



A near to full house of freethinkers met at Reason Center on Sunday, Jan 18, to hear Dr. R Snick expound on Dangerous Medicines and Devices of the 19th Century. The snake oil was flowing.

✧ ✧ The Main Upcoming Events ✧ ✧

➤ **Kim Luke-Lum: The Lu Family**

Sunday, February 25, 2024, 2 pm – 4 pm

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

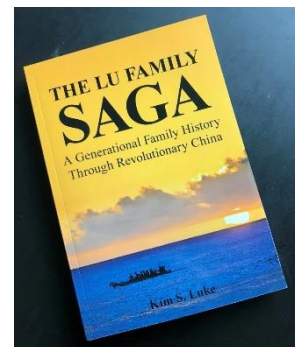
Kim Luke-Lum, longtime Sacramento resident, has a story - no a *saga*. She has written a fascinating book about her family's ordeal and ultimate triumph in America, has spoken to many groups in our area, and has left many eyes a-tear.

The Lu Family Saga covers a historical period of China from 1839 – the first Opium War with the British – to 1965, when Kim's family arrived in San Francisco as refugees. It takes one back through history, chronicling the moving story of Kim's ancestors, her family's village life in Southern China in the 1950s, and her Hong Kong experiences in the early 1960s. And at long last, her family's freedom voyage to the shores of the United States, the land of immigrants.

Such a story! For more information about it and about Kim, see LuFamilySaga.com.

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

Park free in the lot, and maybe bring some personal snacks & beverage to share. AOF will provide cool, clear water - the very best!



➤ **Sacramento Darwin Day: A New Understanding of Human Origins**

Saturday, February 17, 2024, 6:30 pm – 9:30 pm

Location: MOSAC Science Museum, 400 Jibboom St, Sacramento, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/EXQanKuf138h2F5m6>.

Presenting the 27th fabulous year of the **Darwin Day Birthday Gala**, Sacramento's coolest, most singular, most go-to event of science and humanity, brought to you by area science advocates, civic groups and nerds on too much coffee. It is

an in-person event at the MOSAC Science Museum, marking "Chuck" Darwin's 215th birthday. Open to all – but tickets required.

Darwin Day is a science-rush like no other, a celebration of scientific inquiry honoring of the life and work of the great Charles Darwin (b. 12 February 1809), sponsored worldwide by community and educational groups. It's not an AOF event, strictly speaking, but AOF helped found the local gala, and continues to support it and commend it to all our friends in the Sacramento community of reason. Because science! And what's science but reason in the trenches?

Speakers this year are the Drs. Brenna Henn and Tim Weaver:



From the University of California in Davis, they will present their ground-breaking findings on human origins in Africa.

How to attend: Please get a ticket (*General Admission \$20, Students \$6.*). It's not pricey, and this is no time to grinch. Just visit this link: <https://paybee.io/quickpay.html?handle=sacdarwinday&ppid=6#optionList>. Entertainment, snacks and parking are included with your ticket.

For details, see <https://www.sacdarwinday.org/>, or see the beautiful event flyer at <https://www.sacdarwinday.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/2024-Darwin-Day-Flier.pdf>.

Contact with questions: Pat Desmond, ph. 530-598-6080, or email "patdesmond8 (at) gmail (dot) com".

❖ ❖ Other Upcoming AOF Events ❖ ❖

➤ Free Film and Discussion at Reason Center

Friday, February 9, 7pm – 10pm

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

It's an **in-person Movie Night** at the Sacramento's new [Reason Center](#), in a quiet room with cozy seating and a huge screen and refreshments right at hand. The actual movie is a secret because of our [MPLC License](#) and the stodgy rule of law -- but we can slip a hint. This 1995 movie stars Denzell Washington, Tom Sizemore, and Jennifer Beals. In it, a Black war hero, hired to find a mysterious woman, gets mixed up in a murderous political scandal in 1948 Los Angeles. It is rated R.

AOF co-sponsors the Movie Night events. RC provides popcorn - feel free to bring your own snacks as well. We also encourage a post-film discussion, which makes this educational if you stretch the word and stomp on it a bit. No fee to attend. But you know, Reason Center always appreciates donations. Just saying.

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

Free Movie Nights are a joint venture of AOF and Reason Center. Suggest your own fave film for next time!



❖ ❖ Upcoming non-AOF Events ❖ ❖

The Sacramento Community of Reason is a happening place. AOF does not "own" these other events, but give them a try. You might be pleased.

➤ Atheists Community videos & discussion

Monday, Feb 5, 2024, 7:30 pm – 10:30 pm

Monday, March 4, 2024, 7:30 pm – 10:30 pm

Location: Online event. To attend, wait for the meeting time, then click <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81807086862?pwd=ZjUyamt1b2dlc1N5bEZ6Q0w1Um00QT09>.

An educational and entertaining teleconference about Atheism, Logic, Reason, Thoughtfulness - accentuated by videos and, of course, your presence.

Details: see <https://www.meetup.com/reasoncenterevents/events/kgfwgtygcdbhb/> (for Feb 5) and <https://www.meetup.com/reasoncenterevents/events/kgfwgtygcfbgb/> (for March 4).

➤ Recovery from Religion (RfR) online meetings

Monday, Feb 5, 5 pm – 7 pm. “Psychic Blues: Investigating Psychic Mediumship w/ Mentalist Mark Edward.” American mentalist and author will examine TV psychic mediums like Sylvia Browne, John Edward and Thomas John. Attendance link: <http://tinyurl.com/weeklyfrx>. Details at <https://www.meetup.com/rfr-sacramento-ca/events/298967058/>.

Saturday, Feb 10, 2024, 5 pm – 7 pm, for women & non-binary. Attendance link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87403436249>, details at <https://www.meetup.com/rfr-sacramento-ca/events/297323340/>.

Sunday, Feb 17, 2024, 7 am – 9 am, Virtual Chapter Support. Attendance link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/7287067292>, details at <https://www.meetup.com/rfr-sacramento-ca/events/297323125/>.

Sunday, Feb 18, 2024, 12 noon – 2 pm, for LGBTQA+ folk. Attendance link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/7287067292>, details at <https://www.meetup.com/rfr-sacramento-ca/events/297323795/>.

Saturday, Mar 2, 2024, 8 am – 10 am, for men. Attendance link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81672617364>, details at <https://www.meetup.com/rfr-sacramento-ca/events/297323679/>.

“RfR” provides ongoing and personal support to individuals letting go of religious beliefs. Please be sensitive and tolerant, and cut others some slack, so you will get it too (slack begets slack).

➤ Virtual Board Games

Friday, Feb 9, 2024, 7:30 pm – 10:30 pm

Friday, Feb 23, 2024, 7:30 pm – 10:30 pm

Join your friends in the Central Valley Alliance of Atheists and Skeptics ([CVAAS](https://www.meetup.com/fresno-cvaas/)) for online games, ranging from party games to strategy. See <https://www.meetup.com/fresno-cvaas/events/pzpngsygcbmb/> for details how to attend.

➤ Blasphemy Breakfasts - and a Brunch

Saturday, Feb 10, 2024, 10 am – 11:30 am, at Mel’s Diner, 13399 Folsom Blvd, Folsom, CA, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/ri6JvaBoSZVHTdnU6>. Details: <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/znwwgtygcbnbn/>.

Sunday, Feb 11, 2024, 9:30 am – 11:30 am, at Mel’s Diner, 3000 J Street, Sacramento, CA, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/toijMkseMWMtanVP7>. Details: <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/wpgcitygcbpbp/>.

Sunday, Feb 18, 2024, 9:30 am – 11 am, at Mel’s Diner, 6708 Lonetree Blvd, Rocklin, CA, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/ZUY2gq72KkmcC4bU6>. Details: <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/pwwnssygcbxb/>.

Like to hang 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.

➤ Sunday Assembly & Potluck with Shelly Segal + a concert!

Saturday, Feb 10, 2024, 6:30 pm – 8:00 pm (concert)

Sunday, Feb 11, 2024, 11am - 1pm (doors open 10:30am), presentation

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

Sunday Assembly is a secular celebration of *you* with music, readings, food and speakers, plus entertainment for children. This Assembly will feature a visit and talk by rock princess [Shelly Segal](https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/lwcwhtygcbpbp/). For the potluck lunch, bring your favorite dish to share, and be hungry.

Shelly will perform on Saturday. The concert will have a gate fee of \$20 per, at the door.

Details: see <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/lwcwhtygcbpbp/> and <https://reasoncenter.org/wp-event/shelley-segal-performance-at-reason-center-2024-02-10-630-pm>.



➤ Suicide Loss Survivors Discussion and Support

Tuesday, Feb 13, 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/297324060/>.

➤ Ancient Christian Study Group

Sunday, Feb 18, 2024, 12 noon – 2 pm

Location: Mast Coffee, 1430 28th Street, Sacramento, map at <https://maps.app.goo.gl/kA5LsqahX2jFLcHF9>.

The history of ancient Christianity is endlessly fascinating. 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 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.

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

➤ Black Humanists & Non-Believers Book Club

Saturday, Feb 24, 2024, 3:30 pm – 5:00 pm

An online book discussion open to all. Topic will be Allow Me to Retort by Elie Mystal, Chapters 15-21. RSVP to attend, and the location will be revealed.

Details (and to RSVP): see <https://www.meetup.com/bhnb-sacramento/events/whnfftygcdbgc/>.

➤ Saturday Night Hangout

Saturday, Feb 24, 2024, 6 pm – 9 pm, details at <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/hprbjtygcdbgc/>.

Location: Online meetings, just click the attendance link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83092441353?pwd=Wmp6RVIUR1Q0dFZZMIFQUIVodTN0dz09>.

An online meetup on alternate Saturdays, at 6:00 PM Pacific Time. The first half hour is for greeting friends, catching up, welcoming newcomers, and just having fun. No politics please! But the list of options may grow.

➤ Coffee and Community

Sunday, Feb 25, 2024, 10 am – 11:30 am

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

Meet for open-topic conversation, great coffee and treats. 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/298712793/>.

➤ Porch Talk

Wednesday, Feb 28, 2024, 7 pm – 8:30 pm

Online attendance link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88417809715?pwd=UGx1Q3hpU25iWkwrZjZaTWFZMEMxZz09>.

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/kcslytygcdblc/>.

➤ Sacramento Skeptics in the Pub

Sunday, March 3, 2024, 6 pm – 8 pm

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

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!

Details: see <https://www.meetup.com/sacskeptics/events/cnczhtygcdbfb/>.

➤ More Events – So many Calendars

There's more. Plans change, because we're human, 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/>

Yes, you can help us! Here's how.

Support Reason Center

Since Reason Center opened in July 2014, it has hosted hundreds of events and accrued 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, "RC" relies on members and donors. Please stand up for Reason Center, because it stands up for you. To join or donate, visit ReasonCenter.org.

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. Or just email "programs (at) aofonline (dot) org". (Honorariums paid to speakers.)

Volunteer?

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

Reason Center Library: A Black Humanists' Panel Spurs AOF to Expand Book Collection

At an Atheists & Other Freethinkers (AOF) meeting last year, a lively panel presentation by three representatives supplied by the Black Humanists and Nonbelievers group made quite an impression on the (mostly white) audience in attendance.

The panelists pointed out many of their personal trials growing up and living in the United States. Their stories exemplified so many of the challenges faced by African Americans (and Black people, period).

All in all, theirs was an enlightening narrative. So much so, in fact, that following the presentation, the AOF board asked the BHAN folks if they could recommend some reading materials so that more and more of our Reason Center members were better informed and could explore some of the highlighted issues in greater depth. The AOF board promised BHAN it would purchase some of the items and donate them to the Reason Center Library for general circulation.

Thanks to BHAN for suggesting about a dozen readings with descriptions (many from a humanist perspective). Thanks also to AOF, as the board voted to spend up to \$100 value, with each board member voting his/her "top 3" of prime interest. Mynga Futrell offered to match that amount, adding a personal \$100 to the pot.

Consequently, AOF has acquired and turned over seven books to Reason Center (a mix of paperback and hard cover). Once shelved, these books will be available for checking out, now only by AOFers, but by *anyone* who is a Reason Center member. (If not yet a member, you can [Join Reason Center now.](#))

Here are the seven titles (HC=hard cover; PB=paperback): **Why We Can't Wait** by Martin Luther King Jr. (PB) / **The Color of Law** by Richard Rothstein (HC) / **Black Lives Matter at School: An Uprising for Educational Justice** by editors Denisha Jones and Jesse Hagopian (HC) / **How to Raise an Antiracist** by Ibram X. Kendi (HC) / **Viral Justice: How We Grow the World We Want** by Ruah Benjamin (HC) / **Godless Americana: Race and Religious Rebels** and **Humanists in the Hood: Unapologetically black, Feminist, and Heretical**, both by Sikivu Hutchinson (PB).

Whatever your racial identity, there is much to learn about "Being Black in America" folks! Lots of raw material to supply the inquiring minds of freethinkers of all stripes.

The Gradualism of Evolution

By Richard Dawkins – from *Science, the Poetry of Reality*, his keynote lecture at CSICon 2023

Life itself runs on a single, universal digital code: quaternary rather than binary, but otherwise exactly like computer information. Hindsight says it had to be so. Evolution wouldn't work without the high fidelity that digital genetics allows. Today we can read the DNA of any animal, of any species, in a matter of days or even hours. We can compare the DNA recipes that made a rat and you. By counting the discrepancies, we can estimate how many millions of years separate you and the rat from your shared ancestor.

"Wait! Shared ancestor? You mean I share an ancestor with a *rat*?" You certainly do. She was approximately your fifteen-million-greats grandmother, and she lived about seventy-five million years ago. By the way, here's a rather astonishing fact: there was a single individual female who was the fork in the road. She had two babies: two little siblings, playing in the dust. One playmate was our ancestor, plus that of all monkeys, apes, and lemurs. The other little playmate was the unknowing ancestor of rabbits, rats, porcupines, beavers, and capybaras. Also, by the way, giant extinct South American rodents. Imagine a guinea pig the size of a hippopotamus. And while we're on surprising facts, if you look far enough into the future, it must be the case that you, a particular individual sitting in this room, will either be the ancestor of everybody or of nobody. I'll just leave that with you and hurry on.

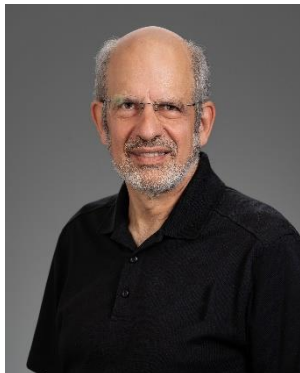
Philosophers of science love to say that present scientific knowledge is only an unfalsified approximation to a deeper truth. But have you noticed how often they rely on a single hackneyed example: Newtonian gravity as a workable approximation to general relativity. How many other examples fit the pattern? In my own field of evolutionary biology, we have facts that are not temporary, unfalsified approximations. They are just plain true. If you trace your great-great-grandparents and a chimpanzee's great-great-grandparents back sufficiently far, you will hit a common ancestor. That's not an approximation. It's a simple fact. It's just true.

Imagine you're standing in Las Vegas, holding the hand of your mother. She holds the hand of her mother, your grandmother. Your grandmother holds the hand of your great-grandmother, and so on in a chain. The chain extends in a southwesterly direction until it hits the Pacific at Santa Monica and can go no farther. Somewhere around the Mojave National Park, the hand-holders would be *Homo erectus*. By Bairstow in the middle of the desert, they'd look like Lucy, an *Australopithecus*. And eventually, on the beach at Santa Monica, staring at the Pacific with a wild surmise, would stand the common ancestor we share with chimpanzees.

Now, with her other hand, the matriarch by the Pacific grips the hand of a different daughter. That daughter holds the hand of her daughter. And so on. A parallel chain now wends its way back through the interminable streets of Los Angeles, across the desert to Las Vegas. The two chains of increasingly distant cousins face each other along the way. And by the time the chain of daughters reaches Las Vegas, we have modern chimpanzees, face to face with modern humans. These modern cousins facing each other belong, of course, in completely different species.

They cannot interbreed. Yet every step of the way along the chain of ancestors, round the hairpin bend at Santa Monica and back to Las Vegas, every individual is the same species as her neighbor. There is gradual change, so gradual as to be far below the threshold of perception.

AOF Welcomes New Officer: David Herbert, Advisor



A salute to David Herbert, Advisor to the AOF Board of Directors. The AOF Board elected him to the position at the January Board Meeting. (If you weren't there, see what you miss?)

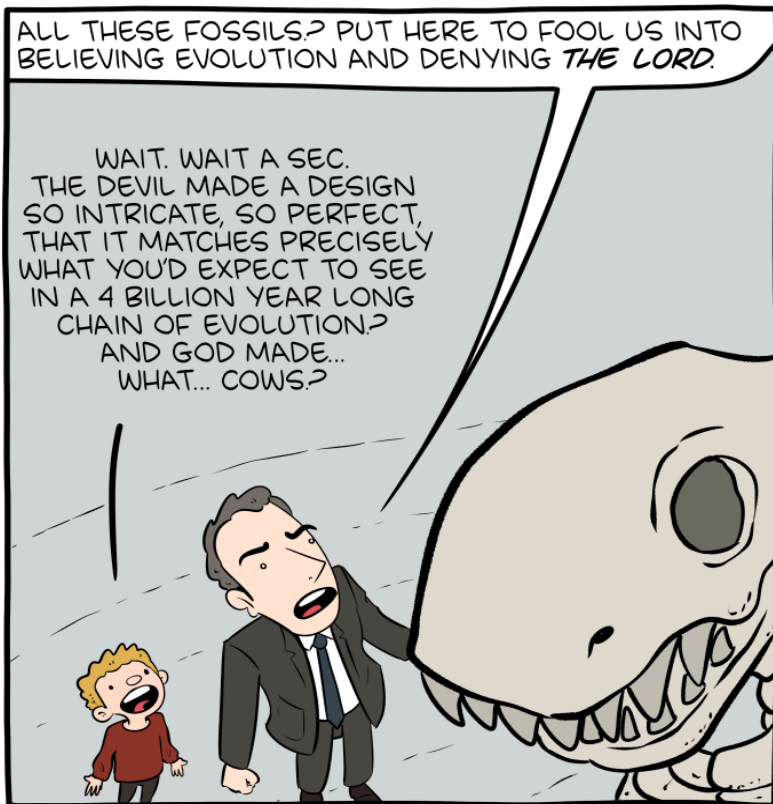
"I was raised in suburbia in a Presbyterian household, and initially bought into that, even giving a sermon to the congregation as part of a *youth Sunday*. But as I began to develop more independent thinking in college, I recognized that there was no extraordinary

evidence to back up their extraordinary claims (thanks, Carl Sagan!) and I developed a personal belief system that focused on rational thought and personal responsibility. I was amazed and delighted some years later (pre-internet) when I came across the Humanist Manifesto -- there were others who felt as I did!

Locally I was one of the financial founders of the original Reason Center and have attended sporadic events there ... but have not been as active in events as I'd like due to family and professional responsibilities, although I have continued to support the Reason Center, FFRF (life member), AHA, and AOF financially. Now my youngest (another freethinker) is away at college and I have more time to contribute to organizations that foster freethinking.

My professional background may offer some experience that the board could find valuable: I have served on multiple boards including the Permanente Medical Group, the Sacramento medical society (including two terms as president), the Sacramento Waldorf School (including president), and Sutter Independent Physicians where I am also CEO.

I have the time, energy, and motivation to contribute to AOF.



Inadvertently, Billy is convinced to worship Satan.



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 Rivers
Vice-president: Marvelous Mynga Futrell
Secretary: Rapid Ruth Rezos
Treasurer & Registrar: Kinetic Ken Nahigian
Advisor: Dependable David Herbert
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>.