

Thanks to the wonderful Darien DeLu for imparting knowledge of ballot propositions at the October AOF general meeting.

✧ ✧ This Month's Headliner Event ✧ ✧

➤ The Portable Poe Show

Sunday, November 24, 2024, 2 pm – 4 pm

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

You will tingle, you will be *chilled*, as the ever-talented Sean O'Brien delivers his dramatized one-man production of Edgar Allan Poe's most enduring tales:

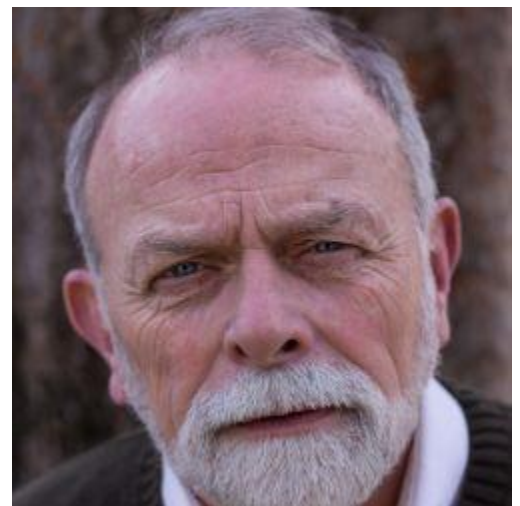
- The Fall of the House of Usher
- The Tell Tale Heart
- The Raven

He will bring these classic horror stories to life in his "The Portable Poe Show". And *ka-thump ka-thump*, the telltale heart will haunt your dreams.

Sean O'Brien, acting teacher, actor, and director, launched Every Corner Productions eight years ago with the ambition of producing dramatic art and music in public spaces. Presently, Every Corner Productions includes "The Portable Poe Show", and "Bob", the words of Col. Robert Green Ingersoll. Other drama projects are in development. Sean also sings and plays guitar and penny Irish whistle. What a guy.

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

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



✧ ✧ Other Upcoming AOF Events ✧ ✧

➤ Free Movie and Discussion

Friday, November 8, 2024, 7 pm – 9 pm

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

It's a free **in-person Movie Night** at Sacramento's [Reason Center](#), in a quiet room with cozy seating and a huge screen and refreshments right at hand. Alas, the movie name is a secret because of our [MPLC License](#) and certain legal foderol – but shhh, we will slip a hint. From 2013, it is a romantic science fiction comedy-drama film starring Domhnall Gleeson, Rachel McAdams and Bill Nighy, about a young man with the ability to time travel who tries to change his past in hopes of improving his future.

AOF co-sponsors the Movie Night events. The movie team provides popcorn and other munchies - feel free to bring your own snacks as well. We also encourage a post-film discussion, which makes this educational if you stretch the word. No fee to attend. But you know, Reason Center always appreciates donations. We're just saying.

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

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



➤ Board of Directors Meeting

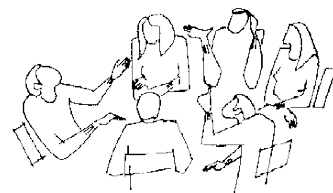
Tuesday, November 12, 2024, 7 pm – 8 pm

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

An AOF planning meeting, mainly for AOF directors & officers but open to all. These happen as required, and are a lot more fun than they sound. Join us, meet the Board, keep an eye on the shenanigans. We love visitors. We often have goodies. And maybe you'll have some good ideas, hm?

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

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



➤ Adopt-A-Highway Cleanup

Saturday, November 16, 2024, 9 am – 11 am

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

Out on Highway 99, for two miles from Elkhorn Boulevard to Elverta Road, runs a lonely stretch -- *our* stretch! Sac-area freethinkers "adopted" it in July 1995. We have cared for it, nurtured it, lovingly rescued it from litter and debris, and received recognition for our work. One of our successful civic efforts, it proves freethinkers can also serve the community.

So, join us! Enjoy a morning commune with nature, and do a deed for the environment and local area wildlife. The refuse we collect would otherwise ultimately be swept by the rain into tributaries and into the ocean, degrading habitat, and leading to a slow death for many sea creatures.

As usual, the stalwart activity captain will provide all safety equipment, including comfortable, natty hard-hats and gloves, stylish safety vests, collection bags, and handy trash pickers. The cleanup takes a scant two hours. Please dress for the season. It may be a good idea to bring a backpack or fanny-pack to carry 3 or 4 trash bags.

To get there, travel north from Sacramento on I-5 past the Natomas area. Take the "Highway 99 - Yuba City, Marysville" exit. Exit at Elkhorn Boulevard less than a mile north. Turn left, cross the overpass. Park in the park-&-ride lot if possible, or somewhere near it.

Note, this is a great event for older children, but please leave smalls safe at home. Also review the CalTrans Highway Cleanup guidelines at <https://dot.ca.gov/programs/maintenance/adopt-a-highway/covid19>.

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

In case of rain, fog, excessive mud, rapture or locust plague, the Cleanup will be rescheduled. If unsure, call the Activity Captain (Don).



✧ ✧ Other Upcoming (non-AOF) Events ✧ ✧

Some local *non*-AOF events worthy of your attention. We don't list them all, just highlights. Much more is happening in our community of reason; please check the calendar links below to see.

➤ Sunday Assembly Yard Sale (two days)

Friday, November 8, 2024, 5:30 pm – 8:30 pm, for staging and set-up, details at

<https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/303439165/>.

Saturday, November 9, 2024, 8 am – 3 pm, the sale, details at

<https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/303439128/>.

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

<https://goo.gl/maps/RwiUgEJ5ESHRhrPu8>.

● It's a Reduce and Reuse opportunity, and a fund raiser! Funds raised will support Sunday Assembly, Help Often projects, and Small Group activities. On Friday we have the main room in the Reason Center to assemble and price sale items. Please RSVP. If you can't attend but still would like to drop off items, please contact Nancy C. (castignetti@gmail.com) or Emily (twidgebit@yahoo.com), or call Reason Center (916-426-2464). Email is best.



➤ Blasphemy Breakfasts and a Brunch

Saturday, November 9, 2024, 10 am – 11:30 am, at Mel's Diner, 13399 Folsom Blvd, Folsom, see map at

<https://goo.gl/maps/ri6JvaBoSZVHTdnU6>, details at <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/304114069/>.

Sunday, November 10, 2024, 9:30 am – 11 am, at Mel's Diner, 3000 J Street, midtown Sacramento, see map at

<https://goo.gl/maps/toijMkseMWmTanVP7>, details at <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/301023323/>.

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

<https://goo.gl/maps/ZUY2gq72KkmkC4bU6>, details at <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/304115274/>.

● Like to hang with like-minded people? Want to meet freethinkers in smaller groups? Or do you just get the morning munchies? Join us for our "Blasphemy Breakfast." We don't blaspheme all that much, but dark mutterings may emerge ... be warned. A great place to speak your mind, and a good starter if you are new to meetups. Please RSVP (see the links).

➤ A Seriously Funny Look at Family Values

Saturday, November 9, 2024, 7 pm – 8:30 pm (\$10 fee at the door)

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

● Join us for seriously funny insights on family values with the lovely, talented Angela and Marie!

Angela Garvie will present "Yes, I'm Going to Hell, And Other Family Values," a personal narrative about the trials and tribulations of raising secular sons in today's world. Learn how to hand back tract for tract, how to not pass Bible class, and how to bake an ethical cake.

Marie Bain will follow with "Family Values: The Bible Tells Me So." With scripture, song and satire, Bain explores the Bible in a free-wheeling interpretation of family values. By the time she's done, you'll understand what gays, crabs and cross-dressing have in common.

This presentations run approx. 90 minutes. **Details** at <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/304000447/>.



➤ Sunday Assembly & Potluck

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

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

● Sunday Assembly is a secular celebration of *you*, with music, readings, food and speakers, plus entertainment for children. Featured presenter is **Kira Dunn**, one of our Sunday Assembly community, now living in San Diego, who will speak about a wrongful conviction and ultimate vindication. Other presentations will follow. And bring a food dish to share if you wish – it's a potluck too!

Details: see <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/302815224/>.

➤ Saturday Night Hangout

Saturday, November 16, 2024, 6 pm – 9 pm

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

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

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

Details: <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/304243090/>.

➤ Ancient Christian Study Group

Sunday, November 17, 2024, 12 noon – 2 pm

Location: Mast Coffee, 1430 28th Street, Sacramento, map at <https://maps.app.goo.gl/kA5LsqahX2jFLcHF9>.

● The history of ancient Christianity is endlessly fascinating. Don Fox and Steve Thoreson will facilitate this review of the history of Rome, religions of the Roman Empire, Gnosticism, Mystery cults, history of Christian persecutions, biographies of major Christians, the history of the Bible and other related topics. If you ever wanted to sort out Eusebius from Clement, or Constantine from Diocletian, or the Vulgate from the Septuagint, then this group is for you. Previous biblical knowledge is not required to participate. Topic focus this month: Paul.

Details: see <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/304118184/>.

➤ Coffee and Community at Reason Center

Sunday, November 24, 2024, 10 am – 11:30 am

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

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

Details: see <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/304383529/>.

➤ Humanity Supper

Sunday, Nov 24, 2024, 4 pm - 6 pm

Location: TBD (to be determined).

● Time for a scrumptious early supper with the Black Humanists and Nonbelievers of Sacramento, such a friendly group! “BHNb” alternates between dinners and breakfasts each month. This event needs at least **3 RSVPs**, so sign up please.

Details at: <https://www.meetup.com/bhnb-sacramento/events/301325076/>.

➤ More Events – So many Calendars!

Really, there's more. And plans change, because we're human. So don't trust the list above. To learn of all those other events, please bookmark & follow these links:

- Sacramento Freethinkers, Atheists and Nonbelievers, <https://www.meetup.com/SacFAN/events/calendar/>
- The Reason Center calendar, <https://www.meetup.com/ReasonCenterEvents/events/calendar/>
- Black Humanists of Sacramento events, <https://www.meetup.com/bhnb-sacramento/events/calendar/>
- Recovery from Religion Sacramento, <https://www.meetup.com/RfR-Sacramento-CA/events/calendar/>
- Sacramento Skeptics events, <https://www.meetup.com/sacskeptics/events/calendar/>
- Sunday Assembly Sacramento events, <https://www.meetup.com/sunday-assembly-sacramento/events/calendar/>
- Central Valley Alliance of Atheists & Skeptics, <https://www.meetup.com/fresno-cvaas/events/calendar/>

You can help. Here's how.

Support Reason Center

Since Reason Center opened in July 2014, it has hosted hundreds of events and accrued twelve partner organizations. Its mission: to support a social and intellectual community for freethinkers, contribute to society through education and community service, advance the civic understanding and acceptance of freethinkers, and uphold the separation of religion and government. All good work.

But to continue, “RC” relies on support from members and donors. Please stand up for Reason Center, because it stands up for you. To join or donate, visit ReasonCenter.org.

Suggest a Meeting

Know a compelling speaker, have a great meeting idea? Tell the AOF Program Committee! Go to <http://www.aofonline.org/contact.html>, click “Program Committee” in the drop-down line, and enter your thoughtful suggestion. (Reasonable honorariums paid to speakers.)

Volunteer?

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

✧ ✧ **Secular Holidays** ✧ ✧

➤ **Carl Sagan Day**

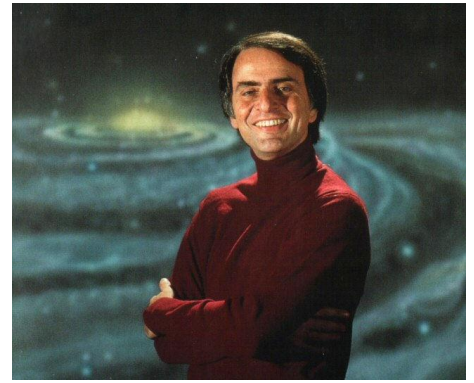
Saturday, November 9, 2024

[Carl Sagan Day](#) marks the birthday of the great Carl Sagan, and is a celebration to honor his memory. Carl Sagan was Professor of Astronomy and Space Science and Director of the Laboratory for Planetary Studies at Cornell University.

He was an outspoken skeptic, humanist and freethinker, and a Pulitzer Prize winning science author. But for the most part the public remembers him as the creator of the [Cosmos](#) television series. This Emmy and Peabody award-winning PBS series transformed educational television when it first aired in 1980. Thirty years later it still seems fresh, and has gone on to affect the hearts and minds of over a billion people in sixty countries.

His *magnum opus* was his final book, [The Demon-Haunted World](#), published in 1995, the year before his untimely death.

Few other science writers (perhaps only Isaac Asimov) were able to reach and teach so many nonscientists in such a meaningful way. So in 2009, the [Center for Inquiry](#) inaugurated Carl Sagan Day as a secular holiday. Each year we will continue to celebrate Dr. Sagan, remember him and his work, and revel in the wondrous cosmos he helped us understand.



➤ Church and State Separation Week

Sunday, November 17 – Saturday, November 23 2024

Many freethinkers have adopted the week of Thanksgiving as **Church/State Separation Week**, to offer concerned and active citizens an opportunity to educate others about the importance of a clear division between Church and State. The hope is that this secular holiday will rally us and provide a platform to celebrate one of this nation's finest contributions to civilization.

Secularist societies such as [Americans United for the Separation of Church and State](#), the [Institute for First Amendment Studies](#), the [Freedom From Religion Foundation](#), the [American Atheists](#) and the [Institute for the Secularization of Islamic Society](#), as well as others united for a secular government, have supported this celebration.

In humanist circles, some also celebrate November 24 as [Evolution Day](#), marking as it does the anniversary of the first publication of *The Origin of Species* (Nov 24, 1859). For the most, however, the focus is on church/state separation. Charles Darwin has his own secular holiday (February 12).



COMING SOON.....SAVE THE DATE!

A HumanLight/Solstice Celebration ☆☆

Sunday, December 15, 2023, 12 noon - 2:30 pm, at Reason Center

A celebration of humanist ideals and humanist values: reason, compassion, hope, science, kindness, joy, and civil community. Also over-eating.

Co-sponsored by:

- Atheists & Other Freethinkers
- Sunday Assembly
- Reason Center

The party will include live music, songs, potluck, games and socializing.



👉 Help AOF! Be a Board Member in 2025. 👈

Have ideas for AOF but don't know how to start? Here's your chance: Be an AOF Director in 2025! Once a year the door opens to those willing to go an extra mile to help AOF thrive, by joining the AOF Board of Directors.

AOF's bylaws require an elected board of at least 5 directors. Elections are around the corner. The term is just one year. And nominations are now open.

Requirements? Simply to be an AOF member in good standing. It helps to have a sharp mind and email access. You're all that, right? Minimum duties: one brief planning meeting every few months, at which you will share your wisdom, help make decisions, and plan how AOF can serve this wonderful community of reason. And nibble snacks.

If interested, great! What next? Tell us! Contact AOF via its contact page or voicemail number (916-304-3796). Then cobble a brief paragraph, 300 words max, about yourself as a freethinker and your background. Include a pic if you can. Submit to this newsletter at <newsletter@aofonline.org>, subject: AOF Board Candidate Statement. We count on you!

**WHAT DOES IT MEAN IF
THE HOLY WATER SIZZLES
WHEN IT HITS YOUR SKIN?

ASKING FOR A FRIEND.**

Abner Kneeland: The Omega Man of Early 19th Century Freethought

by David I. Orenstein • 24 July 2024 • From the Summer 2024 *Humanist*

Imagine you are a citizen living within an irrational society that has laws which state if you blaspheme god, you can be persecuted. Imagine that your ideas and writings regarding a natural universe can, because of such blasphemy laws, allow the state to place you in jail. You may think of modern examples like the countries of Iran, Egypt, Yemen and Pakistan. Rarely, if ever, would you think that a secular constitutional democracy like the United States of America would punish citizens for non-belief.

Sadly, you'd be wrong. If you lived in the United States in the 19th Century you could be marked and persecuted as a heretic in several states for non-belief. While the U.S. Constitution and federal law upholds the right for any citizen to be an atheist, affording such belief and giving it equal protection with religious ideas, individual states in the 1800s had blasphemy laws on their books and used them. Agents of the state did indeed arrest citizens, local courts did prosecute them, and judges did in fact jail nonbelievers, skeptics, and atheists.

In 1838, American skeptic and freethinker, Abner Kneeland, was the last man prosecuted and jailed in the U.S. for the "crime" of blasphemy. He was tried and found guilty by Massachusetts for his religious skepticism and writings. Being the first at something usually gives you iconic stature. Charles Lindbergh, Roger Bannister, Neil Armstrong – each instill a pride and success of the human spirit. Unfortunately, the persons who are last at something may have historical notoriety but rarely do they stay in the conscience of a culture or the memory of the public for very long.

Born in Massachusetts in 1774, Kneeland grew up a child of the Revolution. He also grew up self-educated, learning Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. As an adult, he moved with his brother to Vermont to teach school, got married and eventually became a Baptist minister. However, not unusual to the skeptical journey of many modern clergy, the more he read the Bible the more he rejected it as the revealed word of god.

Kneeland became a Universalist minister in 1805 and preached, with his increasing skepticism growing, for more than two decades. In the 1820s he'd become the managing editor of three liberal and freethinker publications. During this time his long skeptical writings, radical preaching and rationalist editing caused him to be labeled a blasphemer.

Kneeland also advocated for birth control, supported equal rights for women, and supported inter-racial marriage as well as worker reforms.

Kneeland's blasphemy indictment claimed that he had written frequent, "attacks on Christian doctrine, that god was a figment of the people's imagination, and that the story of Jesus was a fable." He also wrote that miracles did not happen and that the idea of eternal life was unreal. Kneeland himself never denied his views and was a staunch supporter of free speech, writing several pamphlets in his defense while his case wound through the Massachusetts courts.

Kneeland chose to defend himself. After five years of trials, and multiple appeals, in 1838 the court eventually found Kneeland guilty of blasphemy. He was sentenced to sixty days in jail. There was a movement to release him early, but Kneeland refused to accept any special treatment and he did his two months in prison for the non-crime.

In 1839, Kneeland left Massachusetts and moved to Iowa. His goal was to set up a utopian colony, far from "the religious orthodoxy of the east coast." He and the Society of Free Inquirers, a group from Boston, bought land on the Des Moines River. They established a community and called it Salubria, a society dedicated to rationalism and the worship of nature. Sadly, in 1844 with the death of Kneeland, the community disbanded.

In a life spanning seventy years, Abner Kneeland established himself as a fighter and freethinker, committed to the humanist ideas of secular democracy, equal rights, and intellectual freedom. A pillar of free speech and religious freedom, his memory should cast him high within the freethinker movement. Not only because he is an important historical figure but because we are still fighting the same fights today.



AOF

Atheists and Other Freethinkers

Not yet an AOF member? Please join us!

Atheists and Other Freethinkers is a 501(c)(3) non-profit association, FEIN 68-0325762, incorporated in 1993. Meetings are free and open to the public. AOF also hosts civic service projects, dinners, movies and parties! See what awaits you at www.aofonline.org.

AOF President: Redoubtable Roger Zabkie
Vice-president: Marvelous Mynga Futrell
Secretary: Rapid Ruth Rezos
Treasurer & Registrar: Kinetic Ken Nahigian
Event Coordinator: Prolific Pamela Rivera
Advisor: Dependable David Herbert
Webmistress: Palpable Pat Kelley
Program chair: Super Susan McLean
Facebook page: Keen Kaeleigh Pontif
Directors at large:
Fran Evanisko, Kaeleigh Pontif

How to Contact AOF:

- Call 916-304-3796 (voicemail)
 - Or write to PO Box 15182, Sacramento, CA 95851-0182
- Or visit <http://www.aofonline.org/contact> to e-message us

How to Join AOF:

Visit <http://www.aofonline.org/join>, or come to a meeting. We have forms.

AOF's Facebook pages (two):

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

AOF Mission Statement:

"The purpose of Atheists and Other Freethinkers (AOF) is to promote the civic understanding of atheism and the acceptance of atheists in our community. Through educational programs, projects, and publications, AOF will extend secular perspectives, including the separation of religion and government and the right to think and speak freely on these perspectives."

What is a Freethinker? One striving to form opinions of life, religion, politics and philosophy on the grounds of reason and experience, rather than tradition, authority or custom. He or she need not be an atheist, though in a religious society most atheists do tend to be freethinkers.

AOF supports a benign separation of Church and State as the best means to protect the liberty and intellectual commerce of citizens. "... to keep forever from these shores the ceaseless strife that has soaked the soil of Europe in blood for centuries" (James Madison, 1803).

Our vision: to be a venue where secular and unchurched citizens can socialize, dialog, develop friendships and enjoy shared company. AOF does not discriminate on such grounds as race, sexual orientation, age, gender, class, physical debility or (*cough*) religion. We welcome the fair-minded of all political persuasions and preferences. Be respectful, and you may join.

Donations to AOF are tax deductible, and the newsletter is free by email. Please share with sympathetic friends.

Your humble editor is Fran Evanisko.

Letters, submissions? We love them! See:

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