

First Coast

FreeThinker



The newsletter of the First Coast Freethought Society

March 2007

Volume 5, Issue 3

Inside this issue: **My Speculation on the Origins of Religion**

Pastor Flaunts
Fleeing his Flock 4

2007 Legislative
Bills 5

Martin Luther
King, Jr. and Civil
Rights 6

Shane Christian

Religion is a direct byproduct of an evolving higher consciousness, ignorance, and fear of death. I'm sure that if we ever discover any other intelligent life from another world (not likely), we will find that they had religious cultural foundations in their evolutionary rise to sentient beings.

Fossil evidence suggests that modern humans were well established as long ago as two-hundred thousand years. Not only did man's higher level of intelligence help him in hunting and gathering

food more efficiently, it also helped him in surviving the stresses of changing climates and hardships.

For the first hundred and fifty thousand years of modern human evolution, human in-

God is the ultimate tool of propaganda.

stincts, environmental stresses, nutritional stresses, natural selection, evolving languages, competition with rival clans, and war would have been a big influence on the molding of the first modern human minds. Day to day knowledge regarding hunting and

gathering, war, social rituals, and social orders, would be passed down from generation to generation.

Mentally, modern man has changed very little in the past fifty thousand years, although our knowledge of the world is millions of times greater than it was long ago. Our mental and emotional capacities are very much the same today as they were long ago.

One characteristic of the human mind is being credulous and the ability to be easily programmed at childhood. This was essential for

(Continued on page 3)

"He [Pasteur] is best known to the general public for showing how to stop milk and wine from going sour - this process came to be called pasteurization. He is regarded as one of the three main founders of bacteriology, among Ferdinand Cohn and Robert Koch."

[-http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louis_Pasteur](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louis_Pasteur)

March 2007 Meeting

Jim Strayer, Retired Science Teacher

**"Pasteur and Koch, Two Giants of the Scientific Method"
Science vs. Superstition**

Monday, March 19, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

(Upstairs in the Sanctuary - Doors open at 6:00)

Unitarian Universalist Church • 7405 Arlington Expressway • Jacksonville, FL

HUMANIST BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP

- When:** 2:00 p.m., the third Sunday of each month.
- Where:** Borders Books, 8801 Southside Blvd., 519-6500, books are usually in stock.
- What:** Books/magazines planned for discussion:
- March 18, 2007 - *Writings of Mark Twain*
 - April 15, 2007 - *A Rulebook for Arguments*, by Anthony Weston



Arguments are attempts to support certain views with reasons, and *A Rulebook for Arguments* is an introduction to the art of assessing arguments. (\$5.95) Not all views are equal. Arguments are used firstly as a means of inquiry, to determine what views are better than others.

Once we have arrived at a conclusion, argument is how we explain and defend it with well-supported reasons. Too often we know only how to shoot down fallacies, but can't explain what is actually wrong, or launch an argument of our own. The ability to defend our views is a measure of the skill to think for ourselves, and to form views in a responsible way. Simple rules for putting together good arguments will be presented by Alice Ricker, June Applen, and John Ruskuski.

For more information, contact moderator Jewell Kross at JKross@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org or call 904-996-1553.



Newsletter Staff

Editor:	Hugo Borresen	779-6883
	HBorresen@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org	
Layout:	Curtis Wolf	573-3847
	CWolf@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org	
Staff writer:	Fred Hill	358-3610
	FHill@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org	
Proofreader:	Wilhelmina Walton	642-8798
	WWalton@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org	
Proofreader:	Carrie Renwick	268-8826
	CRenwick@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org	

The *First Coast FreeThinker* is published for members of the First Coast Freethought Society, other freethinkers, and potential freethinkers. We exchange newsletters with other freethought groups and obtain information from many diverse sources.

Readers are invited and encouraged to reprint our original materials provided they give credit to this publication.

The officials of the FCFS are not responsible for opinions or other statements expressed in this newsletter. It is intended to convey ideas to stimulate discussion on a variety of subjects.

We welcome submissions. The deadline is the **FOURTH SATURDAY** of each month for the following month's issue. Submit contributions by e-mail to Hugo (see above), or U.S. mail to Hugo Borresen, 8831 Taurus Circle South, Jacksonville, FL 32222. Submit web site contributions to Carrie Renwick at the e-mail address above.

My Speculation on the Origins of Religion

(Continued from page 1)

the survival of early human children in hostile environments. Children tend to accept, without question, what they are told by their parents and elders (there are exceptions).

Being suggestible does not end when adulthood is reached. Although it is very difficult to change ideologies which are imprinted in the minds of children after they become adults, being suggestible stays with people throughout their whole lives. This weakness is exploited by many who wish to control and influence the minds of the masses, or to sell us on new unfamiliar ideas and products.

As man's intelligence evolved, his awareness of his environment grew. Besides making tools and weapons, the big breakthrough in our evolving intelligence was our ability to create language and communicate much more efficiently with one another. It was at this time that man was able to express one of his greatest gifts of intelligence: imagination.

When early man couldn't explain events which naturally occur in nature, such as the change of seasons, the rise and fall of the sun, moon, and stars in the sky, volcanoes, earthquakes, tsunamis, rain, lightning, dreams, life and death, he would use his imagination to satisfy his curiosity. Early man created stories to fill in the gaps of

his knowledge. These stories were then incorporated into their daily lives and rituals, and passed down from generation to generation. Wandering nomads, traders, and conquerers would intermix with different cultures, passing between them bits and pieces of myth, superstitions, and religions. Ideologies, like life, have evolved by the same Darwinian processes. As the centuries passed, religions would evolve and become more complex.

At some point in our mental evolution, humans evolved a dual concept of reality. One part of the mind deals directly with reality in the real world interacting with people, places and things, while a specialized region holds a virtual reality built upon cultural myth and superstition. This virtual reality is just as real in the minds of the believers as is the real physical world. Within the virtual reality world reside the ghosts, demons, gods, immortality in the afterlife, and the supernatural.

Religion provided an escape from reality, much as going to the movies does today. The only difference is that believers of these alternate virtual realities of gods and the supernatural believed that the stories were true then, just as they still believe they are true today. And new alternate virtual realities are being born every century.

More recently we saw the rise of the pseudo-religion, Scientology. In the nineteenth century, we saw the rise of the Mor-

mon Church and Baha'i. Credulousness and ignorance are the root cause of new cults around the world.

“One of the saddest lessons of history is this: If we've been bamboozled long enough, we tend to reject any evidence of the bamboozle. We're no longer interested in finding out the truth. The bamboozle has captured us. It's simply too painful to acknowledge, even to ourselves, that we've been taken. Once you give a charlatan power over you, you almost never get it back. So the old bamboozlers tend to persist as the new ones rise.”

--*The Demon-Haunted World*,
by Carl Sagan

Combining the weakness of credulousness and suggestibility with other human characteristics like greed, xenophobia, and prejudice, throw in some propaganda and it's easy to see how a few in control of a social group can turn man against man, religion against religion, and nation against nation. Man can be the most giving and caring being on Earth, but with a little influence, he can also be the cruelest and deadliest creature of all.

The Christian Bible evolved into a reflection of humanity, all the good, bad and the very ugly. Throughout time man has learned how to manipulate the minds of his fellow man through many propaganda techniques. God is the ultimate tool of propaganda. God is good and evil, merciful and merciless. Which side of the coin is used is based on the particular circumstances at a given time.



Pastor Flaunts Fleecing his Flock

Hugo Borresen

Pastor Randall Radic was a trusted servant of the Congregational Church of Ripon, California, for almost a decade. Little did the members suspect what sort of clandestine activity was going on underneath the facade of their trusted confidant.

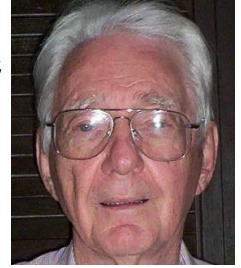
Pastor Randall forged paper work falsely claiming that he owned the 90 year old church and parsonage where he lived and sold the property for

\$525,000. With part of the funds received, he purchased a laptop computer and a BMW and fled to Denver. He was arrested in 2005 after being coaxed to return to California and was sent to jail.

While awaiting trial in jail, he gained the confidence of his cell mate who was in jail on suspicion of murdering a woman, and the suspect confessed his guilt to Pastor Radic. Pastor Radic struck a deal with the court confessing to embezzlement and agreed to

testify against the murderer, at which point the charges against him were dropped, and no further sentence was imposed.

While awaiting trial, Pastor Radic wrote his memoirs detailing how he fleeced his flock and forged the papers to sell the property. He has been unable to sell the story so far. He has,



(Continued on page 10)

Ongoing FCFS Activities

Dinners For Atheists (and Freethinkers, Humanists, Agnostics, etc.)

Sign up to attend or host a dinner yourself. Sign-up sheets will be at the back table at the monthly meetings. For further details on how this works, see page 9 of the February 2006 *Freethinker*, or ask the hospitality ladies at the back table.

Atheist Sunday Morning (or Sunday Morning in the Park)

For those of us seeking more freethought fellowship, conversation and camaraderie, here is an opportunity to get together on Sunday mornings. Contact June Applen at JApplen@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org or call 904-762-0627.

No Atheist Left Behind (or Are You Going My Way?)

If you are seeking a ride to an FCFS event, contact **Hugo Borresen** at HBorresen@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org or call 904-779-6883.

Caring Tree

If a telephone call to any member or anyone interested in our group might serve a purpose--such as a ride to our meeting or some other personal need, please contact **Nita Pitts** at 904-996-0879 or e-mail her at pitrymnd@comcast.net. Otherwise, leave a notation on the sign-in sheet at the front table during one of our meetings.

Bills Before The 2007 Florida Legislature About Which Freethinkers Should Know

Curtis Wolf

It is time for the third annual review of bills coming before the 2007 Florida Legislature that may interest or even terrify freethinkers who believe in separation of church and state and using reason when judging government policy. The Florida Legislature will convene its regular session on March 6th.

We should be grateful that the Florida Legislature does not appear to be as ambitious this year in promoting legislation that is anathema to freethinkers as it has in past legislative sessions. Granted, you will recognize some of the bills listed in this article since they were introduced last year in the 2006 legislative session. But there does not appear to be any new wrinkles in freethinker-unfriendly legislation.

I am using the same rules for selecting the bills in this article that I used last year:

- Does the bill advance religion or religious ideas?
- Does the bill cover an issue in which religious arguments are presented on one side of the issue?
- Does the bill advance or discourage pseudoscience?

Without further delay, here we go...

The religious argument that a human embryo is a person created by God no matter what its stage of development will play a part in the success or failure of the following two bills:

HB 71 redefines the victim of vehicular homicide who is living inside the womb as being an unborn child at any stage of development rather than a "viable fetus."

SB 1602 allows evidence that a minor's decision to seek an abortion is due to intimidation or undue influence to be introduced at parental notice waiver hearings.

Even though the Bible notes that Jesus associated with many unsavory characters, prostitutes could not come within 1000 feet of a church if SB 2550 is approved.

The prospect of children having sex, which often invokes religious disapproval, is the subject of two bills.

HB 561 requires public and private schools to provide information to parents concerning the human papillomavirus virus (HPV) vaccine. Unless the parent elects otherwise, the child is required to receive the vaccination before she can be admitted into the school.

HB 663 requires that parents must be notified about and can elect to have their children not

participate in school-based abstinence only instruction.

Discrimination against gays and lesbians, which often originates from the prohibition of homosexuality in the Bible, is the subject of three bills.

HB 609 prohibits discrimination against homosexuals in the public school system while HB 639 prohibits similar discrimination in the broader community. HB 789 allows homosexuals to become adoptive parents under certain circumstances.

There are a couple bills that relate to osteopathic medicine which is condemned at the QuackWatch website as being prone to pseudoscience. ([http://www.quackwatch.org/04Consumer Education/QA/osteo.html](http://www.quackwatch.org/04Consumer%20Education/QA/osteo.html)).

HB 1141 modifies licensing requirements for osteopathic medicine.

SR 1306 recognizes March 28, 2007 as Osteopathic Medicine Day.

As if we do not have enough days with religious themes on our calendar, HB 627 gives us another one. It designates January 6th as Three Kings Day. Three Kings Day commemorates the biblical story of the three kings who followed the star of

(Continued on page 7)



Abraham, Martin and Charles, Part 2: Martin Luther King, Jr. and Civil Rights

Fred W. Hill

A century after Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., noted in his *I Have a Dream* speech, “the Negro still is not free... the life of the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination.” This, in America, the “land of the free,” of “opportunity,” where “all men are created equal” per our founding declaration. Yet millions of people, inhabitants of this land for many generations, were denied equality, denied opportunity, denied meaningful freedom simply because they were not white.

King’s own great grandparents were born slaves, and his grandfathers were born during the Civil War and were thus too young to recall being born to slavery; all were freed by the Union victory, yet their freedom became a shallow thing in the ensuing decades. The U.S. Supreme Court once again turned against Negroes in the rulings of *The Civil Rights Cases (1883)* and *Plessy v. Ferguson (1896)*, that respectively struck down several key provisions of the Civil Rights Acts of 1875, meant to “eradicate racial discrimination in places of public accommodation,” and upheld racial segregation ([American Constitutional Law](#), p. 742, Stephens & Scheb,

1999). Jim Crow laws, requiring separate facilities for blacks and whites in almost every aspect of life, were enforced in nearly every state, and were extended to the Federal Government by President Woodrow Wilson in 1913 (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jim_Crow_laws).

Wilson also endorsed the wildly distorted historical film of 1915, D. W. Griffith’s *Birth of a Nation*, which inspired the re-birth of the Ku Klux Klan across the country, in chapters (which counted prominent politicians, judges, and policemen among their members) dedicated to the

King risked much in taking his stance and, like Lincoln, he was murdered for it.

proposition that anyone who is not a white Protestant-Christian is less than equal and deserved no rights. Thousands of African-Americans were lynched even for imagined infractions of racist codes of conduct.

President Franklin Delano Roosevelt himself gave in to fear, refusing to speak out directly against the Klan or lynching lest he alienate the southern members of his Democratic coalition. President Kennedy was also swayed by this fear, and his Attorney General, Robert Kennedy, authorized FBI Director J. Ed-

gar Hoover to spy on King. The racist Hoover hardly needed prodding, seeing King as a filthy commie and went so far as to send a letter to him threatening to expose his private failings unless he committed suicide.

Naturally, the Klan had already threatened directly to kill Dr. King--all because Dr. King promoted the peculiar idea that people should be treated equally before the law and judged solely on the basis of their character and actions rather than the color of their skin.

Yet King pressed on to challenge his countrymen to create a better America and to overcome the disgrace of institutionalized racism that sullied its international reputation. King continued a tradition of struggle for full equality begun before the Civil War, with eminent leaders of both races, including Frederick Douglass, Wendell Phillips, Thaddeus Stevens, W. E. B. DuBois, and Thurgood Marshall among many others.

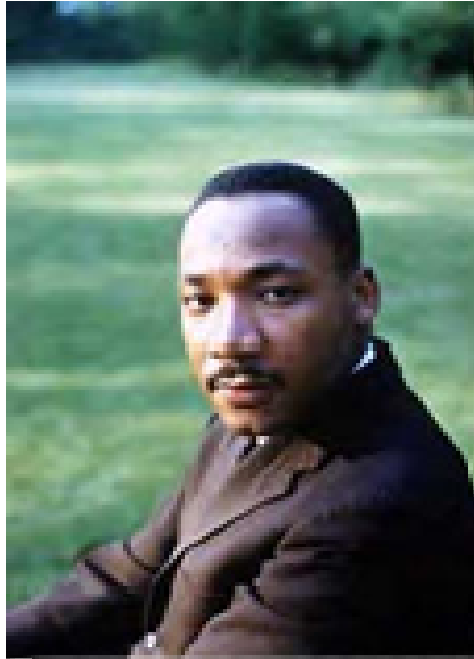
However, King, a gifted orator, organizer and leader, had an edge in that he could elicit the attention of the emerging TV news media and turn its focus to the brutal means by which segregation was enforced, by which even nonviolent protests were put down. This, of course, proved very embarrassing to a



nation engaged in an ideological war with the communists for the hearts and minds of people in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. How could these people be convinced that the U.S. had the better form of government when they could see for themselves how people who looked like themselves were unjustly oppressed here?

Timid sympathizers of civil rights begged King to temporize, to be patient, not to cause such agitation even if non-violently, to wait for justice which was sure to come eventually, they assured. In his *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*, written while he was imprisoned for leading a nonviolent protest against segregation in a city so infamous for violence committed against its black citizens and institutions that it was known as "Bombingham," King expressed his frustration with such entreaties. "We know through painful experience," he noted, "that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed."

Yet neither did King give in to the demands of more radical black leaders to fight fire with fire, to wage war against the oppressors. He meant to appeal to the "better angels" of national opinion, to arouse Americans who actually cared about genu-



ine justice and fairness to demand that the government enforce and protect the civil rights of all citizens throughout the entire country. He attended, as an honored guest, the ceremony

where President Lynden Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which ended legal segregation in public facilities in the United States.

Despite his edge in promoting the cause of liberty, King risked much in taking his stance and, like Lincoln, he was murdered for it. However, his example was revered enough that he became the only American other than George Washington to be honored with a Federal holiday on his birthday--the federal holiday remains "Washington's Birthday," not "Presidents' Day," contrary to popular misperceptions. And contrary to common groushings I have heard, Martin Luther King's Birthday should not be regarded as a "black holiday," but rather as a day of remembrance for a great man who strove for the rights of all people, to make this nation better live up to its ideals of equality of justice and opportunity, so often celebrated in song and speech but too often ill-practiced; a day to be rededicated to furthering that goal through persuasion, education and peaceful protests as necessary.



Bills Before The 2007 Florida Legislature About Which Freethinkers Should Know

(Continued from page 5)

Bethlehem so that they could bring presents to the infant Jesus.

Even though the Bible notes that Jesus associated with many unsavory characters, prostitutes

could not come within 1000 feet of a church if SB 2550 is approved.

To find out more about these bills, refer to:

<http://www.myfloridahouse.com/Sections/Bills/bills.aspx?SessionId=54> for the Florida House; and <http://www.flsenate.gov/Session/index.cfm?Mode=Bills&SubMenu>

[=1&Tab=session&Start=2&End=100&Year=2007&Chamber=Senate](#) for the Florida Senate.

Please note that the First Coast Freethought Society neither endorses nor opposes any of these bills. The above is provided for informational purposes only.



First Coast Freethought Society, Inc.
P.O. Box 550591
Jacksonville, FL 32255-0591
(904) 288-6291
<http://firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org>

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of the First Coast Freethought Society is to serve the needs of the nonreligious of Northeast Florida, to promote freethought and secular humanism, and to provide an opportunity for agnostics, atheists, skeptics and other free-thinkers to exchange ideas.

Meetings

The FCFS meets the THIRD Monday of each month at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Jacksonville, upstairs in the sanctuary, 7405 Arlington Expressway, Jacksonville, Florida 32211. (904) 725-8133. Doors open 6:00. Meeting time: 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Committees and Chairs

Program Curtis Wolf 573-3847
CWolf@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org
Audit R. C. Pitts 996-0879
RPitts@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org
Newsletter Hugo Borresen 779-6883
HBorresen@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org
Membership June Applen 762-0627
JApplen@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org
Telephone Nita Pitts 996-0879
NPitts@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org

FCFS Officers

President Carrie Renwick 268-8826
CRenwick@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org
Vice President Curtis Wolf 573-3847
CWolf@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org
Secretary Wilhelmina Walton 642-8798
WWalton@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org
Treasurer Mark Renwick 268-8826
MRenwick@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org
At-Large/Founder Earl Coggins 519-1809
ECoggins@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org

Other FCFS Appointments

Parliamentarian Tom Bowen 288-6291
TBowen@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org
E-mail Secretary Carrie Renwick 268-8826
CRenwick@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org

Finance Mark Renwick 268-8826
MRenwick@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org
Publicity Carrie Renwick 268-8826
CRenwick@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org
Website Mark Renwick 268-8826
MRenwick@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org
Hospitality Alice Ricker 745-1840
ARicker@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org
Long-Range Planning Curtis Wolf 573-3847
CWolf@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org

March Social - All Welcome!

WHERE: STEAK & ALE at Baymeadows and I-95 South

WHEN: TUES., March 27, 2007. Gather in Lounge at 6:00 p.m., Dinner at 7:00 p.m.

RSVP: CarrieRen@att.net (or 268-8826) by March 26, if you plan to attend!

First Coast Freethought Society, Inc.

P.O. Box 550591, Jacksonville, FL 32255-0591 • (904) 288-6291

2007 Membership Application



Name		Date	
Home address	City	State	Zip Code
E-mail address	Home phone	Business phone	
Occupation	Areas of interest and/or expertise		

How did you hear about us? _____

Membership level (please select one):

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Regular (\$30/yr.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Carl Sagan (\$50/yr.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Charles Darwin (\$200/yr.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student (\$15/yr.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Bertrand Russell (\$75/yr.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Robert Ingersoll (\$500/yr.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Senior - 65+ (\$15/yr.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Thomas Paine (\$100/yr.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Lifetime (\$1,000) |

I'm interested in getting involved in the FCFS as a(n):

- General member Committee member Officer Financial supporter

Do you object to your name appearing on our membership list, which is only distributed to other members? YES

Comments: _____

***You can make a lasting impact on the future of
freethought and secular humanism in this community
...if you provide for the First Coast Freethought Society in your Will.***

Your bequest will ensure that the FCFS continues to be a beacon for freethinkers on the First Coast and to remain a vital Voice of Reason in the Northeast Florida area. Several options are available for establishing a bequest (specific, percentage, residual, or contingent). We will be happy to provide the appropriate wording to you and your attorney, depending upon your wishes.

For further information, contact
Carrie Renwick, P.O. Box 550591, Jacksonville, FL 32255-0591 or
904-288-6291 • CarrieRen@att.net • <http://www.firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org/>
All inquiries are held in the strictest confidence.

Pastor Flaunts Fleecing his Flock

(Continued from page 4)

however, signed a deal to publish a book titled, *The Sound of Meat*, billed as “a fairly accurate memoir.”

The congregation got the

church back; and Pastor Radic is being sued by the couple who bought the parsonage, the title company that issued the loan on the parsonage, and the former notary who authenticated Radic's signature on the false deed.

His lawyer commented, “He is very remorseful about his actions, stating he made some egregious mistakes. But in an imperfect world, people behave imperfectly.” For the most part, the elderly parishioners have forgiven him.



Next deadline for article submission: March 24, 2007

First Coast Freethought Society 2007 Events

March	19 - Monthly meeting	18 - Book discussion group	27- Social at Steak and Ale
April	16 - Monthly meeting	15 - Book discussion group	24- Social at Steak and Ale
May	21 - Monthly meeting	20 - Book discussion group	22- Social at Steak and Ale

Visit our website at <http://www.firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org/>.

(In the Adobe version, the links are **LIVE!** Ctrl & Click will take you there.)

Return service requested



First Coast Freethought Society, Inc.
10653 Hearstone Drive
Jacksonville, Florida 32257