



# The Tampa Bay Coalition of Reason

# Freethought News

Volume 1 No. 4 Sept. 2012 Jim Peterson, Editor

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\* Member organizations

## Two Brilliant lights of Tampa Bay Freethought are extinguished.



**Rob Byrch**, President of the Tampa Humanist Association and long time member and board member of the Humanist Society died on August 1st. He had gone to Tampa General Hospital for removal of an intestinal cyst, and was in the recovery room when he suffered a fatal heart attack.

He had been confidently optimistic about THC and his own future, and was looking forward to being free of the pain he had endured through much of the preceding year. Robert was a kind, generous, sensitive, and highly intelligent man who embodied a great many of the qualities that distinguish the life of someone who lives as a Humanist. Above all, he was a great and good friend.

For more on Rob and the future of the Tampa Humanist Association, see Page 7.

## Directory

### Tampa Bay Coalition of Reason

#### Calendar

Rick O'Keefe

#### Website

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.

**Bill Hall**, a longtime Senior Instructional Specialist at the Clearwater Campus, was found dead at age 49 on Tuesday, Aug. 7. Hall, who began working at St. Petersburg Junior College in 1988 as a part-time Instructional Assistant in the Learning Support Center, became a full-time employee in 1990 teaching writing and reading labs. An alumnus of SPJC, Hall was a finalist for the college's prestigious Apollo Award in 1989.

For members of the freethought community, his clever and apparently magical illusions always invited a perplexed smile. He was fascinated by the endless ways our human perception is vulnerable to illusions and tricks. He knew this was a facet of ourselves that invoked the creativity of our imaginations, while making us the gullible creatures we often are. He spoke often for the benefit of many freethought groups around the bay area and beyond.

"He was excellent instructor and tutor," said Matt Bowen, Associate Provost at the Clearwater Campus who worked in the LSC with Hall for 18 years. "He was a master at teaching students to think critically." Students often would drop by the LSC to talk with him and play with the puzzle and mind-teaser games he kept around his desk. "He was very beloved by students," Bowen said, describing Hall as an intellectual and philosopher with a great sense of humor. Hall received a bachelor's degree in philosophy from the University of South Florida in 1992. He completed additional graduate course work in reading and philosophy. Funeral services are pending.



# August 2012 COR Calendar

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

**Dates/times may change due to unforeseen reasons,**  
Check event details on the Coalition of Reason website at:  
<http://tampabay.unitedcor.org/tampabay/>

## Joint CFI & Brandon Atheists—BRANDON

Starts Sunday night, September 9th, at 7:00 PM  
Location: The Brass Tap, 775 Brandon Town Center, Brandon, FL  
map: [RSVP](#) to Kathryn before Friday, August 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

meets at Countryside Library, **Clearwater Map** at 2741 S.R 580 . Saturday, Sept. 1st at 2 PM will host an open session discussing **The Future of Technology** and what we as a group and

individually can do to address the promise and the consequences. See page [3](#)

## CFI Skeptics in the Pub BRANDON

Mid Day Sunday Mixer Ghengis Grill 910 Providence Ave. Brandon FL. Sunday September 16th at 3:30 PM. More info at: <http://www.meetup.com/CFI-Tampa-Bay/> **RSVP** to Carl at (813) 661-0633 or [here](#).



## UU Clearwater Humanists

UU Humanists will Present a lecture by Nobel Laureate, Sir Harold Kroto on Sunday Sept. 30 at 12:00 pm. For information, folks can contact Bill Norsworthy at 687- 9867 or Mark Brandt at 560-0971. **RSVP** to Mark for most events at [mwbrandt@mail.usf.edu](mailto:mwbrandt@mail.usf.edu)



## Tampa Bay Thinkers Discussion Group CARROLLWOOD CULTURAL CENTER

Monday September 17th at **6:30 pm** RSVP at [website](#).  
**The Philosophy of Resistance 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.  
Location: Carrollwood Cultural Center, 4537 Lowell Rd, Carrollwood, FL 33618 (NW Tampa) Click for a [MAP](#) to the Center.



## Humanist Families of Tampa Bay

Family outing to Legoland with us on Saturday, September 1st . Just going to hang out - play, go to the water park. Admission to the park is required. For more information, see our Facebook page , [Here](#)

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

## Tampa Humanist Association—NEW TAMPA



Starts Saturday, September 15 , 2012 at **11:00 am**  
Location: Jimmie B. Keele Library, 2902 W. Bearss Avenue, Wesley Chapel, FL  
MAP: Jimmie B. Keele Library  
**Topic: Mormonism** with Dr. Ryan Cragun

## CFI Skeptics & Humanists in the Pub—DUNEDIN

Monday, September 24th 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! [Click here](#) before noon, Sept. 24 (Sunday) ([Tampa@CenterForInquiry.net](mailto:Tampa@CenterForInquiry.net) ).

## THA German Cuisine 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 meet on September 10th at 7 PM to discuss the defeat of Amendment 8, the so called Freedom of Religion Amendment. Chapter meets at Good Samaritan Church located at 6085 Park Blvd, Pinellas Park (61st St.). See page [10](#) for more.

## Art Film Meetup:

Dale Friedly host a showing/discussion of:  
**Seeing a Global Lens** film from Cuba



Always see [website](#) for updated info. Studio 620 at 620 1st Ave. S. St. Petersburg, FL Saturday, Sept. 25th at 6:45 PM  
Email: [DaleFried@aol.com](mailto:DaleFried@aol.com)

## Sept. Social Dinner for the Humanist Society

will take place on Sunday September 16th at 5:00 PM at the Island Way Grill This fine restaurant is located at 20 Island Way about half way across the Memorial Causeway, [Check it out at [www.islandwaygrill.com](http://www.islandwaygrill.com)] Must have orders in by 5:30 PM for early bird specials! Please reserve with Glenn Paul at 727-595-3347 or [kpaul29@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:kpaul29@tampabay.rr.com) by Saturday the 15th

**Need Psychological Counseling?** For a secular therapist, see: [Cognitive Neurosciences Inc.](#) Or, [The Therapist Project](#) .







# The Humanist Society of the Suncoast 3

*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](http://www.suncoasthumanist.com)

## OUR FUTURE WITH TECHNOLOGY



**Dave 'Doc' Dockery**, President of the Tampa Bay Computer Society, will discuss: "The Future of Technology". Doc will be speaking about major technological trends and predicting how those trends are going to affect the human race.

Technology as both the instrument of exploration and the means of innovation in creating our world holds some astonishing surprises.

Our lives will change in unexpected ways, and discoveries are lying in wait for us that will alter our view of the universe as well as our view of ourselves.

### Notice of our September Board Meeting

Saturday, September 1st at 12:30 PM just before the regular program at the library. Appropriations for future projects, Programs, and other matters are on the agenda. If you have anything to add to the agenda, please contact the Chair, Jim Peterson, or any of the board members listed on page 4. JP



**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, Sept. 1st 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**, across from the mall.

Volume 20 No. 9

September, 2012



**Too often**, at political conventions, free speech takes a beating.

Political parties intent on keeping the focus on their carefully managed messages do everything they can to make sure protesters don't steal the show. And local authorities let legitimate concerns about security be used to mask totally illegitimate efforts to stifle and silence dissent.

In the next two weeks, tens of thousands of protesters will descend on Tampa where the Republicans are meeting. We have to make sure their First Amendment rights are fully protected.

Working with police and protesters alike to help safeguard free speech, the ACLU is already on the ground in Tampa and Charlotte, where we are:

- Hosting public forums — live and online — educating hundreds of people about their First Amendment rights.
- Distributing "know your rights" materials in advance and during the conventions.
- And will have staff on the ground to monitor police activity at protests during the conventions.

**People Over Politics**



*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 September will be at:

*The Island Way Grill*

on Sunday, September 16th at 5:00 PM. This fine restaurant is located at 20 Island Way, about half way across the Memorial Causeway, a continuation of route 60 through Clearwater on the way to Clearwater Beach. They offer a large selection of early bird specials for \$12.50 per person which includes soup or salad, coffee or tea and a chef's desert. Check it out at [www.islandwaygrill.com](http://www.islandwaygrill.com)

Must have orders in by 5:30 PM for early bird specials! Please reserve with Glenn Paul at 727-595-3347 or [kpaul29@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:kpaul29@tampabay.rr.com) by Saturday September 15th.

## Laugh Lines      Deft Initiations

### HANDKERCHIEF:

Cold Storage.

### INFLATION:

Cutting money in half without damaging the paper.

### MOSQUITO:

An insect that makes you like flies better.

### RAISIN:

A grape with a sunburn.

### SECRET:

Something you tell to one person at a time.

### SKELETON:

A bunch of bones with the person scraped off.

### TOOTHACHE:

The pain that drives you to extraction.

### TOMORROW:

One of the greatest labor saving devices of today.

### YAWN:

An honest opinion openly expressed.

9/12

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.

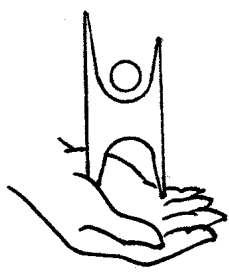
We are putting together a **Speakers Bureau** for outreach. You can help in many ways.

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
- ◆ Patricia Walters (813) 988-5977

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

### Annual Dues

- \_ Trial -3 month- free news
- \_ **Regular -\$25.**
- \_ **Renewal (January)**
- \_ **Reg. Couple -\$30.**
- \_ **Life -\$200.**
- \_ **Life Couple -\$250.**
- \_ **Associate -\$10.**
- \_ **Contribution for growth**

## 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.

*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 \_\_\_\_\_

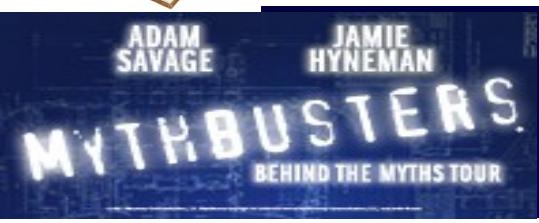
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

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

*(Privacy respected)*

*Send to:*

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



**Sat, Oct 13, 2012 08:00 PM**  
**at the USF Sun Dome**  
4202 East Fowler Ave, Tampa, FL 33620  
Reserve seating available: \$35 to \$190

**Our Humanist Society is actively looking for interesting speakers with novel and well thought out ideas on just about any subject of interest to a general audience - even if not from a distinctly Humanist perspective.**

**Let any board member know if you would like to recommend a speaker or topic.**

### Your published Letters....

"At a time when Florida families and businesses are struggling with staggering levels of unemployment, high energy costs, and slow economic growth, the last thing Washington should do is unnecessarily delay projects like this pipeline that would create American jobs.

He never mentioned the jobs lost due to denial of Governor Rick Scott on the Bullet rail that was voted by Floridians. So he chooses and picks the interest of the Koch brothers that are behind the Pipeline XL."

*Marios Psomas 8/10/12*

### Read Humanist Periodicals:

The Humanist, Free Inquiry, Free Mind, Humanist Perspectives, Skeptical Inquirer, Secular Humanist Bulletin, The Florida Humanist Journal, Skeptic, Essays in Humanism, and many others.

## Humanist Quotes

"The split in America, rather than simply economic, is between those who embrace reason, who function in the real world of cause and effect, and those who, numbed by isolation and despair, now seek meaning in a mythical world of intuition, a world that is no longer reality-based, a world of magic."



— Chris Hedges, *American Fascists: The Christian Right and the War On America*





## Constitution or Form of Government for the People of Florida.

We, the people of the State of Florida by our delegates in Convention assembled, in the city of Tallahassee, on the 25<sup>th</sup> day of October, in the year of our Lord 1865, and of the Independence of the United States, the 90<sup>th</sup> year, in order

## Amendment 8

The amendment will require taxpayers to fund houses of worship without their knowledge, and will give religious organizations an unfettered right to receive state funding. So, even the most extreme or repugnant groups who say they are religious would essentially have an unrestricted constitutional right to taxpayer dollars. This would be both offensive and potentially reckless public policy.

The measure is misleading. The real goal of Amendment 8 is to give the Legislature the power to promote taxpayer-financed school vouchers that would require Floridians to subsidize private religious schools. There should be an up or down vote on vouchers and an end to pretending this is about religious freedom.

**For more information** about Amendment 8, Come to the South Pinellas meeting 7 PM on September 10 at the Good Samaritan Church located at 6085 Park Blvd, in Pinellas Park (61st St.) or visit AU's website at: <http://au.org/flamendment8>



## 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>

economichumanrights.org

POOR PEOPLE'S ECONOMIC HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN

**Contact: Rev. Bruce Wright**

Phone: (727) 278 1547

Email: [bgwright@aol.com](mailto:bgwright@aol.com)

Web: <http://economichumanrights.org>

**The Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign and others will march on opening day of the Republican National Convention on AUGUST 27th, Monday from 3pm to 530pm.**

*This is a March of the Homeless, the Poor, the Unemployed and Supporters to call for a STOP TO ALL FORECLOSURES, STOP THE CRIMINALIZATION OF THE POOR AND HOMELESS. HOUSING AND FOOD ARE HUMAN RIGHTS!*



University of South Florida

**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](mailto:RodrickColbert) 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:

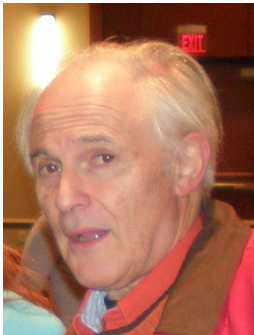
Bill Norsworthy [bnorsworthy@verizon.net](mailto:bnorsworthy@verizon.net)

Mark Brandt [mwbrandt@mail.usf.edu](mailto:mwbrandt@mail.usf.edu)

Website: [www.uuclearwater.org](http://www.uuclearwater.org)



Clearwater, Florida



New

**Sir Harold Kroto**, an ardent Humanist and Nobel Laureate in chemistry, will be speaking at the UU Humanists meeting on Sunday, September 30, at 12:30pm. Dr. Kroto now teaches at FSU in Tallahassee, and will speak for an hour. All are welcome.



**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 September 15, 2012 at 11.00am

Jimmie B. Keele Library,

2902 W. Bearss Avenue, Tampa, FL.

Look for the Tampa Humanist Association sign.

## Topic: Mormonism

You may know that Mitt Romney is a Mormon, but do you know what Mormons believe? Are you familiar with their religious rituals and their dietary restrictions? What about Mormon views on social issues like homosexuality, abortion, and racial equality? In this interactive presentation, Ryan T. Cragun, drawing upon his recently published book addressing these topics, will clearly explain some of the many beliefs and practices of Mormonism that make the religion so unique.

**Ryan T. Cragun** is an assistant professor of sociology at the University of Tampa. His research focuses on the nonreligious and Mormonism. His research has been published in a variety of peer-reviewed journals, including: Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, Sociology of Religion, Nova Religion, Journal of Contemporary Religion, and Journal of Religion and Health. He is also the author of several books and book chapters and has had several essays published in Free Inquiry. When he isn't working, he can typically be found spending time with his son and wife, hiking, cooking, or watching science fiction.

After the untimely death of our leader, **Rob Byrch**, the board of directors has set about the task of reorganizing the association, and continuing the programs, finding new leadership, and keeping the flame lit which Rob ignited for the benefit of the people of Tampa.

You are invited to be part of this process. We need your help to facilitate various functions, and to provide for the financial well being of the group.

All around the world people are finding a way to free themselves from the tyranny of conventional uncritical thinking about the many urgent problems that require our attention if our species is to survive. We must do our part to extend the hand of true friendship in assistance to our neighbors.

In addition to our regular meeting, we have instituted a Humanist Movie club and run joint Humanists and Skeptics in the Pub with our colleagues from the Center for Inquiry. For a **complete schedule of events** see:

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

Or Facebook page: <http://www.facebook.com/tampahumanist> Or our website: <http://www.tampahumanist.com>

Join us for our fun, open and, enlightening discussions.

## Annual Membership Dues

*"Now is the time to come to the aid of the Party"*

Most people belong to one or more membership organizations and are dues paying members. These dues constitute donations to the organization and are tax-deductible under IRS laws. While many take advantage of the tax deduction, people primarily join and renew because they believe in the organization. Most feel they are helping to make a difference and trust that the organization is wisely investing the dues they pay. Tampa Humanist Association, Inc. is your Association and paying this small annual dues gives you the right to vote and a vested interest in its growth and success.

The Website, Meetup page and refreshments served at our meetings are all ongoing costs necessary to make this organization live. Any ideas that you have about building the association will be most welcome.

A membership program alone is not enough to sustain an organization. Yet it serves as a building block along with other fundraising tools such as on-line fundraising, capital campaigns, and deferred giving programs.



# Freedom of Thought for Our World, and Our Future



## *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

**Website:**  
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



TBPC is an autonomous adjunct to the Humanist Society.

## Our stressful future

We can redesign our economic, political, transport, health care, and food systems to be less brittle and more resilient. Suggestions along those lines have been on the table for years and have been largely rejected because they don't serve the interests of powerful groups that benefit from the status quo. Meanwhile the American populace seems incapable of raising an alarm or responding to it, consisting as it does of a large under-class that is over-fed but under-nourished, over-entertained but misinformed, over-indebted and under-skilled; and a much smaller over-class that lives primarily by financial predation and is happy to tune out any evidence of the dire impacts of its activities.

But what is becoming increasingly evident is that our essential systems that sustain the vital center of our society and economy are undergoing severe stress. Physical infrastructure, natural renewable resources, and industrial materials are under pressure by a needful and growing population of humans who, on a planetary level, aspire to live the lives revealed and promoted by the mass media. At this same time, the climatic system, water sources, and the productiveness of an exhausted soil, call into question our ability to provide even the essentials.

We humans are clever and adaptable, and with our unique talents and abilities, we can forgo the temptations of magical thinking, national and religious imperatives, rampant consumerism, and other diversions from the necessary tasks ahead.

A way must be found to bring the necessary unity to our common purpose which has no less a goal than human survival.

Those who maintain a conscious awareness of the problems of our society are a minority of people among the overwhelming numbers of the manipulated masses on whom enormous resources are dedicated to maintaining compliance with the institutions of the status quo. What should have been, and what may yet be, a saving technology - the internet, that allows users to acquire and use the information needed to liberate themselves from the oppressive acquisitiveness that pervades so much of life has been a disappointment. But some way must be found to allow people to reach this potential if humanity is to survive the excesses of its own follies. Perhaps there is another way.... JP

**We invite you to become a member of the Council,  
and make a difference in the quality of our lives.  
Click [www.tampabaypostcarbon.com](http://www.tampabaypostcarbon.com) for more.**



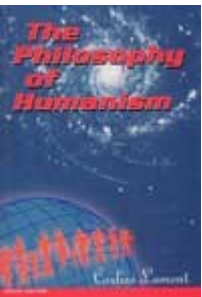
# Humanist Books from the AHA

## 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 - Corliss Lamont

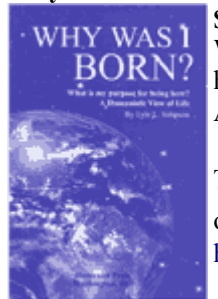


\$16.95

By Dr. Corliss Lamont.

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.

## Why Was I Born?



\$5.00

Why Was I Born? What is my purpose for being here?

A Humanistic view of life by Lyle J Simpson.

These books and a great many more can be ordered from: **The Humanist Press**  
<http://evolvefish.com/fish/HumanistPress.html>



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

## Freethinking Film Enthusiasts Flocking to Denver

9

**Freethought  
Film  
Festival  
Foundation**



Promoting Reason Through Film

The Freethought Film Festival Foundation (FFFF) is hosting its second annual International Freethought Film Festival at multiple venues in downtown Denver, Colorado from July 31 to August 5th.

The festivities kick off with a Tap Takeover party on Tuesday, July 31st at Funky Buddha Lounge, located at 776 Lincoln Street. They will be tapping award winning craft beer from Tampa, Florida's Cigar City Brewing—an establishment that is well known by craft beer enthusiasts. The pre-screening schedule also includes a freethought celebrity Texas Hold 'em poker tournament and casino night charity event on Wednesday, August 1st. Aptly dubbed "Poker in the Church", it is being held at 1160 Lincoln Street at The Church nightclub. South of Colfax Nightlife District (SoCo) is supporting the benefit as the venue sponsor, and has assisted with recruiting local Denver celebrities like Barry Fey and Peter Boyles. Committed freethought celebrities to date include writers, scientists, activists, leaders and entertainers, who are widely recognized in the secular movement. All proceeds from the charity event will benefit the Foundation Beyond Belief, a humanist, charitable, nonprofit organization that raises and distributes funds to five different charities per quarter. Beneficiaries include charities in the categories of education, poverty and health, human rights and the natural world.

Opening night of the International Freethought Festival screenings is Thursday, August 2nd at the Mayan Theater, 110 Broadway—a venue selected for irony's sake, according to FFFF executive director, Andrea Steele. Beginning at 8:30 pm, she will be delivering the opening welcome, and introducing the night's feature film, *The Trouble with St. Mary's*. When seventy two year old Father Peter Kennedy is sacked by the Catholic Church for unorthodox practices, the fight that ensues will result in the exodus of an entire Catholic community as they follow their priest into the unknown, causing one of the biggest rifts in the history of the Australian Catholic Church.

There are 11 other screenings scheduled throughout the film festival, including a double-feature on Friday afternoon at the Denver Performing Arts Complex Studio Loft, and a program of short films on Sunday at the Denver Film Center. Filmmakers and special guests will be making appearances for Q&A's. Included in the line up are former Colorado Governor, Dick Lamm; the Robert L. Kroc Professor of Neurology at Harvard Medical School, Howard L Weiner, MD; and *Attack of the Theocrats* author and former Maine legislator, Sean Faircloth.

The International Freethought Film Festival is a home for Independent films from around the globe that critically examine truth-claims. Reason, logic, critical thinking and science are embraced as the best ways to explain the natural world; while superstition, dogma, tradition and argument by authority are rejected as justifications for practices, policies and behaviors that are often of detriment to humans and the earth. Freedom of inquiry and expression are boldly exercised. The International Freethought Film Festival tagline, "Going there!!!" is a reflection of this. Tickets for the events and screenings can be purchased at our Website at [www.freethoughtfilmfest.org](http://www.freethoughtfilmfest.org)

Freethought Film Festival Foundation, Inc. is a non-profit, educational organization, exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the United States Federal tax code. Established in August, 2009. For more information contact: **Andrea Steele**

*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 is **September 10, at 7:00 PM.** 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 electioneering.

## **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

# 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/>

**September Outing:** Humanist Families go to Legoland 9-01-12 Sign up [Here](#).

Adding to a long history of supporting equal rights for women, the **American Humanist Association Board of Directors** unanimously passed a resolution calling for passage of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). The ERA was originally introduced in 1923, and passed by Congress in 1972. Thirty-five states have ratified the Amendment, three short of the 38 states necessary for adoption.

"There is no reason to wait any longer for women's equality," said Roy Speckhardt, executive director of the American Humanist Association. "Discrimination on the basis of sex continues to this day, and the swift passage of the Equal Rights Amendment will finally provide the protection women deserve."



"Until the Equal Rights Amendment is adopted, women will continue to be treated as second-class citizens, legally, because without protection under the Constitution, our fundamental rights are subject to the whims of local lawmakers and our recourse is limited," said Zelda Gatuskin, co-chair of the Feminist Caucus of the American Humanist Association. "This is long overdue. Congress needs to step up and commit to the ideal of equal justice for all."

The American Humanist Association is supporting the Three-State Strategy, a legal position that holds there is no time limit for the remaining states to ratify the ERA because none is mentioned in the text of the amendment itself, only in its proposing clause.

The American Humanist Association (AHA) first supported the Equal Rights Amendment by issuing a resolution in 1975, and again in 1982. The AHA also adopted a resolution on Equal Pay for Women in 1963 and the World Bill of Rights for Women in 1981. The Feminist Caucus of the American Humanist Association was established in 1977 as a coalition of women and men working toward the advancement of women's rights and equality between the sexes in all aspects of society.

A copy of the resolution can be found [here](#)



# Atheists of Florida



**Chairman, Tracy Thomas**  
**President, Ed Golly**  
**Vice President, Frank Prahl**  
**Treasurer, Nan Owens**  
**Acting Secretary, Tracy Thomas**

**AoF outreach programs** are currently in hiatus, pending resolution of legal matters regarding our media and Meetup sites. A copy of the current 2012 newsletter is available by writing to: [AthAIFLE@aol.com](mailto:AthAIFLE@aol.com).

Look for exciting new programs in the offing very soon. 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/>

### Fighting Cracks in the Wall

The following statement authored by the Coalition Against Religious Discrimination earlier this year supports the first Amendment.

The undersigned religious, education, civil rights, labor, and women's organizations write to voice our opposition to the language of the Adams Amendment (Amendment #1) to H.R. 4970, the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2012. We oppose the Adams Amendment insofar as it would alter the nondiscrimination clause in the base bill to remove protections that bar federally funded religious discrimination. **We urge you to Vote NO on the Adams Amendment**, as government funds should not be used to underwrite employment discrimination within government-funded projects and activities.

We appreciate the important role religiously affiliated institutions historically have played in addressing many of our nation's most pressing social needs, as a complement to government-funded programs. Indeed, many of us are directly involved in this work. We also recognize that the separation of church and state is the linchpin of religious freedom. In our view, effective government collaboration with faith-based groups does not require the sanctioning of federally funded religious discrimination.

In accordance with Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, religious organizations may prefer co-religionists in hiring when using their own private funds. The Adams Amendment, however, would permit religious organizations to take VAWA funds and use those funds to discriminate against a qualified individual based on nothing more than his or her religious beliefs. VAWA should protect against taxpayer dollars being used to underwrite jobs where religion is a factor in hiring decisions.

Adopting the language in the Adams Amendment would be inconsistent with the longstanding principle that federal dollars must not be used to discriminate. Accordingly, **we urge you to vote No.**

### Remove "In God We Trust" from our currency and remove "under God" from the Pledge.

Having God on our currency and in our Pledge of Allegiance fuels the false belief that the United States is a Christian nation. As declared in the Treaty of Tripoli, 1796, "...the Government of the United States of America is not, in any sense, founded on the Christian religion." This was signed by president John Adams. Having God in our currency and in our Pledge of Allegiance directly disrespects those among us who are not of the Christian, or of any faith, and it should be removed.

Click on a White House petition [here](#) to have it removed.

### Holidays of Special Interest to Freethinkers

- **Sept 23rd** - Banned Books Week. The ACLU has an outreach table at the Tampa Bay Times annual Festival of Reading.
- **2012 International Year of Sustainable Energy for All (UN)**



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 Humanist  
organizations are participating. Details and sign-up: <http://www.lighththenight.org/>.

### Local Events

**Rick O'Keefe**  
Chair

CFI is co-sponsoring The Humanist Society of the Suncoast lecture,  
Sept. 8 in Clearwater <http://www.meetup.com/SuncoastHumanist/events/66604612/>

CFI is co-sponsoring Tampa Humanist Assoc. lecture, Sept 19, 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

October 25-28: **CSICON**--Nashville, TN

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 Neuro Sciences, Inc.](#) -- Science-of-the-brain 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/)

### Humanism and Politics by Ronald A. Lindsay

*(Continued from August issue.)* It would be difficult to reconcile an embrace of humanism with opposition to, for example, contraception, same-sex marriage, cohabitation without marriage, laws and regulations that protect and promote racial and gender equality, freedom of expression, and universal suffrage. If we truly respect individual autonomy, we must allow individuals the freedom to give shape and direction to their own lives, especially with respect to critical, life-altering choices, such as whether and whom to marry and whether or not to bear children. We also must ensure that individuals have the opportunity to pursue a livelihood without restrictions based on characteristics such as race or sex. It is also important that every adult have the right to participate in political life and have a role in deciding who our legislators and chief executive should be.

There are also issues on which most humanists agree and with respect to which there is at least a strong presumption in favor of a certain position. Legal-ization of physician assistance in dying for the terminally ill, aka physician-assisted suicide, is one such issue. Certainly, a humanist cannot oppose legalization based on a quasi-religious notion such as the sanctity of life. However, I have known humanists who oppose legalization based on speculation about the harms that might follow legalization, such as pressure on patients to request assistance in dying or a decline in the quality of health care for those with terminal illnesses. The evidence from Oregon and Washington (the two states where assistance in dying is currently legal) indicates that these concerns are probably unwarranted, but it would not be irrational for a humanist to oppose legalization as the evidence cannot be said to preclude completely the possibility of significant harm.

Effectively, that is the key to determining whether a policy position—call it position A—is consistent with humanism: Is position A supported by evidence-based reasoning? To be more precise: Is there an argument supported by some plausible set of facts and sound, secular, evidence-based reasoning that position A will cause less harm than position B, and is position A as respectful of fundamental freedoms and individual autonomy as possible? As humanists may disagree about the facts relevant to resolution of a particular issue,

*Continued on Page 13*



## Humanism & Politics *Continued from Page 12*

it's not only possible but inevitable that there will be a number of issues on which humanists differ.

This brings me back to my initial question about the consistency of being a humanist and being a Republican. In answering this question, it must be admitted that in recent decades the Republican Party has been heavily influenced by the religious Right and has adopted policies antithetical to humanism. If we limited our examination of Republican Party positions to its stance on certain key social issues and the extent to which government can support religious institutions, then we might be tempted to conclude that there is a severe tension between being a Republican and being a humanist.

However, the Republican Party's position on social issues, such as abortion and same-sex marriage, represent only a fraction of the entire Republican Party platform. The 2012 platform was not completed and approved as of the time of this writing, but a review of the 2008 Republican platform (available online at [www.gop.com/2008Platform/2008platform.pdf](http://www.gop.com/2008Platform/2008platform.pdf)) reveals that only about five of its fifty-five pages were devoted to policies on "Pre-serving Our Values." The rest of the platform dealt with national defense, foreign policy, the budget process, fiscal policy, entitlement funding, taxation, government regulation, energy policy, immigration, health care, and about a dozen other issues, including relatively narrow questions such as governance in U.S. territories.

Because humanists place great weight on individual autonomy, it is not surprising that there is a tendency to focus on policies that restrict our ability to make our own decisions about children and marriage and seek to impose religious dogma on us. We don't like theocrats in our bedrooms. But precisely how much weight one should give to these social issues is not something addressed by humanism. Some humanists might view policies relating to national defense, entitlement funding, and taxation as being relatively more important than policies relating to same-sex marriage or the availability of contraception. It would not be irrational to come to such a conclusion. In other words, one *can* be a humanist and a Republican—although presumably a Republican not altogether pleased with the party's stance on some significant social issues.

I have spent some time on this question because, in my discussions with individuals about the work of the Council and the Center for Inquiry, it is not infrequently assumed—especially during a presidential election year—that humanists constitute a subset of the Democratic Party. As a factual matter, most humanists probably do support Democratic candidates more often than not. But humanism does not compel them to do so. When we say that CFI and the Council for Secular Humanism are nonpartisan organizations, we do not make that assertion solely to placate the Internal Revenue Service. We really mean it. Humanism is a life stance, but it does not come accompanied by a detailed platform specifying positions on all the issues that a national political party is expected to address.

That's not to say humanism is devoid of public policy implications. To the contrary, both the Council, through the Secular Coalition for America, and CFI, through its own lobbying arm, the Office of Public Policy, have advocated vigorously (and sometimes effectively) for certain specific policies. In doing so, we believe that we have adopted positions that reflect humanist principles and with which most of our supporters would agree. We regard this advocacy work as an important part of our mission, and we also regard the issues that engage us to be important. How these issues ultimately affect an individual humanist's vote, however, is something for that individual to determine. Humanism has no party line.

\* \* \*

Let me turn briefly from domestic politics to a question of **international human rights**. Again this year, the Center for Inquiry and its affiliates will be commemorating **International Blasphemy Rights Day (IBRD)** on September 30. When CFI and its affiliates first started to commemorate IBRD in 2009, some tried to trivialize this effort, suggesting that it was worse than pointless (and some of this criticism came from so-called humanists!). Actually, it was very important to call attention to the continuing suppression of speech critical of religion. Events in the last several months have underscored that, if anything, this problem is worse than it was three years ago. In Pakistan, one can lose one's life by merely suggesting that its blasphemy laws should be reformed, and both Saudi Arabia and Kuwait have reacted harshly to "tweets" that were alleged to have defamed "the Prophet." In Indonesia, a so-called "moderate" Muslim country, Alex-ander Aan was attacked and beaten by a mob and then placed under arrest on a charge of blasphemy after he declared he was an atheist on Facebook. (The outcome of his trial is not known at this time.) And just a couple of days before I started to write this editorial, it was announced that a new book by Muslim author and activist Irshad Manji was banned in Malaysia for being blasphemous and for causing "disturbance to the public."

Some CFI branches will be holding events to commemorate

*Continued on Page 14*

## Humanism & Politics *Continued from Page 13*

IBRD (look for e-mail alerts). In addition, we expect to meet with State Department officials this summer to discuss problems relating to international religious freedom.

What can you do? First, if you are not already “out” as an atheist or agnostic, there’s no better time to do it than on IBRD. You may have heard: in most Western countries, it’s no longer a crime to be an atheist. Sure, you may risk some ostracism, but if people in other countries are willing to risk jail or death to make an honest statement about their beliefs, you can risk a cold shoulder from a neighbor.

Second, keep informed about the persecution of people like Aan. If his case is still pending, or if he has been convicted and sentenced, contact the Asian Human Rights Commission or some other responsible body to protest the government’s action. (See CFI’s previous news announcement on his case: [http://www.centerforinquiry.net/news/urgent\\_add\\_your\\_voice\\_to\\_support\\_jailed\\_atheist\\_in\\_indonesia/](http://www.centerforinquiry.net/news/urgent_add_your_voice_to_support_jailed_atheist_in_indonesia/).) People everywhere should have the right to express their views about any religious belief. That’s what IBRD is all about.

*Ronald A. Lindsay is the president and CEO of the Center for Inquiry, and he has voted for a Republican once in his life.*



### **Free Inquirers Club’s monthly discussion.**

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



## 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. #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](#)?**





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

## Death from a Humanist perspective

Our community has lost some great thinkers and great men recently and I wanted to write something about the Humanist approach to death and grief as it seems particularly relevant.

Humanism is an optimistic philosophy. We see no point in facing life's adversities pessimistically. We are also very realistic about death. We know we are going to die. And actually, we find this thought strangely very motivating. Our thinking is thus: If we are going to die, we might as well make the best of it while we are here. And that means, not succumbing to pessimism. We Humanists believe we can make things better, if we just try. And when we can't, we might as well laugh about our predicament.

When someone we love and care about dies, we don't try to hide from our grief. We accept that the person is dead and that we will never see them again even though we may want to. Yes, it hurts, but it is better than avoiding grief by pretending that even though our loved one is dead they aren't really dead. All that does is prolong our grief.

I was recently asked to officiate at a funeral of a Humanist who was not part of our community. He may not have known we even existed. I am not a trained celebrant but the family was desperate to have a funeral that honored their father and did not provide them with the false hope of religion. Like most people who lack faith, this family did not want to be told their father was in a better place. He wasn't anywhere anymore. He was dead.

If you have never been to a Humanist memorial service, let me just say they are unlike a religious service. Because Humanists are non-religious, and therefore don't believe in heaven or hell, there is no need to help the deceased get into heaven. And, even if there is a heaven or hell, it is highly unlikely that a memorial service will have an impact on the routing of the deceased anyway, so the focus is on helping the living.

Humanist memorials are quite moving, specifically because they are designed for the living. A humanist memorial service helps the survivors come to terms with the death of their friend and/or loved one. By remembering their life you celebrate their life, and the impact they had on yours. You have an opportunity to say goodbye (an opportunity you may not have had otherwise.) In short, these services help the living come to terms with their loss.

Because I was officiating at this funeral, I missed the memorial meeting for Robert Byrch, a man I was glad to call my friend. The

funeral was really rather emotional for me because as I was helping this family come to terms with the death of their father, I was coming to terms with the death of my friend.

On the drive home I cried quite a bit. But I know that Robert would have been very upset with me had I not helped these people. And that is because Robert was a Humanist. He was committed to being a good person and helping others. The best way I could honor his friendship was to help a complete stranger with their grief.

This incident alerted me to a problem our community has. We don't have enough celebrants. This poor family spent 5 days trying to find a Humanist to conduct a ceremony and only found me (who isn't a celebrant) the night before the funeral. No family should have to go through what they went through while they are grieving. There is no nobler calling than helping someone who truly need your help as people who are grieving do. The funeral director told me he gets requests all the time from people looking for non-religious funerals. So let's collectively step up and offer to help. Become a celebrant.

*Jennifer Hancock*

## Tampa Bay Secular Celebrants

Memorials, Weddings, Rites of Passage. Contact:

**Rick O'Keefe, CFI certified,**

**Virginia Kohl-Lieberman, AHA certified**



### CoR Leadership Team 2012

*Jim Peterson, Mark Brandt, Rick O'Keefe, Ed Golly*

Editorial E-mail: [tbcor@metrodirect.net](mailto:tbcor@metrodirect.net)

**“ Yeah, I know. Bunch of old white guys.  
Still, we're doing the best we can.”**