The 2022 Thomas Paine Festival Activities Report

The June 16-18, 2022 Thomas Paine Festival was specifically created to celebrate the grand opening of the newly named “Thomas Paine New Rochelle Center,” located at 983 North Avenue, New Rochelle, New York. The Center includes the Thomas Paine Cottage Museum (est. 1784), the Thomas Paine Monument (est. 1839), and the Thomas Paine Memorial Building (est. 1925). To learn more about the Thomas Paine New Rochelle Center please visit: www.ThomasPaineCenter.org

The Festival began on the evening of Thursday, June 16th when sponsors hosted a Colonial Tavern Night on the grounds of the Thomas Paine Cottage. A large party tent was used to host live music provided by Eric Lichack and Eliza Lichack. Finger foods and a wide variety of beverages were provided and only a small optional donation was requested.

Friday, June 17th events started at 10:00 AM with a Symposium featuring presentations about Thomas Paine’s life, works, and legacy. The Symposium was held at the Thomas Paine Memorial Building and brought together those interested in the writings and historical legacy of Thomas Paine. Presentations prepared the way for increased international recognition of Paine’s role in the American Revolution, the French Revolution, and the spread of democratic ideas globally. At 2:30 PM members of the Editorial Board of the Thomas Paine Collected Works Project conducted a panel discussion, closing out the Symposium by 3:30 PM.

Later that afternoon the Iona College Library hosted a viewing of Thomas Paine-themed artifacts including his hair, death mask, writing kit, and various personal items.

A reception and dinner theater brought an end to Friday’s festivities. The dinner theater took place at The Greentree Country Club where actor Ian Ruskin presented his one-man play, To Begin the World Over Again: The Life of Thomas Paine. For more information about the play please visit: www.ruskinproductions.com

The agenda on Saturday, June 18th included a ribbon-cutting and wreath-laying ceremony at the Thomas Paine New Rochelle Center. Special guests included Mayor Noam Bramson, City Councilwoman Sara Kaye, State Senator Shelley Mayer, State Assemblywoman Amy Paulin, State Assemblyman Steve Otis, State Assemblywoman Nathalia Fernandez, and Westchester County Executive George Latimer.

Throughout the Festival, Margaret Downey, President of the Thomas Paine Memorial Association and of the Freethought Society portrayed Madame Marguerite Brazier de Bonneville. Bonneville is the woman to whom Paine left the bulk of his New Rochelle estate. Thomas Paine had property and money proving that he did not die a pauper, contrary to untrue rumors that circulated upon his death.

Historical actors and musicians provided a variety of entertainment and demonstrations throughout the day. Their participation added a lot to the festivities and provided educational opportunities to attendees of every age.


A video message from Congressman Jamie Raskin was shown in the Thomas Paine Memorial Building. He said that he would have loved to be in New Rochelle and then talked about why his House Bill 6720 was introduced for a Thomas Paine memorial statue.

Zenos Frudakis, the commissioned sculptor of the Thomas Paine statue, spoke with Downey about the statue project and afterwards the duo answered questions. Samples of Frudakis Studio works were on display.

Festival organizers were the Huguenot & New Rochelle Historical Association, the Thomas Paine Memorial Association, and the Thomas Paine National Historical Association. The Center for Inquiry and the Freedom From Religion Foundation were major financial sponsors, along with many civic groups, individuals and local businesses.
Above (left to right) are Suzanne Tanswell, Barbara Crane, and Margaret Downey. The three women worked together for almost a year to plan the 2022 Thomas Paine Festival. The photo was taken at the Colonial Tavern Night on June 16th.

Tanswell’s title is Chairwoman of Museum Affairs at the Thomas Paine Cottage Museum.

Crane is the Chairwoman of the Thomas Paine New Rochelle Center’s Community Advisory Board.

Downey is the President of the Thomas Paine Memorial Association.

Pictured left are actor extraordinaire Ian Ruskin (in costume) and Jeff Ingersoll.

Ingersoll is a distant relative to the famous 19th century orator Robert Green Ingersoll.

Ruskin’s production of To Begin the World Over Again: The Life of Thomas Paine was captivating and the amazing performance enthralled the audience and brought Thomas Paine back to life in an authentic and captivating way.

Pictured right is Margaret Downey. She was the emcee for the dinner theater and portrayed Marguerite Brazier de Bonneville throughout the evening.

Pictured below is Adrian Tawfik dressed as the official colonial cake cutter.

Tawfik helped plan the 2022 Thomas Paine Festival, and also volunteered whenever and wherever he was needed.
Sandy Parker Ingersoll is pictured below holding the bean bags that were custom made for the one-of-a-kind Thomas Paine cornhole game. The popular two-board game was donated to the Thomas Paine Cottage for use during future events.

Standing in the one-room schoolhouse located on the grounds of the Thomas Paine Cottage is William Hagan. He is holding an information sheet about House Bill 6720 and how to track it.

Pictured right is sculptor Zenos Frudakis. During the Thomas Paine Festival he delivered a presentation about the making of a statue of Thomas Paine.

The pop-up poster pictured was donated to the Thomas Paine Memorial Building to encourage support of House Bill 6720 and the Thomas Paine statue project.

Gary Berton, President of the Thomas Paine National Historical Association, is pictured above with Margaret Downey. Berton and Downey worked together on the committee to plan and implement the 2022 Thomas Paine Festival.

The Thomas Paine National Historical Association coordinated the Thomas Paine Collected Works Project, which met during the Festival. Paine enthusiasts from all over the world participated, including people from Germany and France.
More Photos from the June 2022 Thomas Paine Festival

The Thomas Paine cornhole game was created for use at the Freethought Society/Camp Quest tent that was held in 2016 at the Reason Rally. It was designed by Margaret Downey.

Downey donated it to the Thomas Paine Cottage for future use at special events. The Thomas Paine quotes used on the game are poignantly applicable to game playing.

*The harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph.*

*That which we obtain too easily, we esteem too lightly.*

Dawn Espada is wearing a Thomas Paine themed T-shirt she purchased at the June 17th dinner theater.

Large and extra-large sizes are still available for $15 each (includes shipping and handling). Send your size, mailing address, and check to:

Ian Ruskin
704 Kelton Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90034

Margaret Downey placed a wreath at the Thomas Paine monument while portraying Madame Marguerite de Bonneville — a longtime friend of Thomas Paine.

Elliott Young portrayed Benjamin Bonneville. Below is an excerpt of Downey’s speech, which was adapted from the actual account penned by Bonneville:

*I am here to describe the funeral ceremony of a great politician and philosopher! Thomas Paine died on the morning of June 8, 1809.*

*I planned the burial of my dear friend Thomas Paine. It was a scene to affect and wound any sensible heart. I purchased a mahogany coffin and had him dressed in muslin and his neck and wrists were tied with black ribbons. I laid a rose atop his chest.*

*Contemplating the man he was, and that we were committing to an obscure grave, on an open and disregarded bit of land, I could not help feeling most acutely. Before the earth was thrown down upon the coffin, I placed myself at the east end of the grave and said to my son Benjamin, “Stand you there, at the other end, as a witness for grateful America.”*

*Looking round me, and beholding the small group of spectators, I exclaimed, as the earth was tumbled into the grave, “Oh! Mr. Paine! My son stands here as testimony of the gratitude of America, and I, for France!”*

*But today, we remember Thomas Paine and place a ceremonial wreath at the designated gravesite.*
Hey everybody! This is Congressman Jamie Raskin calling out to you from Maryland’s beautiful Eighth Congressional District.

I want to say hello to all my wonderful Tom Paine friends out there. I know you’ve been celebrating at the Thomas Paine Festival between the 16th and 18th of June. Alas, I could not join you because we are deeply involved in our hearings on the violent attacks on America in the January 6th insurrection and the attempted political coup against our democracy. So that’s the only thing that has kept me from being there with you.

I know that you are celebrating the grand opening of the Tom Paine New Rochelle Center, which will be a nationwide attraction and destination for lovers of democracy and freedom all over the country and all over the world. What a great thing this is! I cannot wait to get up there to see it.

I hope I am able to successfully follow in your footsteps and that you are celebrating the grand opening of the Tom Paine New Rochelle Center, which will be a nationwide attraction and destination for lovers of democracy and freedom all over the country and all over the world. What a great thing this is! I cannot wait to get up there to see it.

I hope I am able to successfully follow in your footsteps with passage of the resolution I’ve introduced, HR 6720, whose purpose is to establish a Memorial to Tom Paine in Washington, D.C. on the Federal Mall to ensure his proper recognition. The Pantheon, for which I am working, has a mission to educate about the history of the United States and Thomas Paine and to preserve his work.

Representatives are sponsors of House Bill 6720: [list of sponsors]

Update on House Bill 6720

House Bill 6720 was created to authorize the Thomas Paine Memorial Association to establish a commemorative work in the District of Columbia and its environs. House Bill 6720 was introduced by Congressman Jamie Raskin (D-MD-08) on February 11, 2022.

As of this date, the following Legislators/Congressional Representatives are sponsors of House Bill 6720:

- Sean Casten (D-IL-6)
- Jim Cooper (D-TN-5)
- Madeleine Dean (D-PA-4)
- Mark DeSaulnier (D-CA-11)
- Jared Huffman (D-CA-2)
- Mike Levin (D-CA-49)
- Alan S. Lowenthal (D-CA-47)
- James P. McGovern (D-MA-2)
- Jerry McNerney (D-CA-9)
- Jerrold Nadler (D-NY-10)
- Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC-Delegate At Large)
- Jay Obernolte (R-CA-8)
- Mark Pocan (D-WI-2)
- Melanie Ann Stansbury (D-NM-1)
- Thomas R. Suozzi (D-NY-3)

If your Congressional Representative’s name does not appear on the above list, please make contact with their office and make an appeal for support of House Bill 6720. Detailed information can be found at:

On Friday, May 13, 2022, the Freethought Society (FS) was pleased to present the very first Friggatriskaidekaphobia Treatment Center’s International Educational Seminar via Zoom. The event was hosted by FS President Margaret Downey and FS board member, Dave Rice.

Comedian Ian Harris kicked off the event with a 15-minute standup routine that took a humorous look at superstitions and irrational beliefs that permeate American culture. The routine was so funny that laughing could be heard through the unmuted microphones of featured speakers! The recording was edited to show Harris’ routine uninterrupted by spontaneous laughter.

Harris is not only a comedian, he is a director and a mixed martial arts (MMA) trainer. He owns a Los Angeles-based MMA training center called “Fight Science,” named for the unique fighting style that he created. He integrates skepticism and critical thinking into his comedy, life and work.

Social activist Babu Gogineni was the first speaker highlighted. He talked about superstitions that prevail in India. Gogineni revealed unthinkable and shocking practices that are thought to have magical benefits strong enough to change the course of nature. He also talked about the Indian Constitution, the caste system, humanism, and science.

Gogineni is an Indian Humanist, Rationalist, and human rights activist who served as Executive Director of the International Humanist and Ethical Union. He is also the founder of the South Asian Humanist Association and Indian Humanists. Gogineni currently lives in Australia and was able to join us live.

Bringing insight into superstitions he saw firsthand on his many trips to Africa, FS board member Norm Allen, Jr. talked about dealing with prevailing superstitions and teaching critical thinking skills, as well as humanistic values. He made great progress over his 30-year career as the Founder and President of African Americans for Humanism. He also shared information about the horrors relating to witch hunts and the belief that using certain body parts of albinistic people can transmit magical powers.

From 1989-2013, Allen was the first and only full-time African American humanist traveling the world promoting humanism, skepticism, and freethought.

He has edited two books and written numerous articles for journals, books, and encyclopedias. Allen has appeared in the media on BBC Radio, C-Span, National Public Radio, Fox News and many other media outlets.

The keynote speaker was author Stuart Vyse. Vyse is an American psychologist, teacher, speaker and author who specializes in critical thinking and belief in superstitions. His book Believing in Magic: The Psychology of Superstition won the William James Book Award of the American Psychological Association and has been translated into Japanese, German, and Romanian.

Vyse impressed everyone with a beautifully designed PowerPoint presentation. Vyse disclosed how superstitions can be traced to ancient human behavior through archeological evidence. For example, below is a photo of a slide that shows an ancient curse object.

Vyse talked about his favorite superstitions, the psychology behind beliefs, and much more. He is the author of many more books including Going Broke: Why Americans (Still) Can’t Hold on to Their Money and The Uses of Delusion: Why It’s Not Always Rational to be Rational.

See the recording of this event at: https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=JRYOkpaApv4
Comedian Ian Harris delivered a 15-minute hilarious anti-superstition skit that had everyone laughing loudly. His animated faces in this collage are a sample of his energy and enthusiasm.

Pictured above left is Babu Gogineni. He connected live from Australia to answer questions and socialize with audience members. Gogineni conveyed shocking information about life in India and the many superstitions held there. Learn more about Gogineni at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Babu_Gogineni

Above right is Norm Allen, Jr., who Zoomed from Buffalo, New York. His insights about African superstitions were scary and insightful. The work he did to promote critical thinking skills there are commendable. Allen is a board member of the Freethought Society. His bio can be found at: https://www.ftsociety.org/board-of-directors/

Stuart Vyse is pictured left. He joined the session from Connecticut, where he is a professor at Connecticut College.

His books Believing in Magic: The Psychology of Superstition; Going Broke: Why Americans (Still) Can’t Hold On To Their Money; and The Uses of Delusion: Why It’s Not Always Rational to be Rational are available through amazon.com. Designating “The Freethought Society” as your chosen AmazonSmile benefits recipient automatically increases the organization’s funds.

Learn more about Vyse by visiting his website at:

https://stuartvyse.com
I think I speak for many atheists who, while browsing the
religion section in bookstores and noticing a portion of books
set aside for religious fiction, say to themselves, “Isn’t that
redundant?” Apparently, authors can usually choose whether to
call their books fiction or nonfiction. But we don’t always
know the author’s true identity, as with most of the stories
contained in the Bible. We know that many of the biblical
writers made up stories, some composed nice poetry, some
described events that likely occurred, and some wrote “just so”
stories to explain what they didn’t understand. I would classify
nearly the entire Bible as fiction, especially the God stories.
However, since many believe the Bible to be factual,
are there any other book. Fortunately, liberal Christians often focus on
reader should choose only what make sense from the Bible or
passages where God acts like a mensch, and ignore the rest.
If not all the Bible is the inspired word of a god, then a
support of slavery, with nary a verse that condemns it.

Fables
by Herb Silverman

It’s difficult to identify the Bible with a loving deity,
considering events like killing witches, slaying all women and
children in a city, the blood of Jesus being on all Jews and their
children, and killing homosexuals. The God of the Bible
is no role model. He is a tyrant who orders the enslaving or
killing of innocent people (including children) because they
worship the wrong gods or live in lands that God wants his
chosen people to occupy. God commands the Israelites to kill
everything that breathes in Canaan. I agree with Richard
Dawkins in The God Delusion: “The God of the Old
Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all
fiction: jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust, unforgiving
control-freak; a vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser; a
misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal,
filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacl, sadomasochistic,
capriciously malevolent bully.”

So what about people who believe the entire Bible is the
inspired word of God? Even many of these biblical literalists
now try to interpret some passages in more enlightened ways.

I identify more with progressive Christians who see
countless biblical contradictions, as well as historical and
scientific falsities. Such Christians don’t attempt to make
sense out of nonsense. I also like what the Dalai Lama said
about his religion, “If science proves facts that conflict with
Buddhist understanding, Buddhism must change accordingly.”

A number of my liberal Christian friends not only ignore
uncomfortable passages, but also agree with me on most
progressive issues. One Christian friend who favors gay
marriage pointed out that the Bible has countless passages
about social justice and only five that condemn homosexuality.
He didn’t have a good answer when I asked how many
condemnations of homosexuality it would take to reverse his
position. In comparison, the Bible has many passages in
support of slavery, with nary a verse that condemns it.

If not all the Bible is the inspired word of a god, then a
reader should choose only what make sense from the Bible or
any other book. Fortunately, liberal Christians often focus on
passages where God acts like a mensch, and ignore the rest.
Perhaps these Christians are on a slippery slope that will lead
them to secular humanism, which sounds to me like the real
“Good News.” That’s probably what literalists fear is
happening to thoughtful and questioning nonliteralists.

How should we treat the Bible? I like what Thomas
Jefferson did. He took a razor to the Christian Bible, cut out
all miracle stories, and left in only what made sense to him.
Jefferson referred to what remained as “Diamonds in a
dunghill.”

I like the idea of an amended bible devoid of passages that
many God believers ignore, are embarrassed by, or interpret as
the opposite of what the words say. This would not be a bible
where poet William Blake could say, “Both read the Bible day
and night, but thou read black where I read white.”

Who should write this new bible? Perhaps a committee of
God believers who view the traditional Bible as inspired, but
not infallible, along with scientists and ethicists as advisors.
After discussion, they could vote on what to include and
exclude.

Is this heresy? No, it’s tradition! Roman Emperor
Constantine in the 4th century brought church leaders together
at the Council of Nicaea, and they voted the “word of God”
into existence. And so it could be with my proposed second-
chance bible for progressive religious believers, who have
been informally amending the Bible with their thoughts and
behavior. I’m just suggesting that such amendments be written
on paper, not tablets.

Here’s how I might start a bible from the perspective of a
scientifically literate God believer. Delete “In the beginning,
God created the heavens and the earth,” and replace it with “In
the beginning of time, about 13.7 billion years ago, God
created our universe with a Big Bang.”

I don’t believe the “God-part,” but at least this bible can
begin more accurately and move on to God’s “creating” the
earth some 9 billion years after the Big Bang. The traditional
Bible fits comfortably with the views of those who wrote it in
a pre-scientific and misogynistic era. Scientists and humanists
have since filled in many “God of the gaps” and moral gaps by
those biblical writers some 2,000 to 3,000 years ago.

Any second-chance bible would be far from perfect.
Future generations would look back and laugh about some of
our current misconceptions and prejudices, which would
inspire them to write a more perfect third bible. And so on.
Maybe a day would eventually come when people accept a
godless bible!

As a child, I enjoyed reading Aesop’s fables and biblical
stories. Both have talking animals, along with moral lessons
and universal truths. Leaving aside the question of which
imparts better advice — though no Bible story was as
consquential for me as Aesop’s “The boy who cried wolf” —
that at least Aesop’s stories are recognized as fables. One of the
most productive ways to read the Bible is by identifying and
discussing its fables. A book I’d like to see is a biblical
version equivalent to Aesop’s Fables, with different yet positive moral
lessons. So I would like to propose a biblical fables book,
which could stimulate conversation between atheists and
theists. To inspire someone to write a biblical fables book, I’ll
give five fables from Genesis, the first book of the Bible,
followed by my moral lessons.

1. Matchmaker Fable

   God notices that the first man he created is lonely. He parades a
   bunch of animals in front of Adam, but Adam remains lonely.
   God then fashions another human from Adam’s rib, with similar but not identical body parts.
   Adam prefers Eve to all the other animals.

   Moral: Humans and most other species are social animals.
   Solitude has its rewards, but so does the company of others.
It’s good to associate and cooperate with people whose values we share. Learn about other kinds, but recognize those with whom you can communicate well and trust.

2. Serpent Fable
   God tells Adam he may eat anything in a garden but the fruit from one tree, saying he will die on the day he eats it. A snake convinces Eve that she will gain knowledge after eating the forbidden fruit. Eve eats, likes what she learns, and encourages Adam to partake. They discover many things, including sex, and God banishes Adam and Eve from the garden and tells them they need to work for a living.
   Moral: God makes blind obedience the supreme virtue, assuming ignorance is bliss. God either lied or was mistaken when he said humans would die on the day they received knowledge. So don’t blindly believe, even if you pay a price for independent thought. It’s better to have freedom without a guarantee of security than to have security without freedom.

3. Cain and Abel Fable
   Adam and Eve’s two sons bring offerings to God, but God gives no reason for accepting Abel’s and rejecting Cain’s. Cain gets jealous and kills Abel. When God asks Cain where Abel is, Cain responds, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” God curses Cain, who must then wander the earth, but God places a protective mark on Cain.
   Moral: The first worship ceremony is quickly followed by the first murder, which shows we must not put our love and worship of a god above our love for human beings. Cain belatedly learns that humans should look out for one another, making each of us our brother’s and sister’s keeper. God recognizes his culpability in the first murder and puts a mark on Cain as a sign to those he meets that they must not do to Cain what Cain did to Abel.

4. Tower of Babel Fable
   Men in the city of Babel decide to build a tower to heaven. God thwarts this activity by confusing their language, and the men are scattered throughout the world.
   Moral: Leaders must not become as insecure as God, who prevented others from cooperating and moving upward together. Also, there is value in diversity. Each of us must decide when to go along with the crowd and when to set out on a road not taken.

5. Binding of Isaac Fable
   God commands Abraham to kill his son Isaac. Abraham acquiesces, but God stops Abraham as he lifts his knife, and provides a lamb to take Isaac’s place.
   Moral: God tests Abraham, who fails the test. Nobody should commit an atrocity, no matter who makes the request. It is better to do good than to have faith.

Atheists almost never put the character “God” in a good light, and God’s behavior is particularly egregious in Genesis. But as the Bible proceeds, God learns from some of his early mistakes and improves, as pointed out in Robert Wright’s, The Evolution of God. There are hundreds of biblical fables, and atheists might find some in which to “praise God.” Such praise would show that atheists don’t hate the biblical god any more than they hate Zeus.

An atheist’s insights into the Bible would be different from those of either liberal or conservative religionists. I think the Bible is an important book to read because it is so influential in our culture. This common bond between atheists and theists might help atheists articulate their differences more effectively with some theists. And I think such enhanced communication would be a worthwhile experience for all participants.

Herb Silverman was born in Philadelphia. He is a regular contributor to the Freethought Society’s ezine, The Freethought Society News.

Silverman is a Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Mathematics at the College of Charleston, South Carolina. He founded the Secular Humanists of the Lowcountry, and is founder and first faculty advisor to the College of Charleston student Atheist/Humanist Alliance.

In 1990, a colleague pointed out that atheists were ineligible to hold public office in South Carolina. After an eight-year battle, Herb won an unanimous decision in the South Carolina Supreme Court which struck down this religious test requirement.

Silverman is president emeritus of the Secular Coalition for America. He served as president of the Secular Coalition through December of 2012 and again from December 2014 to June 2017.

Silverman is the author of two books, Candidate Without a Prayer and An Atheist Stranger in a Strange Religious Land. Both of these books are available through amazon.com. Designating “The Freethought Society” as your chosen AmazonSmile benefits recipient, automatically increases the organization’s funds.
President Joe Biden, said the above words on May 17, 2022 at a Buffalo, New York community center following a mass shooting.

May 14, 2022 is a day that will live in infamy for us Black Buffalonians, in particular. A crazed White supremacist killed ten and wounded three with a high-powered assault weapon. Many Blacks were shocked and angered that the shooter was handled with kid gloves as he was arrested, even though one of the persons he shot to death was retired Buffalo policeman Aaron Salter. Contrast the White suspect’s handling to the 1990s beating of Rodney King or any number of Black suspects throughout American history. Indeed, many Blacks cannot imagine that a Black mass shooter in a similar situation would not have been beaten or killed.

Whenever such a tragedy occurs, many people say “everything happens for a reason.” I am not even exactly sure what that means. It seems to mean that God has his secret reasons for permitting everything that happens. However, what was the reason for this senseless massacre? I seriously doubt that there is any one divine reason. However, I can think of several sound reasons why it happened. It happened because we live in a society in which people promote White supremacy everywhere, from the dark web all the way to the mainstream media and powerful politicians. It happened because a White supremacist acted upon his hatred. It happened because the shooter had access to dangerous weapons, ammunition, body armor, high technology, and so on. It will also not be surprising if it turns out that the shooter is legally determined to be mentally ill.

The shooter embraces the White replacement theory (aka the great replacement theory), much of which is embraced by large numbers of conservative and reactionary Whites. In his manifesto, the shooter, from the town of Conklin, New York, with a Black population under 1%, wrote that Black people are planning to “ethnically replace my own people.” He wrote that Blacks are destroying White culture, and that “We must remove Blacks from our western civilizations.”

Jews play a prominent role in this theory. Jews allegedly want non-Whites to take over Western civilization, largely through immigration. The shooter called for Jews to be exiled or killed without pity.

The Whites who embrace this theory also despise Muslims and want Whites to have more babies. White Christian nationalists have done much to promote these ideas, and in light of the fact that the United States is increasingly becoming a majority non-White nation, this mindset will only continue to grow.

What happened in Buffalo on May 14th was a hate crime. Many people, however, do not believe that hate crimes should have special legal status. They contend that a crime is a crime, and that the motivation behind it should carry no weight when bringing people to justice.

The truth, however, is that hate crimes are carried out with the obvious intent to terrorize and send out harmful messages to entire races, ethnic groups, religious groups, and so on. According to social workers and psychologists, non-White children affected by these kinds of hate crimes can have lowered self-esteem.

The Buffalo shooting was in a very real sense an assault upon Black Buffalo as a whole. Black people throughout the city are now afraid — just as the shooter planned it. This massacre has disrupted many Black lives in Buffalo — just as the shooter planned. The community, where the shooting occurred, was without a supermarket for two months. It has since reopened. Many Blacks, however, have been afraid to use the public library, banks, Dollar Store, health clinic, and and other public-access venues.

All mass shootings create widespread fear, but not all mass shootings are carried out with the specific purpose of frightening and oppressing as many members of a historically oppressed group as possible. For this reason, hate crimes deserve special legislation.

Still, it is important that Black people do not panic. Many Black Buffalonians believe that a major race war is imminent. In reality, though, people have been predicting a race war for years. Yet according to criminologists Jillian Peterson and James Densley, “who study mass shooters in the United States,” only 13% of mass shootings are racially motivated. (“Why Do So Many Mass Shootings Happen at Grocery Stores?” NewsOne.com/4337284.) So, we must be careful not to let our fears get the best of us.

In the minds of most theists there is nothing more important than praising God and defending the faith, no matter how irrational and insensitive their statements might be. That is why, every time there is a mass shooting, religionists come out of the woodwork to try to rationalize the utterly irrational.

My girlfriend and I were at the Tops Friendly Markets store just two hours before the shooting began. Not surprisingly, many of the well-meaning religious people I talked to about this said that we were blessed to have avoided the violence, and so on. When I hear stuff like this I immediately think of the loved ones of the victims. Some of these victims were clearly spiritual church-going Christians. What must the families and friends of the victims think? That their loved ones were not blessed? What must the victims’ young children or grandchildren think?

Some maintain that God called the murder victims “home.” He chose to call them home by way of terror and bloodshed? Does that not mean that the shooter was doing the will of God? What about the three who were wounded? Are they blessed to be alive? Was God sending them a wake-up call by way of bullets from a high-powered weapon? Again, does that not mean that God was using the White supremacist to send these Black survivors a message?

I talked to people who claim that they were going to shop at the supermarket that day, but “something” told them to stay home or to shop elsewhere.

Personally, I never say “something told me.” Rather, I say, “I changed my mind.” or “someone told me something.” That’s much more rational. What would have really been impressive, though, would have been if some spiritual person...
or psychic would have taken to social media before the massacre and said or written, “Please do not go to the Tops on Jefferson on Saturday, May 14, 2022. There will be a White supremacist there, armed and planning to kill people.” Sadly, “something” never tells anyone to do anything like that.

Someone I know said that she could never be killed in a massacre because God loves her too much to ever let something like that happen to her. Not surprisingly, she is just another typical hypocritical “sinner.” Talk about the arrogance of faith! That is a hard slap in the face to anyone who has ever lost a loved one to violence. Yet many people still consider themselves to be truly blessed and highly favored by God, despite their pitiful lives and meager existence.

The supermarket where the massacre occurred has handed out much food, paper products, and so on to members of the community. Yet I have heard some people say they would not accept the food because it was somehow haunted or affected by the dead spirits of the victims in the supermarket. This seemingly harmless irrational belief could have serious consequences. Buffalo, like most other cities, has a hunger problem. Hungry children and homeless people could be especially harmed by this baseless belief and rational people need to counter it whenever possible.

When the Columbine massacre occurred in the 1990s, a producer from the now-defunct O’Reilly Factor program on the Fox Network invited me to speak on the wildly popular show. Bill O’Reilly blamed the shooting on “godlessness.” People told me that I did an excellent job of combating this notion. I am delighted that, as far as I know, no one has publicly blamed the Buffalo massacre on secular humanism or a lack of religious belief throughout society.

These kinds of tragedies raise the question as to whether free will actually exists. Many believe that there is no free will. They believe that we are all the result of the laws of physics and that our thoughts and actions are ultimately determined by forces beyond our control. What are the implications of this belief — particularly the legal consequences? What if we were to learn tomorrow that there is no free will? How should we handle the case of the Buffalo shooter? How should we re-arrange society? Whether free will exists or not, we still have to make society safe from psychopaths. How would we do that? Would some of us still advocate prison abolition, and do prison abolitionists believe that the Buffalo shooter should be incarcerated? We must continue to draw upon neuroscience and other disciplines to help us deal with these thorny questions.

To at least greatly reduce these mass shootings, we need to be able to identify and treat people with mental illness. We also need to stop making assault weapons so readily available and easily accessible. We need to be eternally vigilant where violent White nationalists are concerned.

Finally, when it comes to theodicy, we deserve better than the stubborn, persistent — and unsubstantiated — idea that “the Lord moves in mysterious ways.” This is the most useless rationalization in the history of theism. Why can’t theists simply offer to do something for the loved ones of murdered victims? After all, as Robert Green Ingersoll noted, “Hands that help are better far than lips that pray.”

In 1989, Norm R. Allen, Jr. established African Americans for Humanism (AAH) — at the time, the only humanist organization primarily dedicated to attracting people of African descent throughout the world to organized humanism.


In 2003, he edited The Black Humanist Experience: An Alternative to Religion — the first collection of essays in which Black humanists discussed their personal paths to humanism.

Allen is a public speaker and currently writes a regularly featured online column at: medium.com

Announcing a New Freethought Society Committee!

The Freethought Society (FS) is delighted to announce that the Southern California Secular Coalition (SCSC) has recently become a committee of the organization. SCSC was originally formed in 2019 during a Secular Leaders Summit, where 30 leaders of Southern California groups gathered for a learning weekend. Leaders at the Summit were free-thinkers, Unitarians, atheists, humanists, Secular Jews, secular students, skeptics, and many other nontheists.

An organizational plan was developed, which included ways to connect, share, and grow together. A major goal of SCSC is to enable groups to build relationships with other like-minded groups throughout Southern California. One mission of SCSC is to provide a framework for secular organizations to connect, share, and grow together with the goal of forming a much more cooperative nontheist secular community.

SCSC has already created a regional secular events master calendar; a leaders chat platform; weekly and monthly leader Zoom meetings: an annual “Secular Leaders Summit”; an annual conference; the adoption of social causes for joint engagement opportunities; secular holiday celebration ideas; multi-group speaker tours; software sharing agreements; and an event resource property loaning program (chairs, micro-phones, projectors, etc.).

To learn more about this newest FS committee, please visit the SCSC website at: http://bit.ly/socalsecular.

To join the SCSC Committee, contact the Committee Chairman Dave Rice at: drice@goalsunlimited.biz.
Margaret Downey (President)
On May 2, 2022, someone leaked a Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS) draft opinion that would overturn Roe v. Wade. The news devastated those of us who are concerned about women losing freedom of choice.

Within a few days of the leak, I participated in a pro-choice rally at the West Chester Old Courthouse Building. Many young people were at the Courthouse rally. They “got it.”

The conservative majority was ready to roll back a half-century of abortion rights and personal privacy protections. Subjugation of women appeared to be inevitable, so I decided to dress as a modern day Handmaiden.

A Mississippi law making most abortions illegal after 15 weeks of pregnancy (two months earlier than Roe) was brought before SCOTUS. The Mississippi case is known as Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization. In its brief to SCOTUS, Mississippi asked the Justices to overrule Roe and the Court’s 1992 decision in Planned Parenthood v. Casey, which said states could not impose an “undue burden” on the right to abortion before fetal viability. Most experts estimate fetal viability to be about 24 weeks, not 15 weeks.

Fifteen states and the District of Columbia have laws to protect abortion rights even without Roe in place. The pro-choice laws usually ban the government from interfering with the right to obtain an abortion before viability and/or protect the health of the pregnant woman.

On June 24, 2022 SCOTUS overruled Roe entirely. This allowed states to immediately ban abortions at any time or entirely. About one dozen Republican-controlled states immediately made abortion unlawful. Unfortunately, more states could quickly follow this anti-choice lead.

Republican Texas Governor Greg Abbott signed a law that makes nearly all abortions illegal in the state. Doctors who perform an abortion there will be sentenced to life in prison.

The Texas law also makes no exception for rape or incest. Abbott recently declared that he was putting an end to rape in the state. “Texas will work tirelessly to make sure that we eliminate all rapists from the streets of Texas by aggressively going out and arresting them and prosecuting them and getting them off the streets,” Abbott said.

The ridiculous statement was appalling and an insult to victims of rape whose perpetrator has escaped capture. It’s impossible to stop all rapes. Convictions are possible, but not “elimination.” The rape victim is further damaged by being forced to carry the possible pregnancy to term and deliver an unwanted child.

Shockingly, Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas wrote:

“In future cases, we should reconsider all of this Court’s substantive due process precedents, including Griswold, Lawrence, and Obergefell. Because any substantive due process decision is ‘demonstrably erroneous,’ we have a duty to ‘correct the error’ established in those precedents.”

The very right to birth control and for gay couples to marry may be overthrown and decisions would be thrown back to the states. SCOTUS could reverse many civil rights which were achieved after decades of struggle.

Living in a state where Right Wing Evangelical religious beliefs determine who is protected and who is not is what we have now. Now imagine that the United States could break into small countries with borders created simply because SCOTUS failed to see the uniting force of “substantive due process. Imagine the “Divided States of America.”

Glen Loev (Vice-President)
The conservative majority of SCOTUS overturning two previous decisions (Roe v. Wade and Planned Parenthood v. Casey) allows state governments to impose draconian restrictions on women’s healthcare decisions based on the precepts of religious faith, even though there is no consensus among religious believers on the issue of abortion, or at what point of gestation a fetus gets a “soul,” and, therefore, becomes a “person.”

Within the parochial, conservative Christian view that God ensouls fertilized human eggs, there seems to be no problem with the fact that some two-thirds of fertilized eggs never successfully implant. That’s a lot of human carnage, i.e. natural abortions/miscarriages, brought about by their very own God.

The conservative majority on SCOTUS claims to be in favor of the free exercise of religion. For many Muslim sects, however, “ensoulment” occurs at about the 120th day of gestation. For most of Judaism, ensoulment occurs when the fetus is expelled from the womb and it takes its first breath.

Additionally, in most circumstances, it is a medical obligation to abort a fetus if the health (including the mental health) of the mother is in danger. How dare the “Supremes” allow the restrictions of one religious faith control members of other faiths, and those of us who have no religious faith at all?

The absurdity of the ruling is breathtaking, and is in addition to other recent atrocious decisions further shattering the separation of government from religion.

“There is no difference between this and the Taliban. We must oppose the Christian Taliban. I say this as a Christian.”

The above quote is from Representative Adam Kinzinger (R, IL) who was responding to Lauren Boebert (R, CO) after she referred to the separation of church and state as “junk.”

When we are upset and angry, we can complain and protest. Most importantly, however, is to be as effective as possible in channeling anger in productive directions. That is, we must all contact our State and Federal representatives,
Alan Gold (Treasurer)

Despite the fact we knew it was coming, the overturn of Roe v. Wade was drastic. I went to the first rally in Doylestown, Pennsylvania that night, which mirrored hundreds of similar protests across the country.

Why didn’t Congress understand that Trump would not appoint anyone to SCOTUS unless they would absolutely overturn the rights of women and minorities, blow up the wall of separation between religion and government, and turn us into a Christian Taliban nation?

I believe that we are suffering from backlash against so much “wokeness” and “progressiveness” happening way too fast. This has completely escaped notice of virtually every Democratic leader and talking head. Every time I bring this up to Democratic legislators they tell me that the reason they are losing voters is that their message is not properly getting across. I counter that “It’s because the woke message is getting across and it’s going to be the reason Democrats will lose heavily in the 2022 midterm election.”

The one consolation is that Donald Trump’s traitorous lies are starting to weigh against Republicans. But let me get to the issue at hand — the United States Supreme Court (SCOTUS).

1. Clarence Thomas must be recalled as soon as possible! It amazes me that a formal recall is not organized already. It’s a no-brainer.

2. We need to go after Republican politicians like never seen before. Explain that human rights must overshadow church dogma, and the phrase “Sanctity of life” is just a dogwhistle meaning nothing — except to the hypocritical Far Right. Many people from the anti-choice community do get abortions for their wives, mistresses, and daughters.

3. Rallies are great and should continue nonstop, but they should not be diluted. At the rally I attended, some speakers also wanted to include Black Lives Matter and LGBTQ+ issues. The issue of hate and government control versus privacy and intimate choices is not the current issue. I want to hear how we can pressure our politicians to return to the freedoms and rights we have grown to enjoy in a free country — formally known as “The United States of America.” We must act, not just attend rallies.

Victoria de la Torre (Board Member)

Almost half a century after the legalization of abortion, SCOTUS has overturned Roe v. Wade. Though shocking, this should come as no surprise to our country, considering this decision comes more than a month after the leak of a draft opinion by Justice Samuel Alito, which indicated the Court’s plans on taking this next step. As with many political decisions, this momentous decision is expected to disproportionately affect people of color who already face the obstacles of limited access to healthcare, resources, and support.

As a woman of color myself, it is frustrating to see so many policies affect women like me who are already disadvantaged by so many obstacles. With the overturning of Roe v. Wade, it is likely the United States will also experience a rise in pregnancy related deaths. The National Academy of Medicine finds that “racial and ethnic minorities receive lower-quality healthcare...even when insurance status, income, age, and severity of conditions are comparable.” We may also see a rise in unintended pregnancies due to African American and Hispanic women not having access to highly effective contraception.

In order to understand how this decision affects so many people, it is important to recognize that abortion is a large part of healthcare. Some medical procedures such as dilation and curettage/evacuation are categorized under “abortion care.” These extend beyond seeking to terminate, and does affect the treatment of miscarriage and emergency contraception if deemed illegal or restricted in any way.

I am sometimes at a loss when policies like these are put in place. Beside voting and attending protests, what are we to do? For myself, I advocate for the communities that will be most affected by these decisions. I hope that members of these communities become vocal and will not only give a voice to other women like me, but also help people understand the fact that this decision will affect the country as a whole.

Sally Flynn (Board Member)

In 1929, the year I was born, my parents already had an older child. My brother was 16 months older than I.

The picture below is of me with my mother, Georgia, and brother Tommy. The photo was taken in 1933.

My frail, petite mother was healthy, but not robust. Two little ones so close in age were difficult for her. When a third pregnancy happened she and my father made the choice to end the pregnancy...at a time when there was no choice.

My father was a manufacturing pharmacist, and thus well connected to the area’s local doctors.

Her abortion was safe, secret and illegal. She was one of the lucky ones at a time when most women were being forced to seek out coat hangers and back alleys.

Four decades later Roe v. Wade changed everything for women and children and families. Over the years I’ve volunteered at Planned Parenthood and have been able to help many women access the excellent clinics. But June 24, 2022 has taken us back to the dark ages. It’s beyond shocking! What to do?

All I can do at this point is vote, hope others will vote, protest, and seek legislation that will restore women’s private and healthy choices.
I met Gordon Eck (pictured below with me) through an email exchange in 2017. He contacted the Freethought Society (FS) in an effort to connect with someone philosophically opposite from himself. Eck was, at the time, an adult theology student of divinity and writing a paper for a class. The assignment was to get to know people of other faiths or no faith at all. He wrote:

Your board members’ bios talk about how many of you made a journey to a non-theistic worldview. I would be very interested in hearing more about those journeys. Your website states that your members are atheists, agnostics, humanists, secularists, etc. I’d like to learn the nuances of those different beliefs. I’d also be interested in learning how you answer the big questions of life like origin, meaning, identity, morality, and destiny? What is the biggest issue you have with Christians? What is the one thing you wish Christians understood about nontheists? What is the biggest obstacle to you finding Christianity credible? Is there one book you wish all Christians would read?

I forwarded Eck’s email message to FS board members, asking if anyone wanted to take the time to visit with Eck. Within a few weeks, Glenn Loev (FS Vice-President), Patti Butcheck (FS Secretary), and I were having dinner with Eck in Radnor, Pennsylvania. Eck was charming and interested in everything we had to say. He was not defensive nor judgemental. We all liked him.

After our dinner meeting Loev continued to talk to Eck via email, but Butcheck moved on with other goals. Since I mentioned the FS Helping Hands Committee during our meal, Eck and I started to talk about ways in which nontheists and the East Brandywine Baptist church could work together on a community service project.

Just as we began to formulate a joint volunteer effort at Philabundance (a community food distribution and packing facility located in Philadelphia), the Covid pandemic hit. All in-person activities were placed on hold and two years of in-person social interactions disappeared from our lives.

Eck did not forget about us and he checked in with me in early March 2022. This time, he proposed that I speak to his Sunday morning world religions class at East Brandywine Baptist church in an effort to connect with someone philosophically opposite from himself. Eck was, at the time, an adult theology student of divinity and writing a paper for a class. The assignment was to get to know people of other faiths or no faith at all. He wrote:

I accepted the invitation for Sunday, May 1, 2022 and decided that I would deliver a 7-10 minute background story leaving the rest of the time to take questions. I was sure that the attendees would have many questions, and they did indeed.

Eck also invited me to bring literature to the venue. I filled an entire 6’ x 4’ table with FS and Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) literature. My thanks to Annie Laurie Gaylor and Dan Barker for the generous donation of their “nontracks” for this event.

As I was laying the materials on the table, I commented to Eck that I was sure nobody would want any of the items. I thought no one would dare be seen showing interest in atheist literature!

The 40-person audience listened intently as I briefly told my journey story. There was no “aha” moment, but I explained how my conclusions were formed about what was believable and what was not through the application of critical thinking skills and common sense reasoning. Reading, thinking, and analyzing played key roles in me finding my philosophical nontheist home.

During my talk, I also highlighted the importance of separation between religion and government as well as the issues that propelled me into being a leader and unabashed activist for secular social causes.

When I opened the floor for the question and answer portion, there was a flurry of nonstop conversation. Before I knew it we were out of time. I was pleased to have had the opportunity to work in my personal stories about why the Ten Commandments are an amoral, ancient, and irrelevant code of ethics; dispelling common misunderstandings about the nontheist community; address discrimination in the workplace; the harm of public prayers; which Bible verses are most offensive to me (too many to count); and much more.

I pointed out the literature I brought with me at the conclusion of the class. I was shocked when almost every person in the audience approached the table to get the information. Soon, every FS newsletter was taken and most of the FFRF nontracks were gone! Eck smiled when I mentioned this to him and said, “I told you they would take your information!” He kindly said, “I think they liked you.”

Eck and several others asked me to stay for the church service. I hesitated, saying that I would not be participating with songs, prayers or communion if I stayed. I added “I’m no hypocrite!”

During the service I could not help but notice that only men seemed to have been given privileges, such as the honor of “passing the plate,” distributing the blood and body of “Christ,” and many other leadership roles. Coincidentally, the Washington Post published an article on May 22, 2022 highlighting the fact that Southern Baptist leaders covered up sex abuse and kept a secret database. Read the article at:

https://www.washingtonpost.com/religion/2022/05/22/southern-baptist-sex-abuse-report/

I also noticed that every prayer and song revolved around a fear of dying and the need for forgiveness. The reality is that we all go to the place we were before we were born—nowhere. The heaven and eternal life concept brings comfort, to a lot of people, however.

What about forgiveness? Forgiveness is actually a human quality. A belief in God is not necessary to ask for forgiveness nor to give to others who humbly ask for it.

In the end, I told Eck that we should continue trying to find a community service project that could bring FS volunteers and East Brandywine Baptist church members together. Good things happen when people find common ground.
Freethought Society Two-Month Calendar

To receive notices about Zoom events, become a member of the Freethought Society Meetup group. Join the Freethought Society (FS) Meetup group at: https://www.meetup.com/Freethought-Society-Meetup/. Each listing will have a unique Zoom link listed in the description of the event on the Meetup page. FS meetings will implement security features and will be recorded for replay on social media. Those who join the meeting consent to be recorded and agree to abide by the FS Anti-Harassment and Code of Conduct Policy found at the FS website: https://www.ftsociety.org/freethought-society-code-of-conduct/

October 20-23
After a two-year hiatus the Center For Inquiry’s CSICon is coming back with a huge headliner lineup. The 2022 CSICon will take place in Las Vegas, Nevada. Speakers include Neil deGrasse Tyson, Richard Dawkins, Eddie Tabash, Julia Sweeney, Banachek, George Hrab, and many more presenters.

CSICon will include optional pre conference work-shops, a Thursday night cocktail party, a celebrity lunch opportunity, and a costume dance party with prizes for various categories.

Discounted room rates are available at the Flamingo Resort, where the entire conference will take place.

For more information and to register for this amazing event visit the following CSICon link:

https://csiconference.org

October 28-30
This year, the Freedom From Religion Foundation’s (FFRF) National Convention will take place in San Antonio, Texas. The excellent program includes presentations from author John Irving, Texas commentator Jim Hightower, abortion rights advocate Amy Hagstrom Miller, Texas Senator Megan Hunt, director of the ACLU Program on Freedom of Religion and Belief Daniel Mach, 11-year-old author Elle Harris, news-making awardees, freethinking authors, separation of religion and government advocates, and even freethinking gospel music.

The FFRF conference will include an “early-bird” reception on Thursday evening with complimentary appetizers. Four optional group meals are available, plus a Friday night free dessert social, and complimentary coffee breaks and/or snacks throughout.

The Hyatt Regency on the Riverwalk in San Antonio is offering special rates and, conveniently, the entire conference takes place at this location.

For more information and to register for this amazing event visit the following FFRF link:

https://ffrf.org/outreach/convention

November 2
The Freethought Society will once again cosponsor a Secular Day of the Dead/ Dia de los Muertos Zoom event on Wednesday, November 2, 2022. The bilingual event will start at 3:45 PM (PST)/6:45 PM (EST). Other sponsors are Center For Inquiry, Hispanic American Freethinkers, American Ethical Union, and the Freedom From Religion Foundation.

A Secular Day of the Dead/Dia de los Muertos Secular event is a celebration of life. Nontheist Hispanics view this day as a perfect way to remember the legacies of dead loved ones in a way that does not require prayer, church, or religious dogma. To nontheists, our legacies are our afterlife. More and more people are abandoning their religious upbringing but still want to celebrate the beauty of their culture. This is why a Secular Day of the Dead/Dia de los Muertos Secular event was created.

The 2022 event will include many secularly designed Hispanic traditions and rituals that celebrate life legacies, cultural heritage, and our one and only life. All are welcome.

We are pleased to host author Fernando Alcantar as the 2022 speaker. Actor Jon Huertas will open the program with a special message. The program will include musical and other performances by Kaneko Leyva, Salvador Leon, Juan Antonio Garcia Hernandez, and Daniel Zepeda.

Attendees are encouraged to participate in the honoring ceremony. Prizes will be awarded to the best Zoom box decor, face painting, honoring table, and hair/hat adornment. Below is the event agenda, but details will be updated every week.

3:45 PM (PST)/6:45 PM (EST) Pre-Event Social
Comedian Luis Alberto Torres will present a hilarious bilingual skit during this 15 minute time slot.

4:00 PM (PST)/7:00 PM (EST) Welcome
Bilingual welcome messages from Huertas, organizers and cosponsors Guillermo Alejandro Bencodea, Crescencio Sanchez, Robyn Blummer, Dan Barker, Annie Laurie Gaylor, Victoria de la Torre, Margaret Downey, and David Tamayo.

4:30 PM (PST)/7:30 PM (EST) Guest Speaker
Fernando Alcantar
“Free to Love: Life Lessons from Our Dead”

5:00 PM (PST)/8:00 PM (EST) Honoring Ceremony
Reservations are being taken for speakers who want to celebrate the life of a dead loved one. Filmed or live presentations are welcomed. Send films and transcripts prior to October 10th to the following email address:

Margaret@FtSociety.org

Reserve your 3-minute in-person time slot at the following email address:

Victoria@FtSociety.org

To preregister for the Wednesday, November 2, 2022 Secular Day of the Dead/Dia de los Muertos Secular Zoom event please visit:

http://vh9d.2.vu/12

For more event details see the Facebook event page at:

The Freethought Society (FS) promotes freedom of thought, expression, and choice. FS also advocates separation of religion and government. We educate the public about nontheism, and provide social opportunities where like-minded individuals can meet, socialize and share ideas.

FS publishes *The Freethought Society News* every other month. The publication is delivered as an ezine via email and is complimentary to supporters, donors, like-minded individuals and all those who are interested in learning more about freedom of thought.

Monthly events take place in locations across the United States via Zoom or in person when possible. FS activities and services depend on financial contributions from supporters. Donations may be sent using this form or via the FS website (https://www.paypal.com/us/fundraiser/charity/1554941). All contributions to FS are tax-deductible to the fullest extent of the law (Tax ID Number: 23-2738574). All donations, large and small, are helpful and appreciated.

Yes! I would like to:

( ) become a supporter / renew support of FS (Please enclose checks payable to the Freethought Society):
  $30 Individual Supporter     $40 Family Supporter     $20 Student     $1,000 Supporter for a Lifetime
( ) become a “Freethought Star” by setting up an automatic monthly donation to FS from your bank or through PayPal in the amount of (circle one): $5  $10  $15  $20  $25  $30  $35  $40  $_____other (per month)
( ) earmark a donation to (insert project, event or committee name): _______________________________________________

Name: ________________________________________________________________________________________________
Street Address: __________________________________________________________________________________________
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Email Address: _________________________________________________________________________________________
Phone: ___________________________________________ Cell: _________________________________________________
( ) Check here if you prefer your sponsorship to remain anonymous.

FS will send a complimentary ezine to potential supporters. Please provide contact information for anyone who might be interested in receiving an FS publication.

Name: ____________________________ Email: ____________________________

Mail this form to: Freethought Society, P.O. Box 242, Pocopson, PA 19366 or scan and email this form to: Ezine@FtSociety.org

**Volunteer Opportunities Through the Freethought Society**

Supporters of FS often want to do more than just make a financial contribution. Listed below are committees designed to fulfill the mission, goals, and vision of FS. Volunteers are needed in all committees listed. Please contact FS to volunteer at: volunteers@FtSociety.org.

**Anti-Discrimination Educational Committee**
(nontheism explained in classroom settings)

**Community Outreach**
(locate tabling opportunities)

**Diversity Outreach Committee**
(brainstorming about and developing programs to appeal to minorities)

**Free Speech Zone Committee**
(research and implement displays in public venues)

**Helping Hands**
(provides helpers to seniors in emergency situations)

**Jump into the Jean Pool**
(collection of jeans for donations)

**Literature Placement for Prisoners**
(providing literature to prison libraries)

**Meetup Committee**
(planning events)

**Monthly Meeting Coordinators**
(schedule, manage speakers and venues)

**Secular Celebrations**
(develop new nontheist celebrations)

**Southern California Secular Coalition**
(connect, share, and grow together)

**Speakers Bureau**
(provide FS a resume, photo, and speech subjects/titles)

**Special Events**
(coordinate unique events of interest to nontheists)

**Sole Searching**
(collection of athletic shoes for donations)

**Thomas Paine Memorial Committee**
(work on themed events)

**Tree of Knowledge/Winter Display Committee**
(promote and support the concept nationwide)