



Happy & well-fed AOF friends & guests at the Sept 29 picnic. If you missed it, we missed you [insert sad face].

## ✧ ✧ This Month's Headliner Event ✧ ✧

### ➤ **Ballot Propositions: The Costly, the Absurd, and the Urgent** Sunday, October 27, 2024, 2 pm – 4 pm

**Location:** Reason Center, 1300 Ethan Way, Rm 675, Sacramento, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/RwiUgEJ5ESHrPu8>.

#### **Darien DeLu's insights on November's California Ballot Propositions**

California voters will decide on *ten* state ballot measures this year. The costly items, as usual, are the bond measures. Our choices can be difficult when voters are facing economic challenges, yet it is fitting that citizens should vote on such measures. The future of California – our public educational systems and our ability to respond to the changing conditions in a time of climate change – will be shaped by our votes.

Wanting to share the benefit of her own research, Darien DeLu began her Ballot Guide to the California Ballot Propositions sometime in the 1980s. Since then her career with the State of California and her activist involvement in the environmental, anti-nuclear, and peace and justice movements have further informed and deepened the analyses she delivers every-other-year in her guide.

Darien is currently the national president of the [Women's International League for Peace and Freedom](#), US. Subscribe to the Ballot Guide by sending the message *Subscribe* to "Dariens\_Ballot\_Guide-request@lists.sonic.net".

Come join us at Reason Center on October 27, where Darien will help us get to know the whole cast of ten characters on our November 2024 ballot.

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

*A free event with free parking. Bring a snack or beverage to share if you can, maybe spare change for the donation jug. AOF will provide cool, clear water.*



## ❖ ❖ Other Upcoming AOF Events ❖ ❖

### ➤ Free Movie and Discussion

**Friday, October 11, 2024, 7 pm – 9 pm**

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

A free in-person Movie Night at Sacramento's [Reason Center](#), in a quiet room with cozy seating and a huge screen and refreshments right at hand. What movie? That's a secret because of our MPLC License and certain legal folderol -- but we will slip a hint. From 1989, this is about a vengeful James Bond who goes rogue to infiltrate and take down the organization of a drug lord who murdered his friend's new wife and left him near death.



AOF and Reason Center co-sponsor the Movie Night events. The team 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 a bit. No fee to attend. But you know, we always appreciate donations. We're just \$aying that.

**Contact for details:** See <http://reasoncenter.com/contact/>.

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

### ➤ Feed the Hungry – Davis Community Meal

**Tuesday, Oct 29, 2024, 4 pm – 7 pm**

**Location:** St. Martin's Episcopal Church Hall, 640 Hawthorne Lane, Davis, CA, map at <http://binged.it/1uBpi57>.

The **Davis Community Meal** project serves meals to the hungry, the poor, the indigent, the outcast. It happens in bucolic Davis city, so near to us, where compassionate citizens have developed a secular solution for the problem of hunger, and need our help. So join us, join us in this effort! Your reward will be an opportunity to meet new minds and hobnob with your freethought friends, a likely free meal, jazzy music, and the rosy hearts-glow of benevolence. Also, seriously, it's a blast!

Cooking? Dish washing? None required. The Davis Community Meals team will perform all the food prep and kitchen work. Our job is simply to set up chairs & tables, serve, smile, put things away at the end, and clean a bit (with a minimum of mopping). Extra points if you can arrive for setup, but if you can't, that's OK, any help is good help. Setup begins about 4:30 pm, food service about 5:45. At 6:30 we clean up the hall.

**Contact for details:** See <https://www.aofonline.org/contact.html>, or call Don (916-805-9337).

*Carpooling may be available. For details, please contact Don.*



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

Some local *non-AOF* events worthy of attention. We won't even try to list them all, just highlights. For more, please check the calendar links below. Amazing things await you.

### ➤ Blasphemy Breakfasts and a Brunch

**Sunday, Oct 12, 2024, 10 am – 11:30 am**, at Mel's Diner, 13399 Folsom Blvd, Folsom, map at

<https://goo.gl/maps/ri6JvaBoSZVHTdnU6>, details at <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/303586924/>.

**Sunday, Oct 13, 2024, 9:30 am – 11 am**, at Mel's Diner, 3000 J Street, midtown Sacramento, map at

<https://goo.gl/maps/toijMkseMWMTanVP7>, details at <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/301023321/>.

**Sunday, October 20, 2024, 9:30 am – 11 am**, at Mel's Diner, 6708 Lonetree Blvd, Rocklin, map at

<https://goo.gl/maps/ZUY2gg72KkmcC4bU6>, details at <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/303507163/>.

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 (see the links).

### ➤ Bookclub

**Sunday, Oct 12, 2024, 6 pm – 8 pm**, online discussion.

**Saturday, Oct 26, 2024, 6 pm – 8 pm**, online discussion.

The book to discuss is *A Return to Common Sense: How to Fix America Before We Really Blow It*, by Leigh McGowan, the host and creator of the viral award-winning digital media brand [PoliticsGirl](#).

**Attendance link:** <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85479008462?pwd=1LiyZK8tRsBfpZapf1IBl5llescoVH.1> (just click to attend).

**Details:** see <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/303594077/> or <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/303874921/>.

### ➤ Sunday Assembly & Potluck

**Sunday, October 13, 2024, 11 am – 1 pm (doors open 10:30am, presentation at 11)**

**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. Featured presenter is **David C. Noelle**, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Cognitive Science at the UC Merced. His topic: **How the Brain Makes New Ideas Out of Old Parts**. Bring a food dish to share if you wish – it's a potluck too!

**Details:** see <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/302815216/>.

### ➤ **Black Humanists 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary BBQ**

**Saturday, October 19, 2024, 10 am – 11:30 am**

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

*Please RSVP by Oct 12 for this event.* Get ready to party with the [Black Humanists and Non-Believers of Sacramento](#), and celebrate the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this fabulous group. (At least 10 RSVPs needed to light up the grill.)

**Details:** see <https://www.meetup.com/reasoncenterevents/events/303709399/>.

### ➤ **Humanity Breakfast**

**Sunday, October 27, 2024, 11 am - 1 pm**

**Location:** Fixins Soul Kitchen, 3428 3rd Ave, Sacramento, map at <https://maps.app.goo.gl/QY65nWAuwC9pPni46>.

Here we go again. Time for a scrumptious breakfast with the Black Humanists and Nonbelievers of Sacramento, such a friendly group! "BHNB" alternates between dinners and breakfasts each month. This event needs at least **3 RSVPs** to happen, so sign up please.

**Details at:** <https://www.meetup.com/bhnb-sacramento/events/301324956/>.

### ➤ **Coffee and Community at Reason Center**

**Sunday, October 27, 2024, 12 noon – 3 pm**

**Location:** Reason Center, 1300 Ethan Way, Rm 675, Sac., see [map](#)

Come to the Reason Center Library for coffee, tea and treats. This event is just a casual conversation on topics of the day, and newcomers are welcome. Hope to see you soon!

**Details:** see <https://www.meetup.com/bhnb-sacramento/events/301324969/>.



### ➤ **Saturday Night Hangout**

**Saturday, October 2, 2024, 6 pm – 9 pm**, details: <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/hprbjtygcpbdb/>.

**Location:** Online event! Meet by teleconference; to attend, just click the attendance link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83092441353?pwd=Wmp6RVIUR1Q0dFZZMIFQUIVodT>.

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

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

### ➤ **More Events – So many Calendars!**

Really, there's more. And plans change, because we're human. So don't trust the list above. To learn of all those other events, please 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/>
- 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](http://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. (Reasonable honorariums paid to speakers.)

### Volunteer?

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

## ✧ ✧ Secular Holidays ✧ ✧

### ➤ Freethought Day Sunday, October 12, 2024

[Freethought Day](#), or "Freethought Coming-Out Day," is a day to give closeted freethinkers a platform from which to declare themselves. The formal calendar holiday is October 12, but many groups plan celebrations for the closest weekend. Some recognize the week as **Freethought Week**, or the entire month of October as **Freethought Month**. In this time, newly declared freethinkers can garner strength and support from fellow "declared" freethinkers.

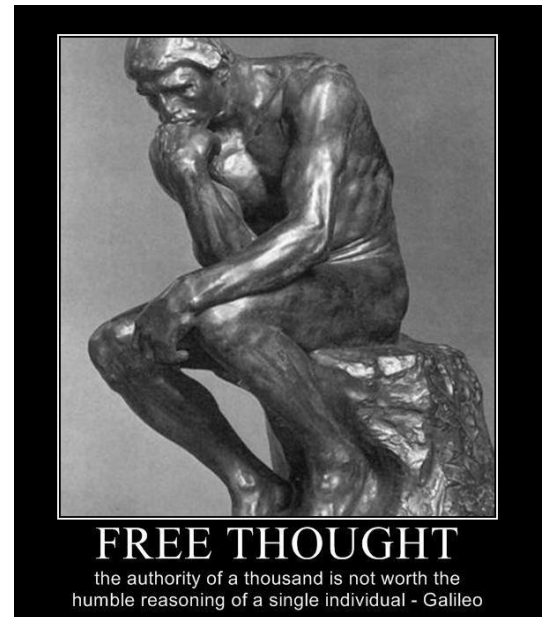
Why October 12? Because on the day in 1692, Colonial Massachusetts Governor William Phips wrote to the Privy Council of the British monarchs to take a stand against the legal use of "spectral evidence," that is, evidence of a non-objective nature, such as "feelings" and visions. His decision that evidence should be objective and verifiable essentially brought an end to the Salem Witch Trials, saving scores of lives. (Click [here](#) to read Phips's two letters.)

In the modern United States, discrimination, hatred and bias against freethinkers continues. The freethought community, unlike the gay and lesbian community, lacks a powerful voice and activist population for ending such treatment. Reactions often stem from a misunderstanding of what it is to be a freethinker, or that freethought is a mindset often set in motion in childhood, like sexual preference, not something to change on a whim or with the right "religion." Others should not try to change it with bullying, ridicule or intimidation. Freethinkers must be allowed to declare themselves openly. The intent of Freethought Day is to change this situation for the better of all freethinkers, especially the young.

Today's world sees the emergence of younger and younger freethinkers who are often alone and isolated in their communities. The [Secular Student Alliance](#) and the [Campus Freethought Alliance](#) attempt through their projects to give voice to college and university freethinkers in the US and across the globe, while programs such as [Camp Quest](#), the country's first secular humanist summer camp, and the [SSA's High School Program](#) provide young freethinkers with a place to gain a sense of community and understand that there is a proud and illustrious history to their philosophy. However these programs are few, and without a united voice and a united commitment to change this situation, they may not be enough.

Every freethinker in every community should feel comfortable with his or her ideals, and part of that is a connection to like-minded individuals. Freethought Day gives our friends a chance to understand who we freethinkers are, what we believe, that freethought exists in every community, and that they should not view freethought with fear, but with respect as a positive, compassionate way to live life.

### ➤ International Sceptics Day Sunday, October 13, 2024



Like most things, skepticism is good in moderation but, today, on International Skeptics Day, on October 13, go ahead and question some of your beliefs. The 'investigation' of your assumptions can be fruitful and worthwhile. Research thus far has not revealed an inaugural year of recognizing International Skeptics Day, nor does skepticism itself follow a clear timeline that would be punctuated by specific events.

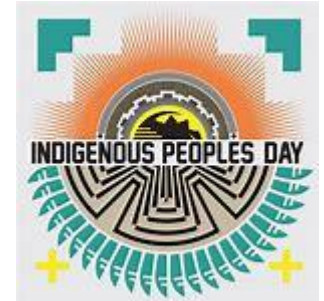
But as a paradigm, skepticism shows no loss of momentum, with periodicals like "The Skeptic" and "The Skeptical Inquirer" still in print, along with podcasts, TV documentaries, and meet-up groups all over the world. The Doubting Thomas who is reading these words should have no trouble finding like-minded people, whatever his or her current location.

The word 'skeptic' comes from the Greek word 'skepsis,' meaning 'investigation.' The skeptics in the ancient period were individuals comprising a school of thought. Their ultimate goal was 'a life without belief.' In written arguments, a skeptic would often be found debating with a Stoic, a Cynic, or an Epicurean — whose main function in the writing would be to elicit the opinions of the skeptic for all to read.



## ➤ Indigenous Peoples' Day Monday, October 14, 2024

Indigenous Peoples' Day is a day to recognize indigenous people and the contributions they've made to history, as well as to mourn those lost to genocide and Western colonization—and to remember that Native Americans were actually here long before European settlers showed up on our shores. In 1977, the United Nations International Conference on Discrimination Against Indigenous Populations in the Americas proposed that Indigenous Peoples Day replace Columbus Day.



Indigenous Peoples' Day is recognized on the same day as Columbus Day each year, the second Monday in October. It is more a day of recognition and mourning than of outright celebration. Great ways to commemorate Indigenous Peoples' Day are to educate yourself and others on Indigenous and Native American culture, and their contributions and history.



### 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](http://www.aofonline.org).

AOF President: Redoubtable Roger Zabke  
Vice-president: Marvelous Mynga Futrell  
Secretary: Rapid Ruth Rezos  
Event Coordinator: Prolific Pamela Rivera  
Treasurer & Registrar: Kinetic Ken Nahigian  
Webmistress: Palpable Pat Kelley  
Program chair: Super Susan McLean  
Facebook page: Keen Kaeleigh Pontif  
Directors at large:  
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 & stuff.

#### AOF's Facebook pages (two):

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1525411971087089/>  
<https://www.facebook.com/Atheists-and-Other-Freethinkers-AOF-104763721971742>

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>.

# What did your pastor say or do that made you quit his church?

Answered by Todd Green, Monday, Aug 5, 2024

(From <https://www.quora.com/What-did-your-pastor-say-or-do-that-made-you-quit-his-church/answer/Todd-Green-9>)

I was only about 12 or 13 years old, and going to a new church in my area (a small town in the Pacific Northwest). The pastor was very charismatic, and I felt inspired by him. One day the pastor was leading a group study session, and I mentioned something about watching food cooking in this new invention we had, called a microwave oven. He said "that is impossible... if they had a window on the oven, you would get irradiated!" I told him that I didn't know how it worked, but I was speaking from direct experience. I knew what I had seen. He said I must be mistaken or lying and I should take his word for it, after all, he was the pastor. I thought about it and realized that he was telling me to ignore my own direct, irrefutable experience and instead believe his version. I started to wonder if that was his approach to everything, including the church. He lost my trust that day, and I stopped going to his church, bible studies, and anywhere else he was "teaching." It turned out he was more con man than pastor, and hurt a lot of people at that church. I was lucky to see through him early on.

Saved by a microwave.



## Freedom

by A.F. Maas (from <https://www.patheos.com/blogs/daylightatheism/essays/freedom/>)

I felt amazed, afraid and confused, all at the same time. Sister Mary Celinda had just informed the class that all of us had "original sin" on our souls. That little center of us that was our spirit was really not white and pure, but black and dirty because of Adam and Eve's sin. I was in the center row, third seat back, thinking to myself that I had done nothing to deserve this. I wasn't guilty of anything! Up to this point I was a happy-go-lucky kid having a pretty good time. Seven is too young to find out that you are not worth a damn according to your religion or your God.

The years following, especially my early adolescent ones, were extremely painful and depressing. When you are a young boy and a Catholic, the sex thing is very taboo and never talked about. I imagined myself burning in hell for eternity, although I thought somehow I could save myself at the last minute with a "good" confession. The guilt, however, was excruciating and never-ending. When I was fourteen, I wrote a poem entitled "Am I the Devil's Only Friend".

I went away to an all men's Catholic college and then joined the Marine Corps and served in Viet Nam. By this time I had given up going to church and was doing pretty much everything I wasn't supposed to be doing. I still figured I was going to hell, but I just didn't care. Death was a long way off and I would figure something out before that happened. I did get married in a Catholic church and to a Catholic girl. We raised four children and we sent them to Catholic schools and I started going to church again to satisfy my wife and to set a good example for my kids.

To me, the Bible was a most unlikely story, but everyone assured me that it was the word of God, and that all the miracles really did happen and that Jesus conquered death. I was a biology major in college so I was a little skeptical of the biblical account of creation and man's origin. Actually I never believed in the creation story or the world flood after the 7th grade.

Being 55 years old now, and looking back, I think that time in second grade when I was branded with original sin was when the anxiety set in on my small mind. I have never thought of myself as a victim but I now know that this was a sort of child abuse. I don't believe that my parents or teachers thought of it that way; they just wanted me to turn out okay and not be a bad person.

For the last three years I have been researching religion and especially the history of Christianity and Catholicism. Slowly, but surely, I have started to come out of the fog. Christianity is a cult just like all the rest except it happens to be more widely accepted than the other religions. I am finally living my life with a much higher degree of freedom and happiness. I realize now the utter stupidity of believing in a religion or any belief system that does not respond to critical thinking and lots of questioning. I can kind of laugh now, but I'm still mad at all the people, especially those people in authority in the church that fed me all of the crap that kept me believing. The time that I have wasted on religion and God also makes me quite angry, but I am getting over it.

Now I am starting to have fun with my life. I am also having quite a bit of fun with the "fundies". A lot of my family thinks that I have lost it but I don't really care. A few of them say I will come to my senses eventually, but I give them a little analogy about a man who finally drags himself out of the quicksand and then immediately jumps back in. In other words, it's not likely to happen, ever! I am free from this weight and I can accept it. I am responsible for myself in thought and in action.

