fashion or change over time. A meeting to discuss the lovely ludicrousness of language. Details: <https://www.meetup.com/SacFAN/events/nvshqsydcclbl/>. Meeting link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88417809715?pwd=UGx1Q3hpU25iVkwRZiZaTWVZMEMxZz09>.
- **Monday, Jan 10, 5pm – 7pm: Sexual Integrity: Finding Courage to be Yourself.** Dr. Steven Davidson, psychotherapist and sex therapist, will discuss why the trap of denying our sexuality, and how to overcome it and be closer to being our true selves. Attendance link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/186729414>, or see <https://www.meetup.com/RfR-Sacramento-CA/events/282828537/> for details.
- **Tuesdays, Jan 11 and Jan 25, 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>.
- **Wednesdays, Jan 12 and Jan 26, 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/88407975917>.
- **Sunday, Jan 16, 10:30am – 12 noon: Online Coffee & Community.** Join us for coffee and discussion – BYO beverage. Attendance link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87468875186?pwd=dGkxTXY5a2p3cTFPTmx2MU95ZWpnUT09>.
- **Saturday, Jan 22, 3pm – 5pm: BHNBS Book Club.** Part 3 of a discussion of *Guns, Germs, and Steel* by Jared Diamond, the modern classic by an evolutionary biologist. For details and to attend, see <https://www.meetup.com/bhnb-sacramento/events/282351206/>.

➤ Blasphemy Breakfasts

Jan 8 and Jan 16, 2022

Want to hang out with local like-minded folk? Want to know fellow freethinkers in smaller groups? Or do you just get munchies in the morning? Welcome to the Blasphemy Breakfasts at Original Mel's Diners in Folsom and Rocklin. RSVP requested.

Saturday, Jan 8 at 10am: 13399 Folsom Blvd, Folsom. Details, see <https://www.meetup.com/SacFAN/events/282787964/>.

Sunday, Jan 16 at 9:30am: 6708 Lonetree Blvd, Rocklin. Details, see <https://www.meetup.com/SacFAN/events/282787942/>.

➤ Saturday Morning Hike

Saturday, Feb 4, 2022, 9:30am – 11:30am

Sacramento is filled with gorgeous nature trails. Come hiking on the First Saturday of the month, meet new people, observe wildlife, and welcome nature's brambles in your socks. Locations to be announced. For details, see

<https://www.meetup.com/SacFAN/events/hfkcgysydcdbhb/>.

➤ Other Sacramento Area Events

For more fun happenings in the area please check out the Sacramento Coalition of Reason global calendar at

<https://unitedcor.org/event-calendar-2/>. Because events just ... keep ... eventing.

You can help us. Here's how.

Support Reason Center

Ah yes, Reason Center! It opened in July 2014, hosted hundreds of events, and accrued twelve partner organizations. It supported a social and intellectual community for freethinkers, contributed to society through education and community service, advanced the civic understanding and acceptance of freethinkers, and upheld the separation of religion and government. Then, in November 2020, it closed. Will "RC" ever return? That depends on support from members and donors. Please stand up for Reason Center as it stood up for you. To donate or join, 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 receive a small kickback for whatever you purchase. Sweet!

Suggest a Meeting

Have a good speaker or 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. (AOF pays reasonable honorariums to speakers.)

Volunteer?

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



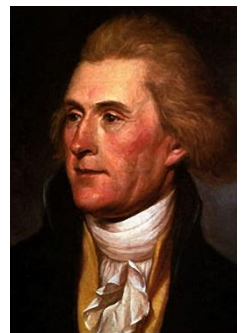
✧ ✧ Secular Holidays ✧ ✧

➤ Religious Freedom Day

Sunday, Jan 16, 2022

[National Religious Freedom Day](#) marks the anniversary of the passage of the Virginia [Statute of Religious Freedom](#), the 1786 colonial statute that disestablished the Anglican Church in Virginia and set the foundation for Separation of Church and State. Thomas Jefferson considered this statute to be one of his greatest achievements. Among other things it declared the following:

- "that to compel a man to furnish contributions of money for the propagation of opinions which he disbelieves is sinful and tyrannical,
- "that our civil rights have no dependence on our religious opinions any more than our opinions in physics or geometry,
- "that no man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place, or ministry whatsoever, nor shall be enforced, restrained, molested, or burthened in his body or goods, nor shall otherwise suffer on account of his religious opinions or belief, but that all men shall be free to profess, and by argument to maintain, their opinions in matters of Religion, and that the same shall in no wise diminish, enlarge or affect their civil capacities."



Congress first marked Religious Freedom Day in 1993. It is a day to reflect on the hard-won separation of civic and religious life, and to refresh our resolve to inform fellow citizen about liberty of conscience in matters of faith, a liberty which must include both freedom *of* and *from* religion. Because otherwise, it is no freedom at all.

➤ Thomas Paine Day

Saturday, Jan 29, 2022

Thomas Paine Day, also called Freethinkers Day, promotes appreciation of freethought through the life and works of American patriot Thomas Paine. Paine (1737-1809) was a courageous freethinker whose life and work inspired great social and political advancement across world. Raised in England, Paine played a vital role in the American and French Revolutions. His books and pamphlets, including *The Age of Reason*, *The Rights of Man*, and *Common Sense*, gained a mass audience for the liberating philosophy of the Enlightenment.



Paine arrived in America in 1774. On January 10, 1776, he published *Common Sense*, a remarkable and powerful republican pamphlet which had an immediate success. He served in the Revolutionary War under General Greene and later in official positions appointed by congress and in the Pennsylvania legislature. In his later publication, *Age of Reason*, Paine expressed that "all religions are in their nature mild and benign" when not associated with political systems. Paine was the quintessential Deist of the 18th century.

Between March 1791 and February 1792 he published numerous editions of his *Rights of Man*, in which he defended the French Revolution. The words of Thomas Paine inspired many to strive for political, economic and social advancement. He was among the first to call for an end to slavery and the establishment of human rights around the world.

In the 1990s, the *Truth Seeker* magazine began celebrating Freethinkers Day on Thomas Paine's birthday in order to educate the public on the importance of Thomas Paine in the history of freedom. Its poetic description of the day, on [this webpage](#), is worthy to repeat:

This day honors Thomas Paine and is on his birthday, January 29. This is a global holiday and is simply celebrated by giving and displaying a White Rose with Thorns. The simple beauty and purity, the fragility and yet not without the danger of drawing blood by a thorn prick, makes this an excellent icon for those Freethinkers who want to reflect on Freedom and promote the ideas of personal liberty as expressed by Paine in The Declaration of Independence,

This is a holiday that celebrates the concept of Freedom by honoring the man who declared our Independence by giving us Common Sense and The Declaration. We owe a great debt of gratitude to Thomas Paine.

So you are welcome to celebrate with us. Just remember a White Rose with Thorns.

Also in the 1990s, the Thomas Paine Foundation began celebrating the birthday of Thomas Paine on January 29th, a Thomas Paine Day proclamation on June 8 and other Paine theme events during the year.

➤ Gorilla Suit Day

Monday, Jan 31, 2022

From the sublime to the ridiculous! Close on the heels of Thomas Paine day comes [National Gorilla Suit Day](#), a pseudo-holiday invented by famed Mad Magazine cartoonist [Don Martin](#). An effluvium of



controversy continues to surround this secular celebration: to some it is a blatant conspiracy of gorilla suit manufacturers to promote their wares, others see it as one of America's more important and venerable holidays. It origins lie in a 1963 comic strip. Don Martin aficionados later evolved the tradition that "NGSD" falls on the last day of January each year.

Whatever your opinion of NGSD, few deny the cartooning genius of Don Martin. Art historian Charles Taylor described Martin's unique style of art and wit:

His people are big-nosed schmoes with sleepy eyes, puffs of wiry hair, and what appear to be life preservers under the waistline of their clothes. Their hands make delicate little mincing gestures and their strangely thin, elongated feet take a 90-degree turn at the toes as they step forward. Whether they're average Joes or headhunters, Martin's people share the same physique: a tottering tower of obloids. Martin puts the bodies of these characters through every kind of permutation, treating them as much like gadgets as the squirting flowers and joy buzzers that populate his gags: glass eyes pop out from a pat on the back; heads are steamrolled into manhole-cover shapes. All of this accompanied by a Dadaist panoply of sound effects found nowhere else: *shtoin!* *shklorp!* *fwoba-dap!* It's unlikely Samuel Beckett was aware of Don Martin, but had he been he might have recognized a kindred spirit.

Waterboarding at Guantanamo bay
sounds like an awesome time if you
don't know what either of those things
are

≧ Thomas Paine Day Celebration ≦

Join hundreds of others via Zoom teleconference on Saturday, Jan 29, 2022, 1pm Pacific Time, to celebrate an oft-forgotten Founding Father, Thomas Paine. Hailed as a “Freethought Hero” and great patriot, the event will be, as far as we know, the first online celebration of his birth. Paine fans will connection from all over the world and all will be invited to deliver a toast in celebration of the life and work of this amazing champion of reason, independent thought, and revolutionary ideas.

Presented to you by the new Thomas Paine Memorial Association (TPMA), with the purpose of educating the public and installing a statue of Thomas Paine in Washington, DC, and other places of significance to the life of Thomas Paine. The American Humanist Association, Center for Inquiry, Freedom From Religion Foundation, Freethought Society, and the Thomas Paine National Historical Association are cosponsors.

Actor [Ian Ruskin](#) will speak about his experiences portraying Thomas Paine, share photos of appearances, and describe his Walk in the Footsteps of Thomas Paine that took place in England. Freethought Society president [Margaret Downey](#) will talk about the many Thomas Paine-themed activities she has sponsored. Sculptor [Zenos Frudakis](#) will join the festivities from his studio in Glenside, Pennsylvania. TPMA board members will speak, including Annie Laurie Gaylor, Ann Druyan and Julia Sweeney. Congressman Jamie Raskin will deliver the closing remarks.

Prior to the interactive social hour, folksinger James Klueh will perform two Thomas Paine-themed songs ("Tom Paine's Bones" and "Liberty Tree").

How can you register for this event? It is simple, and free! Just visit this link:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZwpdeCurj8tG9U-4tRxN-SaOQAZOX4KHHIt>

Margaret Downey

President, Thomas Paine Memorial Association, Ph. 610-357-9432

<https://thomaspainememorial.org> or <https://www.facebook.com/ThomasPaineMA/>

Thomas Paine Birthday Celebration

1:00 PM PST/4:00 PM EST

Welcome by **Emily Newman**, Zoom Specialist and Co-Host

1:05 PM PST/4:05 PM EST

Welcome from board members of the Thomas Paine Memorial Association:
Marnie Mosiman de Lancie, Annie Laurie Gaylor, Gary Berton, Robyn Blummer, John de Lancie, Christopher Cameron, Ann Druyan, Tom Legg, and Julia Sweeney

1:55 PM PST/4:55 PM EST

Ian Ruskin

Performances as Thomas Paine and England “Walk in the Footsteps of Thomas Paine”

2:15 PM PST/5:15 PM EST

Margaret Downey

Performances as Madame Bonneville and Paris “Walk in the Footsteps of Thomas Paine”

2:30 PM PST/5:30 PM EST

Sculptor **Zenos Frudakis** and the Thomas Paine Statue Project

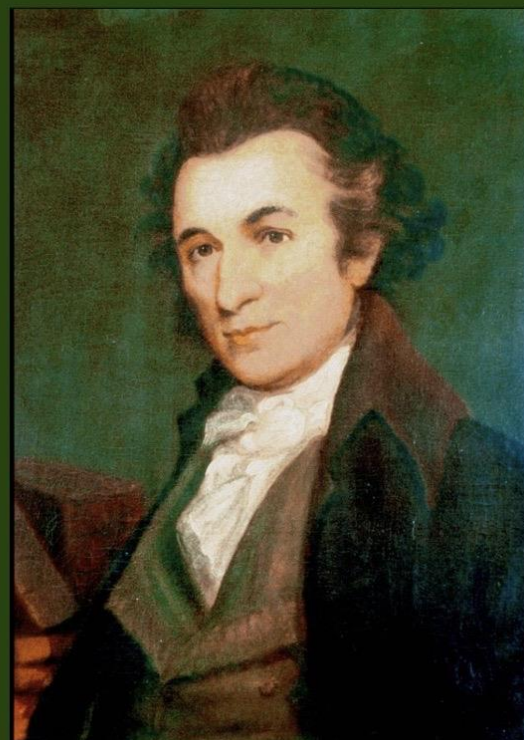
2:40 PM PST/5:40 EST

Question and Answer Portion and Closing Remarks by Congressman **Jamie Raskin**

3:00 PM PST/6:00 EST

Credits and Break Music by **James Klueh**

Interactive Social Happy Hour (Toasts and Questions Welcomed)



The Human Body's Frailty and Splendor

by Carole Chabries

I have long been proud of not believing, of blithely considering myself too practical for something so intangible.

Then in February 2005 I delivered my first daughter. She was stillborn, five months early, because my body failed hers. My bag of amniotic waters broke early. My tiny daughter was too young to breathe on her own, too young for steroid shots to strengthen her lungs, too young for ventilators. She was too young to live.

This would have been a good time to believe in something. Believing in God might have helped the hospital chaplain's words reach me. Believing in reincarnation would have given my daughter's brief life a deeper meaning. Believing in karma would have reminded me I had earned my despair. But that day in the hospital I did not believe.

I spent the rest of that year trying to believe in hope. Perhaps I succeeded, for on Christmas Eve I found myself unexpectedly expecting again. Hope even carried me through until August 2006, when my second daughter was born, on time and alive.

Heartened, I looked beyond hope. Could I believe in good fortune? Or merit? Certainly I deserved this daughter. Certainly I deserved a body that works, that didn't fail those I love.

Luck comes and goes. Merit, I guess, is relative. Even hope is not enough.

In September 2007 I was again in a delivery room, again with prematurely ruptured membranes, again delivering a daughter too young to live. Hope, luck, good fortune: They were obviously meaningless. What mattered, what so obviously mattered, was biology. Our ordeals — my own body's failures to keep my daughter's alive — were simply, purely, biological.

My first daughter was her own kind of biology lesson, stunning in her loveliness. She was a miniature anatomy textbook: an illustration of pure muscle and bone, a perfect network of veins and arteries crossing limbs. Holding her, I realized I had never before touched a dead human body. Sleepless next to her, I marveled at my own body, pumping blood, taking in air. Even as I wept onto her chest, her body molded into mine, head weighted against my fingertips, hips nestled into the palm of my hand.

Nobody planned these deaths. I didn't earn them. They aren't bad luck or even accidents. They are simply the result of human bodies at work.

Belief did not come easily, but our bodies — mine and my daughters' — have brought me around. Now I believe: I believe in the biological complexities of human bodies. They break down and grow strong; their vital processes do not fail, and they do. I believe in the body's unpredictability and frailty, in its heartbreaking splendor.

My one living daughter is somehow a little sister, a big sister and yet an only child. Her body is gloriously alive. And every time I hold her — every time our bodies touch — I feel the strange and wonderful vitality that accompanies my new-found belief.



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 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, Christine Tweet,
Rae Howard, 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>.