

# The Tampa Bay Coalition of Reason

# Freethought NEWS

Vol. 3 No. 8 August 2014 Jim Peterson, Ed

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Coming September 14th...

Be the candle in the Dark



skepticamp

## Skepticamp

The Tampa Bay Coalition of Reason presents an afternoon of honing critical thinking skills on  
**Sunday September 14<sup>th</sup>, 2014,**

**from 12:30 – 4:30 pm at 5103 S West Shore Blvd  
Tampa FL.**

This is a free event, open to everyone. In this age of spin and deceit, we need to reduce our vulnerability to the ploys of manipulative advertisers, crafty politicians, religious true believers, the unscrupulous and the fraudster.

Contact [EventBrite](#) to reserve limited seating.



Get Ready for the Annual

## Florida Humanist Conference

October 10th to the 12th in Orlando

**Headliner: Dr. Lawrence Krauss**

Theoretical physicist and cosmologist  
Foundation Professor of the [School of Earth and Space Exploration at Arizona State University](#)  
Director of the [Origins Project](#)

Best-selling author of [The Physics of StarTrek](#) and [A Universe from Nothing](#) and more. Star of [The Unbelievers](#), a documentary film with Richard Dawkins

+ **Dr. Ryan Cragun, Rebecca Hale, Seth Andrews, Stephanie Guttormson, Mandisa Thomas, Keith Lowell Jensen, Daniel Koster and many more.**

For more information, and to get tickets, go to: <http://free-flo.org/>

## Invocations

With the recent US Supreme Court decision allowing the town of Greece New York to continue to use their invocation period to allow religious representatives an opportunity to peddle their wares under apparent government auspices, a new era has opened up. One of the stipulations the court imposed was that no group could be denied an opportunity to lead such a function, unless that function was discontinued.

Consequently, secular groups from many areas now have an opportunity to appear before city, state and county bodies to show that non-religious groups have as much or more to offer to the occasion than the traditional religious groups.

Currently in the Tampa Bay area, we will have such readings delivered by:

**Joe Reinhardt** of AoF for  
the **Largo City Commission.**  
On August 5th



**Dave Kovar** of the Humanist Society  
for the **Clearwater city Council**  
on August 20th



**Plant City** is looking for a Secular invocator, but it must be someone from within that city.

Other cities are still considering their options. The AHA now has a registry open for anyone wishing to participate as an invocator. Go to:  
<http://humanist-society.org/invocations/listing/>

## Chickungunya Virus Alert !

Watch out for mosquitos. There is no current cure for the painful disease virus they carry. Be sure to use an




Insect repellent that contains DEET whenever you go outside in an area that might be infested.

## Center for Inquiry–Tampa Bay – August, 2014 Calendar

2

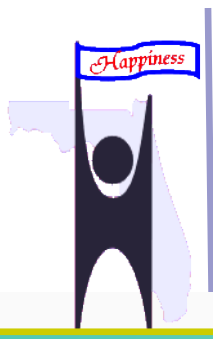
This is produced from preliminary information. Check the individual Web sites to insure the event is being held, when and where .... We are not liable for changes, errors, or omissions. Compiled by Rick O'Keefe & Jim Peterson.

08-02, 1 <sup>st</sup> Saturday, 2:00 PM	CLEARWATER– Countryside Library on 580 The Humanist Society of the Suncoast	To get the details: Regular meeting - See page 3 <a href="http://www.meetup.com/SuncoastHumanist/">http://www.meetup.com/SuncoastHumanist/</a>	
08-15, & 20th Invocations	TAMPA- See page 6 for details Atheists of Florida	Details: <a href="http://www.meetup.com/Atheists-of-Florida-Tampabay/">http://www.meetup.com/Atheists-of-Florida-Tampabay/</a>	
08-10, Sunday, 7 PM	BRANDON– Brandon Atheists	Atheists in the Pub. <b>RSVP.</b> <a href="http://www.meetup.com/Atheists-of-Brandon/">http://www.meetup.com/Atheists-of-Brandon/</a>	
08-18, Monday, 7 PM	NW HILLSBOROUGH / CARROLLWOOD– Tampa Bay Thinkers	Lively philosophical discussion. For topic, see page 10. <b>RSVP at Web site: <a href="http://www.meetup.com/tampa-bay-thinkers/RSVP">http://www.meetup.com/tampa-bay-thinkers/RSVP</a></b>	
08-16, 3 <sup>rd</sup> Saturday, 11:00 AM	TAMPA– North Tampa Library Tampa Humanist Association	Topic: On Hiatus this month only <a href="http://www.meetup.com/Tampa-Humanist-Association/">http://www.meetup.com/Tampa-Humanist-Association/</a>	
08-17 Sunday, 5 P.M	CLEARWATER– Humanist Society of the Suncoast See page 4	Sunday Social Dinner for all members, friends and others interested in conversing with Humanists	
08-17, Sunday, 2 PM	BRANDON- at Crispers 11019 Causeway Blvd. Brandon, FL CFI Skeptics & Humanists	Lunch & discussion. Click to <b>RSVP</b> <a href="http://www.meetup.com/CFI-Tampa-Bay/">http://www.meetup.com/CFI-Tampa-Bay/</a>	
08-23 4 <sup>th</sup> Saturday, 10:30 AM	NW HILLSBOROUGH / WESTCHASE– CFI Readers Book Discussion (Limit 12)	Book lovers meet monthly to discuss books we've read. <b>RSVP</b> Details: <a href="http://www.meetup.com/CFI-Tampa-Bay/">http://www.meetup.com/CFI-Tampa-Bay/</a>	
08-25, Usually, Every last Monday, 6 PM	N. PINELLAS AREA– CFI Skeptics/Humanists Supper	<b>RSVP is required</b> if you are coming. <i>Seating is limited to 20!</i> Click here <i>before</i> midnight, January 25th. <a href="http://www.meetup.com/CFI-Tampa-Bay/">http://www.meetup.com/CFI-Tampa-Bay/</a>	
08- TBA (On hiatus for August)	CLEARWATER– UU Humanists,	<b>Regular Sunday meeting.</b> <b>See page 7 for more information</b>	
08-22	ST. PETERSBURG - Astronomy Club	For dates, location, & and details: <a href="http://www.stpeteastronomyclub.org/index.php">http://www.stpeteastronomyclub.org/index.php</a>	
08 TBA	BRADENTON - Humanist Families of Tampa	Family outings and other activities. See page 13 <a href="http://www.facebook.com/groups/HumanistFamiliesTampa">/www.facebook.com/groups/HumanistFamiliesTampa</a> October: Annual Humanists at Disney in Orlando. <a href="https://www.facebook.com/events/188610644635424/">https://www.facebook.com/events/188610644635424/</a>	
08-27 see <a href="#">Web site</a>	SARASOTA – Humanists of Sarasota Bay	Many events: Details: <a href="#">Web site</a> <a href="http://sarasota.humanists.net/calendar.html">http://sarasota.humanists.net/calendar.html</a>	
08-8 Friday Evening	TAMPA - M.A.R.S. Astronomy Club	See <b>Website</b> : <a href="http://www.meetup.com/MARS-astronomy-club-at-MOSI/">http://www.meetup.com/MARS-astronomy-club-at-MOSI/</a> for all details.	
08- TBA	TAMPA- Humanities Institute at USF	See <a href="#">website</a> for full listing of many events and calendar.	

*Organizers of these events will be most grateful to all who have the courtesy to RSVP for those events that require it.*

**Watch for Skepticamp in September, and other major COR events throughout the year !**

**"...being a Humanist means trying to behave decently without expectation of rewards or punishment after you are dead."** *Kurt Vonnegut*  
Writer and past president of the American Humanist Association



# The Humanist Society<sup>3</sup> of the Suncoast News

An Epicurean society dedicated to the proposition that the fully examined life is worth living well.  
Associate organization of the Humanists of Florida, the AHA, COR, and CSH. Find us at [www.suncoasthumanist.com](http://www.suncoasthumanist.com)

Volume 22 No. 8 August, 2014

Now is the Time to

~ **Join** ~

The Humanist Society of the Suncoast.

### Annual Dues

- \_ Trial -3 month- free news
- \_ **Regular -\$25.**
- \_ Reg. Couple -\$30.
- \_ **Supporter -\$35/45 (W/ pin)**
- \_ Life -\$200.
- \_ Life Couple -\$250.
- \_ Associate -\$10.



If new, please fill out the form;  
if renewing just indicate your name and any changes  
from our previous information. Thanks!

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address -if new : \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone:\* \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

(Privacy respected)

Send tax deductible dues to:  
Marios Psomas, Treasurer  
Humanist Society of the Suncoast  
1013 Connecticut Rd  
Tarpon Springs, FL 34689



\*= optional

## Dr. Paragh Parikh

One of our area's most brilliant intellectuals has chosen to make his swan song with us. Dr. Parikh is an ENT surgeon and diagnostician who has a large following in the Humanist Community as one of its more incisive exponents. With a broad range of knowledge and experience, his talks are invariably illuminating in every respect. His style is fluid and entertaining; always a source of gentle wisdom.



While we regret losing him to southern California, we are glad to have this opportunity to hear him August 2nd.

“I've been thinking a quite bit about what we could discuss and when trying to crystallize my thoughts I find them always returning to the foibles of the human psyche and how we are too often mired in the muck of inter-personal conflict instead of directing our efforts at moving forward as a species. I thought if we discuss , or rather muse about the future of humanity from a humanistic and scientific perspective it would be quite fun.

Developments in medicine, science and technology will change how we will be forced to deal with one another in the coming centuries and our definitions of what it means to be human may be cast into obsolescence sooner rather than later with the advent of artificial intelligence and human/machine integration. This is where my thoughts stand now...”



**Food: the first kindness. Humanists aspire to true friendship with our fellow human beings.**  
An important measure of this concern is care for the physical well being of others. As reactionaries in congress vote to cut the budget for food stamps and other key supports, there is increasing hunger here in our community. Don't forget to bring canned and boxed food (before the expiration dates) or checks for TBH. Thanks to *Glenn Paul*, chair

Please join us for  
this insightful  
discussion.

**Saturday,  
August 2nd,  
2014**

at 2 PM  
at

The Clearwater  
Countryside Library  
2741 State Rd. 580  
Clearwater, FL 33761

Many members go to  
dinner afterwards.

## Need Psychological Counseling?

For a secular therapist, click:

**Cognitive Neurosciences Inc.** or, **The Therapist Project**, or, **Linda Gurvitz**, or **Patricia Walters**.



For Addiction Problems,  
see:

**Life Ring Secular Recovery**





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

## What is the Humanist Way?

1. To extend a human centered approach to the critical problems of life and society.
2. To encourage attitudes of kindness, compassion, tolerance and a loving generosity in human relationships, and in our treatment of all life. These attitudes help us to see ourselves in the lives of others and encourage appreciation for the remarkable diversity of human culture and experience.
3. To develop and popularize the skills of creative and critical thinking that empower people to challenge prejudice, superstition and irrationality in every area of life. Such empowerment enables the individual to reach the highest levels of achievement.
4. To exalt those artistic and imaginative expressions of life which have been the source of the greatest pleasure and enlightenment, and which reflect compelling human truths. Through music, literature, art, dance, and other expressions, we embrace the essence of what it means to be human.
5. To explore the grounds of ethics and 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

## The Movable Feast:

the Humanist Society monthly social Dinner

# Country Harvest

**on Sunday August 17th at 5:00 PM.**

This restaurant is located at 1285 South Missouri Avenue in Clearwater about a mile plus south of G-T-B on the east side of Missouri.

They have a wide variety of offerings in the \$9 -13 range with a full alcohol bar.

Please make your reservations with Glenn Paul at 727-595-3347 or reply email: [kpaul29@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:kpaul29@tampabay.rr.com) by Saturday August 16th 2014.

**Ed. Note.** Glenn is looking for someone to help with the task of selecting restaurants, and handling the RSVP's. If you can help, it will keep this popular program going. Call Glenn.

### Laugh Lines

### Student Views

8-14

Q. What happens to a boy when he reaches puberty

A. He says goodbye to his boyhood and looks forward to his adultery

Q. Name a major disease associated with cigarettes

A. Premature death

Q. What is artificial insemination

A. When the farmer does it to the bull instead of the cow

Q. What is a terminal illness

A. When you are sick at the airport.

Q. What is the fibula?

A. A small lie

Q. What does 'varicose' mean?

A. Nearby

Q. What is the most common form of birth control

A. Most people prevent contraception by wearing a condominium

Q. What is a seizure?

A. Roman Emperor. (Julius Seizure, I came, I saw, I had a fit)

Q. How can you delay milk turning sour

A. Keep it in the cow

Q. What does the word 'benign' mean?

A. Benign is what you will be after you be eight

## HUMANIST SOCIETY OF THE SUNCOAST

A chapter of the American Humanist Assoc.  
The Association of Secular Humanist Societies

### Board of Directors

Meets Sept., December, April

*Lois Fries*, Secretary

Anita Garcia

Dave Kovar, Vice President

*Beth Maxie*

*Jim Peterson*, President

*Frank Prah*

*Marios Psomas*, treasurer

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*Steve Brown, Jon Green, Mark Kligman,*

*Jerry Moore, Mark Winterbottom,*

*Sidney Goetz Dec. Bob Collette, Glenn*

*Paul, Don Acenbrach Dec., Jackie*

*Jordan, Brent Yaciw, Mike Hubbard,*

*Matt Cooper, Jim Butler*

~\*~\*~\*~\*~\*~

Jordan Williams, mail Publisher

Jim Peterson, Editor

E-Mail us at:

[jim@suncoasthumanist.com](mailto:jim@suncoasthumanist.com)



The **Kochhar Humanist Education Center** hopes to impact the level of community activism among chapters and affiliates of the American Humanist Association by providing case studies and citizen action guides; they bring to light issues on minority religions and ethnicities that humanist chapter members may not have considered before. It will also expand existing efforts like Essays in the Philosophy of Humanism and utilize other resources in working to eliminate the pernicious effects of ignorance and discrimination.

## Tampa Humanist Association

### On Hiatus for August

Meets every third Saturday at, 11:00 AM in



### The North Tampa Public Library

8916 North Blvd. Tampa, FL 33604

[Map](#)

Back in September .

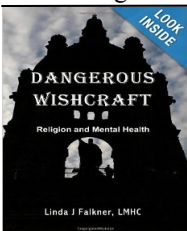


### Florida County Judge pushes Religion in Court! In Tallahassee.

Judith Hawkins, who served as a county judge in Tallahassee, Florida, evidently used her government position to advance her religious ministry and lost office after being found guilty. Hawkins founded the company Gaza Road Ministries and ran it from inside the Leon County Courthouse apart from selling her ministry's books to legal practitioners who appeared before her.

According to James Ruth, Judicial Qualifications Commission Hearing Panel Chair, Hawkins was found guilty of obliterating subpoenaed financial records, misleading investigators during depositions and not handing over material without official orders. She was also found guilty of publishing photos of herself wearing the judicial robe on her ministry's website, not complying with tax laws, using less than her full time for judicial duties and reading tabloids during court proceedings.

These allegations against Hawkins first surfaced in December 2012 and the case has been continuing ever since. However, on July 1st, the Florida Supreme Court ruled that Hawkins could no longer serve as a judge. While the Judicial Qualifications Commission said that she should be fined \$17,000 and suspended for 90 days, the Supreme Court can decide on a much harsher punishment unless Hawkins provides them with a good reason to reconsider before August 14. Thanks to [Atheist Republic](#) 7-14



Order this important new book now from [Amazon](#)

By local Humanistic Counselor,  
**Linda Faulkner**

*Dangerous Wishcraft*, By Linda Faulkner is a must read for anyone who has ever questioned the truth of religious beliefs, explores the dangers of relying on prayer ~wishcraft~ rather than using rational thinking skills, and the often tragic mental, emotional, and physical consequences that can result. Religion, which may have originated as a way to explain the world, has now become an anchor in the fight against scientific knowledge. Modern evangelical religions are attempting to drag the world back into the Dark Ages. This book shines a light, through stories of clients scarred by religion combined with scientific research, on the damage religious fanaticism can inflict on both individual and global levels, and also presents potential strategies for protection from the dangerous practice of wishcraft.

### HUMANISTS CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE FOR A CHILD

The need is great. All it takes is about an hour out of a day and the commitment to show up once a week. The feeling of having helped is most gratifying. How can we as Humanists not act to impact a child in the inner city in a positive manner?

YOU can give a child a much-needed hour of personal attention that will encourage reading and just might help them to move forward while improving their self-esteem.

In Hillsborough County, contact: **Debra L. Blossom**,  
Program Manager Training and Volunteer Management  
[debra.blossom@sdhc.k12.fl.us](mailto:debra.blossom@sdhc.k12.fl.us) 813.872-5254

Gale Barron

Dinner and a Movie  
with  
Dr. Lawrence Krauss  
Orlando, FL  
October 11, 2014

Movie: "The Unbelievers"  
starring  
Lawrence Krauss &  
Richard Dawkins



FreeFic2014 Conference  
October 10-12  
[free-fic.org](http://free-fic.org)

### Humanists Support Science

Rep. Rush Holt has reintroduced the Darwin Day resolution, which recognizes February 12th as Darwin Day, commends scientists for improving humanity's quality of life through scientific discovery, and opposes the teaching of creationism.

[Please help us honor Charles Darwin and support science by using the AHA's action alert system to:](#)

- Send an email to your Representative and ask him or her to support the Darwin Day resolution. We've even written the message for you to make it easy and quick to send.
- Get your Representative's phone number and call to say "I urge you to cosponsor [H. Res. 467](#), also known as the Darwin Day resolution. Creationism is being taught in schools nationwide, and we need Congress to stand up for real science."

### Humanist Quotes

"Religion is regarded by the common people as true, by the wise as false, and by the rulers as useful. "

Seneca the Younger 4 BCE, - 65 CE

Thanks to Marios Psomas

# Florida Atheists



***Atheism sprinting into the future!***

**Chair, Tracy Thomas, President, Judy Adkins**

Join our Tampa chapter on **Sunday, August 5th Joe Rienhardt delivers a secular invocation at City Hall, Largo.** See [AoF Meetup](#) for more information.

**AoF outreach programs** can be found at our [Meetup](#) site. Current newsletters are **available**; write [Athaifle@aol.com](mailto:Athaifle@aol.com). AoF's outreach also includes a full scale studio for the production of TV, web, and podcast programs. Your ideas are always welcome to help guide us in these creations.

JOIN US - AoF meeting information can be found at our [Meetup](#) site and more information about the organization can be found on our [website](#) and on our [Facebook page](#).

AoF is a comfortable and safe place in which to find rewarding new friendships, to discover hidden potentials, and 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.

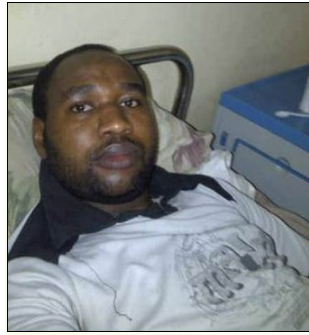
Look for exciting new programs and internet webcasts (audio & video). Let us know if you wish to participate. We are a resource for those with questions and doubts about the standard religious narrative of life.

For most people, atheism represents the most focused and powerful criticism of the philosophical worldview 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 and changeless narrative of unexamined traditional beliefs. Because it is such a foundational and wrenching break with the past and because it leads the way in recognizing a broad range of possibilities for both scientific and social progress, atheism is an essential pillar for all other humanist and freethought philosophies. We join our coalition organizations to provide an essential part of the unique spectra of thought and activity that is vital to human progress. From a personal standpoint, we bring a human centered ethic to bear in serving our fellow human beings as they struggle to overcome the delusional psychology of years of religious conditioning. JP

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**Nigerian  
Atheist  
Committed**

According to the Lagos **Independent:**

*A Nigerian man has been committed to a mental institute in Kano state despite being given a clean bill of health because he declared he did not believe in God, a humanist charity has said.*

*Mubarak Bala is being held against his will and forcibly medicated at the Aminu Kano Teaching Hospital, where he has been kept since 13 June, the International Humanist and Ethical Union (IHEU) reports.*

*The chemical engineering graduate is allegedly being held on the grounds of a "personality change" because he declared himself an atheist despite being raised in a Muslim family in Kano, which is a mainly Muslim state.*

*The organization says that when Mr Bala told his family he did not believe in God, they took him to a doctor and asked if he was mentally ill.*

*When this doctor found him to be fit and well, the family are then believed to have taken him to a second doctor who claimed he was suffering with a personality disorder.*

Thanks to:



## Your Published letters...

### ***Plenty of violence in the classics***

The letter writer approves of censoring the novel *Paper Towns* to keep it from schoolchildren. She deplores the pornography it contains and wishes that young people could go back to reading 'the classics' that her generation read. Just what 'classics' does she have in mind? And do they present a world of which she would approve?

Some of the most revered novels - novels that have been treasured through many generations - are awash with violent passions: greed, hate and, yes, sex. They were never intended to preserve young readers' innocence. Instead, they mirrored all kinds of human problems. Think, for instance, of *Treasure Island*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *The Scarlet Letter*, *Moby Dick*, *Jane Eyre*.

When it comes to sex, one can find plenty of that in the Bible. Read the stories in the Old Testament. Would they be classic enough? **Abigail Ann Martin, Brandon** TB Times 7-8-2014.

### ***Punitive treatment***

Is anyone going to call for an investigation of the Pinellas school system? If ever there was an example of punitive treatment, the demotion of principal Kathleen Brickley and her obviously dedicated staff would seem to be it. To add to the injustice of the situation, a reporter's inquiry is belittled and ignored. The public owns the school system, pays for it and deserves the answers it needs for open administration and policy decisions.

**Lula J. Dovi, Tampa**

TB Times 7-21-2014

## Clearwater UU Humanists

We are a group of Unitarian Universalists committed to a humanistic and non-theistic worldview. Currently, meetings are scheduled once a month and are usually held on the third Sunday of most months from 12:30 pm to 1:30 pm, after UU services.

The UU Humanists are open to all aspects of humanism, including investigation of religious humanism. However, the focus of the group is on secular aspects of humanism.

Programs have been well received with attendance between 50 and 75. To learn more, please contact: co-facilitators: Bill Norsworthy [bnorsworthy@verizon.net](mailto:bnorsworthy@verizon.net)  
Mark Brandt [mwbrandt@mail.usf.edu](mailto:mwbrandt@mail.usf.edu)  
Web site: [www.uuclearwater.org](http://www.uuclearwater.org)

UU Humanists will be meeting next in September while going on Hiatus during August.

There are still many fine programs going on that will enable you to mingle with others of a similar philosophical bent.

Be sure to check us out during the rest of the year, as we have some extraordinary programs and truly wonderful speakers.



Clearwater, Florida



## Florida NOW

<http://www.flnow.org/>

NOW is a multi-issue political organization. NOW's self-defined role has been to initiate change for the benefit of the greatest number of people, to affect the legal and institutional structures of the society in a way that systematically expands the choices and possibilities available to all women. In this way, NOW takes action to bring women, as a class, into the mainstream of society, rather than offering aid to individual women in achieving personal solutions or temporary relief from oppression.

The Florida National Organization for Women is a group dedicated to taking action to bring ALL women into full equality and participation through changing policy, law and culture. This mission attracts women and men of diverse backgrounds and gives us the ability to look at the systemic oppression in our lives and determine actions that will bring about change for all women.

Often, we are contacted by women and men who are facing "legal" situations, or in need of individual help. Unfortunately, we do not have the resources to provide direct services, and for legal reasons we can not provide referrals for lawyers or other services. If you need these services, please consider doing an internet search for local attorneys, referral services, legal aide, domestic violence shelters, or other terms that are appropriate for your individual situation. Good luck.

## FLORIDA REPORT

Civil liberties news in the Sunshine State



Last week, Attorney General Eric Holder spoke out against lifetime felon disfranchisement, a voting rights crisis of which Florida is the worst offender. This March, the a U.N. panel is going to review the U.S.'s compliance with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), a treaty that requires nations hold up to certain human rights standards. One of the areas which the UN panel will be scrutinizing is voting rights for people with past felony convictions, an area where Florida has disfranchised over 1.5 million citizens.

Florida's lifetime disfranchisement of people with past felony convictions has long been a black eye on our record for democracy and it was made worse when Gov. Scott and the Board of Executive Clemency created new rights restoration restrictions. Now that record is under the microscope for international scrutiny, and the Attorney General has called for reforms.

**Add your name below to tell Gov. Scott and the Clemency Board to restore voting rights in Florida and avoid international embarrassment for our state.**

For more: <http://aclufl.org/>

Get more involved. **Run for a seat on your local ACLU board!**

BECAUSE FREEDOM CAN'T  
PROTECT ITSELF  
JOIN THE ACLU



## The Humanities Institute of USF

**Challenge, Create, Connect:** Our new motto focuses our commitment to bring the beauty, values, and lessons of the humanities to USF and our community.

The USF Humanities Institute, established in 2003, provides a forum where ideas are debated, values are clarified, and students, faculty, and community come together to envision a better world through scholarship, debate, and public programs.

We showcase the scholarship of USF faculty from across the disciplines, as well as hosting renowned scholars and sponsoring small conferences and symposia on topics developed with faculty and students. We are developing distinctive signature themes, and strengthening our focus on relevance and community engagement, demonstrating that the joy and challenge of the humanities belong to everyone.

As part of our mission to encourage important research in the humanities, the Institute provides summer grants for humanities-focused research projects. Following the National Endowment for the Humanities, we foster a broad and inclusive definition of humanities, to include the contributions of scholars in language, literature, history, jurisprudence, philosophy, archaeology, religion, ethics, arts, and humanistic social sciences.

### Mailing Address

Humanities Institute  
4202 E. Fowler Ave.  
Tampa, FL 33620  
CPR 107

[Click here for Our 2014 schedule](#) 6/14

# Freedom of Thought for Our World, and Our Future



An autonomous project of the Humanist Society. Affiliate of [PCI](#)

## *Two Realities*

**Tampa Bay CoR**  
TAMPA BAY COALITION OF REASON

## ***Promoting Action & Unity in the Tampa Bay Area***

Join the Freethought Organizations in the Tampa Bay Area: Tampa Humanist Association, Humanist Society of the Suncoast, Center for Inquiry, UU Humanists Clearwater, UU Humanists Tampa,\* Secular Student Alliance USF,\* Atheists of Florida, Plus numerous Meetup organizations that promote what are essentially Freethought ideas and principles.

(\*= not currently members of the Coalition)

Member organizations and agencies should contact the following CoR representatives about the matters indicated:

**Calendar:**  
Rick O'Keefe

**Newsletter:**  
**Jim Peterson**

**Web site:**  
Jim Peterson

**Special Projects**  
Mark Brandt

For several years now, various leaders of the Freethought community in the bay area have been meeting informally to share experiences, and occasionally to coordinate plans. But recently, changing circumstances have brought additional pressure to cooperate in bringing programs and members services to an expanding movement.

At this point leaders continue to meet, and together with the various boards of directors and committees, try to develop policies that will enable every group to enhance its unique role in serving its members.

There appears to be general agreement on developing several community wide programs over the year that will allow significant speakers to be presented in our area. The costs of these programs will be shared among the organizations proportionally.

Thus substantive and exciting new activities will be offered to the Tampa Bay area that were not possible for most organizations before.

We are especially grateful to the national office of the United Coalition of Reason and its director, Fred Edwards. You may recall that UCoR was the major impetus to getting a large number of billboards erected in Tampa Bay and across the nation with such messages as "You can be good without God. Millions are!"

*TBCoR is an alliance of groups identified with the freethought / Humanist /Atheist movement.*

As this momentum continues to grow, we will keep you informed of developments. JP  
Contact: [tbcor@metrodirect.net](mailto:tbcor@metrodirect.net)

Our contemporary world is host to two coexisting but fundamentally different—and, in at least one crucial respect, contradictory—realities. One of these might be termed Political Reality, though it extends far beyond formal politics and pervades conventional economic thinking. It is the bounded universe of what is acceptable in public economic-social-political discourse. The other is Physical Reality: i.e., what exists in terms of energy and materials, and what is possible given the laws of thermodynamics.

For decades these two realities have developed along separate lines. They overlap from time to time: politicians and economists use data tied to measureable physical parameters, while physical scientists often frame their research and findings in socially meaningful ways. But in intent and effect, they diverge to an ever-greater extent.

The issue at which they differ to the point of outright contradiction is economic growth. And climate change forces the question.

...Within a contracting economy, income and wealth inequality becomes a critical political and social issue. Unless policies dictate otherwise, those with prior economic advantage tend to aggressively aggregate an ever-larger share of overall societal wealth and income, while those at the bottom of the heap descend into absolute misery. Solutions would begin with taxing financial transactions, inherited wealth, high incomes, and luxury goods, with the revenues spent on building renewable energy infrastructure, redesigning food and transport systems to dramatically reduce oil dependence, and helping poor folks adapt and get by. These policies must be promoted on a national and global scale with major funding and the enlisted expertise of messaging professionals.

Now for those objections—"It's too late," "We haven't the capacity." They are persuasive. The fulfillment of the above wish list (it could be lengthened considerably) is indeed a far longshot. But even minor progress along any of these lines could help change the trajectory of collapse and our chances for a desirable outcome.

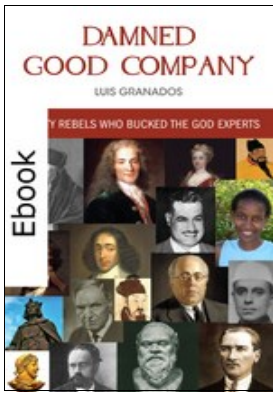
If the problem of political realists is self-delusion, the predicament of many physical realists is a sense of defeat and dread. So for the sake of the latter I will conclude with a little pep talk (directed as much to myself as to readers). Too much is at stake to retire in cynical self-assurance that we are right, they are wrong; we are weak, they are strong. Yes, horrible consequences from past growth are inevitable; today's physical reality is a given. However, tomorrow's reality is still, at least to some degree\*, up to us. Thank to **Richard Heinberg**

Click [www.tampabaypostcarbon.com](http://www.tampabaypostcarbon.com) for more. 8/14

\*According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, May and June of this year were the hottest months ever measured, and continue the trend of 352 consecutive months of temperatures over the 20th century average. **Global warming, anyone?**

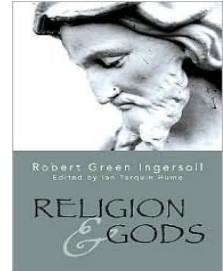


# The Humanist Press



## Damned Good Company By Luis Granados

In *Damned Good Company: Twenty Rebels Who Bucked the God Experts*, author Luis Granados explores twenty cases, from Socrates to Ayaan Hirsi Ali, of brave challenges against those claiming a special authority from God. The author was recently the guest of the Tampa Humanists and delivered a memorable lecture. Paperback \$15.00 378 Pages, [Order here.](#)



Amid the 21st century's escalating religious tensions, Robert Green Ingersoll's views on the substance of religion and gods offer a firm foundation of logic and independent thought leading to a life examined and a life of happiness free of the shackles of religion. **Prometheus**

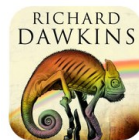
Pins buttons, stickers, etc. can be ordered

from: **Evolve Fish** <http://evolvefish.com/>

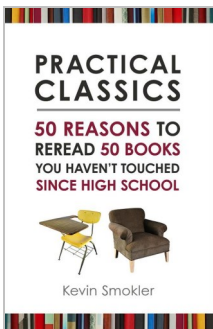
**Read Humanist Periodicals:** The world's leading minds can be read at: [The Humanist](#), [Free Inquiry](#), [Free Mind](#), [Humanist Perspectives](#), [Skeptical Inquirer](#), [Secular Humanist Bulletin](#), [The Florida Humanist Journal](#), [Skeptic](#), [Essays in Humanism](#), and many others. Look 'em up!

### *The Magic of Reality*

Download it to your I-pad to experience this award winning multi media book.



## Prometheus Press



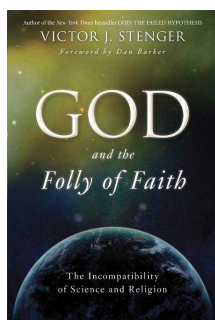
### Practical Classics: 50 Reasons to Reread 50 Books You Haven't Touched Since High School.

A canon of contemporary literature that will re-illuminate our time and your life.

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### God and the Folly of Faith: The Incompatibility of Science and Religion

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The story of the fight against superstition has been told before, but never like this. Victor Stenger confronts the battle between religious superstition and science with the eye of a trained physicist and the practicality of a superb teacher. 409 pages, Paperback, \$20.00 [Order here](#)



# The Matt Cooper

## Memorial Humanist Library.

Humanist Society members (only) can select the number of the book you wish to borrow, and send it to Marios Psomas at: [marios\\_psomas@hotmail.com](mailto:marios_psomas@hotmail.com). Then pick it up at the next meeting. **Be sure to return it!** Donations appreciated.

#	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 Hawkins
25.	Breaking the Spell	Daniel Dennett
26.	The Philosophy of Humanism	Corliss Lamont
27.	The Quotable Atheist	Jack Huberman
28.	50 Reasons People Give for Believing In a God.	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 Rest of World.	Rossi
33.	Imagine There's no Heaven	Editors of Free Inquiry
34.	Hidden Order	David Friedman
35.	What the Dog Saw	Malcom 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.	Sex & God	Darryl Ray
57.	Being Right Is Not Enough	Paul Waldman
58.	Loser Takes All	Mark Crispin Miller
59.	Taking Back Politics	Cathy Allen
60.	What Happened in Ohio?	Fitrakis, Rosenfeld & Wasserman
61.	Autobiography of Mark Twain	Ed. Harriet Elinor Smith
62.	The Skeptics Annotated Bible	
63.	Database Systems (Complete Ver.)	Kifer, Bernstein, & Lewis
64.	Reluctant Database Administrators	Josef Finsel
65.	Asimov's Guide to the Bible	Isaac Asimov
66.	Inevitable Illusions	M. Piattelli-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	Stenesh



## Tampa Bay Thinkers



Thinking deep thoughts about serious matters since 2008 at the Carrollwood Cultural Center in Tampa, every third Monday at 7. Come cogitate with us!  
**Aug. 18th: World Overpopulation**

## Humanist Families of Greater Tampa



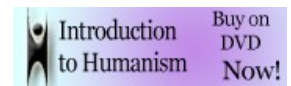
**Jennifer Hancock** started this organization several years ago. It uniquely serves Humanist families with a variety of wonderful programs throughout the year.

There is a strong emphasis on creative childrearing. Here, you can make connection with other families dealing with the problems of living in a society that is still hostile to an explicitly Humanist Way of life.

Jennifer is author of several books including; The *Humanist Handbook*, *The Humanist Approach to Happiness*, and her latest book, *The Bully Vaccine* (illustration below). - JP  
 See much more at: [www.Jen-Hancock.com](http://www.Jen-Hancock.com),

**Humanist Families** organizes social outings every month. These are opportunities to do something fun, socialize and enjoy each other's company. Sometimes we go to a park, sometimes a museum, sometimes we go swimming. Our group has grown over the past year to the point we now organize Tampa area outings and 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 and 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. We are on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/).



## The Military Association of Atheists and Freethinkers



Nontheistic service members serve honorably throughout the world—always have; always will. However, nontheists are the last unprotected minority. The nontheistic, whether an atheist, humanist, agnostic, freethinker, or other secular minority, have a strong community.

Jason Torpy, a West Point graduate, serves as president of MAAF. He also holds seats on the boards of the Secular Coalition for America and the American Humanist Assoc.

**On the web at:** [www.maaf.info](http://www.maaf.info)

Contact: Chris

([christbrown@yahoo.com](mailto:christbrown@yahoo.com))

MSgt, USAF (Retired) Co-Organizer:  
 MacDill Atheists & Secular Humanists  
 (MASH) MacDill AFB, FL

## 3 new programs at HLS

Thanks to our education partners, we now have 3 new programs to offer you. 2 are free and 1 is for a fee. Let's start with the free ones:

### Finding Meaning in Life

Let's just figure out the meaning of life, once and for all, in under 20 minutes, This short program by Derek Sivers, founder of CD Baby is awesome. He does a great job of logically working his way through the problem of finding meaning in life and his conclusion is quite wonderfully humanistic. So if you want to know how a Humanist finds meaning in life – this is probably one of the best explanations you can find. <https://humanistlearning.com/finding-meaning-in-life/>

### The Goal Trainer

This free tool is offered by our partner ClearerThinking.org. It was created with the assistance of Piers Steel, PhD, one of the world's foremost researchers and speakers on the science of motivation and procrastination. Dr. Steel's research has appeared in countless outlets around the world, ranging from Psychology Today and New Scientist to Good Housekeeping and The New Yorker. This program is offered free. I learned a lot from using it - I highly recommend it. <https://humanistlearning.com/goaltrainer/>

### Overcoming Addictions

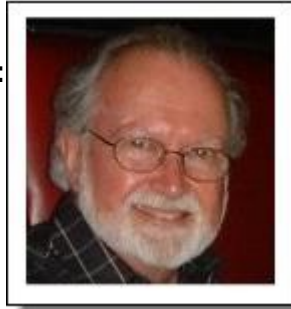
This is an addiction recovery tool for people who want to stop drinking, using drugs, or compulsive gambling and recover using an app that's supported by scientific research. This app was developed by Dr. Reid Hester, Director of the Research Division of Behavior Therapy Associates, LLC. Dr. Hester is a Clinical Psychologist with extensive research and clinical expertise in helping people recover from addictions. There is a cost to access this program. A portion of the fee is donated to SMART recovery. Learn more

*Jennifer Hancock*

# Institute for Rational Living

is the official psychoanalytical representative of Center for Inquiry:

Institute for Rational Living  
2502 N Rocky Point Dr, Suite 1010  
Tampa, FL 33607-1406  
Office Phone: 1-727-278-8446  
Office Fax: 1-727-391-8459  
[vparr@ishv.net](mailto:vparr@ishv.net)



Vincent Parr, PhD  
Clinical Psychologist at Institute for Advanced Study MRL  
President at Institute for Rational Living

Dr. Parr is a licensed Clinical Psychologist with over 40 years experience in Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) and Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT). He also has 23 + years of experience in Mindfulness and Zen. He uses these two very powerful approaches to help people reach freedom -- that is, the freedom that comes from maximally eliminating suffering (often defined as chronic disappointment and frustration) and disturbance (Anger, Anxiety, Depression, and Guilt).

Dr. Parr has been a consultant to the United States Air Force, Hayatt International, Bic Pen Corporation, the City of St. Petersburg, the St. Petersburg Police Department, the Institute for Rational Living, the Institute for Advanced study in Rational Psychotherapy, and was an adjunct professor at the University of Tampa for nine years. In addition, he sits on the national Board of Directors for the *Institute for Science and Human Values*.

## Prepare for 2nd Annual Freethought Cruise

Come and escape to Cozumel next winter on a Caribbean cruise with David Silverman, President of American Atheists! Join dozens of other freethinkers on the second annual Freethought Cruise.

We set sail from Tampa, Florida Thursday afternoon, January 29th and visit Cozumel, Mexico returning to Tampa on Monday morning, February 2nd. During both days at sea David Silverman will speak to the group about his work for American Atheists, state/church separation, and his forthcoming book "I, Atheist". Of course, since David is vacationing with us for the weekend there will be plenty of opportunities for you to chat with him one on one.

Cozumel is one of the top diving and snorkeling destinations in the world for its bright coral reefs and beautiful beaches. Shore excursions will also take you to Mayan ruins and many other adventures listed below. Be sure to check out all of them before deciding.

We cruise on the Carnival Paradise which has plenty to do on board. There is Camp Carnival for the kids, several pools, hot tubs, and sun decks and first-rate entertainment. The ship even has dedicated teen and pre-teen clubs AND an adult only sun deck so bring the whole family if you like so everyone can enjoy themselves!

With a \$150 deposit, per person, you can select the cabin of your choice now. The total cost of the cruise is \$330 per passenger for an interior stateroom or \$370 for an ocean view. These prices are based on double occupancy, and includes all taxes and fees. Plus you will get \$50 on board credit per cabin for drinks or other on board expenses. Shore excursion prices are listed below or you can book these on your own if you choose.

After your initial deposit, you will be contacted to determine how you want to handle future payments (such as monthly or in one final payment).

If you seek a wonderful opportunity to have a fun weekend and hang out with fellow freethinkers, don't miss this one!

If you are interested, you may sign up directly through this link:  
<http://www.expertvacationstation.com/rw/view/3516>

Travel Specialist for our group:  
Jaine Nelson, Cruise Planners/American Express  
[jainenelson@cruiseplanners.com](mailto:jainenelson@cruiseplanners.com) Ph. 612-802-8810 or 651-785-5157



Check with CFI, AHA, and other groups for more Freethought Cruises!

## AH Appignani Humanist LC Legal Center

### [Atheist Lawsuit Against Pittsburgh's Port Authority Settled](#)

July 3, 2014 – UnitedCoR & AHLC victorious in suit over Port Authority's refusal to run bus ads for the Pittsburgh Coalition of Reason.

### [AHLC Files Motion of Contempt Against Public School for Prayer](#)

May 7, 2014 – Rankin County School District in Mississippi includes formal Christian prayer in student awards ceremony.

### [American Humanist Association Wins Lawsuit Against Cross Monument in Lake Elsinore, California](#)

April 23, 2014 – City officials decline to appeal ruling of federal judge

### [Humanists File Lawsuit Against "Under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance in New Jersey](#)

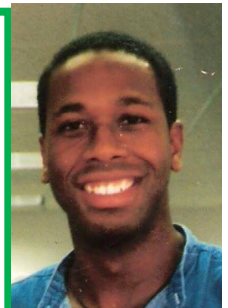
April 21, 2014 – School-sponsored Pledge violates state constitution's equal protection law

### [AHA Sues for Equal Treatment of Humanist Inmates in Federal Prisons](#)

April 8, 2014 – Lawsuit filed against correctional officials at the Federal Bureau of Prisons.



University of South Florida



Rodrick Colbert

**Freethinkers@USF** is a multicultural, interdisciplinary student society which welcomes USF students who describe themselves as atheists, agnostics, skeptics, freethinkers, humanists, or religiously open-minded who seek to promote reason, compassion, tolerance, and free inquiry on campus. We hope to contribute opportunity for interdisciplinary dialog to the USF community, and build scientific literacy for all to enable objective and rational interpretations of issues affecting our lives. The organization is open to anyone of any religious persuasion or personal beliefs.

Write Rodrick Colbert or [freethinkersusf@gmail.com](mailto:freethinkersusf@gmail.com).

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## On Humor and Its Not-So-Funny Consequences

By Norm R. Allen Jr.

Many people believe that humor is always harmless and could not possibly have any negative consequences. Whenever anyone disagrees with this simplistic view, they are dismissed as lacking a sense of humor, killjoys, etc.

However, anyone who has had just a single course in humor studies understands that there are different kinds of humor that appeal to different kinds of people. Some kinds of humor are rooted in meanness, cynicism and misanthropy. The worst kinds of humor are racist, sexist, and homophobic. Some of these jokes are not even funny, and seem to be indulged in primarily for shock value and generating feelings of discomfort. These include jokes about rape, sexual abuse, the Holocaust, etc.

Those that consider all forms of humor to be harmless – rather than merely tasteless – do not understand that humor has often been part of the arsenal that oppressors have used to intimidate people and to keep people down. Perhaps nowhere is this fact more clear than in the history of racist humor directed against Black people.

In the 1980s, director and producer Marlon Riggs came out with the Emmy Award-winning film *Ethnic Notions*. The film was narrated by Esther Rolle, best known as the character Florida Evans, the mother on the 1970s classic sitcom “*Good Times*.” The film, in part, showed how, from the Civil War through the civil rights movement, White media and popular culture used humor to perpetuate stereotypes and caricatures of Black people through books, poetry, cartoons, film, advertisements, children’s stories, comedic routines with Whites and Blacks in blackface, etc. This onslaught fostered not only White supremacy but Black self-hatred. Blacks were depicted as lazy, stupid, ugly, highly sexed, etc. During minstrel shows, the stereotype of the happy, singing, dancing, laughing Black slave was popularized. These images no doubt influenced laws and public policy throughout the U.S.

There has also been racist humor focusing upon Jews, Chinese, Japanese, and other groups. Shortly after the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, many Black stand-up comedians made bigoted jokes about the idea that all Arabs and Muslims are terrorists.

Cruel, hurtful jokes about Gay men have long been popular throughout the world. Many comedians foster the stereotype that all Gay men are effeminate. Some comedians are completely over the top. For example, not long ago, Tracy Morgan joked that he would stab his son if he found out that he was Gay. (He later apologized for the joke.) Sexist jokes often make women feel uncomfortable and afraid. Such jokes often create or exacerbate a hostile work environment for women. Some men not only tell sexist jokes, but wear t-shirts or display posters or artwork with sexist jokes.

Many times, members of historically oppressed groups are driven by self-hatred and greed to stereotype their own people in the name of humor. For example, many Black stand-up comedians make fun of or denigrate dark-skinned Black people with thick lips and other pronounced African features. They will make jokes about alleged Black incompetence, undependability and other stereotypes.

This is not to say that racial or sexual humor do not have their place. One can make fun of very real differences among the races without being cruel or without promoting stereotypes. There are clear differences in cultures, interests, musical tastes, food preferences, sports preferences, etc. among different races. Such differences can be recognized and joked about without resorting to thinly disguised racial attacks. Similarly, sex is a natural part of life and can be joked about without using humor as a weapon to objectify women or make them feel uncomfortable, especially if such humor is presented under the right circumstances and at appropriate places and times.

What makes it difficult to fight against harmful kinds of humor is the fact that, whenever such humor presents itself, some insufferable, bigoted loudmouth will inevitably appear to whine about alleged political correctness, or PC. Indeed, the perfect preemptive strike against those that respect “the Other” is wrapped in an attack on this alleged threat. Tired complaints about alleged “PC run amok” have become de rigueur among bigots everywhere over the past few decades.

However, despite the damage that humor can do, censorship is not the answer. People must always have the right to express themselves. Still, as someone once noted, “just because you have the right to do it, doesn’t mean it’s right to do it.” Bigots need to do away with the idea that freedom to be bigoted means they have a corresponding right to be free from criticism, boycotts, or other legal and moral forms of retaliatory behavior. The victims of bigoted humor also have rights.

Contrary to what many people believe, just because a joke is funny or elicits much laughter does not necessarily make it o.k. The disturbing paradox is that humor often has very serious – even-tragic - consequences, and is often part of the way oppressors keep people down.



At the [Center for Inquiry](#), we believe that evidence-based reasoning, in which humans work together to address common concerns, is critical for modern world civilization. Moreover, unlike many other institutions, we maintain that scientific methods and reasoning should be utilized in examining the claims of both pseudoscience and religion. We reject mysticism and blind faith. No topic should be placed off limits to scrutiny—certainly not fringe science and religion, which have an enormous influence on beliefs and conduct.

We also maintain that values are properly the subject of study and discussion as much as empirical claims. The Center for Inquiry studies and promotes human values based on a naturalistic outlook. Ideological doctrine and religious dogma have no more right to dictate our moral norms than they do to influence scientific research.



Rick O'Keefe

## ***Americans are dangerously ignorant on politics***

[CJ WERLEMAN](#), [ALTERNET](#), WEDNESDAY, JUN 17, 2014 6:45 PM UTC

The health of a democracy is dependent on an educated citizenry. Political illiteracy is the manure for the flourishing of political appeals based on sheer ignorance. The First Amendment's declaration that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion" embodied the founders' view that religion has no place in the political domain.

That not a single major media outlet bother[s] to correct [citizens'] ignorance represents America's continual decline in American civic and cultural literacy.

"Every shortcoming of American governance is related in some fashion to the knowledge deficit of the public – if only because there is no widespread indignation at policies shaped by elected officials who suffer from the same intellectual blind spots as their constituents," observed Susan Jacoby, author of *The Age of American Unreason*.

The nation's collective ignorance as it pertains to cultural and civic literacy paves the way for extremist politicians to convince the public of the validity of extreme positions.

### **So how bad is America's political literacy?**

A 2007 National Constitution Center poll found that two-thirds of Americans couldn't name all three branches of the U.S. federal government, nor a single Supreme Court justice. Another poll found that 91 percent couldn't name the current Chief Justice, which is staggering considering the number of high profile, politically polarizing cases deliberated upon by the nation's highest court in recent years – including the rulings on the Affordable Care Act, same-sex marriage and campaign finance laws.

It gets worse. When respondents were asked whether they could recall any of the rights guaranteed by the First Amendment, a majority could name only free speech. More than a third were unable to list any First Amendment rights. The National Constitution Center also found that 42 percent of Americans think the Constitution explicitly states that "the first language of the United States is English;" and 25 percent believe Christianity was established in the Constitution as the official government religion.

Only 40 percent of adults know that there are 100 Senators in the U.S. Congress, while a great majority of Americans have no idea of when or by whom the Constitution was written. A 2010 Pew Research Center [survey](#) of American's knowledge of public affairs and politics revealed that political literacy has been in rapid and continual descent since high water mark of the 1950s. While one may be forgiven for not understanding all the quirky procedural rules of the U.S. Senate, one should be suitably embarrassed if one cannot at least correctly identify the number of votes needed to end a filibuster, but on that – more than two-thirds of Americans do not know the answer is 60.

This rising tide of ignorance threatens the very foundation of American democracy.

[End of excerpt. [Read the rest HERE.](#)]

*What have our schools been teaching? Civics? Literacy? Critical thinking? Would it be too much to ask that our taxpayer money that pays of public education produce some value?*



**Humanists of Sarasota Bay, Inc.**  
Sarasota, Florida

### **Calendar of Upcoming main events:**

Aug 27:

12: PM **lunch**, 1:45 PM **Current Affairs discussion group.**  
New Dynasty Restaurant, 6131 South Tamiami Trail, Sarasota ([map](#))

[more details»](#)

For more detailed information, see the HusBay [website](#):

Lectures, discussions, and hands-on demonstrations of the Humane use of technology. And always, there is the occasional random act of Kindness.

Visit our facility on 1510 Barry Rd. in Clearwater: Map: <http://tampa-bay.org/map.html>

**Dave 'Doc' Dockery** President,

Find us at: [www.tampa-bay.org](http://www.tampa-bay.org)

**We repair our members computers!**



<http://tampabay.unitedcor.org/tampabay/>

## Practical Freethought

Thousands of your friends and neighbors in the Tampa Bay area feel the same as you. The Tampa Bay Coalition of Reason is a group of local organizations joined together to increase the growth, visibility and acceptance of nontheists throughout the area.

All of these groups share common ground, while each has its own particular emphasis and atmosphere. Some are focused on scientific inquiry and education. Others are focused on ethics and community, activism or the arts. Others monitor state/church separation and fight for your civil rights. All alike are committed to promoting the wider acceptance of a more rational and contemporary view of humanity and the universe we live in.

[TampaBayCoR.org](http://TampaBayCoR.org) is where secular people in the Tampa Bay area can discover groups to join, activities in which to participate, events to attend and like-minded people with which to socialize. In short, we want to help those who have grown beyond religious belief to find their philosophical home.

Those nonbelievers who are not ready, or who are unable, to “come out” can take comfort in knowing that they are not the only ones who accept the reality of a 100% natural world.

For the religious community, we want them to realize that, although non-theists reject the supernatural, we share with them compassionate human values that most religious believers embrace. In most ways, we are like them; hard working, taxpaying, moral citizens who care deeply about our families, our communities, our state and our country.

Non-theists are a large minority, larger than many minorities having much more political and cultural influence than we do. Based on the US Census Bureau estimate of Florida’s 2008 population and several polls, we estimate our statewide constituency at about 2,800,000 residents (more than 400,000 in the Tampa Bay quad-county area). TampaBayCoR has organized to increase our standing in the marketplace of ideas and to take our rightful place at the table of acceptance and equal rights. We invite all nontheists to support us in our efforts by joining and actively participating in one of TBCoR’s constituent groups.

Even if you never join a group or attend a meeting you can help Florida move forward by contributing to local or national participating organizations. And you can always help to further the nontheistic community just by standing up proudly for your reality-based life among your friends and family. It’s OK to not believe in gods. And, yes—not only can you be good without a god or religion, but in most cases, far better off. Millions of us are.

*R.O.*

### Holidays of Special Interest

- **2014** is the UN International Year of Family Farming

**August** is Romance Awareness Month

- 3rd Friendship Day
- 6th Wiggle your toes day
- 13th left handers Day
- 16th National Tell a Joke Day
- 18th Bad Poetry Day
- 26th Women's Equality Day
- 30th Frankenstein Day



#### TBCoR Leadership Team 2014

Mark Brandt, Chris Brown, Jennifer Hancock, Rick O'Keefe, Jim Peterson, Tracy Thomas  
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#### Be Included!

Group Leaders are invited to send items for this Newsletter. Please send them to: [tbcornews@metrodirect.net](mailto:tbcornews@metrodirect.net)  
For calendar items, include as much info as possible.