

The Tampa Bay Coalition of Reason

Freethought News



Vol. 9 No. 12, December 2020

Jim Peterson, Rick O'Keefe, Editors

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Tampa Bay

Coalition of Reason

Web site—Jim Peterson

Editors—Jim Peterson &

Rick O'Keefe

Back & current issues online at:

<http://www.tampabaycor.net>

Special Projects—Mark Brandt

& Bill Norsworthy

See our event websites at:

<http://bit.ly/2vUJoE1>

Opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors. They do not purport to reflect the opinions or views of the editors, TBCoR, or its member organizations.

Anywhere in this newsletter, CLICK on an image or blue text for a link.

This is a season of Joyful

anticipation. Our people have proven themselves to be capable of resisting the siren call of comfortable conformity to a tyranny of easy prejudices. Not by much to be sure, but still enough to matter.

The work of civilization, which is to say, becoming human, is not easily accomplished; not in a day, and not within our time.

The maturation of enlightenment is the product of constant education. It is also marked by the constant giving and receiving of criticism.

These are tasks for which the freethought movement across its many manifestations is superlatively equipped. We do not lack for the intellectual capacity nor the historical imperative.

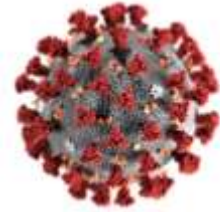
No matter your age or affiliation, now is the time to get engaged. JP

Please Don't Delay – Get Your Shingle and Flu Shots Now!

The Food and Drug administration in 2017 approved the much more effective, **Shingrix** as the preferred alternative to Zostavax, which was approved in 2006.

Both vaccines are approved for adults age 50 and older for the prevention of shingles and related complications, whether they've already had shingles or not. If you have already had the first vaccine, get the second. It helps with Covid.

Also, don't forget your current **Flu & Pneumonia shots** available now.



Vaccines are on the way!

...and with them the possibility of reviving the face to face meetings in which social life can once again thrive.

On-line Zoom meetings and lectures have been great at keeping our organizations alive, but for more dynamic uses we really need to be in the presence of others.

Although vaccines have been scheduled to be distributed starting in late December, it will be some time in June before they are available to the entire population. First up to receive them are medical people and seniors over 65.

Those of us over that age can expect to begin get-togethers sometime in mid April most likely.

By midyear it will be physically possible to have regular meetings and events, at least until the next pandemic shows up.

NB. Until further notice, following best-practices and official medical recommendations, **all group gatherings are postponed** due to the Coronavirus pandemic. We will let you know here when we're go for "Normal."



The Humanist Society of the Suncoast

An Epicurean society dedicated to the proposition that only the fully examined life is worth living.
Associate organization of the the [AHA](#), [COR](#), & [ASHS](#). Find us at www.suncoasthumanist.com

Meetup Zooms of Humanist interest

DECEMBER 10, 2020 | 6:30PM - 8:00PM

WATCH THIS VIRTUAL TALK ON ZOOM AND FACEBOOK LIVE

Speaking of Humanism | Humanist Holiday Delights and Disputes

Janey Rizvi shares how he celebrates the season and navigates the holiday sensibilities of his religious family.

[READ MORE](#)



DECEMBER 22, 2020 | 12:00AM - 12:00AM

ACCEPTING SUBMISSIONS NOW!



Send Season's Greetings to Incarcerated Humanists

Help us also spread season's greetings to incarcerated humanists by sending secular holiday letters. [READ MORE](#)

Humanism
is a progressive philosophy
of life that, without
theism or other
supernatural beliefs,
affirms our ability and
responsibility to lead
ethical lives of personal
fulfillment that aspire to
the greater good.

The Humanist Society is a 501c3 organization. As such we can take no position, and does not endorse any candidacy or political party. We will discuss issues and ideas, however. We recommend that you use available resources on the web and media to learn more about your local candidates.

Our Local Board Meeting

The Humanist Society of the Suncoast will have another board meeting soon. Under consideration are ideas and directions for future programs. Members are invited to contribute ideas: contact jim@suncoasthumanist.com to let us know what you think. Members are also invited to contribute dues, the all important resource that allows us to exist. See the column to the right...

Vol. XXXIII No. 10 October, 2020



The Humanist Society has maintained an enlightened presence on the Florida Suncoast sine 1987.

Please Join or renew
**Humanist Society of the
Suncoast**

Annual Dues

- Regular -\$25
- Reg. Couple -\$30.
- Supporter -\$35/40 (With pin above)
- Life -\$200. (Inc. Pin)
- Life Couple -\$250 (Pins)
- Associate -\$10



Your membership helps keep Humanism alive & growing in the Tampa Bay area. A small part of your dues allows us to participate fully as a member organization of the Tampa Bay Coalition of Reason & enables us to support larger & more exciting programs.

If you have questions concerning your dues or status, contact our treasurer,
Scott Wilson scott33761@yahoo.com

If new, please give info below; if renewing just indicate your name & any changes from our previous information. Thanks!

Name: Address –if new : City, State, Zip
Phone, E-mail: (Privacy respected)

Send check made out to:
"Scott Wilson"

Memo line: "Humanist Society Dues"
(501c3, tax deductible)

Humanist Society of the Suncoast, AHA
6814 Charlotte Harbor Way
Tampa FL 33625



Humanists work to build a world in which happiness is the enduring criterion of all policy.

What is the Humanist Way?

- ♦ **To extend** a human centered approach to the critical problems of life & society.
- ♦ **To encourage** attitudes of kindness, compassion, tolerance & a loving generosity in human relationships, & in our treatment of all life. These attitudes help us to see ourselves in the lives of others, & encourage appreciation for the remarkable diversity of human culture & experience.
- ♦ **To develop** & popularize the skills of creative & critical thinking that empower people to challenge prejudice, superstition & irrationality in every area of life. Such empowerment enables the individual to reach the highest levels of achievement.
- ♦ **To exalt** those artistic & imaginative expressions of life which have been the source of the greatest pleasure & enlightenment, & which reflect compelling human truths. Through music, literature, art, dance, & other expressions, we embrace the essence of what it means to be human.
- ♦ **To explore** the grounds of ethics & morality within the unfolding history of our evolving culture. Such knowledge will enable us to become effective protagonists for the happiness of the individual person. JP

Golfing with Philosophers

Have you ever wondered why no one wants to join you, a philosopher, for a round of golf? The fact of the matter is that, on the golf course, philosophers are a truly tedious lot--always have been!!

No one ever wanted to play with **Kant** since he was such a stickler about following the rules. He claimed that it was Imperative to do so. **Kropotkin**, on the other hand, never adhered to any rule. Stories abound about how he teed off from the seventh green, taking aim toward the fourteenth hole. Most golfers considered Kropotkin positively dangerous.

Hearing **Thales** lament about his latest round was tiresome. One would think that every hole was nothing but water. Admittedly, **Hegel** had a more positive frame of mind, but that was no better. He kept claiming that everybody's game was constantly improving, approaching an Absolute Ideal. **Marx** got so tired of hearing this that he turned Hegel on his head.

Sartre was positively annoying. He would pontificate about how a person is only a bad golfer because that is what he chooses to be. That never sat well with anyone who had just finished a bad round. **Berkeley** was a bit more subtle, but just as damning. He would claim that the game was entirely mental. That sent **Malebranch** into despair. He felt that it would take an act of God for your mind to be able to control your body. **D'Holbach**, on the other hand, would attribute his bad rounds on the pre-existing conditions in the universe; he swore that there was nothing one could do to change the outcome.

Philosophers have also managed to take the fun out of any tournament. **Hume** was skeptical about any reported score. He wanted proof, but would never accept any of the presented evidence as sufficient. **Diogenes** was just as Cynical, claiming that he had scoured the world looking for an honest golfer. Meanwhile **Paley** would go around showing everybody this watch he found.

One had to wait endlessly in the clubhouse for **Zeno** to get started; it seemed like he could never reach the first hole. **Abelard** was the only one who didn't seem to mind; he was content to sit in the bar and moon over **Heloise**.

Strangely, though, the philosopher everyone hated the most was **Plato**. It is not that he ever did anything wrong. In fact, he had perfect Form. People just couldn't stand the fact that he never shot anything but Par. Thx. DC

Humanist Society of the Suncoast

A chapter of the American Humanist Assoc., Tampa Bay Coalition of Reason, & The Association of Secular Humanist Societies

Board of Directors.

Meets Sept., December, April

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~*~*~*~*~*

Jim Peterson, Editor
E-Mail us at:
jim@suncoasthumanist.com

Need Psychological Counseling?

For a secular therapist,
click:

[Secular Therapy Org.](http://fampsy.org/member/lynda-gurvitz/)
[Cognitive Neurosciences](http://fampsy.org/member/lynda-gurvitz/)

Or call:

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(727) 725-8820

Or, Joel Schmidt
www.floatoncounseling.com
321-604-7637



What Are You Grateful For? *Finding Hope in a Tumultuous Year*

While caveats abound: On the planetary level, I'm grateful the world is uniting to overcome this deadly pandemic, just as I'm grateful our country's democracy was strong enough to overcome the threat of fascism. I'm grateful to live in a vibrant, diverse city tuned in to the importance of politics and almost universally standing against hate. With the incoming Biden-Harris administration more friendly to our movement, I'm excited about humanism's prospects to achieve greater prominence. Most of all, I'm grateful to have a loving family including my youngest daughter who is succeeding through her struggles with the pressures of the pandemic, my oldest daughter who recently beat stage four cancer and is thriving at college, and my brilliant wife who sustains me more than I can imagine.

—Roy Speckhardt, Executive Director AHA



In 2014, the American Humanist Association and Foundation Beyond Belief announced the merger of their respective charitable programs Humanist Charities and Humanist Crisis Response to encourage humanist giving. [Humanist Disaster Recovery](#), this new joint project of the AHA and FBB, exists to provide financial support to secular organizations working locally to meet the needs of recovering survivors.

Recent recovery giving campaigns have helped relief efforts with Hurricanes Harvey & Irma, famine in East Africa, flooding in Louisiana, earthquakes in Ecuador & Nepal, and much more.

Learn more at: foundationbeyondbelief.org/disaster-recovery

Humanist Quotes

If you read my books, especially the Star Trek books and the Quest for Tomorrow books, you'll see in them the core theme of the basic humanistic questions that Star Trek asked.

— [William Shatner](#)

- However, we all share the firm belief in the triumph of humanist and progressive values that mankind has achieved during its long history of struggle and creativeness.

— [Tran Duc Luong](#)

- Jewish intellectuals contributed a great deal to insure that Europe became a continent of humanism, and it is with these humanist ideals that Europe must now intervene in the Middle East conflict.

— [Daniel Barenboim](#)

- Anthropology is the most humanistic of the sciences and the most scientific of the humanities.

— [Alfred L. Kroeber](#)

- Global thinking and local action both require understanding of ecological systems, but ecological management can be effective only if it takes into consideration the visceral and spiritual values that link us to the earth. Therefore ecological thinking must be supplemented by humanistic value judgments concerning the effect of our choices and actions on the quality of the relationship between humankind and earth, in the future as well as in the present.

— [Ren](#)

- As religion and faith are being driven out of the public square, the Judeo-Christian ethical foundations that have sustained our country since its beginning, are being lost and are being replaced with a humanistic amorality, a self-centered, pragmatic indifference that will ensure that our moral compasses will fail to point us in the right direction in the future.

— [Archie B. Carroll](#)

- The cinema, like the detective story, enables us to experience without danger to ourselves all the excitements, passions, and fantasies which have to be repressed in a humanistic age.

— [Carl Jung](#)

Click here



An autonomous project of the Humanist Society.
Affiliate of the [Post Carbon Institute](#)

A Universal Basic Income

I would imagine that most contributors to this discussion agree, to some degree at least, with the principle that we need deep, structural changes to our current socioeconomic system. It is not enough to tinker with a few parts of the system, no matter how beneficial that tinkering might appear. Our civilization, torn apart by gaping inequalities, is currently hell-bent on a course to disaster. Its suicidal addiction to economic growth paralyzes it from making the changes required to avert climate catastrophe, while it destroys life's abundance on our beautiful but wounded Earth.

We need to change the fundamentals of our society. We must move from a wealth-based civilization to one that is life-affirming—an ecological civilization. Without this Great Transition, we are leaving future generations to face the horrors of a collapsing civilization on a devastated planet. Can we transition rapidly enough? And can the transition occur without the old civilization collapsing catastrophically around us?

Given this context, I have been surprised by how much the discussion of a universal basic income sounds like arguing how to stack the deck chairs on the Titanic. Can we afford it? Would it be inflationary? Would the right wing use it as an excuse to take away basic services? In my view, the fundamental issues need to be: Does UBI help with the process of transforming civilization from within? Can it help to move us seamlessly into the Great Transition?

My own answer is a strong affirmative. I acknowledge that, by itself, it is not enough to redirect our global society, but I view it as one of the most important trimtabs available that (a) meets an urgent and current need, while (b) helping unravel some of the economic and cultural structures that have set our civilization on its collective suicide pact.

A full-fledged UBI—one that unconditionally provides every person with enough income to meet their basic needs—would fundamentally alter the paradigm of

capitalism that has locked workers into the dominant system ever since its inception. Capitalism has endured by commoditizing people's lives, forcing them to sell the bulk of their available time and energy, or else face destitution and starvation. A true UBI would transform the relationship between labor and capital and weaken the power of the wealthy elite to control the population.

Even more fundamentally, UBI has the potential to shift underlying mainstream misconceptions about human nature. The dominant contract between capital and labor has reified the idea that humans are essentially selfish and lazy, and must be forced to work by a combination of fear and greed, which is effectuated by wages and other monetary "incentives." However, it has been widely demonstrated (and summarized well in Rutger Bregman's *Humankind*) that humans are nothing of the sort. In fact, people have a fundamental need to engage in a livelihood that is meaningful and to feel valued by their community. Work is not something people try to avoid; on the contrary, purposeful work is an integral part of human flourishing. If people were liberated by UBI from the daily necessity to sell their labor for survival, they would reinvest their time in crucial parts of the economy that, as Kate Raworth outlines in *Doughnut Economics*, have mostly been hidden from view—the household and the commons. They would care for loved ones, build community, and dare to do whatever it is that inspires them. The domination of the economy by the market would inevitably decline while those other, life-affirming sectors would be strengthened.

From a values perspective, UBI elevates the principles of trust and fairness as organizing structures of society, while eclipsing the ethic of cynicism that dominates our market-oriented system. Morally, UBI recognizes a precept of human history that has long been ignored—that the overwhelming proportion of wealth available to modern humans is the result of the cumulative ingenuity and industriousness of prior generations going back to earliest times, including such fundamentals as language, cultural traditions, and scientific knowledge. Once we realize the vastness of the cumulative common resources that our ancestors have bequeathed to us, it transforms our conception of wealth and value. Contrary to the widespread view that an entrepreneur who becomes a billionaire deserves his wealth, the reality is that whatever value he created is a pittance compared to the immense bank of prior knowledge and social practices—the commonwealth—that he took from.

It is the moral birthright of every human to share in the vast commonwealth that our predecessors have collectively built, and I see a global UBI as the most effective way to make that happen. There are many structural changes required to shift our society's disastrous trajectory and replace our wealth-based, growth-addicted civilization with one that is truly ecological. A UBI, by itself, would not be nearly enough, but in my view, it is one of the most important cornerstones of a future that fosters sustainable human flourishing on a regenerated living Earth.

Author: Ching Chen Juhl



SUPPORT BEYOND-THE-BOX THINKING

- **Agroecology** is entering a new phase. A range of circumstances have catapulted agroecology into the limelight. From the acceleration of the climate crisis, the dangerous decline of biodiversity and Covid-19 to the sustained and committed work of social movements to raise agroecology's profile – agroecology is now gaining recognition and momentum as an alternative to a failing food system.

Agroecology is constantly evolving and moving, by nature it is a process of experimentation and creativity; it is a plurality of pathways rather than a destination. As a concept that is gaining steam on international political stages, and in territories around the world, it is 'in motion' as different actors with different agendas, positions and priorities begin to engage, adapt, reinterpret...and co-opt it. Sometimes it is moving so fast that it is hard to keep track of what is going on under the umbrella of 'agroecology'. Articles in *Agroecology in Motion* will explore this movement where new ideas, contradictions, edges, fusions and opportunities are constantly emerging.

Agroecology is also 'in motion' in the sense that its main roots and lifeblood are in social movements that are advancing a deeply transformative vision of agroecology that holds great promise as an antidote and alternative to the ills that emanate from the dominant food system. This column will foreground the transformative agroecology reflected in the movements organizing for agroecology, food sovereignty and the right to food.

Contributions in *Agroecology in Motion* are intended to nourish a transformative agroecology by probing and pushing the boundaries of thought and action. The column will be provocative and inspiring, international in scope and connected with agroecology happenings all over the world. The articles will be critical, compelling and analytical, focusing on the dynamics of political and social transformation in the political agroecology and food sovereignty movement(s). To this end, we are asking contributors to speak to one or more of the following:

Hunches – What do you think you know but can't yet prove? And, by extension, what are the missing elements in your emerging theory or hunch?

- **Edges** – What are the edges of agroecology? – that is: the places where agroecology butts up against

another movement or issue, and opportunities for exchange and learning can be explored and harnessed for social transformation (e.g. the edge between agroecology and the Black Lives Matters Movement or feminism, etc.).

- **Visions and Horizons** – What are the horizons and futures for agroecology? What visions of the future does agroecology imply? And what horizons need to be brought into view in order to realize them?
- **Doubts** – What are the shortcomings and blind spots of agroecology? What are the implications of these for agroecology transformations? How might they be overcome?
- **Contradictions and Threats** – What dynamics undermine agroecology? – either its internal contradictions, or threats from outside.
- **Unpacking narrative and evidence** i Who is building narratives based on what arguments and evidence to argue for or against agroecology? What are their vested interests and what is the effect on agroecology (e.g. when corporations adopt agroecology language or where politicians attack agroecology)?
- **Inspiration** – Provide a story, narrative or example that inspires. This should not only include a description of the how, but also a sense of the 'why' the case has achieved success.



- **Learning from mistakes or 'failures'**: Share a postmortem on an initiative or project that didn't achieve its desired outcome or from mistakes you've made in your own practice. Be sure to draw lessons learned.

But what is agroecology?

Agroecology is a term being filled with multiple meanings... Agroecology is a movement. It is knowledge and wisdom. It is "a science". Cultural practices. Technical application of particular practices. It is viewed by some as a business opportunity. A way to realise food sovereignty. A marketing tool for agribusiness. A way of life. A word obscure to some... and deeply meaningful to others

Atheists of Florida Inc.



For our Atheists helping the Homeless project -

For all meetings: bring, if you can, small bars of unused soap, small bottles of shampoo, heavy duty socks, any kind of personal care items, or money (for bulk purchase of these items).

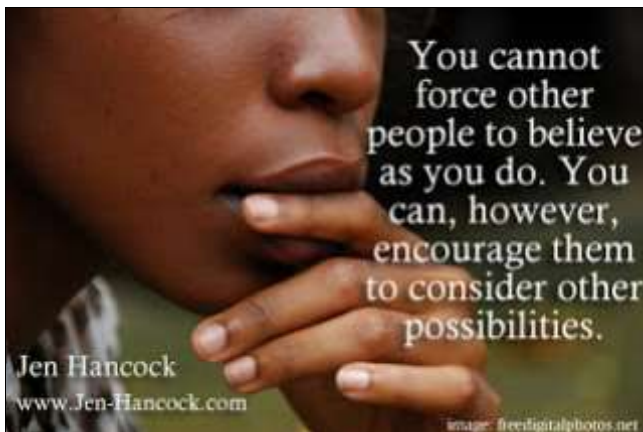
Ed Golly, Chair - Judy Adkins, Exec. Dir.
See AoF Meetup for details Website: <http://aof.ngo>

AoF is a comfortable & safe place in which to; find rewarding new friendships, discover hidden potentials, & make a positive contribution to your own humanity as well as that of others. We are pleased to offer legal assistance with church state separation issues as an important focus. For many people, atheism represents the most focused & powerful criticism of the philosophical world-view with which most of us were raised. It is liberating for the same reason it attracts the enmity of those who are committed to the closed & changeless narrative of unexamined traditional beliefs. JP



Strategies for Dealing with Racism in the Workplace

Today's blog post on humanistic leadership is actually just a link to an article I think you all should read.



It's titled: Confronting the Uncomfortable Reality of Workplace Discrimination by Derek R. Avery and Enrica N. Ruggs at MIT Sloan.

<https://sloanreview-mit-edu.cdn.ampproject.org/c/s/sloanreview.mit.edu/article/confronting-the-uncomfortable-reality-of-workplace-discrimination/amp>

Jennifer Hancock

Do you know what your legislature Is up to?

AoF submitted a short survey on **religious freedom** to candidates for the Florida House of Representatives, the Florida Senate, and the US House of Representatives. We are posting the responses on our website as they are received. You can visit the information at <https://www.atheistsofflorida.org/2020-candidates>. (NOTA BENE: We did this through email, so only those candidates for whom we could find an email address are included.)

JMA



Reasons you should join our **new online real-time meeting**: Stay tuned for more details. Register at: <https://www.free2think.org/>

Always Vigilant

Public school prayer events are generally billed as being student-organized in order to *appear* constitutional.

But in reality, school staff are often actively involved, even to the extent that they're the ones organizing the event.

To stop this unconstitutional Christian proselytizing, someone needs to expose the adult organizers. That's where we come in!

Let us know of any church-state violation you may run across - restrictions, prayers, bible readings, etc. We'll take it from there. Thanks, www.aof.ngo

Be sure to come on in for AoF's regular Sunday evening Zoom sessions starting at 5:00 PM. See our listings on the TB-CoR Meetup for topics, guest speakers, etc. and many more Zoom-meets.

For linking information, see our notices on the Coalition of Reason Meetup page, or go to our website; www.aof.ngo.

For over 27 years, Atheists of Florida Inc. has attempted to provide much needed information about religion and the alternatives to religion which have proved to be so liberating for so many of us.

We invite you to explore the many written and audio video presentations from our library.

The radio/TV broadcasts are on extended hiatus for now. However, previous programs, most with discussions of timeless interest, are available **on the internet at:** www.youtube.com/atheistforum.



For now, tune in to **the Voice of Reason, Thursday at 10am on WTAN radio** See [page 13](#)! The voice is a private effort led by Ed Golly, who along with Joe Rhinehardt and guests supply fresh insights on the world we face.

Contact us: info@atheistsoffloridainc.org



Atheist COMMUNITY of Polk County

Being a nonbeliever in what seems to be a heavily religious area can often be isolating. YES – we’re building a new community of atheists, humanists, freethinkers and skeptics to socialize and discuss issues we find important in a safe, friendly environment. But we also want to create a landing pad for those who may be doubting their faith or leaving their religion.

Often, when people leave belief behind, they’re losing more than a God belief. Sometimes family severs contact, the church friends you’ve been close to for years may start to distance themselves. When your religious connections are a large part of your world, it’s easy to find yourself lost and alone when you walk away. If this is you, please know that YOU ARE NOT ALONE. There is a community here that cares for and values you – no commandments required.



We are currently organizing social events through our closed Facebook Group. Because the group is closed, only members of the group can see who’s in it and what they post, so if you’re unable to be open about your nonbelief, it’s safe to join.

Since ACPC serves the many cities in Polk County, we’re making some effort to move social events around the county as well as mixing up day and time.

If you live in or near Polk County, Florida, we’d love to meet you! Start by joining the group and look for our events! <http://facebook.com/groups/polkatheists>

Our Mission

To increase the visibility of and respect for nontheistic viewpoints in Polk County through socializing, educational opportunities, and community service;
To oppose discrimination and promote equality in all its forms;

To defend religious equality by protecting what Thomas Jefferson called the “wall of separation” between state and church created by the First Amendment; and

To work with other organizations in pursuit of common goals.

<https://polkatheists.org/>

Atheist and Freethinker Candidates Make Electoral Gains

BY [RON MILLAR](#) • 9 NOVEMBER 2020

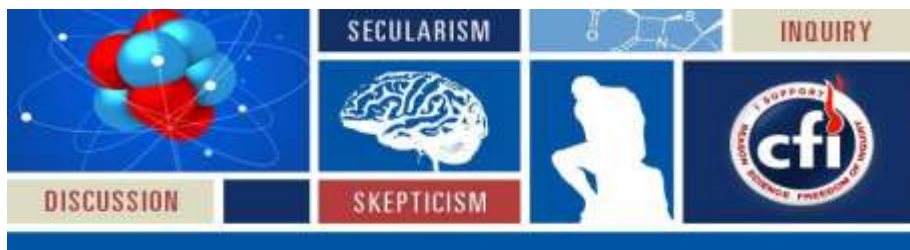
Humanists across the nation and around the world are joining in the celebration of Donald Trump’s defeat. We can now embrace hope for progress in a way that wasn’t possible these last four years. While we don’t wish to sink to his level of strident demonization, we do need to recognize that seventy million people voted for the most regressive president our country has seen in over a century. So even while we rejoice, we know our struggle for a more reasonable, egalitarian, compassionate America, has a long way to go.

Polling prior to the 2020 general election generated hope for a clear repudiation of Trump and his Christian nationalist base of support. Sadly, this election demonstrates that a substantial number of Americans continue to embrace the dangerous political agenda of white Christian nationalists. A Biden presidency will offer some protection against the worst aspects of their agenda; however, the results of this election demonstrate that the Christian nationalist’s bigoted, anti-science, racist, misogynistic, xenophobic, and homophobic crusade will continue.

Fortunately, the growth of the atheist and humanist community and our increasing political engagement has the potential to serve as an effective counter to Christian nationalism. Our participation was not enough to make gains in the U.S. Congress and state legislatures this election, but our continued growth and engagement make us a constituency to be reckoned with. **The atheist, agnostic, and religiously unaffiliated voting bloc has nearly doubled since 2008—from fifteen percent to twenty-eight percent of registered voters.** Our community needs to continue to organize and make our values known at the ballot box and members of our community need to run for public office.



Ron Millar is the coordinator for the Center for Freethought Equality and the Freethought Equality Fund PAC.



Incorporated in Florida on October 3, 2002. Only with *your support* can we succeed.

Seasons Greetings!

Shouldn't we take a few days off to celebrate? Yes! As Ingersoll said, "Happiness is the only good; that the time to be happy is now, and the way to be happy is to make others so." Well, for us retirees who can't keep the days of the week straight, if you are like me, we enjoy holidays and weekends—"days off"—from whatever we otherwise do. A lifetime of conditioning, eh?

Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Years, *Bill of Rights Day* (12/15), *Winter Solstice* (shortest day of the year; "the reason for the season." 12/21), Festivus (12/23), Bacon Day (12/30), National Hangover Day (01/01), *International Skeptics Day* (01/13), National Freedom Day (02/01), Abraham Lincoln's Birthday (02/12). Presidents Day (3rd Monday), Random Acts of Kindness Day (02/17), George Washington's Birthday (02/22)

So many, many more listed at Holiday Insights.

Stay in touch through our Meetup site, where "gatherings" are listed: <http://bit.ly/2Ktcfke>. Don't be alone. All good and friendly freethinkers are welcome.



If you support

1. Separation of Church & State
2. Humanist ethics and values
3. Science in government & classroom
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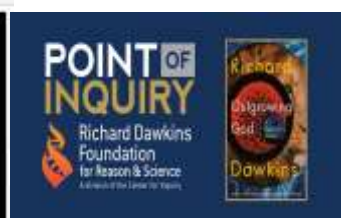
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"Freethinker"—"a person who forms opinions on the basis of reason, independent of authority or tradition, especially a person whose religious opinions differ from established belief."

"Synonyms: skeptic, agnostic; atheist."

Source: [Dictionary.com](https://www.dictionary.com) ~ [The Freethinkers Flyer](#)





The **Center for Inquiry (CFI)** leads the charge on promoting science, reason, critical thinking, and humanist values.

CFI's vision is a world in which evidence, science, and compassion—rather than superstition, pseudoscience, or prejudice—guide **public policy**.

Op-Ed by **Ophelia Benson**

LIVING UP TO IT

From: *Free Inquiry* Volume 40, No. 6
October / November 2020

We've always had this problem with freedom—this problem of what do we think we mean by it? Especially, what do we think we mean by it when we are slaveholders?

It jumps right out at you, after all. It can't help it. Right there at the beginning, the second paragraph of the Declaration of Independence: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." Oh, and we are slave-owners. We declare that all men (a.k.a. people) are created equal and we (some of us, but the Declaration of Independence is meant to speak for and about all of us) enslave people. Well, which is it? All men are created equal, or we own slaves? Pick one! You can't have both!

It didn't go unnoticed at the time. There were murmurs—not so much from people who agreed with the rights claim as from people who thought it was grandiose nonsense. Tory Samuel Johnson asked, "How is it that we hear the loudest yelps for liberty among the drivers of negroes?" It's a good question. I've never understood how the Enlightenment heroes who drew up the Declaration solved the problem in their own minds.

One way to square the circle is what Thomas Jefferson did in *Notes on the State of Virginia*. He took a look at the slaves he knew—that is, the ones who slaved on his farm and enabled him to buy all those books and bottles of French wine—and decided with surprising confidence that they were just not as high-quality as White people. He did admit the possibility that enslavement had something to do with the imputed inferiority, but he still felt confident enough to offer such insights as "In general, their existence

appears to participate more of sensation than reflection." So, does that mean they were *not* endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, including Liberty? Or that they *were*, but slaveowners are entitled to ignore that Right? Jefferson is the man who *wrote* those inspirational words, yet it's not clear whether or not he actually believed them.

Read the full article here: <https://bityl.co/4a50>

"I believe in an America where the separation of church and state is absolute.

"I believe in an America that is officially neither Catholic, protestant, nor Jewish; where no public official either requests or accept instructions on public policy from the Pope, the National Council of Churches, or any other ecclesiastical source; where no religious body seeks to impose its will directly or indirectly upon the general populace or the public acts of its officials; and where religious liberty is so indivisible that an act against one church is treated as an act against all.

"Finally, I believe in an America where religious intolerance will someday end, where all men and all churches are treated as equals, where every man has the same right to attend or not to attend the church of his choice, where there is no Catholic vote, no anti-Catholic vote, no bloc voting of any kind, and where Catholics, protestants, and Jews, at both the lay and the pastoral levels, will refrain from those attitudes of disdain and division, which have so often marred their works in the past, and promote instead the American ideal of brotherhood.

"That is the kind of America in which I believe."

— John F. Kennedy, excerpt from his [Houston Speech](#)

Teacher Institute for Evolutionary Science

Calling all teachers of **English Language Learners!!** We are thrilled to offer the TIES student-guided units, along with the student response sheets, rubrics, and exams **in Spanish!!!** We have both middle and high school versions available. Check it out: <https://tieseducation.org/teacher-materials/#spanish>
Email if need anything - bvazquez@centerforinquiry.org

Upcoming events: RSVP for admission links! Many regional freethought events are listed in detail with registration instructions on Meetup. *Go here:* <http://bit.ly/2Ktcfke>



Founded in 1988 by [Gary P. Posner, M.D.](#), [Tampa Bay Skeptics](#) is a nonprofit educational & scientific organization devoted to the critical examination of paranormal & fringe-science claims, & the dissemination of factual information about such claims. [Read More!](#)



[A memory from the final printed [Tampa Bay Skeptics Report](#), Vol. 26 #2 Fall 2013]

TBS in Transition

By [Terry A. Smiljanich](#)

Tampa Bay Skeptics was founded 25 years ago, through the considerable efforts of [Gary Posner](#). He has continued those efforts ever since, putting out a quarterly newsletter, finding material to publish in the newsletter, keeping track of TBS finances, maintaining an archive of TBS materials, maintaining our website, setting up quarterly meetings and finding interesting content for those meetings (with much help in recent years from [Jack Robinson](#)), and generally making sure that TBS doesn't just go the way of so many special interest groups, i.e, starting off with great passion and then just petering out after a year or two.

Times have changed over the past quarter century. Print media is dying and being replaced by social media. "Clubs" are not popular with younger generations. The Internet instantly provides information tailored to your particular interests, together with any opinion one wants to seek out to confirm your particular bias.

At a recent symposium held at the University of Florida discussing the new look of higher education (mainly due to online courses), a student spokesman, working on an advanced degree in computer engineering, was asked where he primarily gets his news information. He quickly answered, "On Twitter, like almost everyone I know."

From an initial peak of about 120 members, TBS has suffered a slow but steady decline in paid membership, currently standing at around 40, and lately our quarterly meetings have been sparsely attended. At the last meeting, Gary and I waited to see if *anyone* else would show up. One intrepid soul did. He offered his opinion that clubs and meetings just aren't very popular anymore, and that TBS needed to enter the world of social media.

He was right. I have recently created a Facebook page ([Facebook.com/TampaBaySkeptics](#)) and a Twitter account ([Twitter.com/TampaBaySkeptic](#) [no "s" at end]) for TBS, both admittedly in their incipient stages. And given that our website contains much of the material that is published in our newsletters, the following questions arise: Why keep putting out a hard-copy newsletter when everyone can just go to the website and read much of its content? And if we stop publishing it, why continue to require dues from members when most of our expenses relate to the printing and mailing of the newsletter? What does it mean anymore to be a "member"? Isn't it just a subscription?

For all of these reasons, TBS is going to have to change with the times. Our upcoming meeting on September 28 will consist largely of a discussion of these matters, and interested members are encouraged to attend and express their opinions.

As readers will see from Gary Posner's editorial that follows, he is not only weary of carrying all of the weight, he is also discouraged by what he sees as political and economic trends in America, and is no longer as excited about beliefs in paranormal silliness.

Gary and I have been compatriots in this TBS endeavor ever since I became Chairman in our second year. Although we agree about the importance of rational inquiry and the proper approach to examination of paranormal claims, we couldn't be further apart when it comes to politics. My own summary of political events over the past 25 years would look very different than his, whether it's the problems with the Supreme Court these days, liberal bias in the media, fiat money, or the course of presidential politics and the national debt since the 1980s. As for whether humanity can be blamed for global warming, and the extent to which those who express skepticism of the current scientific consensus are being denigrated and shamed into silence, we again disagree, though amicably.

What cannot be denied is that Gary is now far more concerned over political and economic trends than with, as he calls them, "comparatively trivial superstitions and such." Although I am not in the same place as he, without his Herculean efforts TBS cannot go on as before.

I have volunteered to try and keep our new Facebook and Twitter accounts engaging. Gary will keep the website alive and perhaps publish a more occasional newsletter. Clearly, however, it is time to take a good look at TBS and see where we are heading.

"Skeptic," in fact, comes from the Greek *skeptikos*, for "thoughtful" — Michael Shermer

Christian Charity Gets in the Way of Genuine Economic Progress

By **Norm R. Allen Jr.**

Paul Kurtz Institute for Science and Human Values



Conservative Christians relentlessly brag about how much more they give to charity than other religious and secular groups. For purposes of this article, I am not primarily concerned with the findings that show that most of that charity does not find its way to the intended targets. Let's say for the sake of argument that all of the money goes to the intended recipients.

Conservative Christians are especially generous around Thanksgiving and Christmas. No surprise there. What better way to call attention to your faith than to give money during two of the most popular holidays in the U.S.? Sadly, though, after the holidays are over, conservative Christian giving goes way down and the causes they support fall from the proverbial radar. Charity is important and it makes the world a better place. I have given to charity throughout most of my life and will continue to do so. But like religious progressives, I understand that charity is simply not enough.

It is all well and good to open soup kitchens, build clinics and hospitals, open shelters for the homeless, and so forth. But as nice as all of this is, it simply puts a band aid on a gushing wound.

Conservative Christian Dinesh D'Souza rarely engages in formal debates to defend Christianity without bragging about how much more money conservative Christians give to charity than everyone else. Moreover, when told about the genuine success that secular social democracies in Europe are having in combating poverty, homelessness, bad health, and so on, he implies that that is no big deal because the government is responsible for that success.

Duh! That's exactly the point and the point of this article. That is the only way to make widespread progress for suffering people. Charity has never done so and never will. Conservative Christians seem to have a point when they claim that the Bible does not say that the government should intervene on behalf of its citizens in need. If they are correct, it just shows how sadly outdated the Bible truly is.

While Conservative Christians pat themselves on the back for feeding some of the hungry, they want to cut food stamps and other government programs that could feed far more people than they ever could. For example, shortly before Christmas in 2019, President Donald Trump, the hero of White evangelicals, made plans to cut the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. As many as 3.1 million people could lose benefits as a result. No matter how much they give and pray, conservative Christians would be unable and unwilling to help so many needy people on a regular basis. That is the government's job!

The law is proposed to go in effect in April 2020. It would deny benefits to seniors, veterans, the disabled and hundreds of thousands of children, i.e., the most vulnerable members of

society. It would even hurt many of Trump's poor White supporters.

Conservative Christians love to point to the clinics and hospitals that they have built all over the world. They have volunteered their time as well as put their money where their mouth is. However, they have routinely opposed good health care for the poor majority.

For example, in 2018, Judge Reed O'Connor ruled that the entire Affordable Care Act be dismissed. Later, on December 18, 2019, a federal appeals court found that the act's requirement that people have health insurance is unconstitutional.

If the law is dismissed, millions of people could lose health insurance, including many of Trump's poor White supporters. Fifty million people with pre-existing conditions could be without health insurance. What, pray tell, could charitable conservative Christians do to help all of these people? Incidentally, this raises the question of why hospitals are needed in the first place. Why can't Christians and other theists just ask God to intervene on behalf of the sick and suffering? Perhaps the omnipotent and omniscient God could even bring people back from brain death and grow people new limbs.

There are many other areas of need in which government aid is paramount, such as disaster relief. However, conservative Christians have steadfastly opposed government aid for those suffering from the ill effects of "acts of God." Not surprisingly, on August 27, 2019, President Trump declared that he would take \$155 million from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to detain asylum seekers and create locations for their court hearings.

There are several secular and religious charities that provide disaster relief. However, such efforts are simply too short. For example, they cannot pay for the Coast Guard during floods, and so on. Again, though, we must ask why Christians and other theists cannot simply pray away hurricanes, earthquakes, and so on. To make matters worse, many self-righteous conservative Christians blame the victims. For example, that have blamed alleged sinners for the fires in California, a major earthquake in Haiti, Hurricane Katrina, and so on.

Last but not least, Trump has proposed massive cuts to affordable housing, to bipartisan disapproval. Despite conservative Christians building houses for the poor, providing homeless shelters, and so forth, this simply will not help most poor people in need of housing.

Conservative Christians are too obsessed with their own sense of moral superiority to be truly concerned with the elimination of widespread human misery. They can always pat themselves on the back for the charity they give to hospitals that will not be able to serve those poor people to whom conservative Christians have gleefully denied health insurance.

Norm R. Allen Jr. is the editor of two ground-breaking books: *African-American Humanism: An Anthology*, and *The Black Humanist Experience: An Alternative to Religion*. He is currently writing a third book, *Secular, Successful, and Black: 25 Profiles*. For 21 years, Allen had been the first and only full-time African American secular humanist to travel the world promoting secular humanism. He has spoken on numerous radio and television shows including National Public Radio and to 72 humanist groups in 30 African nations. His writings have appeared in numerous books and encyclopedias, including *Voices for Evolution*, published by the National Center for Science Education.

Recommended Reading

Click on the book's image for more info



In Roger Williams's Little Book of Virtues, religion writer Becky Garrison delves into the life of her eleventh/twelfth great-grandfather to uncover the untold story behind this forgotten pioneer of religious liberty. Employing a format reminiscent of How Proust Can Change Your Life and The Little Book of Atheist Spirituality, Garrison examines Roger Williams's work through the lens of the four classical virtues, which, as she observes, define values that have an almost universal consensus regardless of one's particular belief system.

How can Roger Williams's life and ministry shed light on the role of the citizens in a global pluralized world? Garrison asks why this conversation focusing on the role of religion in public life got relegated to moralists like William J. Bennett, who crafted a fundamentalist rulebook that views these virtues through a very strict black-and-white lens.

In this age of horizontal social media, what prevents people from standing up to these modern-day Goliaths and taking away their media megaphone? Here Garrison sees hope in the rise of the "nones" who, like Williams, follow their own spiritual path and create spaces that embrace women, POC, LGBT folks, and others marginalized by the institutional church.

Why is the world the way it is? How did we get here? Does everything happen for a reason or are some things left to chance? Philosophers and theologians have pondered these questions for millennia, but startling scientific discoveries over the past half century are revealing that we live in a world driven by chance. *A Series of Fortunate Events* tells the story of the awesome power of chance and how it is the surprising source of all the beauty and diversity in the living world.

Like every other species, we humans are here by accident. But it is shocking just how many things--any of which might never have occurred--had to happen in certain ways for any of us to exist. From an extremely improbable asteroid impact, to the wild gyrations of the Ice Age, to invisible accidents in our parents' gonads, we are all here through an astonishing series of fortunate events. And chance continues to reign every day over the razor-thin line between our life and death.

This is a relatively small book about a really big idea. It is also a spirited tale. Drawing inspiration from Monty Python, Kurt Vonnegut, and other great thinkers, and crafted by one of today's most accomplished science storytellers, *A Series of Fortunate Events* is an irresistibly entertaining and thought-provoking account of one of the most important but least appreciated facts of life.



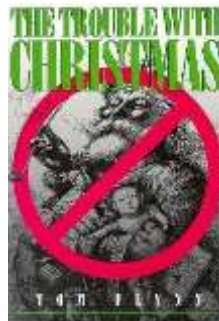
Prejudential is a concise, authoritative exploration of America's relationship with race and black Americans through the lens of the presidents who are elected to represent and govern all of its people.

Throughout the history of the United States, numerous presidents have been remembered as slaveholders, bigots and inciters of racial violence, but were others generally regarded as more sympathetic to the plight and interests of black Americans--such as Lincoln, FDR and Clinton--really much better? And what of all the presidents whose interactions with and impacts on the lives of black America are hardly considered at all? Over the course of 45 chapters--one for each president--Kimberley examines the condition of black America through the attitudes and actions of the highest elected official in the country.

This is not meant to be a definitive examination of the topic but rather an informative and engaging guide that illustrates the merits and especially the shortcomings of even those presidents considered more progressive than their contemporaries on race issues. By casting sunlight on an aspect of American history that is largely overlooked, *Prejudential* aims to increase awareness in a manner that will facilitate discussion and understanding.



In *The Trouble with Christmas* Tom Flynn challenges America's most popular sacred cow. Alternately outrageous, satirical, and thoughtful, this rollicking critique calls Christmas to account. How many holiday traditions are authentically Christian? (Next to none.). Does the contemporary Christmas holiday have ancient roots? (Hardly. It was largely invented by six eminent Victorians.). Is the Santa Claus myth unhealthy for children? (Yes, Virginia.). Are Christmas critics discriminated against? (Is "Scrooge" an insult?). What is the future of Christmas as America becomes a multicultural, multifair society? (Educators should start sweating now.). *The Trouble with Christmas* is not only for curmudgeons, but for citizens, parents, teachers, and freethinkers of every stripe. Anyone curious about the origins and future of one of the Western world's most celebrated holidays will find something of interest in this provocative book.



The Matt Cooper

Humanist Lending Library

Humanist Society members can select the number of the book you wish to borrow, at any meeting. Then pick it up at the next meeting. **Be sure to return it!** Donations appreciated. **Brad Perryman** is our new librarian.

TITLE AUTHOR

1. The Expanding Circle Peter Singer
2. In Gods we Trust Scott Atran
3. Why Evolution is True Jerry Coyne
4. The Second World Panag Khanna
5. Denialism Michael Specter
6. The Selfish Gene Richard Dawkins
7. Democracy Incorporated Sheldon Wolin
8. The Upside Irrationality Dan Ariely
9. The End of Growth Richard Heinberg
10. The God Delusion Richard Dawkins
11. All That We Share Jay Wallgasper
12. Sex, Time, and Power Leonard Shlain
13. Sex at Dawn C. Ryan, & C. Jetha
14. What liberal Media Eric Alderman
15. The End of Faith Sam Harris
16. Plan B Lester Brown
17. The Portable Atheist Christopher Hitchens
18. Open Society George Soros
19. Non Believer Nation David Niose
20. God on Trial Peter Irons
21. Natural Experiments of History Diamond-Robinson
22. The Missionary Position Christopher Hitchens
23. Life Inc Douglas Rushkoff
24. A brief History of Time Stephen Hawking
25. Breaking the Spell Daniel Dennett
26. The Philosophy of Humanism Corliss Lamont
27. The Quotable Atheist Jack Huberman
28. 50 Reasons People Believe In G.G. Harrison
29. Mathematics and Politics Alan Taylor
30. Stealing Elections John Fund
31. The God Virus Darrel Ray
32. What Every American Should Know About World Rossi
33. Imagine There's no Heaven Editors of Free Inquiry
34. Hidden Order David Friedman
35. What the Dog Saw Malcolm Gladwell
36. Sway Ori, Rom Brafman
37. The Better Angels of our Nature Steven Pinker
38. Letter to a Young Contrarian Christopher Hitchens
39. Hot, Flat, and Crowded Thomas Friedman
40. Gaming the Vote William Poundstone
41. Subversion Fable Alexa Kckearing
43. Evolution and the Big Question David Stamos
44. Why People Believe Weird Things Michael Shermer
45. The World is Curved David Snick
46. The Snow Ball Warren Buffett
47. The Moral Landscape Sam Harris
48. How We Believe Michael Shermer
49. Full House Steven Jay Gould
50. The Origins of Political Order Francis Fukuyama
51. Asimov's Guide to the Bible Isaac Asimov
52. Autobiography of Mark Twain Harriet Smith, Editor
53. Science Friction Michael Shermer
54. Genius James Gleick
55. Inevitable Illusions Piatrelli & Palmarini
56. Demon Haunted World Carl Sagan
57. Being Right Is Not Enough Paul Waldman
58. Loser Takes All Mark Crispin Miller
59. Taking Back Politics Cathy Allen
60. Spiritual Common Sense Mark Lindquist (Gift by author)
61. Autobiography of Mark Twain Ed. Harriet Elinor Smith
62. The Skeptics Annotated Bible Various
63. 12 Vol Complete Works Robert Ingersoll
64. On Religious Liberty Roger Williams & Davis
65. The God Makers Baker & Hunt
66. Inevitable Illusions M. Piatrelli-Palmarini
67. Ain't Nobody's business If You Do Peter McWilliams
69. Bonk Mary Roach
70. What Money Can't Buy Michael J. Sandel
71. Financial Shenanigans Howard Shilit
72. Sex & God Darrel Ray, ED.D
73. Best American Non required Reading Dave Eagers
74. Reporting at Wit's End St. Clair McKelway
75. Corporations are not People Clements
76. Could I Vote Mormon for president? Cragun - Phillips
77. Culture of Honor Nisbett - Cohen
78. Rot on the Vine Stenes
79. Thoughts of a Freethinker New Kaye * Essential works
80. An Atheist Stranger by Herb Silverman
81. Candidate without a prayer- Herb Silverman



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Humanist Families of Greater Tampa

Jennifer Hancock started this organization several years ago. It uniquely serves Humanist families with a variety of wonderful programs throughout the year. We strongly emphasize creative childrearing. You can connect with other families dealing with the same problems of living in a society that is still hostile to an explicitly humanist way of life.

Jennifer wrote three books: *The Humanist Handbook*, *The Humanist Approach to Happiness*, & *The Bully Vaccine*.

Humanist Families organizes social outings every month. Come and do something fun, socialize, enjoy each other's company. Sometimes we go to a park, a museum, go swimming, & sometimes we leave the kids at home. We organize Tampa & Manatee/Sarasota area outings every month.

Throughout the year we host parties like *Darwin Day* in February, *World Humanist Day* in June, *Freethought Day at Disney* in October, & *Carl Sagan Day* in November. Among our spin off groups is a *Parenting Beyond Belief* group which gets together to discuss the challenges of raising children without religion. Please join us on [Facebook](#).

Thanks, Jennifer Hancock

The Military Association of Atheists & Freethinkers (MAAF)

The **MacDill Atheists & Secular Humanists (MASH)** community was created for atheist & secular humanist military personnel stationed at MacDill Air Force Base, their families, & retired military residing in the Tampa Bay area.

MASH provides a valuable & much needed resource in which you will find common ground to socialize, discuss issues, & draw emotional support from like-minded freethinking members.

Tampa Bay Thinkers

Be part of the conversation on Mondays online at 7 PM
Topic: TBA



See our Meetup page for meeting [link](#)

We meet monthly to escape shallow, petty talk and to ponder broad, complex yet practical subjects. We expect members to proffer evidence and use logic in conclusions, but expect all present to keep the meeting FUN for all. We teach, and don't scold. We expect the conversation to move without getting stuck so sometimes, we are forced to "agree to disagree" and move on.

We arrive and part as friends. There are no personal attacks, but each IDEA goes under the microscope. Members agree, others disagree, often with enthusiasm! We have no gates, and no gatekeepers. All are welcome and we tolerate no personal attacks, sarcasm, or even indirect denigration. IDEAS RULE and stand on their own. Finally, we are "thinkers", not "doers". Come, join us, participate, learn, exercise your brain, but mostly HAVE FUN. Learn more [here](#).

Karen Assel, Leader

The Socrates Cafe

A monthly discussion since 2008.

Hosted by **Brent Hardaway**

Facebook: <http://bit.ly/38mveZH>

Join us to discuss

Is It Ever OK To Break The Law?

Saturday Afternoon 3 PM, December 12th on Zoom. Go to our Meetup page to register your [RSVP](#)



Humanistic Jews of Tampa Bay welcomes all who are interested in Jewish history, culture, and tradition independent of supernatural explanations. We believe human beings are responsible for their own choices and making the world a better place through science and reason. Join us for discussions, lectures, cultural events,

Ethical Humanism, also called Ethical Culture, is an evolving body of ideas that inspires Ethical Societies. Humanism is a progressive philosophy of life that, without supernaturalism, affirms our ability and responsibility to lead ethical lives of personal fulfillment that aspire to the greater good of humanity (*Humanist Manifesto III*). For Ethical Humanists, the ultimate religious questions are not about the existence of gods or an afterlife, but rather, "How can we create meaningfulness in this life?" and "How should we treat each other?"

The American Ethical Union was founded in 1877 by Felix Adler in New York, and currently has over 30 member societies.

UU St. Pete Thursday Citizens' Café

12:00 pm - 1:00 pm
100 Mirror Lake Dr. N., St. Petersburg

UU Humanists of Clearwater

Usually every 3rd Sunday 12:30 to 1:30 pm, after UU services,

UU Humanists of Tampa

Public Discussion, 2nd Thursday eve from 7-9 PM.
11400 Morris Bridge Rd. Tampa



Humanists of Sarasota Bay, Inc.
Sarasota, Florida

HUSBAY is only holding meetings on Wednesdays via Zoom. We don't plan the topics much in advance. People interested in joining us can contact dbhelgager@comcast.net or text to 941-350-0927.

Tampa Bay CoR

TAMPA BAY COALITION OF REASON

Promoting Action & Unity in the Tampa Bay Area

Join the Freethought Organizations of the Tampa Bay Area: groups that promote serious secular discussion & activity about important issues in our area & beyond.

Substantive & exciting new activities are now offered to the Tampa Bay area that were not possible for most organizations before.

Every year we sponsor events such as Darwin Day in February, Solstice day in December, and other activities all year long.

You may recall that UCoR was the major impetus to getting a large number of billboards erected in Tampa Bay & across the nation with such messages as "You can be good without God. Millions are!"

TBCoR is an alliance of West Central Florida groups identified with the secular, freethought, Humanist, Atheist

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The St. Petersburg Astronomy Club, Inc.

(SPAC), has been meeting continuously since 1927. It was incorporated in 1979 as a nonprofit, tax deductible organization.

For almost 50 years SPAC has provided free educational programs for its members & the public. Questions? send an email to: spaceaminer@gmail.com.

Meetings are normally held on the fourth Friday of each month (except November & December when it is on the third Friday) at the St. Petersburg College/Gibbs Campus, 6605 5th Ave N, St. Petersburg, FL 33710, at 8:00 P.M. Meetings are open to the public. [Calendar](#)

M.A.R.S. – Tampa Astronomy Club at MOSI

Come to the [Museum Astronomical Resource Society](#), also known as the M.A.R.S. astronomy club. M.A.R.S. is sponsored by the [Museum of Science & Industry \(MOSI\)](#), in Tampa, Florida. We are also members of both the [Astronomical League & Night Sky Network](#). This site provides club news & astronomical information to our membership & to the public. Whether you are new to astronomy & curious about how to experience it, or a seasoned veteran looking for an active club to spend observation time with. We invite you to attend a meetings as our honored guest. **Monthly meetings** are normally held on the 3rd floor of MOSI in the Science Works Theater, & take place on the 2nd Friday of each month from 7:00 to 9:00 PM. Meetings are free & open to the public. **Details & RSVP:** <https://www.meetup.com/MARS-astronomy-club-at-MOSI/>

University of South Florida [Humanities Institute](#)



Spring 2020 Newsletter
Now Available!
Complete Schedule of Events

Get all the details of our many activities such as the Book Group, Books & Caffeine, lectures. Poetry, Humanities & Hops. *Always something to involve active minds!*

Dec. 3 • 7pm • Book Group: Citizen

TBA • 7pm • Humanities & Hops: Finding Your Calling



USF Freethinkers

Freethinkers@USF is a cosmopolitan collective of USF students promoting critical thinking & pluralism through dialogue & reasonable inquiry. Join the official group and vote on upcoming discussions: Contact: <https://orgsync.com/87429/chapter>



TBCoR Leadership Team 2020

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Bill Norsworthy,
UUCH

Mark Brandt,
UUCH

Chris Brown,
MASH

Jenn Hancock,
GTBHF

Rick O'Keefe,
CFI

David Vangsness,
TBS

Jim Peterson,
HSS, TBPCC,
CoR Facilitator

News of Interest on this and the following page...

Title	URL
Secular rapper guest on “Freethought Matters” this week	https://ffrf.org/news/news-releases/item/38161-atheist-rapper-greydon-square-on-freethought-matters-this-week
A Series of Fortunate Events: Sean B. Carroll on Skeptical Inquirer Presents, Dec. 3	https://centerforinquiry.org/news/a-series-of-fortunate-events-sean-b-carroll-on-skeptical-inquirer-presents-dec-3/
Give Thanks, With Grace Or Without	https://www.au.org/blogs/Thanksgiving-in-2020
October Beyond Belief Network Roundup (Plus Team and Photo of the Month)!	https://foundationbeyondbelief.org/oct-2020-bbn-roundup/
A N.J. School Wins The Right To Teach Objectively About Religion	https://www.au.org/blogs/NJ-Islam-lessons
FFRF applauds NY AG’s lawsuit against Catholic Church abuse	https://ffrf.org/news/news-releases/item/38164-ffrf-applauds-ny-ag-s-lawsuit-against-catholic-church-abuse
FFRF constitutionally tutors N.C. Rep.-elect Cawthorn	https://ffrf.org/news/news-releases/item/38163-ffrf-constitutionally-tutors-n-c-rep-elect-cawthorn
Ten New Fellows Elected to Committee for Skeptical Inquiry	https://centerforinquiry.org/news/10-new-fellows-elected-to-committee-for-skeptical-inquiry/
“Holy Spirit” may not guide policy, FFRF tells Tenn. mayor	https://ffrf.org/news/news-releases/item/38162-holy-spirit-may-not-guide-policy-ffrf-tells-tenn-mayor
Fox News-Loving Conservatives Believe Christians Are Victims Of Discrimination	https://www.au.org/blogs/conservatives-cry-persecution
Religious Groups Want The Supreme Court To Grant Special Exemptions From Coronavirus Rules	https://www.au.org/blogs/pandemic-cases-court
If You Want To Understand Where Christian Nationalism Stands, Read These Two Articles	https://www.au.org/blogs/two-important-articles
Hawaii Discontinues Online Learning Program Full of Religious Propaganda, Following Warning Letter from American Atheists	https://www.atheists.org/2020/11/hawaii-religious-propaganda-online-learning/
Jewish Book Month 2020 – Recommendations for Humanistic Jews	https://shj.org/jewish-book-month-2020-recommendations-for-humanistic-jews/
Christian Nationalists Claim It’s The End Of The World – Again!	https://www.au.org/blogs/graham-election-result
Announcing a Bigger, Bolder Compassionate Impact Grant	https://foundationbeyondbelief.org/cig-announcement-2020/
What Humanistic Judaism’s Mission Means To Me	https://shj.org/what-humanistic-judaisms-mission-means-to-me/
Justice Alito’s Speech Was Inappropriate – And Inaccurate	https://www.au.org/blogs/justice-alito-speech
Assessing The Religious (And Non-Religious) Vote In 2020	https://www.au.org/blogs/2020-religious-vote
Grantee Spotlight: Nexleaf	https://foundationbeyondbelief.org/nexleaf-blog-2020/
A Fla. Woman Is On A Crusade To Bring Back School-Sponsored Prayer	https://www.au.org/blogs/fla-school-prayer
The American People Decided The Election. Religious Right Groups Are Ignoring Them.	https://www.au.org/blogs/Religious-Right-election
Thinking About Our Pale Blue Dot	https://foundationbeyondbelief.org/pale-blue-dot/

Church-State Separation Has Taken A Beating Over The Past Four Years. Americans United Has A Plan To Fix That.	https://www.au.org/blogs/repair-the-wall
Kamala Harris’s Family is My Family Too	https://shj.org/kamala-harriss-family-is-my-family-too/
Is Being Humanist a Political Statement? What About Being Jewish?	https://shj.org/is-being-humanist-a-political-statement-what-about-being-jewish/
Grantee Spotlight: Cool Earth	https://foundationbeyondbelief.org/cool-earth-blog/
Statement from American Atheists in Response to Joe Biden’s Election as President	https://www.atheists.org/2020/11/presidential-election-results/
Election Day Featured Some Interesting Down-Ballot Races. Here’s A Roundup.	https://www.au.org/blogs/down-ballot-races
Trump Administration Must Disclose Full Details of \$7.3 Billion Church Bailout, Federal Court Rules	https://www.atheists.org/2020/11/church-bailout-federal-court-ruling/
Ruth Bader Ginsburg: The People’s Justice	https://shj.org/ruth-bader-ginsburg-the-peoples-justice/
Supreme Court Should Affirm That Taxpayer-Funded Child-Placement Agencies Can’t Use Religion To Discriminate	https://www.au.org/blogs/fulton-case-argued
Election Day Is Here – Vote!	https://www.au.org/blogs/it-is-election-day
Our 2020 Election Day Endorsements and Predictions	https://foundationbeyondbelief.org/election-2020/
Video for Protect Our Democracy platform	https://aeu.org/2020/11/video-for-protect-our-democracy-platform/
An Ambitious Goal	https://foundationbeyondbelief.org/an-ambitious-goal/
Reclaiming The Symbols That Belong To Us All	https://www.au.org/blogs/reclaiming-the-symbols
Your Vote Is Your Voice – Lift It Up!	https://www.au.org/blogs/new-voter-data
People In Need Should Get Help – Not Discrimination Or Pressure To Pray	https://www.au.org/blogs/faith-based-changes

What Does “Solstice” Mean?

The term “solstice” comes from the Latin words *sol* (sun) and *sistere* (to stand still) because, during the solstice, the angle between the Sun’s rays and the plane of the Earth’s equator (called declination) appears to stand still.

So what does that mean, exactly? Upon the winter solstice, the Sun appears at its lowest in the sky, and its noontime elevation seems to stay the same for several days before and after this day. The Sun’s gradual decrease in the sky reverses upon the winter solstice, marking what many cultures believe to be a “rebirth” of the Sun as the hours of daylight become longer.

Essentially, our hours of daylight—the period of time each day between sunrise and sunset—have been growing slightly shorter each day since the [summer solstice](#) last June, which is the longest day of the year (at least in terms of light). After December 21, the days will begin to grow longer and will continue to do so until we reach the summer solstice again, and begin the whole cycle anew.

While we celebrate the winter solstice, those living in the Southern Hemisphere will be simultaneously marking the Summer Solstice. That’s because while our half of the globe is inclined away from the Sun, their half is inclined toward it. Being tilted away from the Sun brings us shorter days and colder temperatures.

Early man kept track of the days by observing the Sun as it “moved” across the sky and cast shadows during the day and at different times of the year. In fact, historians believe Stonehenge in England was erected to keep track of the Sun’s yearly progress.



Tampa Bay Coalition of Reason – December, 2020 Calendar

Because of CV-19, all gatherings in-person are cancelled pending further notice.

See our Meetup site for more/ONLINE: www.meetup.com/Tampa-Bay-Coalition-of-Reason



Various Sundays, 2 PM; & Friday nights	BRANDON–CFI Sunday Freethought Social & Godless Friday Nights	Skeptical interests with critical thinkers. Click to RSVP : http://bit.ly/2ljTe9l
TBA – various activities	TRI-COUNTY – Atheists of Florida, Inc.	Details & RSVP : http://bit.ly/AOF-Meetup
TBA – various activities	TAMPA– Tampa Bay Skeptics, Inc..	Details & RSVP http://bit.ly/2ljTe9l
2nd Saturday, 2 PM 3rd Sunday -Dinner see Pg. 3.	DUNEDIN– Humanist Soc. of the Suncoast see Pg. 2	Details & RSVP http://bit.ly/Suncoast-Humanists On the 2nd Saturday at 2 PM! All face to face meetings suspended for the duration of the pandemic.
3rd Sunday, 12:30 PM	E. CLEARWATER– UU Clearwater Humanists	Details: http://bit.ly/UUC-Humanists
TBA – various astronomy activities at MOSI	E. TAMPA– Museum Astronomical Resource	Details & RSVP : http://bit.ly/1Psc2Pi Other events: http://bit.ly/MARS-home
TBA - numerous events— this semester	E. TAMPA– Humanities Institute at USF	See Web site for full listing of many events & calendar. http://bit.ly/USF-Humanities Locations vary! Page 12.
4th Monday, 6 PM	N. PINELLAS AREA– CFI Freethought Supper	RSVP is required. Seating is limited to 25! <i>For CFI & TBS paid members.</i> http://bit.ly/2ljTe9l
3rd Saturday, 11 AM	N TAMPA – Tampa Humanist Assoc.	Details & RSVP : No program this month! http://bit.ly/TPA-Humanists
Various Saturdays	NE CLEARWATER – CFI Readers Book Discussion	Limited to <i>10 paid-up CFI members.</i> RSVP is required. <i>Must have read the book under discussion to attend.</i> http://bit.ly/2ljTe9l
3rd Monday, 7 PM	NW HILLSBOROUGH– Tampa Bay Thinkers	Lively discussions. RSVP here: http://bit.ly/2DVtwCd
4 th Friday, 8 PM general meeting. Many more events monthly.	ST. PETERSBURG– Astronomy Club	For several dates, locations, & details: http://bit.ly/StPete-Astronomy-Home http://bit.ly/StPete-Astronomy-Calendar
Various Saturdays/Sundays plus various other times/venues	TAMPA BAY REGION– Center for Inquiry Tampa Bay venues	Details & RSVP http://bit.ly/2ljTe9l
TBA – various activities	TAMPA BAY REGION– Humanist Families	RSVP here: Family outings & other activities. Details & RSVP : http://bit.ly/1Ps9MaN



Read more on the web at: www.tampabaycor.net

Evolve Fish is a source for freethought paraphernalia: <http://evolvefish.com/>

When Einstein gave lectures at U.S. universities, the recurring question that students asked him most was: - Do you believe in God?

And he always answered: - I believe in the God of Spinoza.



Baruch de Spinoza was a Dutch philosopher considered one of the great rationalists of 17th century philosophy, along with Descartes.

(Spinoza) : God would say:

Stop praying.

What I want you to do is go out into the world and enjoy your life. I want you to sing, have fun and enjoy everything I've made for you.

Stop going into those dark, cold temples that you built yourself and saying they are my house. My house is in the mountains, in the woods, rivers, lakes, beaches. That's where I live and there I express my love for you.

Stop blaming me for your miserable life; I never told you there was anything wrong with you or that you were a sinner, or that your sexuality was a bad thing. Sex is a gift I have given you and with which you can express your love, your ecstasy, your joy. So don't blame me for everything they made you believe.

Stop reading alleged sacred scriptures that have nothing to do with me. If you can't read me in a sunrise, in a landscape, in the look of your friends, in your son's eyes... you will find me in no book!

Stop asking me "will you tell me how to do my job?" Stop being so scared of me. I do not judge you or criticize you, nor get angry, or bothered. I am pure love.

Stop asking for forgiveness, there's nothing to forgive. If I made you... I filled you with passions, limitations, pleasures, feelings, needs, inconsistencies... free will. How can I blame you if you respond to something I put in you? How can I punish you for being the way you are, if I'm the one who made you? Do you think I could create a place to burn all my children who behave badly for the rest of eternity? What kind of god would do that?

Respect your peers and don't do what you don't want for yourself. All I ask is that you pay attention in your life, that alertness is your guide.

My beloved, this life is not a test, not a step on the way, not a rehearsal, nor a prelude to paradise. This life is the only thing here and now and it is all you need.

I have set you absolutely free, no prizes or punishments, no sins or virtues, no one carries a marker, no one keeps a record.

You are absolutely free to create in your life. Heaven or hell.

I can't tell you if there's anything after this life but I can give you a tip. Live as if there is not. As if this is your only chance to enjoy, to love, to exist.

So, if there's nothing after, then you will have enjoyed the opportunity I gave you. And if there is, rest assured that I won't ask if you behaved right or wrong, I'll ask. Did you like it? Did you have fun? What did you enjoy the most? What did you learn?...

Stop believing in me; believing is assuming, guessing, imagining. I don't want you to believe in me, I want you to believe in you. I want you to feel me in you when you kiss your beloved, when you tuck in your little girl, when you caress your dog, when you bathe in the sea.

Stop praising me, what kind of egomaniac God do you think I am?

I'm bored being praised. I'm tired of being thanked. Feeling grateful? Prove it by taking care of yourself, your health, your relationships, the world. Express your joy! That's the way to praise me.

Stop complicating things and repeating as a parakeet what you've been taught about me.

What do you need more miracles for? So many explanations?

The only thing for sure is that you are here, that you are alive, that this world is full of wonders.

- *Spinoza*

After four years, where does the USA rank in the World?

Worsening. Two words are why [sic]. Secular humanism can reverse the decline.
[Source unknown]

Democracy Index ~ Wikipedia <https://bityl.co/4CEN>
Measure of the state of democracy in 167 countries

The Free World's Leader Isn't Free Anymore ~ Foreign Policy <https://bityl.co/4CFu>

Democracy - Our World in Data <https://ourworldindata.org/democracy>

How does the US rank on corruption and democracy?
~ The Fulcrum <https://bityl.co/4CFE>

Yes, our 'flawed' democracy just got downgraded. Here's why. ~ Washington Post <https://bityl.co/4CFZ>
Voters on Nov. 8, 2016 received "I voted" stickers at Colin Powell Elementary School, in Centreville, Virginia. (Paul J. Richards/AFP/Getty Images)

In January, the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU)'s Democracy Index demoted the United States from "full democracy" to "flawed democracy." That's disturbing, but what does it mean?

A democracy index is an attempt to measure how democratic a country is, like a movie rating flags "adult" content, or a bond rating measures an individual bond's risk. It may sound like typical academic overreach to put a number on democracy, but indexes can distinguish which countries are democracies and which are dictatorships — and define countries that are shades of gray between them. [How do you measure democracy?] 1/5

The basic tenet of democracy, free and fair elections, is intrinsically part of all the democracy indexes nowadays. A number of organizations use a range of criteria to determine their indexes, so how does the EIU downgrade compare to these other indexes? We looked at some of the best known indexes for a comparison.

Democracy indexes tabulate the freedom to campaign and other political rights. The level of democracy in countries can vary across indexes, sometimes dramatically, as Seva Gunitsky discussed here in the [Monkey Cage](#). The democracy index with the most data is [Polity IV](#), with data for many countries going back to the 1940s. The [Freedom House Index](#) has data from the early 1970s onward. These are the indicators academics use most commonly.

Polity IV assigns scores to a handful of questions about

a country's political institutions — How many people are free to campaign? What checks are on executive power? How competitive is campaigning? Polity IV assigns a score to each answer, then adds up a total score for that country ranging from 0 to 10.

Freedom House assigns scores ranging from 1 to 7 for two categories each, civil liberties and political rights. Using combined scores, Freedom House divides countries into rankings of "free," "partly free" and "not free." rok

Did you miss out...

...on "Giving Tuesday"?

Well, Good news! The fine organizations listed as links below are willing to take whatever residual cash you may have malingering in your pocket or bank account.

Just click on any of the organizations listed below to rid yourself of the unwanted burden of that extra cash whilst at the same time making a world changing difference.

[American Ethical Union](#)
[American Atheists](#)
[American Humanist Association.](#)
[Americans United for Separation of Church and State](#)
[Atheist Alliance of America](#)
[Atheists of Florida](#)
[Black Nonbelievers](#)
[Camp 42](#)
[Camp Quest](#)
[Center For Inquiry](#)
[Cultural and Secular Jewish Organization](#)
[Committee for Skeptical Inquiry](#)
[Counsel for Secular Humanism](#)
[Florida Humanist Association.](#)
[Foundation Beyond Belief](#)
[Freedom From Religion Foundation](#)
[The Freethought Society](#)
[Hispanic American Freethinkers](#)
[Humanist Society of the Suncoast](#)
[Institute for Humanist Studies](#)
[Military Association of Atheists and Freethinkers](#)
[Military Religious Freedom Foundation](#)
[Oasis Network](#)
[Recovering From Religion](#)
[Tampa Bay Coalition of Reason](#)
[The Richard Dawkins Foundation](#)
[Secular Coalition for America](#)
[Secular Student Alliance](#)
[Secular Woman](#)
[The Skeptics Society](#)
[Society for Humanistic Judaism](#)
[Sunday Assembly](#)