



AOF members & friends gathered at Reason Center on Feb 25 to hear Kim Luke-Lum relate the story of her family's escape from China. If you missed it, it was intense!

✧ ✧ This month's Main AOF Event ✧ ✧

➤ Love is Not What You Think – Joey Garcia

Sunday, March 31, 2024, 2 pm – 4 pm

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

No it's *not* what you think. Love, that is. The luminous & wise **Joey Garcia** visits us to explain why.

Poets, Philosophers, and Psychologists speak of love but too often their definitions creep towards the giddy realm of infatuation, or dip into the troublesome arena of codependency.

Why is it difficult to talk about love? What is love really—a feeling, an emotion, a belief, a certain behavior? A tennis score?

Joey will unpack and dissect the stories society tells us and why, before considering a fresh perspective with the power to change relationships for the good.

Joey Garcia is an author and professional speaker, and hosts an [advice column](#) for *Sacramento News & Review*. Born in Belize and raised in the U.S., she lives in Sacramento. She has presented to AOF before, and we are proud to have her back. For more about Joey visit her website joeygarcia.com

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

Park for free in the lot, the Back Lot, and maybe bring some snacks & beverage to share. AOF provides cool, clear water - the very best!



✧ ✧ Other Upcoming AOF Events ✧ ✧

➤ Film and Discussion at Reason Center

Friday, March 8, 2024, 7 pm – 9 pm

Location: Reason Center, 1300 Ethan Way, Rm 675, Sac., 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 drama 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. (You know, this is the *same description* as last month's film, so it might be an error – we print what we're sent. Check later for corrections.)



AOF co-sponsors the Movie Night events. RC provides popcorn and other munchies - 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. No fee to attend. But you know, Reason Center always appreciates donations. Just saying.

Contact for details: See <https://reasoncenter.org/contact>.

Totally free, but Reason Center won't turn down donations.

➤ Adopt-a-Highway Cleanup

Saturday, March 9, 2024, 9 am – 11 am

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

Out on Highway 99, for two miles from Elkhorn Boulevard to Elverta Road, runs a lonely stretch -- *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. One of our more successful civic efforts, it proves freethinkers can also serve the community.

So join us! 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. Note, Cal-Trans is now paying a stipend for our work!

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 Natomas area. 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.

Contact for details: 916-805-9337 (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).



➤ Board of Directors Meeting

Tuesday, March 12, 2024, 7 pm – 8 pm

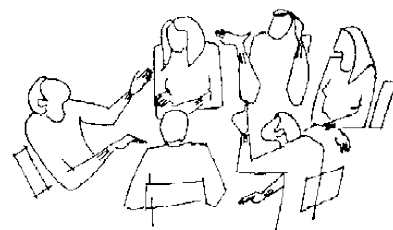
Location: Reason Center, 1300 Ethan Way, Rm 675, Sac., map at <https://goo.gl/maps/RwiUgEJ5ESHRhrPu8>.

It's an AOF planning meeting, mainly for AOF directors & officers but open to all. These happen as required, and are a lot more fun than they sound.

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

Note, this Board meeting will be an actual in-person meeting, so be sure vaccinations are current, or wear a mask, or just don't cough on us.

Bring your ideas for AOF, your strategies, your event and activity suggestions -- best of all, your volunteerism! Helping hands are the bomb. (A good kind of bomb.)



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

✧ ✧ Other Upcoming Events ✧ ✧

The Sacramento Community of Reason is happy and busy. These are non-AOF events, but try them anyway. Please.

➤ Recovery from Religion (RfR) online meetings

Monday, Mar 4, 5 pm – 7 pm. “Liberating Your Authentic Self with Ember.” The host of the YouTube channel *Better Than Ember* will discuss how secular communities and transgender communities can support one another, unshackled from theology. Attendance link: <http://tinyurl.com/weeklyrfrx>. For details see <https://www.meetup.com/rfr-sacramento-ca/events/299559322/>.

Saturday, Mar 9, 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/297323461/>.

Saturday, Mar 15, 2024, 5 pm – 7 pm, for young people. Attendance link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85471165177>, details at <https://www.meetup.com/rfr-sacramento-ca/events/299497701/>.

Sunday, Mar 16, 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/297323209/>.

Sunday, Mar 17, 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/297323916/>.

Saturday, Apr 6, 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/298843897/>.

“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.

➤ Atheists Community videos & discussion

Monday, March 4, 2024, 7:30 pm – 10:30 pm, see <https://www.meetup.com/reasoncenterevents/events/kgfwgtygcgbgb/>.

Monday, Apr 1, 2024, 7:30 – 10:30 pm, see <https://www.meetup.com/reasoncenterevents/events/kgfwgtygcgbcb/>.

Location: Online event. To attend, wait for the meeting time, then click

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81807086862?pwd=ZjUyamt1b2dlc1N5bEZ6Q0w1Um00QT09>.

An fun teleconference about Atheism, Logic, Reason, Thoughtfulness - accentuated by videos and of course, by you.

➤ Open Library Hours at Reason Center

Thursdays, March 7 & April 4, 2024, 4 pm – 6 pm

Location: Reason Center, 1300 Ethan Way, Ste. 675, Sacramento, map at

<https://goo.gl/maps/S5MR1e8ZodBzb4TG8>.

The Reason Center library is open for browsing. We have an extensive collection of great books; you can even borrow them if you are a Reason Center member. See reasoncenter.org to join (or you may join up at the library).

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

Or see <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/fcsjkytygcgbkb/> or <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/fcsjkytygcgbgb/>.



➤ Blasphemy Breakfasts and a Brunch

Saturday, Mar 9, 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/znwwgtygcgbmb/>.

Sunday, Mar 10, 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/wpgcjtygcgbnb/>.

Sunday, Mar 17, 2024, 9:30 am – 11 am, at Mel's Diner, 6708 Lonetree Blvd, Rocklin, CA, map at

<https://goo.gl/maps/ZUY2gq72KkmkC4bU6>. **Details:** <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/pwwnssygcgbwb/>.

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 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 celebrates Pi Day

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

Location: Reason Center, 1300 Ethan Way, Suite 675, Sacramento, map at

<https://goo.gl/maps/S5MR1e8ZodBzb4TG8>. (Back of the building.)

Sunday Assembly is a secular celebration of *you* with music, readings, food and speakers, plus entertainment for children. March 14 is Pi Day, so please bring a pie of your choice for the potluck lunch, and be irrationally hungry.

Featured presenter Nick Gray from [Camp Omni](https://www.campomni.com) will share details about the 2024 camp experience. Also Luisa Morco will presenting her program of arts and science education for kids in our community, with math games to entertain us. **Details:** see <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/299537383/>.



➤ Suicide Loss Survivors Discussion and Support

Tuesday, Mar 12, 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/297324123/>.

➤ Games at Reason Center

Friday, Mar 15, 2024, 6 pm – 9 pm

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

A fun evening of games and food. OK to bring some of your own games to share. Light snacks to share to too. Reason Center has both board games and card games. (Here are a few: Ticket to Ride, Azul, Camel Up, Labyrinth, Rummikub, and more.) But no gambling allowed.

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



➤ Ancient Christian Study Group

Sunday, Mar 17, 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/vvzcktygcfbwb/>.

➤ Compassionate Humanists of Roseville - Humanist Salon

Saturday, Mar 9, 2024, 11:30 am – 1:30 pm, details at <https://www.meetup.com/compassionate-humanists/events/299287060/>.

Location available to members of CHR only. Visit the link to join & learn more.

➤ Saturday Night Hangout

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

Saturday, Mar 23, 2024, 6 pm – 9 pm, details at <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/hprbitygcfbfc/>.

Saturday, Apr 6, 6 pm – 9 pm, details at <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/hprbitygcgbjb/>.

Location: All are by teleconference; to attend, 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! The list of options may grow.

➤ Black Humanists & Non-Believers Book Club

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

An book discussion (via phone conference) open to all. RSVP to attend, and the location will be revealed.

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

➤ Coffee and Community

Sunday, Mar 23, 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, such a friendly person!

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

➤ Humanity Supper

Sunday, Mar 24, 2024, 4 pm – 6 pm

Location: Slim & Husky's Pizza, 3413 Broadway, Sacramento, map at <https://maps.app.goo.gl/PYMq7bSpiayVhgZq5>.

Join your BHNH friends for their first social gathering for 2024. "We will be changing it up a bit and have some dinners in place of our typical breakfast." This is a bright, friendly group and they will love to see you.

Details: see <https://www.meetup.com/bhnb-sacramento/events/299476265/>.

➤ Porch Talk

Wednesday, Mar 27, 2024, 7 pm – 8:30 pm

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

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

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

➤ Sacramento Skeptics in the Pub

Sunday, Apr 7, 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/cnczhtygcgbkb/>.

➤ 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/>

You can help. 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.

But to continue, "RC" relies on support from 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 call AOF, 916-304-3796. (Reasonable honorariums paid to speakers.)

Volunteer?

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

✧ ✧ Secular Holidays ✧ ✧

➤ International Women's Day

Friday, March 9, 2024

International Women's Day (IWD), an international celebration, honors the social, economical, 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.

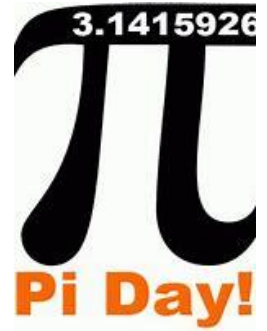
IWD is an occasion that can be celebrated by all community groups that believe women's rights are human rights.



➤ Pi Day

Thursday, March 14, 2024

Pi, Greek letter (π), is of course the symbol for the ratio of the circumference of a circle to its diameter. **Pi = 3.1415926535...** (This is *pi* to just ten decimal places; it is an irrational number, meaning 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 Pi 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.

➤ Freedom of Information Day

Saturday, March 16, 2024

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

Sunday, March 10 – Saturday March 16, 2024

Sunshine Week includes Freedom of Information Day (March 16), the birthday of James Madison, and runs through that calendar week. 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.

➤ Equinox (March)

Tuesday, March 19, 2024

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, so it points 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.

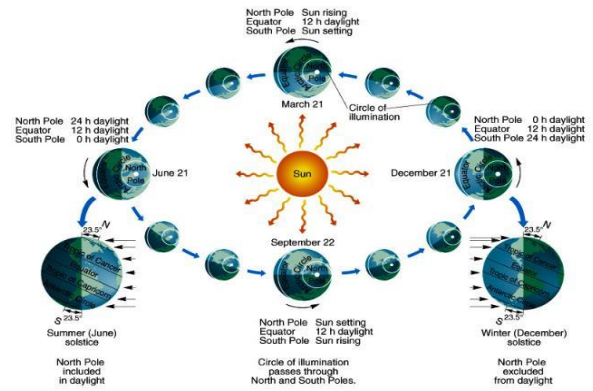
So for half of the year the Southern Hemisphere is more exposed to the sun than the Northern Hemisphere, and for the other half of the year the reverse is true. At noontime in the Northern Hemisphere the sun appears highest in the sky during summer and lowest in the sky during winter.

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

Saturday, March 23, 2024

[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.

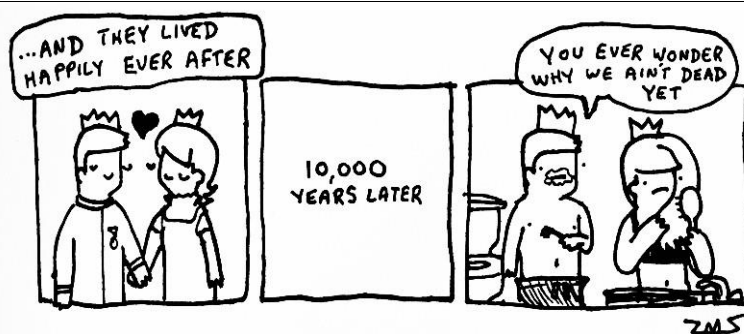
"On March 23rd we shall take a stand for our right to be treated equal and for those of us in countries where atheists are persecuted and live under a threat of death. From every city in every country in the world we shall be one voice, a voice of reason."



If you missed the 2024 Thomas Paine Birthday celebration (Jan 29, 2024), please click here to watch it now:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AoERxdSkGm8>

The program, *The Anti-Slavery Efforts of Thomas Paine*, was sponsored by the Thomas Paine Memorial Association, Black Nonbelievers, the Secular Coalition for America, the Freedom From Religion Foundation, the Center for Inquiry, and the Freethought Society. Hosts are Margaret Downey and Dr. Christopher Cameron. Presenters include comedian TyBarnett, Representative Jamaal Bowman, Representative Shontel M. Brown, poet Victor Harris, activist Dom Jones, Dr. Wil Jeudy, educator and historian Richard Newman, Professor Anthony Pinn, Representative Jamie Raskin, Representative Victoria Spartz, and Black Nonbelievers founder and president Mandisa Thomas, with musical performances by Cynthia McDonald.



John XII, the worst-ever Pope



here have, you've got to admit, been some bad Popes here and there. Like [Formosus the corpse-botherer](#), and plenty more where he came from. But I think it's safe to say that John XII was the worst ever.

John was the illegitimate son of the devout 10th-century Roman lord Alberic - though reading that sentence once again, perhaps not all that devout. Alberic spent years reforming the corrupt Roman church, and making sure that all the Popes appointed were holy men who subscribed to the spiritual revival movement of Cluny abbey.

But on his deathbed, Alberic was overcome by family values and decided to undo all his reforms by making his son Pope. John was not a holy reformer, he was a spoilt 17-year-old.

The Cluny movement was making people less tolerant of papal debauchery, but blissfully unconcerned about what anyone was tolerant of, John did what any 17-year-old with all the resources of Rome at his disposal would do, and opened a brothel in the papal palace. Pilgrims who were unwary enough to visit St Peter's alone were pounced on and sexually assaulted.

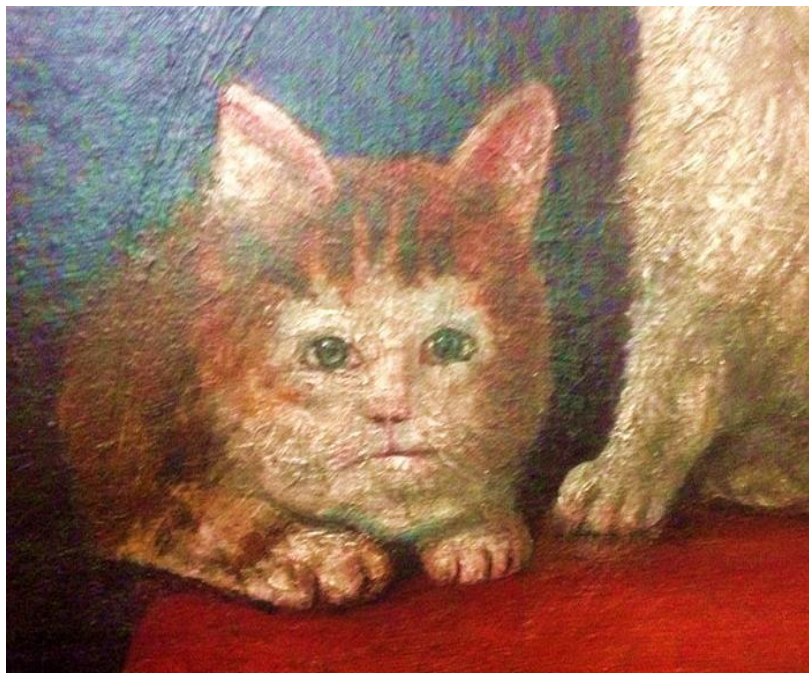
John is said to have consecrated one of his bishops in a stable. In the same refreshingly relaxed attitude to the dignity of the episcopal office, he allegedly castrated one.

When pilgrims brought offerings to St Peter's, John simply pocketed them. When he was strapped for cash he paid his lovers with church plate.

In 958, he went on a foray to conquer some Italian districts for the Papal State, but it went wrong, and he had to call the German king Otto to rescue him from the tribe he was meant to be attacking. But the deal Otto cut with him was a bit steep, so John tried to have Otto overthrown (by the tribe he was meant to be attacking).

So Otto marched on Rome to overthrow John instead. The holy father filled his bags with all the ecclesiastical gold he could get his hands on, and ran for it.

John died shortly afterwards in bed (not his own) of a stroke. In his mid-twenties. John was actually baptised Octavian, but made the unprecedented decision to take a saintly pseudonym when he became Pope. So if you ever wondered which Pope started the tradition of taking a new name to dissociate one's private frailties from the holy office, unfortunately perhaps, but not inappropriately, it was John.



Absolutely realistic cat from a medieval painting



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.

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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.

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