



# The Tampa Bay Coalition of Reason

# Freethought News

Volume 1 No. 6 Nov. 2012 Jim Peterson, Editor

## What's Inside?

- Unified Calendar..... 2
- Humanist Society..... 3 \*
- Tampa Humanists.... 7 \*
- Clr.UU-Humanists... 7 \*
- Post Carbon Council.. 8
- Freethought Films..... 9
- Humanist Families... 10 \*
- Americans United.... 10
- Military Atheists..... 10 \*
- Atheists of FL ..... 11 \*
- Ctr. For Inquiry..... 12 \*
- Tampa Bay Skeptics. 13
- Coalition News..... 15

\* Member organizations

*Bringing it all together...*

## The Civilian Conservation Corps and restoring a good life. The Joyful Work of:



*Jay Alexander*

The Humanist Society is fortunate to have as a member, Jay Alexander, whose life as a social and political activist gives real meaning to the claim that Humanists are as much about changing things as we are about arguing about them. For the last several years he has been active and unusually successful about a restoration of the New Deal program of the 1930's, the Civilian Conservation Corps. In a time when the issue of unemployment has become painfully significant, Jay, and over 20 members of congress who support **his efforts**, have seen that much good could come from focusing a large section of the labor force on the reconstruction of our country's infrastructure: schools, roads, forests, community buildings, etc. A vet and peace activist, he has seen the twin evils of war and indifference work their malicious and inhumane effects on our society. In his view, the CCC would aid in transforming our country toward becoming a resilient, sustainable and ecologically balanced culture. Programs like these would help this society to survive, thrive and prosper as much as we did in the 20th Century. If you feel so motivated, Please sign and spread this **petition** to the White House.

## *S*cientific American

partnered with grassroots organization ScienceDebate.org earlier this summer to encourage the two main presidential candidates –Barack Obama and Mitt Romney –to answer 14 questions on some of the biggest scientific and technological challenges facing the nation.

President Obama and Governor Romney have now answered these Top American Science Questions, which you can read below. Editors will grade the candidates' answers for SA's November issue, which will be available on the iPad and in print in mid-October.

Here are the questions:

**1. Innovation and the Economy.** Science and technology have been responsible for over half of the growth of the U.S. economy since WWII, when the federal government first prioritized peacetime science mobilization. But several recent reports question America's continued leadership in these vital areas. What policies will best ensure that America remains a world leader in innovation?

**2. Climate Change.** The Earth's climate is changing and there is concern about the potentially adverse effects of these changes on life on the planet. What is your position on cap-and-trade, carbon taxes, and other policies proposed to address global climate change – and what steps can we take to improve our ability to tackle challenges like climate change that cross national boundaries?

**3. Research and the Future.** Federally funded research has helped to produce America's major postwar economies and to ensure our national security, but today the UK, Singapore, China, and Korea are making competitive investments in research. Given that the next Congress will face spending constraints, what priority would you give to investment in research in your upcoming budgets?

(Continued on Page 9)

## Directory

### Tampa Bay Coalition of Reason

#### Calendar

Rick O'Keefe

#### Web site

Jim Peterson

#### Newsletter

Jim Peterson

#### Special Projects

Mark Brandt

## Be Included!

Group Leaders are invited to send items for this Newsletter. Please send them to:

Jamestp@metrodirect.net

For calendar items, include as much info as possible.



# November 2012 COR Calendar



Compiled by *Rick O'Keefe*, with *Dale Friedley & Jim Peterson*

*Dates/times may change due to unforeseen reasons,*  
Check for more events + details on the Coalition of Reason Web site at:  
<http://tampabay.unitedcor.org/tampabay/>

## Joint CFI & Brandon Atheists—BRANDON

Sunday night, November 9th, at 7:00 PM  
The Brass Tap, 775 Brandon Town Center, Brandon, FL [map](#).  
**RSVP** to Kathryn before Friday, Nov. 10th, noon.  
The Brandon Atheists are a fun and friendly social-only group (no divisive activism). So, if you want good conversation and a choice of 400+ craft beers, visit our monthly joint evening of freethought enjoyment. Ask the host for the Brandon Atheists table.



## The Suncoast Humanist Society

Countryside Library, 2741 S.R 580 .  
Saturday, November 3rd at 2 PM

This is an open session discussing "The Eupractical life of Paul Kurtz". See page [3](#)

## Brandon—CFI Skeptic/Humanist Mixer

Ghengis Grill 910 Providence Ave. Brandon FL.  
Sunday November 21st at 3:30 PM.

Details: <http://www.meetup.com/CFI-Tampa-Bay/>  
**RSVP** to Carl at (813) 661-0633 or [here](#).



## UU Clearwater Humanists

Sunday, November 21, at 12:30, for it's monthly meeting at Unitarian-Universalist Clearwater. The presentation will be announced. A discussion will follow.  
For information, contact Bill Norsworthy (687-9867) or Mark Brandt (560-0971) or [mwbrandt@mail.usf.edu](mailto:mwbrandt@mail.usf.edu). All are welcome.



## Tampa Bay Thinkers Discussion Group

**CARROLLWOOD CULTURAL CENTER**  
Monday, November 19th at 6:30 pm. **RSVP** at [Web site](#).

**Why Do We Love Being Afraid** will be discussed in depth. Details can be seen on our [Meetup](#) site. If you will be going, please bring a potluck snack, or picnic-type treat.

Carrollwood Cultural Center, 4537 Lowell Rd,  
Carrollwood, FL 33618 (NW Tampa)  
Click for a [MAP](#) to the Center.



## Humanist Families of Tampa Bay

Family outings and other activities are ongoing.  
For more information, see our Facebook page [Here](#)

**Café Philo**—philosophical discussion group in Tampa at Dale Mabry Barnes & Noble See [Web site](#) for more info.

## Tampa Humanist Association

Saturday, November 17th, 2012 at 11:00 am  
Jimmie B. Keele Library, 2902 W. Bearss Ave.,  
Wesley Chapel, FL Click for the [MAP](#)

Topic: **An academic's visit to Belarus:**  
**Exploring the Criminal Justice System on the eve of an attempted transition to Democracy.** See page 7



## CFI Skeptics/Humanists Social—DUNEDIN

Monday, November 26th, 6:00 PM  
Café Alfresco, 344 Main Street, Dunedin, FL 34698  
[Map](#), [menu](#), etc.

Our monthly Dunedin gathering is a congenial affair, with far-ranging discussions and good humor. Join us! Voted "Best Restaurant on the Pinellas Trail 2009" by *Tampa Bay Magazine*. **RSVP is required** if you are coming so we can reserve enough space. *Seating is limited to 12!* [Click here](#) before noon, November 25th (Sunday) ([Tampa@CenterForInquiry.net](mailto:Tampa@CenterForInquiry.net)).

## THA German Beer Night—NEW TAMPA/USF

**On hiatus for now- Check back next month.**  
Location: Mr. Dunderbak's Beer Garden, 14929 Bruce B. Downs Blvd., Tampa Fl. 33613 (813) 977-4104 Come and enjoy German food and a wide variety of beers with your fellow freethinkers.



**Americans United** for Separation of Church & State will have its annual meeting in March. Details forthcoming.

## Art Film Meetup:

Dale Friedley hosts a showing/discussion  
**No film scheduled at this time.**



Eckerd College Miller Auditorium, 4200 54th Ave. S.  
St. Petersburg FL [Map](#) **RSVP:** [DaleFried@aol.com](mailto:DaleFried@aol.com)

## November Social Dinner for the Humanist

**Society** at Rumba Island Grill on Sunday November 18th at 5:00pm. This fine but inexpensive restaurant is located at 1800 Gulf-To-Bay Blvd in Clearwater. See details on Page 4.

## Tampa Bay Skeptics Quarterly Meeting

Click for [details](#). Coming in December.

## Need Psychological Counseling?

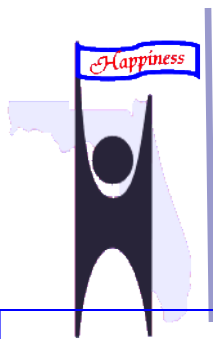
For a secular therapist, click:  
[Cognitive Neurosciences Inc.](#) or,  
[The Therapist Project](#). For Addiction Problems,  
see: [Lifering Secular Recovery page 7](#)



[Click to register](#) for next year

Ages 7-16, Holland, NY





# The Humanist Society of the Suncoast

*A Socratic society dedicated to the proposition that the fully examined life is well worth living.*  
Associate organization of the Humanists of Florida, the AHA, COR, and CSH. Find us at www.suncoasthumanist.com

Volume 20 No. 11

November, 2012

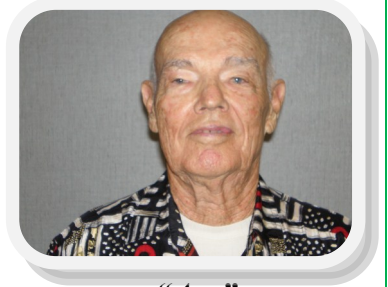


## “The Father of Secular Humanism” has died.

Many of us, friends or acquaintances, will miss the inspiration and humor of Paul Kurtz. He reached his 86<sup>th</sup> year, working to the end. To celebrate this transition, we will have a discussion about Paul Kurtz, his ideas and accomplishments. Panel participants include **Nan Owens, Rick O’Keefe, Jim Peterson,** and a possible appearance by **Toni Van Pelt.** Paul Kurtz was directly associated with the founding of the Center for Inquiry–Tampa Bay. Likewise, he brought Tampa Bay Skeptics into the fold, and guided Center for Rational Living

Foundation under Dr. Vincent Parr in becoming CFI’s official psychotherapy division. We will have some special guests to share some of these experiences. Paul’s visits to our area always generated enthusiasm and a renewed sense that reason and humanism can make strong inroads against superstition and ignorance. Paul didn’t think that confrontation was practical, but that setting an example and holding conversations and other communications in promoting our message will win in the end. Perhaps I can sum up his approach in dealing with people who haven’t seen the light, as it I understand it: we have to be willing to point people in the right direction and let them realize the truth for themselves. Then offer them community. *R.O. & J.P.* The Humanist Society of the Suncoast is a member of the **Tampa Bay Coalition of Reason.**

*A Member* of our Suncoast Humanist Society family has died. **Don “Ace” Acenbracker** has been a member for the last eight years, and served on the board for much of the last five.



“Ace”

He was, in the warmth of his manner and the readiness with which he offered help to others, a true gentleman. A Florida native, he served in the armed forces during the second world war, eventually coming to work for the city of Clearwater in its civil engineering department.

## Humanistic Psychology

During the 1950s, humanistic psychology began as a reaction to psychoanalysis and behaviorism, which dominated psychology at the time. Psychoanalysis was focused on understanding the unconscious motivations that drive behavior while behaviorism studied the conditioning processes that produce behavior. Humanist thinkers felt that both psychoanalysis and behaviorism were too pessimistic, either focusing on the most tragic of emotions or failing to take into account the role of personal choice.

Humanistic psychology has instead focused on each individual’s potential and stressed the importance of growth and self-actualization. The fundamental premise of humanistic psychology is that people are innately good and that mental and social problems result from deviations from this natural tendency.

Remember... we meet in the **Countryside Library** at 2741 State Rd. 580 in Clearwater



**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. There is increasing hunger here in our community. Don’t forget to bring canned and boxed food or checks for**

## Tampa Bay Harvest.



**Please join us for this free and open discussion.**

**On Saturday, November 3rd. at 2 PM:**

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

Following our meeting, many of us will dine and argue together at the **Greek City Cafe,**



*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 the human spirit.
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

## Our monthly social dinner,

The Moveable Feast for November will be back at:

## RUMBA ISLAND BAR & GRILL

1800 Gulf-To-Bay Blvd  
Clearwater  
(N.E. Corner of G-T-B & Keene)  
Sunday, November 18th, 2012 @ 5:00 P.M.

This restaurant has a variety of early bird specials:  
Seafood, Barbecue and Caribbean  
The food quality has been widely complimented by members.

Please reserve by November 17th with Glenn Paul at 727-595-3347 or by email at [kpaul29@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:kpaul29@tampabay.rr.com)

## Laugh Lines More PARAPROSDOKIANS

1. Where there's a will, I want to be in it.
2. The last thing I want to do is hurt you; but, it's still on my list.
3. Since light travels faster than sound, some people appear bright until you hear them speak.
4. If I agreed with you, we'd both be wrong.
5. We never really grow up, we only learn how to act in public.
6. War does not determine who is right - only who is left.
7. Knowledge is knowing a tomato is a fruit. Wisdom is not putting it in a fruit salad.
8. They begin the evening news with 'Good Evening,' then proceed to tell you why it isn't.
9. To steal ideas from one person is plagiarism. To steal from many is research.
10. Buses stop in bus stations. Trains stop in train stations. Why is my desk a work station.
11. I thought I wanted a career. Turns out I just wanted paychecks.
12. In filling out an application, where it says, 'In case of emergency, please notify, I put 'DOCTOR.'
13. I didn't say it was your fault, I said I was blaming you.
14. A clear conscience is the sign of a fuzzy memory.
15. You do not need a parachute to skydive. You only need a parachute to skydive twice.

11/12

Thanks to Connie Purdum

## 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

**Steve Brown, VP**  
**Jim Butler**  
**Robert Byrch (Dec.)**  
**Terry Eckstien**  
**Lois Fries, Secretary**  
**Jon Green**  
**Jim Peterson, President**  
**Frank Prah**  
**Marios Psomas, treasurer**  
**Emeritus members:** Anita Garcia,  
Mark Kligman, Jerry Moore, Mark  
Winterbottom, Bob Collette, Glenn  
Paul, Don Acenbrach, Jackie Jordan,  
Brent Yaciw, Mike Hubbard, Matt  
Cooper

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

**Jim Butler Publisher.**

**Jim Peterson, Editor**

E-Mail us at:

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

## How you can Help

I hope these general notes are helpful.

**Contribute** to the welfare of our own local chapter by leading efforts to bridge gaps, bring tolerance and social unity, and exercise kindness everywhere. A little financial help is always appreciated as well. **Start by renewing your membership!**

At a recent board meeting, we made plans to participate with an **information table** at a major public event in the coming year.

We are putting together a **Speakers Bureau** for outreach. You can help in many ways.

And we need help in setting up our meetings: chairs, electronic components when needed, literature and food collection tables. **See a Board member** to offer your help. **JP**

## A Humanist Helping Hand

Several members have formed a caring response team to help members of our Humanist family who may need supportive practical help. This is an independent group, not affiliated directly with the Humanist Society. But their efforts are wholly consistent with the Humanist outlook. Contact a helper below if you or another member needs help or wishes to participate.

- ◆ Terri Eckstien (813) 891-9399
- ◆ Jerry Moore (727) 455-4973
- ◆ Nan Owens (813) 662-6612



## A Last word from our late friend, Bill Hall

Bill died this past August 4th. Here is his final benediction.

### Fireside Chat by W. W. Hall

Here is the text of my address to the teeming mass of captive students:

W.W. Hall sits by the hearth with an unlit pipe in one hand and a copy of *The Confederacy of Dunces* in the other (with the cover face out). He leans forward slightly, raises his head, and without greeting his audience, speaks...

“You know who I am. As Americans, desperate creatures that we are, we traditionally set aside a day during which we reflect upon all for which we are thankful. The implication, of course, seems to be that for the other 364 days we are self-serving, greedy ingrates. So often true.

Today, however, we praise one or more gods, the government, or some other powerful entity for being so generous and benevolent to us poor, unworthy, pitiable humans.

Hogwash! We should instead praise ourselves by acknowledging that, although the crushing weight of the universe ultimately snuffs out our petty little lives, we still dance in the rain, fall in love, climb snow capped peaks, and journey to the moon.

Why? Why do we, with our clipped wings, continue to strain and flap, barely able to hover above the black, yawning pit waiting to claim us? Why do we bother to write, sculpt, or paint? Why do we insist on producing symphonies, plays, and rock concerts?

Why? We do this precisely because a blues riff or a nocturne can heal us. We do this because a novel can take us to the farthest reaches of our being and bring us back. We do this because to not do so is to beckon death. We do this because we must!

Thus we have saved ourselves through the power of art, music, literature, and philosophy to unite, to comfort, to enlighten, and to transform. The dignity of the human spirit lies in our refusal to bow before the universe, in our raging against the forces that bind us.

I am speaking to you today because you are dying a slow, terrible death that only the creative process can assuage. Save yourselves by nurturing your talents or be crushed by life!

I am usually one who receives thanks, but today I offer it. I am thankful for the art, the music, the literature, and the philosophy that pours out of us and flows over us, that wellspring of healing that washes away our pain, our fears, our loneliness, our despair, and refreshes our hope, our dreams, our courage, our lives.

I thank those great visionaries whose unbowed heads dreamt of the stars and the atom, created a Starry Night and a Lilliput. I thank Nietzsche and Plato, Galileo, Newton, Einstein, and Bohr. I thank Pablo, Edward, Georgia, and Leonardo. I thank Feodor Dostoevsky, William Faulkner, Jorge Luis Borges, and Kurt Vonnegut. I thank Beethoven and Chopin, John Lennon and Willie Dixon, Jimi Hendrix and Janis Joplin, and every other tinkerer with truth and beauty who has helped draw me up from the cesspool, peel open my eyes, and show me what I really was and how I could be so much more.

Remember that. You are not yet the person you can one day be.”

W.W. leans back and continues reading as the camera zooms in for a close up of the title. Fade to black...



~ Join or Renew ~  
The Humanist Society  
of the Suncoast.

5

### Annual Dues

\_ Trial –3 month– free news

\_ Regular –\$25.

\_ Renewal (January)

\_ Reg. Couple –\$30.

\_ Supporter –35/45 (W/ pin)

\_ Life –\$200.

\_ Life Couple –\$250.

\_ Associate –\$10.

\_ Contribution for growth

*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 to:*

**Glenn Paul, Asst. Treasurer  
Humanist Society of the Suncoast  
2507 First St. #E  
Indian Rocks Beach  
33785-3010**

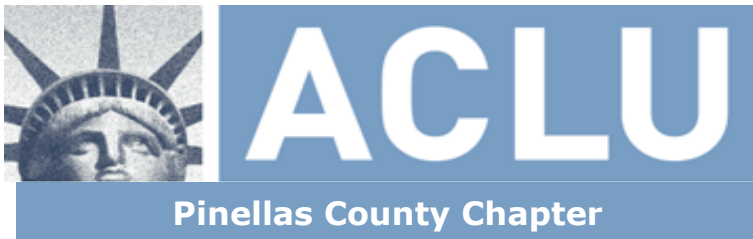
## Humanist Quotes

“The four characteristics of humanism are curiosity, a free mind, belief in good taste, and belief in the human race.”

*E. M. Forster*







Cordially invites you to join us in celebration of two great institutional advocates for civil liberty,

*The Holocaust Museum & PolitiFact*

Join us on Thursday Evening,

**December 6 2012** 

St. Petersburg Bayfront  
333 1st St. S., St. Petersburg, FL, 33701

Read our newsletter at:

[www.clip-pinellas.org](http://www.clip-pinellas.org)



**|| Our Program ||**

6 to 7 PM REGISTRATION, SOCIAL HOUR, & CASH BAR  
7 PM OPENING REMARKS, BOARD ELECTIONS AND DINNER

*Choose your entrée from The Evening's Menu*

**Beef** - London Broil Marsala, or **Chicken** Marsala, or **Vegetable** Moussaka. All with suitable accompaniments,

Please RSVP\* as soon as you can. Hurry, space is limited - Interest is high!

\$45 per person, (\$30 if limited income). Place your reservation by: November 30th, 2012

- • • CHECK: Send it with this filled-out coupon to: ACLU Dinner P. O. Box 12372 St. Petersburg, FL 33733
- • • PHONE: Call (727) 347-4266 (Leave message)
- **Reservations required for admission.**
- • • E-MAIL: (To reserve and pay at the door\*) [mbuu@earthlink.net](mailto:mbuu@earthlink.net)  
Sorry, no credit cards.

\*Your RSVP is a commitment on which our costs are based. Payment is therefore required for every reservation regardless of attendance.

Make your check out to: **ACLU Annual Dinner**

(circle a menu selection for each name. Print more coupons to register more names)

NAME _____	Beef	Chicken	Vegetable
\$ _____			
NAME _____	Beef	Chicken	Vegetable
\$ _____			
NAME _____	Beef	Chicken	Vegetable
\$ _____			
NAME _____	Beef	Chicken	Vegetable
\$ _____			
PHONE _____	E-MAIL _____		
TOTAL \$ _____			

Join with community leaders Thursday, December 6th to honor our Heritage of Freedom!

**Bank of Wisdom**  
*Electronic publishing to make the world better*

These Rare Books are Amazing, and only a penny a page. Bank of Wisdom is listing thousands of Rare and Suppressed books in PDF format. These eBooks have a picture of every page so exact reliability is maintained. Yet these eBooks can be Searched and the Cut-and-Paste feature is active, these books can be used for scholarly research, and quoted by page and paragraph, just like the actual book. And for the casual reader there is no end of amazing and interesting facts and ideas that will enlighten, educate, astound, and elevate your view of History and the World. Most important we specialize in books to un-brainwash. The cost of most PDF instant downloads is \$.01 per page. (\$1.00 per hundred page book.) Set up your account here:

<http://bankofwisdom.com>

The ritual performance of **the legend of democracy** in the autumn of 2012 promises the conspicuous consumption of \$5.8 billion, enough money, to prove that our flag is still there. Forbidden the use of words apt to depress a Q Score or disturb a Gallup poll, the candidates stand as product placements meant to be seen instead of heard, their quality to be inferred from the cost of their manufacture. The sponsors of the event, generous to a fault but careful to remain anonymous, dress it up with the bursting in air of star-spangled photo ops, abundant assortments of multi-flavored sound bites, and the candidates so well-contrived that they can be played for jokes.



**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 student organization is open to anyone of any religious persuasion or personal beliefs. Write **Rodrick Colbert** or [freethinkersusf@gmail.com](mailto:freethinkersusf@gmail.com) for details.

## 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)



Clearwater, Florida

UU Humanists will be meeting on Sunday, November 21, at 12:30, for its regular monthly meeting at Unitarian-Universalist Clearwater. The presentation topic will be announced later. The expected and usually lively discussion will follow the presentation. All are welcome.

Watch for an announcement about the first annual Bay Area Freethinkers Winterfest coming in January!



*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 (NOW) is in strong opposition to the Personhood Amendment ballot initiative for which the organization Personhood Florida is currently collecting signatures, according to Florida NOW president Donna Slutiak. "This amendment is ridiculous and an insult to women," Slutiak said. "The issue of Personhood would have very far reaching results, and would do more than criminalize abortion; it would also make birth control pills and the IUD illegal in the state of Florida. The amendment states that human life begins at the time when an egg is fertilized, which will also impact in-vitro-fertilization clinics. How would you like your mother's fertilized eggs that are sitting in a clinic freezer to have inheritance rights?"

Do you want to have to go underground to get your birth control pills?" Florida NOW expects all intelligent people to pledge not to sign this initiative, and to vote against it, if by some fluke it does get on the ballot. Personhood is bad for womanhood."

## Tampa Humanist Association

Saturday November 17th, 2012 at 11.00am

Jimmie B. Keele Library,  
2902 W. Bearss Avenue, Tampa, FL.

Look for the Tampa Humanist Association sign.

Topic: **An academic's visit to Belarus:  
Exploring the Criminal Justice System on  
the eve of an attempted transition to  
Democracy.**

**William R. Blount, Ph.D.** Professor Emeritus, Chair Emeritus  
Criminology University of South Florida

A visit to Minsk in May of 1993 after the transition to Byelorussian independence. What you will hear about and see is that visit through my eyes – those of a consummate tourist and a Criminologist who spent his career blending the academic with the real world. It will include the Offices of the KGB.

Dr. Blount is Professor Emeritus and Chairperson Emeritus of the Department of Criminology at the University of South Florida, where his teaching responsibilities center on research methods, statistics and program evaluation. He continues to instruct in these areas both at USF and at Saint Leo University. He is also President/CEO of W.R. Blount and Associates, Inc., an independent program evaluation and consulting firm with a specialty in justice and court-related programs.

He has conducted numerous evaluations of intervention programs including programs in the public schools, the courts, law enforcement and corrections agencies, and both public and private treatment programs. He has more than 40 publications to his credit and has authored more than 200 other professional papers, workshops and technical reports.

His areas of expertise include Criminal Justice, Research & Evaluation, Statistics, Alcohol & Substance Abuse, Female Criminality and Police Training.

For a complete schedule of events see:

<http://www.meetup.com/Tampa-Humanist-Association>

When Apple Inc. founder **Steve Jobs** died after a long fight with cancer last year, software engineer Tony Tseung sent an email to a Buddhist group in Thailand to find out what happened to his old boss now that he's no longer of this world.

This month, Mr. Tseung received his answer. Mr. Jobs has been reincarnated as a celestial warrior-philosopher, the Dhammakaya group said in a special television broadcast, and he's living in a mystical glass palace hovering above his old office at Apple's Cupertino, California headquarters. Some of Mr. Jobs's admirers in Malaysia later gathered on a tropical island and in a religious ceremony each took a bite from an apple before flinging the fruit into the sea in a bid to speed up his reincarnation. Now, Phra Chaibul Dhammajayo, abbot at the Dhammakaya Temple just north of Bangkok, claims Mr. Jobs has already been reborn. "After Steve Jobs passed away, he was reincarnated as a divine being with a special knowledge and appreciation for science and the arts", the Dhammakaya leader said in the first of a series of sermons beamed to hundreds of thousands of the group's followers around the world. ...

Apple's mantra of using technology to bring people closer together also dovetails neatly with the teachings of the orange-robed monks. They preach a worldly, tech-savvy form of Buddhism which instructs worshippers that it isn't a sin to grow rich, as long as they contribute a chunk of their earnings to the Dhammakaya cause.

An Apple spokeswoman declined to comment.

# Freedom of Thought for Our World, and Our Future



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

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

Freethought Organizations in the Tampa Bay Area:

Americans United,\* 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 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



TBCC is an autonomous adjunct to the Humanist Society.

### **A LESS THAN "GREAT" DEBATE ON ENERGY**

In the second debate, a questioner from the audience asked president Obama if there is something the latter can do to lower gasoline prices. The ensuing fiction-laced candidate dialogue featured assertions like the following:

- America has a century's worth of cheap natural gas. (It doesn't, and production levels will probably begin declining within the next couple of years.)
- Oil drilling in North Dakota will soon free the U.S. of the need to import oil. (It won't, and production there will similarly peak and start to wane in the next 2-5 years.)
- The president of the United States should be held accountable for high gasoline prices. (In fact, aside from temporary gestures like opening the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, there's almost nothing a president can do to reduce gas prices, which mostly track the global price of crude oil.)

The reality is that America faces profound energy challenges. The "Beverly Hillbillies" era of cheap oil is over, and with it the decades-long spate of economic expansion that both candidates appear to believe is the birthright of all citizens. Oil production costs have skyrocketed in recent years, and out of desperation drilling companies are using costly techniques like hydrofracturing to wring crude from low-grade reservoirs. The energy world portrayed in the debates—in which coal is "clean" and oil and gas companies will lead the U.S. to a new era of energy abundance if only they are unleashed or regulated properly—is a stage set carefully crafted by fossil fuel industry PR professionals and political consultants. Once viewers have dutifully mistaken this painted scenery for reality, it's the actors' job to raise the audience's adrenaline levels with taunts and sneers. Meanwhile, outside the theater, the real world is hurtling toward an energy supply crisis for which no one is being prepared, and whose impact will not be blunted by sensible policy. Summon the scapegoat.

*by Richard Heinberg, Director of the Post Carbon Institute*

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



# Humanist Books

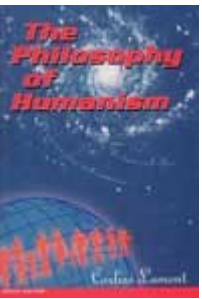


## One Planet One People by Carl Coon \$22.



Former Ambassador to Nepal, Carl Coon provides a highly readable overview of the evolution of human society, arguing that the 21st century will witness a crucially important and difficult transition for the human race. Blending the disciplines of anthropology and evolutionary psychology with over thirty years of experience in the diplomatic corps, Coon traces the evolution of the human tendency to divide others into two groups, "us versus them." Today, he argues, we have reached a stage where the whole world must be viewed as "us," if we are to overcome the global challenges we face. Hardcover 149 pp.

## The Philosophy of Humanism - Dr. Corliss Lamont \$16.95



In a work that is a standard text and reference in the ongoing international discussion around secular humanism, Lamont offers an argument for a philosophy that advocates for happiness in this life rather than hope for an undefined afterlife. Paperback, 371 pages.

These books and a great many more, plus pins buttons, stickers, etc. can be ordered

from:

## Evolve Fish

<http://evolvefish.com/fish/HumanistPress.html>

**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 Foundation Beyond Belief is sponsoring a local "light up the night Walk" on behalf of The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society (LLS). This is a walk, not a run or jog, and there will be assistance along the trail. For more information see:

<http://pages.lightthenight.org/2012/>

Endorsed by the American Humanist Association, Center For Inquiry, Harvard Humanist Chaplaincy & Alumni, Secular Student Alliance, and United Coalition of Reason, and nearly every national association. The Steifel Family has promised to match every dollar up to \$500,000. **A short walk for a great cause!**

**"...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

**4. Pandemics and Biosecurity.** Recent experiments show how Avian flu may become transmissible among mammals. In an era of constant and rapid international travel, what steps should the United States take to protect our population from emerging diseases, global pandemics and/or deliberate biological attacks?

**5. Education.** Increasingly, the global economy is driven by science, technology, engineering and math, but a recent comparison of 15-year-olds in 65 countries found that average science scores among U.S. students ranked 23rd, while average U.S. math scores ranked 31st. In your view, why have American students fallen behind over the last three decades, and what role should the federal government play to better prepare students of all ages for the science and technology-driven global economy?

**6. Energy.** Many policymakers and scientists say energy security and sustainability are major problems facing the United States this century. What policies would you support to meet the demand for energy while ensuring an economically and environmentally sustainable future?

**7. Food.** Thanks to science and technology, the United States has the world's most productive and diverse agricultural sector, yet many Americans are increasingly concerned about the health and safety of our food. The use of hormones, antibiotics and pesticides, as well as animal diseases and even terrorism pose risks. What steps would you take to ensure the health, safety and productivity of America's food supply?

**8. Fresh Water.** Less than one percent of the world's water is liquid fresh water, and scientific studies suggest that a majority of U.S. and global fresh water is now at risk because of increasing consumption, evaporation and pollution. What steps, if any, should the federal government take to secure clean, abundant fresh water for all Americans?

**9. The Internet.** The Internet plays a central role in both our economy and our society. What role, if any, should the federal government play in managing the Internet to ensure its robust social, scientific, and economic role?

**10. Ocean Health.** Scientists estimate that 75 percent of the world's fisheries are in serious decline, habitats like coral reefs are threatened, and large areas of ocean and coastlines are polluted. What role should the federal government play domestically and through foreign policy to protect the environmental health and economic vitality of the oceans?

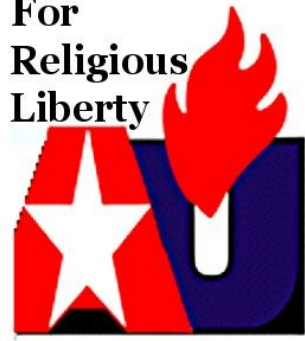
**11. Science in Public Policy.** We live in an era when science and technology affect every aspect of life and society, and so must be included in well-informed public policy decisions. How will you ensure that policy and regulatory decisions are fully informed by the best available scientific and technical information, and that the public is able to evaluate the basis of these policy decisions?

**12. Space.** The United States is currently in a major discussion over our national goals in space. What should America's space exploration and utilization goals be in the 21st century and what steps should the government take to help achieve them?

(Continued on Page 12)

*A Tradition of Advocacy*

**For  
Religious  
Liberty**



**Americans United  
for Separation of Church & State**  
~ Pinellas County Chapter ~

For more information, see: <http://www.au.org/>  
The Chapter meets at Good Samaritan Church located at 6085 Park Blvd, Pinellas Park (61st St.). The next meeting will be the annual meeting in next March. We are working for the defeat of Amendment 8, the so called Freedom of Religion Amendment. It allows tax payer funds to support religious schools & organizations. Also, we will be contacting local churches to remind them of the legal dos and don'ts concerning pulpit

## 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

**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 at: <http://www.facebook.com/groups/HumanistFamiliesTampa/>

## Redefining Success

Today's topic is redefining success. We all want to feel successful, the problem is, how? Will achieving professional goals help us feel successful? Will making more money? How we define success impacts our self worth and that impacts our happiness. Choosing your personal goals wisely is important. I define success in life by the quality of my personal relationship and by whether or not I am the ethical person I know I want to be. Sure, I have other more professional goals I want to achieve, and that I actively strive for, but whether I accomplish them or not, I feel successful. Why? Because I have wonderful people in my life and when I am challenged, I tend to do the right thing. And that feels pretty good.

Read more here: <http://www.brudenton.com/2012/06/16/4079662/overcoming-fear-with-compassion.html#storylink=cpy>

## Holidays of Special Interest to Freethinkers

- **Oct 12th** - Freethought Day
- **Oct 24<sup>th</sup>** - United Nations Day
- **Oct 31st** - Halloween – a little old fashioned pagan challenge to orthodoxy

## 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 (Active) Co-Organizer:  
MacDill Atheists & Secular Humanists  
(MASH) MacDill AFB, FL



# Atheists of Florida



**Chair, Tracy Thomas**  
**President, Ed Golly**  
**Vice President, Frank Prahl**  
**Treasurer, Nan Owens**

**AoF outreach programs** can be found at our [Meetup](#) site. The next meeting is on Nov. 11th at 1:30 at the new meeting hall on 5103 South Westshore Blvd. in Tampa. A copy of the current 2012 newsletters are available by writing to: [AthAIFLE@aol.com](mailto:AthAIFLE@aol.com).

Look for exciting new programs and internet webcasts (audio & video) in the offering very soon. 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. We affirm the positive values of a rigorously logical and scientific approach to the problems of life.

At the same time, 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.

As an institution committed to bring the enormously prolific benefits of the atheist proposition to ever larger numbers of our citizens, we desire to enable an enlightened majority of truly free people to turn their intelligence toward the real problems we all must face.

AoF has been a leader in the effort to preserve church state separation. We look forward to serving a growing constituency.



## Institute for Science and Human Values

*Inspired by Empathy, Creativity and guided by Reason*

No Local chapters. See <http://www.instituteforscienceandhumanvalues.net/>

### Religious Freedom Day

Monday, January 16, 2013, marks the celebration of the birthday of Martin Luther King. However, it also marks the celebration of Religious Freedom Day. This special day honors the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom passed by the Virginia General Assembly on January 16, 1786. (Thomas Jefferson wrote the law in 1777, and it was introduced to the Assembly in 1779.)

The law defends freedom of thought, freedom of conscience, and the separation of church and state. It was the predecessor to the First Amendment right of religious freedom. It regards religious freedom as a natural right, and maintains that no one may be forced to attend church or to support a place of worship with taxes.

In this day, it is especially important that Americans celebrate this special day. Threats to religious liberty have never been greater. Conservative Christians are attempting to prevent Muslims from building mosques.

In several U.S. states Conservative Christian politicians are attempting to pass laws against Sharia law, even though it poses no threat to the nation. Indeed, the 10<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court of Appeals recently ruled against Oklahoma's proposed anti-Sharia law, finding that Sharia was no threat to the state. Influential politicians such as Newt Gingrich have led such efforts that discourage the growth of Islam and, at least inadvertently, promote Christianity.

Please join the Institute for Science and Human Values by contacting President Obama and your U.S. senators and representatives and local politicians to ask for their support in keeping church and state separate.

11/12

### Freethought Film Festival *Promoting Reason through Film*

The International Freethought Film Festival is a home for Independent films from around the globe that critically examine truth-claims. The International Freethought Film Festival tagline, "Going there!!!", is a reflection of this.

### **Tampa Bay Secular Celebrants**

Humanist Memorials, Weddings, Rites of Passage. Contact:

[Rick O'Keefe](#), CFI certified,

[Virginia Kohl-Lieberman](#), AHA certified

### **Our Humanist Traveling Library** **Has a new Librarian - Marios Psomas!**

We have a wonderful library of current books. This is a circulating library that depends on the integrity (and memory) of members to return and keep circulated, the many volumes in this fine unique collection.

Thanks once again to the great and generous efforts of **Matt Cooper**, Matt has "paid it forward", now it's our turn.





CFI–Tampa Bay is supporting Leukemia and Lymphoma Foundation with two teams (click for the team page), **12**  
**Light The Night's Pinellas Walk** at Bright House Networks Field on **Nov 3**, 2012 for the team Center for Inquiry

Tampa Bay-Pinellas-FBB, and **Light The Night's Tampa Walk** at George M. Steinbrenner Field on **Nov 10**, 2012  
for the team Center for Inquiry-Tampa Bay-FBB. *How can you help?* If you can't walk, you can donate. All the  
organizations are participating. Details and sign-up: <http://www.lightthenight.org/>.

## Local Events

CFI is co-sponsoring The Humanist Society of the Suncoast event on  
November 3 in Clearwater <http://www.meetup.com/SuncoastHumanist/events/>

CFI is co-sponsoring Tampa Humanist Assoc. lecture, Nov. 17th, in New Tampa,

<http://www.meetup.com/Tampa-Humanist-Association/>

Click for our **Calendar**: <http://www.centerforinquiry.net/tampa/events/calendar/2012/09/>

## National Events

May 17-29, 2013--Women in Secularism

### Some of our divisions:

**African Americans for Humanism**

**Tampa Bay Skeptics** -- Central Florida's famous Skeptics assoc. See page **14**.

**The Committee for Skeptical Inquiry** – world-wide assoc. of Skeptics and scientific investigations.

**Cognitive NeuroSciences, Inc.** -- Science-of-the-brain secular humanist oriented counseling/therapy center.

To become part of our important work, and to make a difference, become a **member**:

[http://www.centerforinquiry.net/support/donate\\_now/](http://www.centerforinquiry.net/support/donate_now/)

### *Free Inquirers Club, a monthly discussion.*

Contact David Vangsness for details: [CLICK here](#).



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>

### **Doc (Dave Dockery)**

President, Tampa Bay Computer Society

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

*"We repair our members' computers for free!"*

### Scientific American Poll *(Continued from page 9)*

**13. Critical Natural Resources.** Supply shortages of natural  
resources affect economic growth, quality of life,  
and national security; for example China currently produces  
97 percent of rare earth elements needed for advanced  
electronics. What steps should the federal government take  
to ensure the quality and availability of critical natural  
resources?

**14. Vaccination and public health.** Vaccination campaigns  
against preventable diseases such as measles, polio and  
whooping cough depend on widespread participation to be  
effective, but in some communities vaccination rates have  
fallen off sharply. What actions would you support to  
enforce vaccinations in the interest of public health, and in  
what circumstances should exemptions be allowed?

*The two campaigns have already answered the questions,  
but SA's editors have not yet evaluated those answers.*

*PIQUE readers can preview the answers here:*

[www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=obama-romney-science-debate&WT.mc\\_id=SA\\_WR\\_20120905](http://www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=obama-romney-science-debate&WT.mc_id=SA_WR_20120905)

Let us know what you think.

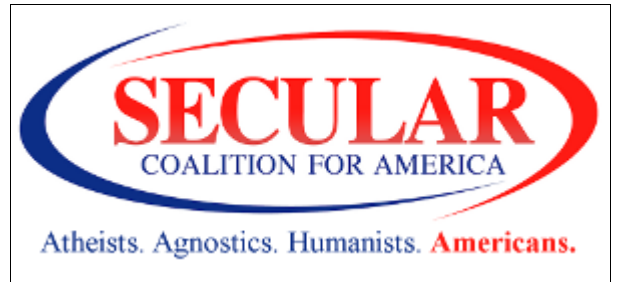




## National Secular Movement Update Newsletter and Call

Call Every Thursday from 12PM - 12:30PM (ET)  
Phone Number: 559-726-1300 Code: 199568

<http://secular.org/>



### What is Tampa Bay Skeptics?

Founded in 1988, Tampa Bay Skeptics is a nonprofit educational and scientific organization devoted to the critical examination of **paranormal** and **fringe-science** claims, and the dissemination of factual information about such claims. In 2004, TBS became a Special Interest Group of the **Center For Inquiry–Tampa Bay**.

Particular areas of interest to TBS include UFOs, "**psychic**" power, **astrology**, **fringe science & medicine**, purported **miracles** and other **New Age** claims. Our interest in religion is restricted to claims that can be objectively tested and potentially verified, such as "weeping icons" or miraculous healings.

TBS conducts its own investigations, follows the activities of other skeptics groups, monitors the press coverage of the paranormal, and publishes a quarterly newsletter, *Tampa Bay Skeptics Report*, which is also distributed gratis to members of the press and to many other skeptics groups around the world. TBS also makes its representatives available to local and national media to provide a skeptical voice as a counterweight to the irrationalism and superstition that is increasingly prevalent in the television and print media. We have been instrumental in examining and reporting upon the Tarpon Springs "weeping icon," hypnosis, (in)famous psychics, local astrologers, etc.

TBS does not reject claims out of hand, but rather is committed to objective and critical inquiry. In this vein, we share the philosophy of the Committee for Skeptical Inquiry (CSI) -- publisher of *Skeptical Inquirer* magazine, an international organization that has nurtured the growth of local skeptics groups (such as ours) all over the world.

### Membership in TBS

We encourage those who wish to help further the cause of skepticism to join TBS! You can take your first step, and make a statement about irrationality and superstition at the same time, by writing a check for \$15 to cover your first year's dues. Annual membership includes four issues of *Tampa Bay Skeptics Report*, each snailmailed to you in advance of our quarterly meetings (last Saturday of every March, June, September, and December). Members also receive a 30% discount on any **Prometheus Books** purchased through TBS.

Make your \$15 check payable to "Tampa Bay Skeptics" and mail to:

**CFI c/o O'Keefe, 4011 S. Manhattan Ave., Box 139, Tampa, FL 33611-1277**

**Or click to simply join our [TBS e-mail list\(s\)](#)? Or order [TBS T-shirts](#)? Or join [CFI–Tampa Bay](#)?**

# Paul Kurtz, 1925-2012



Paul Kurtz, founder and longtime chair of the Committee for Skeptical Inquiry, the Council for Secular Humanism, and the Center for Inquiry, has died at the age of 86. He was one of the most influential figures in the humanist and skeptical movements from the late 1960s through the first decade of the twenty-first century. Among his best-known creations are the skeptics' magazine *Skeptical Inquirer*, the secular humanist magazine *Free Inquiry*, and the independent publisher Prometheus Books.

**Early Life.** Paul Kurtz was born on December 21, 1925, to Martin and Anna Kurtz of Newark, New Jersey. He enrolled briefly at Washington Square College of New York University before enlisting in the U. S. Army at age 19, at the height of World War II. He fought in the Battle of the Bulge and served in a unit that liberated the Dachau concentration camp. He was demobilized eighteen months after the war's end and resumed his studies at New York University (NYU).

At NYU Kurtz studied philosophy under Sidney Hook, who had himself been a protégé of the pragmatist philosopher John Dewey. The philosophy of Dewey and Hook, arguably the greatest American thinkers in the humanist tradition, would deeply influence Kurtz's thought and activism. Kurtz graduated from NYU in 1948 and earned his Ph. D. in philosophy at Columbia University in 1952.

**Academic Career.** Kurtz taught philosophy at Trinity College from 1952 to 1959. He joined the faculty at Union College from 1961 to 1965; during this period he was also a visiting lecturer at the New School for Social Research. In 1965 he was recruited by the new State University of New York at Buffalo. The former University of Buffalo had recently been absorbed into the state university system; under Governor Nelson Rockefeller, the institution launched an aggressive program to recruit top young academics to its faculty. Kurtz became professor of philosophy at SUNY-Buffalo, a post he held until his retirement from teaching in 1991. At this stage of his career, Kurtz focused principally on methods of objective inquiry and the history of American philosophy. He contributed the significant entry "American Philosophy" to the influential first edition of the *Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (1967), edited by Paul Edwards. He edited two large anthologies of American philosophy and published his best-known scholarly work, *Decision and the Condition of Man* (1968).

**The Humanist Movement.** It was in the late 1960s that Kurtz embarked on the pursuit whose prominence would exceed even that of his career as a philosopher, when he began his involvement with the humanist movement. In 1967 he was named editor of *The Humanist*, published by the American Humanist Association (AHA), then the nation's only significant humanist organization. He took the magazine in new directions, both by making its content more sharply critical of religion and by using aggressive techniques to expand its circulation. Arguably, *The Humanist* never enjoyed greater cultural prominence or higher circulation than during Kurtz's editorship, but his forceful style led to friction with others within AHA, including some members of its board of directors. Kurtz gave up editorship of *The Humanist* and parted ways with AHA in 1978. Ironically, that was the very year in which, owing to Kurtz's influence, AHA moved its headquarters from San Francisco to Amherst, New York, the location of SUNY-Buffalo's suburban campus. (AHA would remain headquartered off Harlem Road in Amherst until it moved to Washington, D. C., in 2000.)

Kurtz was for more than a quarter-century an influential figure in the International Humanist and Ethical Union (IHEU), a worldwide network of national humanist organizations founded in Amsterdam in 1952. He joined IHEU's board of directors in 1969 and served as the organization's co-chairman from 1986 to 1994. During this period, Kurtz hosted IHEU's Tenth World Congress, held at SUNY-Buffalo during the summer of 1988.

**The Kurtz-founded Organizations.** Kurtz would be better known for his work through organizations he founded and shaped from their inception.

In 1969 he founded Prometheus Books, a for-profit publishing company that quickly emerged as the dominant imprint in skepticism, humanism, and atheism. It would become the most prolific publisher of atheist and humanist titles in history. Since its founding it has published more than 2500 titles in what has become a broad range of genres. Significant milestones included the 1998 acquisition of most of the assets of the scholarly publisher Humanities Press International, giving rise to Prometheus's imprint Humanity Books, and the formation in 2005 of its Pyr division, which has emerged as a prestige imprint for science fiction and fantasy fiction. Now led by Paul Kurtz's son Jonathan, the most impressive achievement of Prometheus Books may be that it has retained its independence during five decades in which an enormous number of independent publishers closed down or were absorbed. Paul Kurtz was perhaps best known for the three mutually supportive not-for-profit organizations he founded in Buffalo and later Amherst, New York, now known as the Committee for Skeptical Inquiry, the Council for Secular Humanism, and the Center for Inquiry.

Kurtz and others founded the world's first organization devoted solely to scientific criticism of paranormal claims at an April 1976 conference at SUNY-Buffalo whose participants included author Isaac Asimov, author-mathematician Martin Gardner, and magician James Randi. The organization was originally known as the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal, and became widely known by its acronym, CSICOP. Several months after its formation CSICOP launched a journal, *The Zetetic*, which later achieved great prominence as the *Skeptical Inquirer*, which continues to be published bimonthly. During its early years CSICOP encouraged the formation of local skeptics

*Continued on next page (15)*



**Continued from Page 14...**

groups across the United States, and of independent national skeptics organizations across the world. These groups would form the kernel of today's international skeptical movement. In 2006, the organization shortened its name to the Committee for Skeptical Inquiry, partly to show that its concerns now extended beyond its original focus on paranormal claims to include the public understanding of science and issues in medicine and mental health.

In 1980, two years after his departure from the American Humanist Association, Kurtz launched a new, more explicitly nonreligious humanist organization, the Council for Democratic and Secular Humanism (CODESH). The word "Democratic" was added to demonstrate the group's opposition to Communist totalitarianism, an important consideration since non-theism was then strongly associated with Communism in the public mind. The new organization's first act was to release *A Secular Humanist Declaration*, a position document originally signed by 57 distinguished activists and academics. Its release was covered in a front-page story in the *New York Times*. The Council simultaneously launched a journal, *Free Inquiry*, with Kurtz as its publisher and founding editor. *Free Inquiry* quickly became the best-respected and highest-circulation humanist magazine in the U. S. It continues to be published bimonthly.

In 1996, in response to the collapse of European Communism, the organization shortened its name to the Council for Secular Humanism. It maintains a network of independent local groups, operates North America's only freethought museum, and engages in a variety of educational and advocacy activities. Since 2007 the Council has been lead plaintiff in a lawsuit that challenges contracts between the state of Florida and explicitly religious social service providers.

In 1991, Kurtz's skeptical and secular-humanist organizations relocated from Buffalo to Amherst, New York. In the same year Kurtz founded a third major non-profit organization, the Center for Inquiry. Originally conceived as a platform for consolidating activities that CSICOP and CODESH conducted in parallel, from magazine production to payroll, the Center grew into an advocacy organization in its own right. Its agenda encompassed both CSICOP's skepticism and CODESH's secular humanism, placing both in a broader cultural and intellectual context. In addition to the Center for Inquiry headquarters campus in Amherst, which Kurtz expanded to some 35,000 square feet, there at various times more than fifty branch Centers for Inquiry operated in other American cities and across the world, employing a variety of operating models. From its transnational headquarters at Amherst, the Center conducted a wide range of educational programs, including an online master's degree program in conjunction with the University at Buffalo. Its research libraries hold the world's largest collections of humanist, skeptical, and related literature.

**Awards and Recognitions.** Paul Kurtz received numerous awards and other encomia. In 1992 he was named a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. In 1996 the main-belt asteroid Kurtz 6629 was named in his honor. In 2000 he received the International Rationalist Award at the Second International Rationalist Conference at Trivandrum, India. In 2001 he received the Charles P. Norton Medal, the highest award bestowed by the State University of New York at Buffalo. In 2009 he received the Eupraxopher Award, a special lifetime

achievement award, from the Center for Inquiry, as well as the Philip J. Klass Award from the National Capital Area Skeptics. In 2010 he received a lifetime achievement award at The Amazing Meeting (TAM) sponsored by the James Randi Educational Foundation.

**Publications.** Paul Kurtz wrote or edited more than fifty books for scholarly or general audiences. Among the better-known are *Exuberance: A Philosophy of Happiness* (1977); *Forbidden Fruit: The Ethics of Humanism* (1988); *Eupraxophy: Living without Religion* (1989); *The Transcendental Temptation: A Critique of Religion and the Paranormal* (1991); *The New Skepticism: Inquiry and Reliable Knowledge* (1992); and *What Is Secular Humanism?* (2006). His works have been translated into multiple languages. He composed a great number of essays, including editorials that appeared in every issue of *Free Inquiry* magazine from its founding in 1980 until 2009.

Kurtz was also organized humanism's most prolific composer of position documents. When he joined the humanist movement, it was still strongly influenced by the *Humanist Manifesto* of 1933. Drafted and signed by Unitarian ministers (with the conspicuous exception of signer John Dewey), the original *Manifesto* explicitly envisioned humanism as a new religion. On Kurtz's view, a more secular formulation was needed. As editor of *The Humanist* he led a campaign for a new and more relevant *Manifesto*. *Humanist Manifesto II* was published in 1973, having been co-drafted by Kurtz and fellow humanist leader Edwin H. Wilson. Where its predecessor was religious, *Manifesto II* explicitly abjured religiosity. In a passage reflecting Kurtz's writing style, it declared: "Some humanists believe we should reinterpret traditional religions and reinvest them with meanings appropriate to the current situation. Such redefinitions ... perpetuate old dependencies and escapisms; they easily become obscurantist, impeding the free use of the intellect. We need, instead, radically new human purposes and goals."

*Manifesto II* was signed by 114 activists and thought leaders at first publication, and would eventually attract 261 distinguished signers. Its release garnered worldwide media attention including a front-page story in *The New York Times*.

The previously mentioned *A Secular Humanist Declaration* (1980) was drafted solely by Kurtz. It offered a secular humanist interpretation of many of the ideas developed in *Manifesto II*, but steeped in the recognition that an unquestionably nonreligious humanist institution needed to be created, close to but slightly outside of a larger humanist movement that included both religious and nonreligious humanists.

In the late 1990s Kurtz began to compose a new successor document. Originally he planned to title it *Humanist Manifesto III*, asserting the right to do so as the sole living co-author of *Manifesto II*. After the American Humanist Association asserted ownership of the *Manifesto* title and threatened legal action, Kurtz retitled his document *Humanist Manifesto 2000*.

*Humanist Manifesto 2000: A Call for a New Planetary Humanism* was issued in 1999 with about 200 signatures. It was book-length, far lengthier than the previous *Manifestos*, and represented the fullest statement of Kurtz's vision for humanism as a planetary commitment transcending national and ethnic identities. Besides challenging religion and championing the scientific outlook and freedom of thought, Kurtz called for a popularly elected global

*Continued on page (16)*



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### *Continued from page (15)*

parliament, a World Court, a global environmental monitoring institution, and a new international tax to aid the developing world. These internationalist contentions engendered substantial controversy within the humanist movement.

**Principal Contentions.** Kurtz consistently asserted that morality should be rooted in human flourishing and happiness, not on supernatural revelation. He attached high priority to individual liberty in a robustly democratic culture. His ethics were primarily utilitarian, but he tempered his utilitarianism with a strong commitment to basic liberties. As early as 1969 he had written that “there are two basic and minimal principles which especially seem to characterize humanism. First, there is a rejection of any supernatural conception of the universe and a denial that man has any privileged place within nature. Second, there is an affirmation that ethical values are human and have no meaning independent of human experience.” Repeatedly he characterized secular humanism less as a set of moral or philosophical prescriptions than as a process, a template for the conduct of ethical inquiry.

Two further contentions strongly influenced Kurtz’s thought and writing beginning in the mid-1980s. The first was his growing sense of humanism as *necessarily* planetary. He argued that since the principal problems confronting humankind were global in scope, they required transnational solutions. This view was accompanied by an assertive cosmopolitanism that viewed traditional religious, ethnic, and national identities as archaisms to be jettisoned whenever possible.

In addition, he sought an authoritative answer to the question “If secular humanism is not a religion, what is it?” His solution was to coin a new word, *eupraxophy* (in later years spelled *eupraxosophy*). Formed from Greek roots meaning roughly “good wisdom and practice in conduct,” the word was meant to label a novel category of intellectual and moral systems that met some of the social needs served by religions without the supernaturalism or authoritarianism of traditional faiths. Kurtz made his most extended argument for the coinage in his 1989 book *Eupraxophy: Living without Religion*. A subsequent edition was titled *Living without Religion: Eupraxophy*. The neologism’s move from title to subtitle reflected the coinage’s fate. Kurtz’s arguments for eupraxosophy were received respectfully, and some activists eagerly restyled themselves “eupraxosophers.” Ultimately, however, the term failed to get traction and is infrequently used in the movement today.

**Later Life.** While Kurtz’s son Jonathan had succeeded him as president of Prometheus Books, Kurtz continued to exercise day-to-day control of the non-profit organizations he had founded well

past his eightieth birthday. After 2005 there was heightened concern on the part of the organizations’ directors to implement a specific succession process. In June 2008, attorney and philosopher Ronald A. Lindsay succeeded Kurtz as president and CEO of the Center for Inquiry, the Council for Secular Humanism, and the Committee for Skeptical Inquiry. Lindsay was Kurtz’s personal selection for the position. Kurtz continued to serve as board chair until June 2009, when Buffalo investment advisor Richard Schroeder was elected Chair and Kurtz assumed the new position of Chair Emeritus. Kurtz faced this process with increasing reluctance, and on May 18, 2010, he announced his resignation from all of his remaining positions at the three nonprofit organizations. His office continued to be reserved for his use whenever the Center for Inquiry – Transnational in Amherst was open.

Late in 2010, Kurtz announced the founding of a new organization, the Institute for Science and Human Values. It released a manifesto-style document titled *Neo-Humanist Statement of Secular Principles and Values* with more than 150 signers and announced a new quarterly journal, *The Human Prospect*.

**Conclusion.** Ultimately, Paul Kurtz did much to shape the American and world humanist movements during the final third of the twentieth century. He was a prodigious organizer, responsible for much of the social landscape through which nonreligious Americans moved before the emergence of the so-called New Atheist movement in the middle 2000s. At the same time, a vibrant and varied skeptics’ community now served by dozens of local and national organizations might not exist at all – and surely would not have its current form – if not for Kurtz’s founding of the first modern skeptical organization, CSICOP. His most enduring legacy may be the Center for Inquiry, which continues to stand as the larger movement’s largest, most active, and highest-budgeted organization.



### **CoR Leadership Team 2012**

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