

# Hard CoR News

The insider bulletin of the United Coalition of Reason

**Volume 1, Issue 2 ~ February 5, 2015**

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## **In this issue...**

[January CoR Launches](#)

[As Good as Gold...](#)

[Waving the CoR Banner](#)

[Local CoR Newsletter Help](#)

[Hard CoRe Local Action!](#)

[Social Media Explosion](#)

[Charitable to the CoRe...](#)

[Leadership Need Met and Further Needs](#)

[CoRrelated Groups](#)

[No Atheists in Foxholes...How About Openly Visible On-Base?](#)

[CoRlaborated Leadership](#)

[Taken from the Heap](#)

## **January CoR Launches**



On January 10, 2015 the [CRS-5 Dragon](#) successfully launched and subsequently docked with the International Space Station. During January, we also witnessed the launch of two CoRs--both in highly conservative areas--so let's share in their exciting stories!

**January 6, 2015: [Gulf Coast CoR](#) (Gulfport, MS, Mobile, AL and Pensacola, FL)**



We never thought it was going to happen, but it did! Thanks to the United Coalition of Reason, FOUR billboards went up right here in the buckle of the Bible belt. It took us almost two years to make it happen, but it really, finally did! Nine non-theistic groups from Mobile, Ala. to Panama City, Fla. started this adventure in early 2013. Some groups were very small; some were a few hundred members, and others largish and smallish. But it took us almost TWO years to finally get the local billboard companies to put our “controversial” message up: there are others here around Interstate-10 that don’t believe in a god!

We almost fell asleep waiting for the OK to put up billboards. (Just kidding.) What we really did was we didn’t let the lack of commercial support get us down. Instead we continued to build, support, and encourage local groups and expand our original coalition from nine groups to sixteen, plus added a “friend” of the coalition. When we got the word right after Thanksgiving 2014 that we could get a billboard up on December 22, 2014 we jumped on the offer and started rallying the group leaders to prepare for the potential barrage of media attention, both positive and negative. Unfortunately, the local billboard companies continued to make it difficult for us to get our billboards up. One of the three markets decided that they needed a “disclaimer” saying that UnitedCoR was paying for the billboards. That ended up delaying the process by two-weeks! But, by golly, those billboards DID go up and we DID get some attention!

Every Facebook timeline near and far was covered with images of our four different billboards: two in Pensacola, FL, one in Mobile, AL, and one in Pascagoula, MS. Online newspapers and blogs in Mississippi, Alabama, and even to Tennessee and beyond (Ohio, North Carolina and even Czech and Russian news outlets), grabbed the headline. Nevertheless, people began hearing the news and finding our coalition Facebook group and page, and then finding local groups to join and find similar-minded folk. Our non-theistic communities have grown because of this experience, and will continue to grow. We’ll continue to work together building groups, doing community service projects, and enjoying this one life we have here and now.

Thanks go out to UnitedCoR, for all of their help, support, and attention to our southern “crises.” Special thanks also to our coalition coordinators and media reps, Buz Ryland (co-coordinator/FL media), Amanda Scott (AL media), Cory Woerner (MS media), and Vince Lauria (photographer) and our 16 group leaders that got the word out to their members and continue to welcome new members into the groups. Although there have been some anxious times, everyone worked together patiently and consistently, to get the work done. I have never been more proud to say, “I live in the South!”

--Rose Jansen  
Co-Coordinator, Gulf Coast CoR

**January 20, 2015: Inland Empire CoR (Riverside, CA)**



The placement of a sign on a busy Riverside County, California freeway heralded the launch of the Inland Empire Coalition of Reason. We studied the traffic patterns in this part of California for a couple of months, and realized that there was a certain stretch of Interstate-215 that would be under heavy construction, with most traffic at a crawl from 10am through 6pm. We made sure our billboard was placed in the perfect spot so no motorist from Los Angeles, San Diego and Las Vegas could help but read, "Don't believe in God? You are not alone." Our billboard is expected to have approximately one million views per week during the four-week billboard campaign!

Launching this coalition required the dedicated work of several non-theistic groups in the so-called "Inland Empire" of Southern California, an area consisting of Riverside and San Bernardino counties, two of the largest geographically in the state with a combined population of approximately 4.5 million people. Our CoR actually had its beginning with the formation of the Orange County CoR in 2011 with the help of Fred Edwards. Jase came out to Riverside in November 2014 and worked with our cooperating groups to get us read for our official launch in January 2015.

Since the placement of the IECoR sign, articles have appeared on numerous internet news sites, and IECoR has been featured on CBS and NBC television nightly news. Several of the member groups have seen a growth in their membership since the launch of the coalition. Our CoR focuses on social justice issues, and we're really pleased to be part of the UnitedCoR family!

--Jan Goings  
Coordinator, Inland Empire CoR

## As Good as Gold...

### [January 6th, 2015: Butte County CoR \(Chico, CA\)](#)

George Gold, coordinator of the ButteCounty CoR, made history on January 6, 2015 when he delivered a respect-filled and thought provoking secular invocation at the Chico City Council meeting. Gold didn't appear before the Council to draw attention to himself, but to turn eyes to the fact that, "In the city of Chico, that means, for the first time ever, I'm here representing over 17,000 secular Chico citizens with this invocation." Hemant Mehta immediately covered the [story](#), complete with a full text of Gold's invocation for all to read. Local news also [televised](#) the invocation and highlighted the fact that some members of the Council chose [not to attend](#) Gold's invocation, but rather returned after he was finished.



Following the positive and inclusive message in Gold's invocation, one week later on January 13, for the THIRD consecutive year, someone vandalized the Atheists of Butte County Adopt-a-Highway sign...



In a press release, George Gold said, "Religious extremists will not prevail. We are committed more than ever to being part of our community and letting all non-believers, free thinkers, agnostics and atheists know that we are here as their organization. Atheists of Butte County promote reason, justice and compassion." Drawing on the words from George's secular invocation, [Jase](#) also added: "Hopefully this act of vandalism will inspire and more non-theistic people in Butte County to realize how important it is to join with others of like mind. When Mr. Gold gave the secular invocation in Chico on January 6, his message unequivocally emphasized the inherent worth and dignity of all citizens in a community, whether it be local, national or global. It is unfathomable why the community that Mr. Gold represents, who continually and actively serves people around them, would consistently be the target for such incidents."

As we saw in [last month's newsletter](#), "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." Our friends in Chico are continuing to say "enough!" even in the face of adversity. If someone in your CoR would like to offer a secular invocation, please consult the [Secular Invocation Resources](#) page for further details and to let the voice of your non-theistic community be heard!

## Waving the CoR Banner



### Cleveland, OH

"The gentleman fourth from the left (ok, we photo-shopped him in) is Rafiq from Bogor, Indonesia. He's been helpful to us by participating in Google and Skype video conferences on the discussion of how Islam is perceived in the West. We use these video conferences with him and one of his students to get their feelings as [ex-Muslims](#) still living with calls to prayer five times a day in their home country. He's been very active in Freethought and is a good resource if you need insight into life in a Muslim country. We're proud to put his virtual photograph with us and our CoR's banner!"

--Ray Valenti  
Coordinator, NEOhio CoR

## Local CoR Newsletter Help

Some CoRs have taken Judy Saint up on her offer and have sent out some excellent newsletters to their local area, as well as to us here in UnitedCoR. If you haven't had a chance to find out how Judy can be of assistance, check out her support:



## Hard CoRe Local Action!

January 11, 2015: [Fredericksburg CoR](#) (Fredericksburg, VA)



Jase was intrigued by an [article](#) that William Murray (son of former founder of [American Atheists](#) who was assassinated in 1995) wrote in January 2014, proclaiming that atheists tried to "hijack [a] national religious freedom day." After contacting the [Fredericksburg CoR](#) about this event, Jase went to join the parade and to hear from the local activists what had taken place that prompted Murray to write his article. "We didn't 'push' to the front, despite what Murray said. We were invited to stand with our banner near the front," said one of the members of Washing Area Secular Humanists ([WASH](#)). Another parade participant from the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Fredericksburg ([UUFF](#)) explained that the Religious Freedom Day parade was originally a secular event, started by the work of a local and well-respected university instructor, [Dr. Kurt Leidecker](#).

The parade went exactly as Jase wrote about it in [TheHumanist.Com](#): Fredericksburg CoR and the Unitarian Universalist groups were sent to the rear of the parade, a public and theistic service was conducted at the memorial, a public Pledge of Allegiance with "under god" was required, "God Bless America" was sung...it was clearly an event that had changed from what it was intended to be when it was created. Following the parade, Fredericksburg CoR and the University of Mary Washington co-sponsored a community-wide essay competition for school-age children on the topic of religious liberty. The room was filled with over-150 people who gave rapturous applause for the three students who received cash prizes from Fredericksburg CoR.

### **January 13, 2015: ATL CoR (Atlanta, GA)**



"HOTlanta" turned up the heat when they caught wind of the former Fire Chief comparing "homosexuality to bestiality" in a book he wrote. The open letter they wrote and displayed on their [local CoR website](#) in support of the Mayor of Atlanta's decision to dismiss Fire Chief Cochran detailed the reasons why they supported the mayor for "upholding the secular values upon which our nation was founded." Click on the hyperlink above to find out more about their support of the firing of the Fire Chief.

# Social Media Explosion



UnitedCoR is grateful to the American Humanist Association for sharing the link to the Secular Directory last month that caused a social media explosion. We would also appreciate it if other organizations were to share the Secular Directory on their social media so that as many groups as possible receive representation and recognition: we're almost at 500 likes! Don't forget to check out Secular Directory's [Facebook page](#) and please be sure to connect with it and UnitedCoR's [Facebook page](#) and Twitter @UnitedCoR.

## Charitable to the CoRe...

**January 10, 2015: [Mid-Columbia CoR](#) (Kennewick, WA)**



"We had around 40 people attend the [Tri-City Freethinkers](#) Winter Solst-ish Celebration. Many of the attendees heard about us through our [November bus ad campaign](#) and became members of the Freethinkers that night. We collected two large, heaping boxes of new school supplies and \$255 in cash and office supply store gift cards that night, which will be donated to Amistad Elementary School in Kennewick, WA. This school is important to us because it has the largest number of underprivileged students in the school district, and we are excited to support local teachers and students. We've also appealed to the store manager of local Staples as to whether they will match our donation if we purchase a \$250 gift card. I'm hopeful we'll be able to present Amistad Elementary with a \$500 gift card along with other gifts cards and the school supplies.

We've also been active in helping to support the [lawsuit](#) against a local florist in Richmond, WA who refused to sell flowers for the wedding of a same-sex couple who have been the florist's long-standing

customers. We agree with the county judge that not only is this issue anti-LGBTQ related, but that there are religious reasons behind the florist's refusal to serve these customers. We'll keep you informed of the progress of this case."

--Jennifer Baker  
Coordinator, Mid-Columbia CoR

## Leadership Need Met and Further Needs

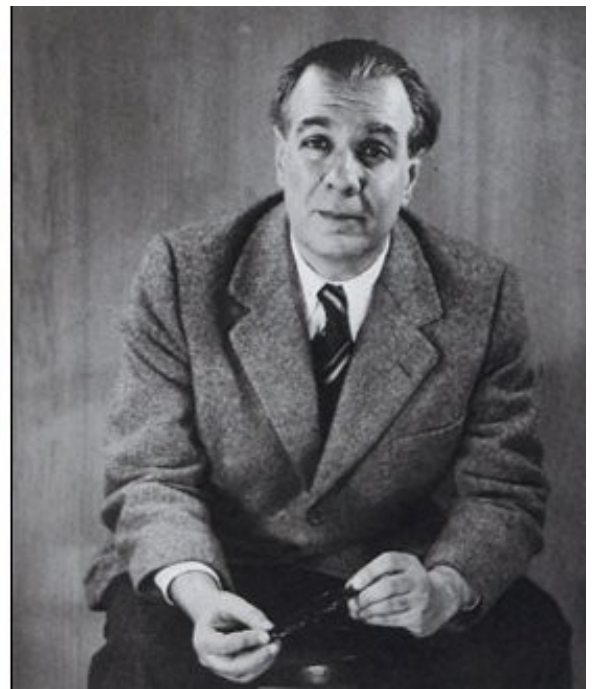
We want to welcome and thank Jim Wright for stepping-up and providing leadership and support for [Detroit CoR](#) as their new CoR Coordinator!! Along with cooperating groups like Sunday Assembly Detroit, the local CoR helped arrange for [Dr. Neil deGrasse Tyson](#) to come and speak in Detroit on January 28, 2015. Welcome, Jim, and we look forward to seeing many great things happening in The Motor City!!

Are you an interested volunteer able to help one of these local CoRs as their coordinator? Learn what's needed and how you can help.

[Utah CoR](#)

[San Francisco / Oakland CoR](#)

## CoRrelated Groups



Images of Jorge Francisco Isidoro Luis Borges and José de Sousa Saramago courtesy of Wikipedia.

With more and more people within the Latino/a community [becoming public with their non-theistic beliefs](#), this month, and with [Hispanic Heritage Month](#) being a future opportunity for CoR-sponsored events, we want to focus on groups that are vital to helping your CoR link into and support this growing community of non-belief.

[Latino/a Atheists](#): Complete with a blog feed, resources, [Facebook](#) and Twitter (@LatinoAtheists), Latino/a Atheists "provides a space where Latino/a atheists, agnostics, humanists and free thinkers can express their doubts and encourage critical thought on religious views."

[Hispanic Secular Humanists](#): Welcoming people of any race who supports their mission, HSH is a



"secular community dedicated to providing social and educational activities for non-religious Hispanics." Check them out on [Facebook](#) and link in to their Twitter [@HSHTX](#) .

[Hispanic American Freethinkers](#) (HAFREE): HAFree "seeks to be a voice for those who can't speak for themselves by serving all those Hispanics who live in the U.S. providing them with the necessary tools to support Freethought." Be sure to link with their [Facebook](#) and Twitter ([@HAFree](#)).

[Hispanic Meetups](#): The Chicago Meetup group works to "discuss contemporary issues regarding hispanics/latinos and the predominance of religion in our culture." They also make atheists more visible in their local communities by promoting education, community service, secular religious education and upholding the separation of church and state. Why not start a Hispanic Meetup group in your local area?

[Hispanic Atheists Society of America](#) (HASA): HASA is a growing community that focuses on the specific needs of Hispanic Americans breaking away and recovering from religion, and they are supportive of all non-theistic communities. Follow them on Twitter: [@HispanicAtheist](#)

**Top Tip for your CoR!** The Freethought Society successfully held their first Secular *Dia de los Muertos* ("[Day of the Dead](#)") on November 2, 2014. In celebration of Hispanic-American cultures in America, why not think about hosting an event with your CoR this coming November? Click on Freethought Society's January/February 2015 [newsletter](#) for more details and photographs from the 2014 Secular Day of the Dead and to see how you can also host a similar event in your local area.

## **No Atheists in Foxholes...How About Openly Visible On-Base?**

**January 22nd, 2015: [San Diego CoR](#) (San Diego, CA):**



"In the military and atheist? Agnostic? Humanist? Curious?" Chief Petty Officer Doug Wright publicly took his message to the sailors and made history on January 22nd with the first Humanist meeting at [Naval Base San Diego](#). Since Chief Wright's event, the local Military Association of Atheists and Freethinkers ([MAAF](#)) has experienced new and increasing membership interest from non-theists in uniform as well as their families and friends. The call has gone out Congratulations, San Diego CoR and San Diego MAAF!

[The picture on the left is of Chief Petty Officer Doug Wright addressing Inland Empire CoR in November 2014.]

## CoRlaborated Leadership

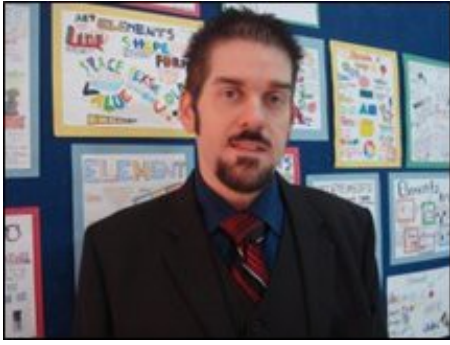


On January 24, 2015, a [Secular Leadership Conference](#) was held at Rice University in Houston, Texas and hosted by the [American Humanist Association](#). Joseph and Jase represented UnitedCoR (in addition to Joseph's representation of [FreethoughtAction](#)), and had the opportunity to collaborate efforts with others such as [Freethought Society](#), [Black Nonbelievers](#), the [Atheist Alliance of America](#), [American Atheists](#), [International Humanist and Ethical Union](#), [Secular Policy Institute](#), the [Openly Secular](#) project, the [Brights' Net](#), [Darwin Day](#), the [Society for Humanistic Judaism](#), [Ex-Muslims of North America](#) and many others. The day was marked by harmonious discussions on many exciting projects that are currently underway, including [Camp Quest](#), the [Clergy Project](#) and the [Human Morality portal](#), so be sure to click on the links above to see how your local groups can benefit from the national organizations.



When we say that theistic messages are all around us, we're serious. Many attendees at the conference were given a parting gift at Houston Hobby airport with an Evangelical sermon, complete with running subtitles. It's all the more important now for non-theistic communities to unite and work together to ensure that we are not shut out from public discourse and forced to take second best in American life.

## Taken From the Heap



Ready...set...action! I can still remember some of the pithy wisdom that my mother instilled into me as a child, and no doubt, you've probably heard these, too: "Birds of a feather flock together" and "Actions speak louder than words." As non-theists, we've been doing a lot of "flocking together," and there is nothing wrong with this because we know there is strength when we form coalitions of support and strength. The question then is "What are the actions that speak louder than words?" One action that spoke volumes was an exciting and groundbreaking conference that took place at American University in Washington, DC on January 27. Given the

nature of the discussions and those involved, it is important that we recognize what non-theist sponsorship and facilitation created:

*"Peace, Pluralism, & Progress!" This was the title of a friendly and fruitful dialogue hosted by the [Humanist Chaplaincy at American University](#) (AU) between scholars representing Humanist and Abrahamic religious perspectives focused on conflict reduction, resolution, and prevention. The panel discussion drew several dozen students from AU and other area colleges, as well as interested and supportive community members.*

*Conflict around religion has caused much suffering, death, and destruction in our world. Tragic and preventable misunderstandings, hatreds, and violence are increasing & must be reduced: between people who identify with the same religious tradition; between people of differing religions; and between theistic and non-theistic people.*

*This panel of four scholars explored how some theological and some secular worldviews fuel such discord and harm, while others foster dialogue, bias-and-conflict-reduction, mutual understanding and regard, even cooperation, trust, and friendship. They share a common commitment to the latter outcomes. The panel included a Muslim imam and educator, a Christian philosopher and diplomat, a Jewish public interest lawyer and author on religion, and a Humanist philosopher and author on science, ethics, and politics. The last of these panelists is Dr. John Shook, who connected AU's Humanist chaplain, Rabbi [Binyamin Biber](#), with the other scholars and proposed the event. This was the inaugural gathering beginning a series of dialogue and bridge-building events at AU organized by Chaplain Biber.*

In addition to the work that was carried out at American University, some local CoRs have sent me emails about their activities during the month of January. Some have been serving as members of local interfaith/philosophy councils; collected feminine hygiene products for a shelter that serves women who were victims of domestic violence; donated 5+ TONS of food to local Federal Section 8 housing projects; built three raised-bed gardens for a homeless settlement and assisted homeless workers build 5 make-shift shelters; regularly volunteered time to litter pick-ups with Adopt-a-Highway programs; raised money for [Smile Train](#) to repair cleft lips/palates in underdeveloped countries; participated in diabetes walk fundraisers and human society walks with local Humane Society shelters; and donated money to Camp Quest to sponsor a student.

It's one thing to say that we are "good without a god," and we know that others in the community hear us say that. Our words are louder when we DO "good without a god," because others in the community experience the benefit of what was done in the name of "you're important because you are here."

-Jason D. Heap