



AOF News & Views – Newsletter for October 2025



Freethinker Picnic at Westwood Park, Sept 28, 2025

✧ ✧ This Month's Headliner Event ✧ ✧

➤ Gun Violence in the United States

Sunday, October 26, 2025, 2 pm – 4 pm

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

Our Shameful Epidemic (2025 update)

Bill Durston, M.D., president of [Americans Against Gun Violence](https://aagunv.org) (AAGV), will discuss the main factors driving our gun violence epidemic, the definitive measures needed to stop the epidemic, the obstacles to taking these measures, and how to overcome these obstacles.

The rate of gun related deaths in our country is currently at least ten times higher than the average rate for the other high-income democratic countries of the world. **Since 2020, gunshot wounds have become the leading cause of death for U.S. children and adolescents.** The AAGV position is that we have the ability and the moral responsibility to reduce rates of firearm related deaths and injuries in the U.S. to levels that are at or below the rates in other economically advanced democratic countries.

Bill Durston worked for more than 35 years as a board certified emergency physician in Sacramento, California, during which time he treated innumerable gunshot victims. Before becoming a physician, Bill was an expert marksman in the United States Marine Corps, serving in combat in Vietnam, where he was decorated for "courage and composure under fire." In March of 2016, he co-founded a national non-profit organization, Americans Against Gun Violence, aagunv.org, to extend to a national level the gun violence prevention work that Physicians for Social Responsibility (PSB/Sacramento) was doing locally. Contact Bill through AAGV by email at info@aagunv.org.

Don't miss this important talk!

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



✧ ✧ Other Upcoming AOF-related Events ✧ ✧

➤ California Freethought Day

Sunday, October 12, 2025, 11 am – 5:30 pm

Location: West steps, California State Capitol, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/EYkQPck3urcvEG7L6>.

This is it, the event of the year! The Annual [California Freethought Day](#) Festival will convene (for the twenty-third year!) on the West Steps of the California State Capitol. As in years previous, the local community of freethinkers will bring you a menagerie of wonders and a fabulous flight of free minds, with music, speakers, awards, display tables and more. Attendance is free, yes we say *free*. So please join us.

OK, full disclosure: "CFD" is not an official AOF event. But AOF founded it in 2002. It began as a rather rag-tag gathering on the Sacramento courthouse steps. To our pleasant surprise it took root and grew. Year by year it grew, until it left the nest and took wing. We still promote and sponsor it because we're so damn proud.

Today CFD is an annual public jubilee and gala hosted by the independent [Freethought Day Committee](#), a wide-ranging celebration of free speech and free thought, civic engagement, enthusiasm for science, social justice, and the separation of church and state. Open to all, it combines "the fun and festivity of a fair with the education and activism of a conference," as the event chair fondly tells us. It features exhibits, speakers, music, prizes, panels, performance art, banners, jugglers, balloons twisted into small animals, and tons of fun.

Planners are packing the day with events to entertain you and uplift you. For details see <https://freethoughtday.org/main/schedule/>.

So [sign up now](#). But sign up why? It's free, isn't it? Oh yes, the main event (on Sunday) is free to attend, but registration, which costs nothing, makes you eligible for delightful & toothsome benefits, including doorprizes and updates. And would you care to staff a table? Would you like to attend the Supporters Reception the evening before? CFD is a multifarious event, covering the whole weekend. Please visit the [event website](#) to learn more.

The seed of this festival, of course, is the celebration of [Freethought Day](#), a secular holiday that technically falls on October 12 (click the link to learn a bit about it), and one of many celebrations held world-over at about the time.

Finally ... if you'd like to table, volunteer, sponsor, help promote, help plan, participate - or if you just have ideas - then please do visit <https://freethoughtday.org/> now and contact the chairman (see below). Sooner = better -- the team will love to have you, because hands that help ... are beautiful hands.

Contact for details: 209-610-0651, or email "chair (at) FreethoughtDay.org".



✧ ✧ Other Upcoming Events ✧ ✧

Some local *non*-AOF events worthy of your attention. We won't list them all this time, just highlights. For more, please check the calendar links below.

➤ Blasphemy Breakfasts and a Brunch

● **Saturday, October 11, 2025, 10 am – 11:30 am**, at Mel's Diner, 13399 Folsom Blvd, Folsom, CA, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/ri6JvaBoSZVHTdnU6>, details at <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/311156330/>.

● **Sunday, October 12, 2025, 9:30 am – 11:30 am**, at Mel's Diner, 3000 J Street, Sacramento, CA, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/toijMkseMWmTanVP7>, details at <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/311172591/>.

● **Sunday, October 19 2025, 9:30 am – 11 am**, at Mel's Diner, 6708 Lonetree Blvd, Rocklin, CA, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/ZUY2gg72KkmkC4bU6>, details at <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/311205343/>.

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).



➤ California Freethought Day Fundraiser Reception

Saturday, October 11, 2025, 6:30 pm – 9:30 pm

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

The CFD fundraising reception will feature the first opportunity to meet many of the speakers. Guests will enjoy live entertainment, donor recognition, exclusive gifts, an open bar (beer and wine) plus appetizers and desserts, and recognition as a donor. *Fee required for this event; it's a fundraiser.* Your ticket also includes drinks and snacks at the main even Sunday.

Special guests will include: Corey Wright, Erica Lee, Haram Doodles, Jonathan Lopez, Liana Pilar de Leo, Nick Fish, * Seth Andrews.

Tickets are normally \$85; purchase your ticket in advance for a \$10 discount. Get Your Tickets at:

<https://freethoughtday2025.eventbrite.com/>

Details: <https://freethoughtday.org/main/reception/>. Or call 209-610-0651, or email "chair (at) FreethoughtDay.org".

➤ LiteraCheer at Reason Center

Saturday, October 18, 2025, 2 pm – 4 pm

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

Reason Center is excited to continue the in-person "Literacheer" events! Come and enjoy the weekend afternoon by discussing books with fellow thinkers.

Everyone will get a chance to share their ideas about any book of their choice—any genre, fiction or nonfiction. It's a great way to keep abreast of what like-minded people are reading. It will occur in the Reason Center library seating area.

🔗 **Guidelines:** First, Honor your RSVP and keep it updated on Meetup.

Second: We must have 3 RSVPs to move forward (besides the moderator). Lacking that number will force a cancellation on the day prior.

Next, follow common sense decency in choice of books. Have a book in mind for discussion - even if you are still reading it. Avoid unrelated and/or prolonged discussions that veer off topic from the book. Try to keep the book topics accessible to all. A topic you would bring up at a cocktail party or public function. Finally, be nice – focus on the "cheer" part of the event.

Optional to bring your snacks to share with others. The organizers will bring complementary treats.

Details: See <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/311196855/>.



➤ Sunday Assembly & Potluck

Sunday, October 19, 2025, 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. The event will have a featured presenter, a short Doing Your Best presentation, a time for members to share their Milestones, and a potluck. Bring a food dish to share if you wish. The Assembly will provide donuts and coffee.

Details: See <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/311001021/>.

➤ Black Humanists & Non-Believers Book Club

Saturday, October 25, 2025, 3:30 pm – 5:00 pm (online meeting)

An online book discussion open to all. The book will be **Dawn Lilith's Brood** by Octavia Butler. RSVP at the Details link below, and you will see how to attend.

Details: see <https://www.meetup.com/bhnb-sacramento/events/309724842/>.

➤ Coffee and Community at Reason Center

Sunday, October 26, 2025, 10 am – 11:30 am

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/sacfan/events/pqqfstyhcnbjc/>.



➤ Humanity Breakfast at Fixins (bi-monthly) Yummy :-)

Sunday, October 26, 2025, 11 am – 1 pm

Location: Fixins Soul Kitchen, 3428 3rd Ave, Sacramento, CA

Firstly: 🗨️ **Honor your RSVP and keep it updated. Greatly appreciated.** 😊

Secondly: We must have 3 persons RSVP'g to move forward. Lacking that number will force a cancellation on the day prior. Always check the site for cancellations - a good practice with any meetup event!

Here we go again. Time for a scrumptious breakfast. As you may already know, we are alternating between dinners and breakfasts each month. Even months are breakfasts and odd months are dinners. We need at least 3 RSVPs, including myself, to proceed with this event. If we don't meet this threshold, the event will be cancelled the day before. Always check back here for updates or check your email.



BTW. Be prepared to bring cash to have the most flexible payment experience (if party size is larger than 3). We have gotten away with separate tickets for a group size of five. Who knows.

➤ Skeptics in the Pub

● Sunday, November 5, 2025, 6 pm – 8 pm

● Sunday, December 7, 2025, 6 pm – 8 pm

Location: Urban Roods Brewing and Smokehouse, 1322 V Street, Sacramento, map at <https://maps.app.goo.gl/VmDt4vn2y1ac12Np7>.



A social gathering for the skeptical minds, a community of people, friends, and families that champion the methods of science and critical thinking.

The Skeptics will usually meet in the back patio, weather permitting; tables are out there under a tent. Otherwise, a table inside. Urban Roots is an ideal location.

Details: See <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/310929334/>.

➤ 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/>
- 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. (Reasonable honorariums paid to speakers.)

Volunteer?

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

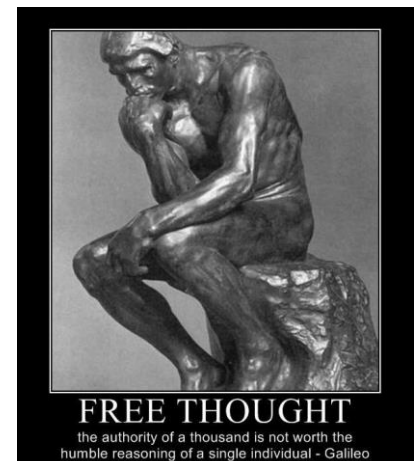
✧ ✧ Secular Holidays ✧ ✧

➤ Freethought Day

Sunday, October 12, 2025

OK, this might confuse you, so lemme 'splain. [Freethought Day](#), or "Freethought Coming-Out Day," is a *secular Holiday*. It is a day to give closeted freethinkers a platform from which to declare themselves. The formal calendar holiday is October 12, every year, but groups tend to plan celebrations for the closest weekend. Some even 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.

[California Freethought Day](#) is a *public event*, which happens to be on the same day this year. Convenient and confusing.



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 Skeptics Day Day, October 13, 2025

International Skeptics Day is like a party for your brain, where doubt is the guest of honor! This special day lands on October 13th each year, inviting everyone to question the usual and embrace some healthy skepticism.

But there's a twist. This day also gets celebrated on January 13th and sometimes even on the first Friday-the-13th of the year, making it a triple treat for those who love to question everything.

The day's roots stretch way back, touching on historical figures like Pyrrho of Elis and William of Ockham, who taught us the importance of questioning our beliefs and the knowledge we take for granted.

The essence of International Skeptics Day is not just about doubting for the sake of it but encouraging a spirit of inquiry and critical thinking. Imagine a world where everyone accepted things at face value. There's not much room for progress, right? That's where this day steps in, urging us to question the established, seek evidence, and maybe even play devil's advocate at the next group hangout.

Remember that the essence of skepticism is not about being negative, but about keeping an open mind, and not just accepting things on someone's word. It's about looking for evidence, asking questions, and not taking "because I said so" for an answer.



**INTERNATIONAL
SKEPTICS DAY**

We get Letters

Postcard from Andrew Lutes, AOF member in Erlanger, KY
8 Sep 2025

"Happy Hundreth Anniversary of the Scopes Trial!

"'Inherit the Wind' is the only critical examination of the bible some people may see, so I'm glad the trial was held and the play/movie was made."

Critical Bigfoot Theory: Does Bigfoot Exist by [Pat Kelley](#)

A new critical analysis and coloring book by an AOF Charter Member

What makes Bigfoot so special to survive in our imaginations and strike fear in the hearts of otherwise intrepid hikers and campers who dare trek far into the vast hinterlands of the Pacific Northwest and Canada?

Is Bigfoot just another Boogieman or is there really a wild, smelly, gigantic apelike creature lurking in the shadows waiting to create havoc upon campgrounds and lay waste to innocent intruders?

Can the process of Bigfoot Critical Theories answer these questions?

Let's explore the possibilities.

Get a hard-to-find copy at <https://www.amazon.com/Critical-Bigfoot-Theory-Does-Exist/dp/B0DJZ6BMRD>



The Hen by Lord Dunsany

All along the farmyard gables the swallows sat a-row, twittering uneasily to one another, telling of many things, but thinking only of Summer and the South, for Autumn was afoot and the North wind waiting.

And suddenly one day they were all quite gone. And everyone spoke of the swallows and the South.

"I think I shall go South myself next year," said a hen.

And the year wore on and the swallows came again, and the year wore on and they sat again on the gables, and all the poultry discussed the departure of the hen.

And very early one morning, the wind being from the North, the swallows all soared suddenly and felt the wind in their wings; and a strength came upon them and a strange old knowledge and a more than human faith, and flying high they felt the smoke of our cities and small remembered eaves, and saw at last the huge and homeless sea, and steering by grey sea-currents went southward with the wind. And going South they went by glittering fog-banks and saw old islands lifting their heads above them; they saw the slow quests of the wandering ships, and divers seeking pearls, and lands at war, till there came in view the mountains that they sought and the sight of the peaks they knew; and they descended into an austral valley, and saw Summer sometimes sleeping and sometimes singing song.

"I think the wind is about right," said the hen; and she spread her wings and ran out of the poultry-yard. And she ran fluttering out on to the road and some way down it until she came to a garden.

At evening she came back panting.

And in the poultry-yard she told the poultry how she had gone South as far as the high road, and saw the great world's traffic going by, and came to lands where the potato grew, and saw the stubble upon which men live, and at the end of the road had found a garden, and there were roses in it—beautiful roses!—and the gardener himself was there with his braces on.

"How extremely interesting," the poultry said, "and what a really beautiful description!"

And the Winter wore away, and the bitter months went by, and the Spring of the year appeared, and the swallows came again.

"We have been to the South," they said, "and the valleys beyond the sea."

But the poultry would not agree that there was a sea in the South:

"You should hear our hen," they said.



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 Rivera

Vice-president: Marvelous Mynga Futrell

Secretary: Rapid Ruth Rezos

Treasurer & Registrar: Kinetic Ken Nahigian

Event Coordinator: Pamela Rivera (again)

Program chair: Super Susan McLean

Webmistress: Palpable Pat Kelley

Facebook page & Advisor: Keen Kaeleigh Pontif

Directors at large:

Fran Evanisko, David Herbert, Roger Zabkie

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.

Your humble editor is Fran Evanisko.

Letters, submissions? We love them! See:

<http://www.aofonline.org/read/submission-guide.html>.