



FCFS January 2009 Activities

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
4 Book Group	5	6	7	8	9	10
11 Planning Mtg.	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19 Public Meeting	20	21	22	23	24 Article Deadline
25 Secular Sunday	26	27 Olive Garden	28	29	30	31

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

In the Adobe version, the links are **LIVE!** One click takes you there. Two-line links may not work. Best to copy and paste into your browser window.

A Word About our 2009 Ongoing Fundraising Program

Carrie Renwick, Fundraising Chair

Interestingly, in September 2008, even before the gravity of the country's financial crisis was fully articulated, the Fundraising Committee and the Board concluded that creating a convenient, monthly support opportunity would be beneficial to the FCFS as well as its members.

To that end, a General Promotional Fund was created, and you will find a support card included in every newsletter, both the e-mailed Adobe version and the mailed hard copy. Adobe recipients will be provided a link, and the hard copy recipients will be provided a return envelope. (See November 2008 FreeThinker for more details.)

It has been suggested that the FCFS raise the membership dues in order to increase revenue. However, the Board opted not to do that, lest the cost be prohibitive to any prospective FCFS members and ultimately result in a decrease in membership rolls. Also, we do provide higher, tax-deductible levels of membership for those who feel so inclined.

Time alone will tell whether our new ongoing fundraising program will work. But if it works well, we conceivably could renew the NPR (National Public Radio) Corporate Sponsorship contract for the second half of 2009 without the special summer fund drive. Wow! Wouldn't that be great?

In any case, we hope that in these times when belt-tightening is required by us all (persons as well as nonprofits) that this program will provide a convenient fundraising solution. Be on the lookout for the support cards!



FIRST COAST FREETHOUGHT SOCIETY, INC.

An organization of freethinkers and secular humanists supporting free inquiry, education, and community in the Northeast Florida area

Our Motto: “To Question is the Answer.”

Post Office Box 550591, Jacksonville, FL 32255-0591
Website: <http://FirstCoastFreethoughtSociety.org>

Telephone: 904-288-6291
E-mail: CarrieRen@att.net



Support the First Coast Freethought Society

Dear E-mail *FreeThinker* Recipient:

To provide support on line, click here: <http://www.firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org/support.htm> to go to the FCFS website and use a credit card or PayPal account.

If you prefer to mail a check, print this page and use the “card” (below) to indicate your choices. To print this page, put your cursor anywhere on this page. Click Print. Then select “Current Page” and click the “OK” button.

Mail your check to the FCFS, P.O. Box 550591, Jacksonville, FL 32255-0591. Thank you!



The First Coast Freethought Society, Inc.

Post Office Box 550591
Jacksonville, Florida 32255-0591
<http://www.firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org/support.htm>

- I wish to contribute to the **NPR Corporate Sponsorship Fund**; or
- I wish to contribute to the ongoing **General Promotional Fund**
- No preference

Enclosed is my contribution for (please check one):

- \$25 \$50 \$75 \$100 Other _____

- I authorize the FCFS to include my name in a forthcoming issue of the *First Coast FreeThinker* recognizing my support.

Name: _____

Address: _____

E-mail: _____

Your Support Promotes Freethought on the First Coast

First Coast

FreeThinker



The Newsletter of the First Coast Freethought Society

January 2009

Happy New Year!

Volume 7, Issue 1

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The Positive Atheism
website can be found at
<http://www.positiveatheism.org/>

Earl Coggins

The First Coast Freethought society is moving into both another year and another decade. Coincidentally, we are headed into that next decade with a newly elected U.S. president—a president who probably received a lot of votes because of his campaign slogans, “Change” and “Yes, we can.”

There are a few things I personally would like to see changed in the next decade of the First Coast Freethought Society's existence. First, I'd like

to see non-religious people respected as moral and ethical. Then, I'd like to see candidates for any elected office, be it local, state, or federal, get elected not because they're religious, but because they're qualified to do the job. I'd like to see all levels of govern-

First, I'd like to see non-religious people respected as moral and ethical.

ment honor the First Amendment to our federal Constitution and keep government secular.

How exactly we go about getting these things recognized as important by the new administration, the voting

public, and citizens in general, is what I hope we as a local organization and all of the other freethought, humanist, atheist, agnostic, and skeptic organizations can focus on during the next year. That will be tough, considering the enormous issues on the presidential plate that take precedence over everything else—things like two wars and an economy in ruins.

Professor Paul Kurtz, chairman and

(Continued on page 3)



January 2009 Meeting

Earl Coggins, Founder and President, First Coast Freethought Society

“Positive Atheism: Presenting the Merits of Disbelief”

Monday, January 19, 2009, 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 first Sunday of each month.

Where: Borders Books, 8801 Southside Blvd., 519-6500, books are usually in stock.

What: Books/magazines planned for discussion:

- January 4, 2009 - Discussion: What is humanism, and what do you prefer to call yourself, a freethinker? a humanist? a religious humanist? an atheist? an agnostic? ...or something entirely different?
- February 1, 2009 - *Sleeping With Extra-Terrestrials*, by Wendy Kaminer (Please note: Borders will not stock this book for us)



In her book, *Sleeping With Extra-Terrestrials*, Wendy Kaminer illustrates the various ways in which society has come to value emotion over reason and faith over fact. She argues that declarations of intense belief have largely taken the place of rational discourse. “How do you feel?” seems to be a more frequently asked question than “What do you know?” Her examination of the rise of spiritualism, the mushrooming digital culture, junk science, and the habitual merging of political and evangelical speech blazes with relevance and incisive wit.

For more information, contact moderator Jewell Kross at JKross@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org or call 904-996-1553. (NOTE: If you purchase books from Amazon, please go to our website first, <http://www.firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org/index.html> and then click the link to Amazon.com. Thank you!)

First Coast FreeThinker

The *First Coast FreeThinker* is published for FCFS members, other freethinkers, and potential freethinkers. Nonmembers may receive three issues free of charge, after which they must join the FCFS to continue to receive hard copy.

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. The *FreeThinker* is intended to convey ideas intended to stimulate thought and discussion on a variety of subjects.

We welcome submissions. The deadline is the **FOURTH SATURDAY** of each month for the

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following month's issue. Submit contributions to the newsletter by e-mail to Hugo (see above), or by U.S. mail to Hugo Borresen, 8831 Taurus Circle South, Jacksonville, FL 32222.

January 2009 President's Message

(Continued from page 1)

founder of the Center for Inquiry Transnational, Editor-in-Chief of *FREE INQUIRY* magazine, and professor emeritus of philosophy at the State University of New York at Buffalo, was recently published in the *Washington Post's* "On Faith" section of their online newspaper. In his article, "Is Belief in God Essential for

Moral Virtue?" Kurtz writes: "Secular humanists define their outlook affirmatively in the light of positive ethical values, not by what they are against but what they are for."

In Kurtz's *A Secular Humanist Declaration*, published in 1980 and endorsed by 58 prominent scholars and writers, there are ten ideals listed as worthy of defending. They are Free Inquiry, Separation of Church and

State, the Ideal of Freedom, Ethics Based on Critical Intelligence, Moral Education, Religious Skepticism, Reason, Science and Technology, Evolution, and Education.

If the country is truly ready for change and our new president is ready to introduce it, I think the secular humanist and democratic ideals listed above should be a part of this 21st Century reform movement.



My Views as a Scientist on Religion

Terry Loucks

I know way too much about New Testament scholarship and physics to believe in personal gods to whom people pray, but it does not take away my sense of awe about the creation I have been able to witness through mathematics during my one life.

Every year scientists learn more about creation, but we already know enough for me to be grateful in a very profound sense. I am grateful for this amazing planet which enjoys not only a propitious location in our solar system and galaxy but also a very stable environment for long enough that complex life,

like me and the nature around me, could evolve.

I am also grateful for the laws of physics which have miraculously held true for 13.7 billion years (the life of our universe), for without them, all would be chaos. Electricity and

The awesome Periodic Table, with vital chemical elements in perfect order, is ideal for the evolution of life



and ultimately consciousness. And all of this from a handful of masterful equations!

I am first and foremost a scientific skeptic and a believer in human reasoning and the scientific method as the salvation of humankind. As a secular humanist, I have ample reason to be ethical and moral, because I want more than anything for my offspring and my species to survive. To me,

the natural, as revealed through the sciences, is much more amazing than the supernatural with its many gods.



Periodic Table of Elements

1 H																	2 He
3 Li	4 Be											5 B	6 C	7 N	8 O	9 F	10 Ne
11 Na	12 Mg											13 Al	14 Si	15 P	16 S	17 Cl	18 Ar
19 K	20 Ca	21 Sc	22 Ti	23 V	24 Cr	25 Mn	26 Fe	27 Co	28 Ni	29 Cu	30 Zn	31 Ga	32 Ge	33 As	34 Se	35 Br	36 Kr
37 Rb	38 Sr	39 Y	40 Zr	41 Nb	42 Mo	43 Tc	44 Ru	45 Rh	46 Pd	47 Ag	48 Cd	49 In	50 Sn	51 Sb	52 Te	53 I	54 Xe
55 Cs	56 Ba	57 *La	72 Hf	73 Ta	74 W	75 Re	76 Os	77 Ir	78 Pt	79 Au	80 Hg	81 Tl	82 Pb	83 Bi	84 Po	85 At	86 Rn
87 Fr	88 Ra	89 +Ac	104 Rf	105 Ha	106 T06	107 T07	108 T08	109 T09	110 T10								

* Lanthanide Series

58 Ce	59 Pr	60 Nd	61 Pm	62 Sm	63 Eu	64 Gd	65 Tb	66 Dy	67 Ho	68 Er	69 Tm	70 Yb	71 Lu
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+ Actinide Series

90 Th	91 Pa	92 U	93 Np	94 Pu	95 Am	96 Cm	97 Bk	98 Cf	99 Es	100 Fm	101 Md	102 Ds	103 Uu
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Legend - click to find out more...

■ H - gas	■ Li - solid	■ Br - liquid	■ Tc - synthetic
■ Non-Metals	■ Transition Metals	■ Rare Earth Metals	■ Halogens
■ Alkali Metals	■ Alkali Earth Metals	■ Other Metals	■ Inert Elements

magnetism, the forces in the nucleus and our stars, including the sun, have orchestrated the beautiful universe around us.

Editorial—The Future of the *First Coast FreeThinker*

Hugo Borresen

This issue of the *First Coast FreeThinker* is bigger in size and content. After ten years of success, the First Coast Freethought Society now has a readership of over 800 recipients. The mailing list includes over 150 paid members. The *FreeThinker* strives to educate, enlighten, and entertain freethinkers, a minority living in the Bible Belt. The *FreeThinker* seeks to have freethinkers recognized as part of the social fabric of the city, state, and nation.

Nationally, 21% of atheists and 23% of agnostics have earned college degrees, according to the Pew Forum. This is comparable to the better educated religious denominations: Buddhists, Congregationalists, Eastern Orthodox, Episcopalians, Hindus, Jews, Methodists, Presbyterians, and Unitarians.

In the future, freethinkers will increase in influence. Four atheist authors—Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, Sam Harris, and Christopher Hitchens—have been on the best seller lists for some time, now. A

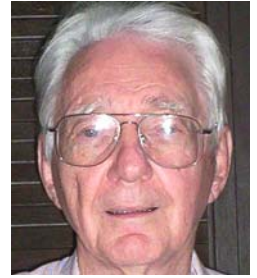
freethought lobbyist in Washington, DC, Lori Lipman Brown with the Secular Coalition for America, now speaks to members of Congress on behalf of nonbelievers who may now number thirty million—sixteen percent of the population. The status of nonbelievers as the most maligned minority in the nation is slowly ending, just as discrimination against African Americans is slowly ending.

The status of non-believers as the most maligned minority...is slowly ending...

We support democracy and the Bill of Rights. “We the people . . .” begins the Constitution, and the *Affirmations of Humanism* state that we “believe in an open and pluralistic society” and that “democracy is the best guarantee of protecting human rights from authoritarian elites and repressive majorities.” We nonbelievers outnumber all the other religious minorities combined—Bahá’ís, Buddhists, Hindus, Jews, Mormons, Muslims, etc., in the U.S.—so even Congress begins to recognize us.

Our newsletter relates the Constitution and the Bill of Rights to belief in secular humanism and supports reason, science, pluralism, justice, and moral excellence. In fact, these documents often affirm some of humanism’s twenty principles which are available on the Internet and in print. (See “*The Affirmations of Humanism: A Statement of Principles*” found here: http://www.firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org/statement_of_principles.htm)

Current plans for the *FreeThinker* include having Ken Hurley write about civic issues, and David Schwam-Baird will focus on political science issues, in turn throughout the year. We are already enjoying Terry Loucks’ science contributions, staff writer Fred Hill’s articles, Earl Coggins’ messages and articles, and of course Curtis Wolf and Sigrun Buckley’s articles. As we proceed into the new year, we welcome your comments and suggestions. But most of all, we encourage and welcome your submissions!



Thomas Paine Speaks!

Here are some words of wisdom from Thomas Paine, a Founding Father and freethinker.

Any system of religion that has anything in it that shocks the mind of a child, cannot be true.

Is it not a species of blas-

phemy to call the New Testament revealed religion, when we see in it such contradictions and absurdities?



Freethinkers Speaking Out on Religion

FCFS member Beth Perry submitted the following letter to the editor to the *Florida Times-Union*:

I am reminded again why I resigned from religion after reading about the lady whose church is going to publicize her private life, since they do not agree with it. Apparently this pastor and his congregants are not Christians. Jesus never taught denigration, that I remember. He also taught, "judge not, lest ye be

judged." I was always taught not only the Ten Commandments, but that Jesus's Sermon on the Mount and his word superseded that of the Old Testament. What hypocrites! Especially the "friend" who could not keep her word and ran and tattled. What will they do next? Throw stones? What about "ye who are without sin, cast the first stone?" Where is the "Grace" in this church? What a misnomer. How many others are as appalled at this pastor's and con-

gregants' action as I?

In 1st Corinthians 5:1-13, Paul commanded the Christian Church in Corinth to ostracize one of its members who was having a sexually immoral relationship with his father's wife. It is only when the member repented as indicated in 2 Corinthians 2:4-8 that he was accepted back into the church. If you buy into Christianity, you buy into all of its rules on sex and morality, no matter how irrational they may be.



Ongoing FCFS Activities

Dinners for Doubters

Sign up to attend or to host a dinner yourself. Sign-up sheets will be at the back table at the monthly meetings. For details on how this works, see **page 7 of the August 2008 *FreeThinker*** (available on website) or ask a greeter at the back table.

Secular Sunday Morning in the Park (or Atheist Sunday Morning)

Freethinkers... let's get acquainted and enjoy intelligent conversation **every 4th Sunday of the month** (unless inclement weather prevails) at 10 a.m. until ? at the pavilion at Losco Park, 10851 Hood Rd., S., Jacksonville 32257, between Shad and Losco Roads. Need directions? Call Beth Perry at 733-5489 or Google the address to get a map and directions. We generally provide coffee. Bring a breakfast snack and a **chair**. Mark your calendar. We hope to see you there!

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 a member is in order, or if a sympathy card, flowers, or some form of support is needed, please contact **Nita Pitts** at 904-996-0879 or e-mail her at pitrymnd@comcast.net. If you prefer, leave a notation on the sign-in sheet at the back table at one of our monthly meetings.

The Promise and Dangers of Cloning (Part One)

Richard T. Hull

This article begins a two-part series on cloning and its implications [from Richard T. Hull, "Cloning," in Clifton Bryant and Dennis Peck, eds., Encyclopedia of Death and the Human Experience (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2009)].

Cloning

The concept "cloning" refers to artificial embryo twinning, somatic cell nuclear transfer, and removing stem cells from embryos and adult individuals to be used to "grow" tissues, organs, or individuals. Embryonic cloning involves using an electric current or other technique to split a pre-embryo into two, each of which has the potential, under optimal circumstances, of gestation and parturition to develop into a member of the species. The more powerful technique of somatic cell nuclear transfer involves the removal of the nucleus of an unfertilized ovum and replacing it with the nucleus of a somatic cell, such as a skin cell, and then using a small electric current to cause these combined elements to reverse the specialization and revert to stem cell status. The resultant cell is somewhat like a fertilized ovum, except that the bulk of its DNA is that of the donor organism

with the exception of the mitochondrial DNA that comes from the ovum. Finally, one goal of human therapeutic cloning is to produce cells that are progenitors of those for specific organs, not entire organisms. Such cloning is commonly referred to as therapeutic cloning: the cloning of organs and tissues that are histocompatible with a potential recipient of a transplantation of the resultant cells or organ. To date, cloning as a technique is in its infancy. Medical science has little interest in cloning individuals or in artificial twinning. The major thrust is toward human therapeutic cloning.

Such clones, created specifically to provide older twin siblings with a pool of compatible organs, would return the world to a kind of exploitative slavery that is the equal of enslavement practices of the past.

Cloning and Death

The prospect of death, whether of oneself or a loved one, frightens most humans. The fear may involve various dreadful prospects supposed to await the dying person, from Hell's fires, to the pain of separation, to the experience of nothingness. Even those not burdened by belief in an afterlife of judgment seek to remain alive as long as life holds a positive balance of

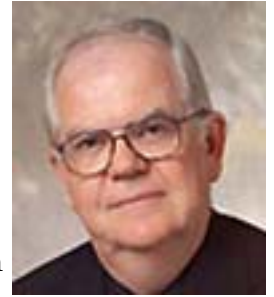
meaningful activity.

Humans have long sought to extend life and forestall death by imprecations, pharmacological supplementation of essential physiological chemicals, surgical removal of tumors, and repair of injuries. In pursuit of longevity, humans will cut calories to close to a starvation regimen, ingest unproved and disproved drugs (like laetrile), employ useless procedures (like coffee enemas), and take combinations of substances (like mega-

vitamin therapy) believed through a combination of anecdote, assurances, and gullibility to beat back cancers and other life-threatening conditions. More recently, replacement of organs with transplants from donors, living and dead, human and ani-

mal, have become the more scientific tools of life extension. Modern medicine and its alternative imitators have become the first and last hope of the sick and dying.

The relatively recent emergence of human reproductive cloning techniques has added several other stratagems to the tempting arsenal of weapons against imminent death. This entry discusses the present tech-



nology of human reproductive cloning and the possibilities of human therapeutic cloning for replacement of lost or injured parts and for replication of highly valued individuals.

Cloning and Immortality

Some individuals view cloning as a kind of immortality. But such views are not consistent with the facts. A clone is a much younger twin of the cloned individual. Just as, when a twin dies, it is not claimed that he or she somehow lives on in the survivor, so it wouldn't be said of a clone that he or she is "the spittin' image," or exact duplicate or replica, of the source of the cloned DNA. The reason is that a clone would be raised by different parents in a different time with different influences on its development. Identity has as much to do with the specifics of time and place as it does with genetic endowment.

Clones as Organ Farms

However, there are other attractions to having a clone twin. A clone would be a potential source of transplantable organs for an individual who suffers from severe vital organ failure. And the transplantable heart or liver or kidney would not require suppression of the immune system, as it likely would be recognized as "same" by the individual's defenses against foreign protein. Transplanted organs from cadavers or neomorts are typically histologically incompatible with the recipients, necessitating a life-long

regimen of drugs to suppress the immune system.

The problem with this "solution" to the need for transplantable organs is that, to date, the ability to clone humans as "organ farms" is highly constrained by both ethical and practical considerations. Ethically, of course, creating another human individual to serve as a potential source of organs is a monstrous idea that violates the



Cloned Sheep Dolly

most fundamental canons of morality. Such clones, created specifically to provide older twin siblings with a pool of compatible organs, would return the world to a kind of exploitative slavery that is the equal of enslavement practices of the past. Their lives would be forfeit at any time a vital organ was needed by the older twin, and their lives would be otherwise inconvenienced by the need for non-vital organ, tissue, and blood transplants and transfusions. Even if the usual protec-

tions of informed consent were scrupulously applied, the clone would be under constant pressure to view himself or herself as in thrall to another, more favored person.

But ethical scruples are not the only reasons not to move toward human cloning for transplantation's sake. As was learned from the unfortunate cloned sheep, Dolly, whose life span was half that of an ordinary sheep, cloning from adult cells (e.g., skin cells), in the rare case where the effort works, produces an individual already physiologically much older than an infant normally conceived. The apparent reason is that cells from a mature individual have begun to accumulate genetic errors caused by exposure to radiation and other environmental elements, and such breakage serves as a precursor to all manner of disorders, including cancers. To put the point colloquially, the clone created from the DNA of a mature human's somatic cells is born already aged with a biological age roughly equivalent to that of the source of the DNA.

It might be possible to clone an infant and then freeze the embryonic clone to be thawed and gestated upon the need for organ replacement arising in the older "twin." Such a procedure, however, is in conflict with the ethical principle of respect for individuals that serves as a barrier to any such stratagem.

One other theoretical possibility would be to manipulate an
(Continued on page 9)

Civication Is Good for the Economy!

Ken Hurley

He is lazy, happy, and dim-witted. His behavior is often ridiculous, selfish, dangerous, clumsy, and insensitive. However, he has shown moments of reasoned intellect. Over the years, he has evolved into an iconic symbol, recognized and understood by millions of misunderstood fathers across the world. He is oblivious to his status as a source of laughter for millions. In many ways, he is us.

Homer Jay Simpson, his plump, yellow-belly, hung over his belt as he opened another beer in celebration of word that he and his family were more popular than the First Amendment.

“News travels slowly in these parts,” said Homer. “Doh!” He wiped beer spray from his eye.

It was found in a study conducted by the McCormick Tribune Freedom Museum that 22% of Americans could name all five

Simpson family members ⁽¹⁾, compared with just 1 in 1,000 people who could name all five First Amendment freedoms ⁽²⁾.

The survey also found people misidentified First

Amendment rights. About one in five people thought the right to own a pet was protected, and 38% said they believed the right against self-incrimination—commonly known as “Taking the Fifth”—was a First Amendment right. However, the same people did acknowledge their preference for drinking a fifth.

In another less renowned study, when asked prior to the previous election, “Who are you voting for?” Sixteen percent couldn’t decide and 37% thought their vote didn’t matter.

We cannot remain ignorant on matters of our government. We, the people, are the government.

Who are these undecided voters? Undecided between Obama and McCain? That’s like asking, would you like ice cream or warm vomit to eat? And the great undecided wonder which flavor is the ice cream.

Millions and millions of dollars are spent trying to woo, persuade, and convince the wavering unsure to vote a certain way. That effort uncovered Joe the Plumber—a descendent of Homer Simpson. Too often it is the people who do not vote who decide who wins an election.

How did we come to this, you may ask? How did we raise generation after generation of citizens, constituents, voters, and

other people with loose brain cells rattling around in skull after skull after skull? Do we enjoy our ignorance? Have we self-disenfranchised to the point that we don’t recognize our own ignorance? Have our lives become too complex for us to remember the importance of our founding documents? Is it too late to do anything to turn the tide? Does any of this matter? Does anyone know what time it is?

This writer has spent a fair number of years out and about, mixing it up with the “general public.” As a result, a young attorney friend of mine, Dvorah Ben-Moshe, and I have co-founded a new non-profit entitled, Civication, Inc., dedicated to promoting civics education for all Americans aged two years through death.

Most recently, we have prepared a ten question “Quick Civics Quiz” that I have given to many students and professors. To Homer’s delight and my dismay, nearly all who have taken our little quiz failed. The first question on our quiz is, “What is the supreme law of the land?” More than one person answered, “God!”

Call me ignorant too if you like. But I still want to believe that Americans want to value



the ideals of democracy. They like the nobleness that our Constitution and Bill of Rights offers, but far too many citizens do not understand the basic working of our government or are cynical and distrustful of our political institutions and processes.

It is the effort of Civication, Inc. to promote the development of greater civic competence and civil responsibility. Should we continue to fail at educating children of all ages what it means to be an American, it is reasonable to project that America herself may fail. Each generation must take the responsibility to become informed, concerned citizens so

that we learn to elect informed and concerned policymakers who possess an understanding and appreciation of the framework by which we have already agreed to govern ourselves.

Effective civic learning teaches the very traits that employers say are highly sought in new employees: teamwork, tolerance for the point of view of others, and personal responsibility. That's right . . . Civication is good for the economy.

We cannot remain ignorant on matters of our government. We, the people, are the government. The ignorant will always be prey for those who know. The

more you know the better decisions you make . . . it's time . . . let's civicate ⁽³⁾.

References

1. Homer, Marge, Bart, Lisa, and Maggie
2. Religion, Speech, Press, Assembly, Petition
3. Civicate: Verb. Etymology from the gentle creators of Civication, Inc. Date: 21st Century. To commit Civication ⁽⁴⁾.
4. Civication: Noun. The act of promoting the art of civics education in America.



The Promise And Dangers Of Cloning - Part One

(Continued from page 7)

embryonic clone, if we had the understanding of development sufficient to do it, to produce only a specific organ for transplantation. In such an approach, the normal embryonic development that is directed by the embryo's DNA *in utero* would be managed so as to produce only

the desired organ. Just how this could be accomplished *in utero* is unclear and unknown, but it might be possible to "grow" vital organs and other tissues *in vitro* until mature enough for transplantation. If the clone had been "begun" while the "older twin" was still in infancy, then cryopreserved until it was evident that a vital organ would be needed and subjected to a still-

nonexistent methodology of developmental management, such a fantastic possibility might be realizable. But we are far from such therapeutic cloning. More likely is therapeutic cloning of important tissues *in vivo*, where the normal processes of cell regeneration are managed so as to replace damaged or diseased cells and organs. *(To be continued next month.)*



2009 Membership Dues Now Due!

If you haven't yet renewed for 2009, you can click this link <http://www.firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org/> and click to renew on line using a credit card or PayPal. Or, mail a check to the FCFS, P.O. Box 550591, Jax, FL 32255-0591.

All donations and dues beyond the basic levels of membership are tax-deductible. Members insure that nonprofits survive!

Honoring Heroes and Monsters

Fred W. Hill

Throughout the history of our civilizations, we have often honored our gods and heroes in the naming of our institutions, cities, and other political and geographical formations. In many instances, the original honoring was so long ago as to become essentially meaningless to people of the present. The names remain, even after the deities once honored ceased to be worshipped, and the heroes are largely forgotten or regarded by modern sensibilities as monsters.

Thus, Athens, the ancient city-state and modern capital of Greece, was named for Athena, the Greek goddess of wisdom and heroic endeavor, whose remaining worshippers were forced to abandon her for the ascendant Christian God about sixteen hundred years ago. Alexandria, Egypt, and Kandahar, Afghanistan, were both named after the Macedonian conqueror Alexander the Great who remains a heroic figure to modern Greeks and Macedonians but is likely regarded, if at all, as naught but a foreign intruder to the current inhabitants of those cities. Certainly, the founding fathers of Turkey held no reverence for the Christian Roman Emperor Constantine the Great, whose former imperial capital, Constantinople, they renamed Istanbul, apparently because they liked it better that way.

Then there is the case of Christopher Columbus. He was

once such an internationally popular hero that a South American nation, a Canadian province and several U.S. cities, including the state capital cities of Columbus, Ohio, and Columbia, South Carolina, were all derived from variations of the name of the famed admiral of the ocean blue whose exploits initiated the European conquest of what came to be called the Americas. Ironically, Columbus died believing he had made landfall on or near Asia, and it was a later but canner explorer, Amerigo Vespucci, who recognized that they had actually encountered continents previously unknown to mainstream European culture, and whose writings resulted in maps labeling the continents with a variation of his first name.

***To paraphrase a cliché,
one man's hero is
another man's monster.***

Regardless of how they got their new name or who deserves credit for "discovery" of the Americas, it was a major catastrophe for the original inhabitants who died in massive numbers afterwards, done in by germs as well as superior weapons. After the indigenous people of the island he named La Española received Columbus and his crew hospitably, even helping them build the first Spanish-American settlement, La Navidad (yes, named for Christmas), Columbus rewarded them with enslavement, demanding they bring him the vast

wealth he was certain they were hiding from him, working them to death, or slaughtering them outright when they failed to sate his feverish gold-lust.

Oh, and yes, Columbus was a, ahem, "good" Christian, by the perceptions of his day. And in the perceptions of many people of this day. Why, they might wonder, should Columbus be judged by modern standards rather than those of his own era when slavery and brutal conquest were widely practiced standards of ancient pedigree—conduct endorsed, even commanded by God within the pages of the Old Testament. Of course, there are many other people, even those sharing Columbus's Christian European heritage, who regard his conduct as monstrous, one reason Columbus Day celebrations have become increasingly controversial and muted.

The issues of slavery and treatment of the American Indians also trip up regard for many more, particularly American, heroes of the 18th and 19th centuries. During that period, many of the most heralded figures, including eight Presidents, owned slaves. One of them, Andrew Jackson, was also probably the most acclaimed American war hero and Indian fighter of the early 1800s. Even before his Presidency, many communities across the nation were named for Jackson, including our own



Jacksonville, adopting the appellation in 1822 in honor of the first U.S. military governor of Florida which he had invaded while it was still a Spanish colony, while engaged in war against revolting Seminoles and runaway slaves. Although as a President, Jackson was widely reviled for many of his stands and policies, including the forced removal of the Cherokee and other tribes from lands they had long held in the Southeastern U.S., he was even more widely admired as a national hero, particularly for championing the rights of white Christians to take the territories of the reputedly godless red “savages.” Although no longer quite as revered as even 50 years ago, when a song about his battle against the British in New Orleans topped the American pop and country music charts, Old Hickory remains an iconic figure, his image emblazoned on our twenty dollar bills, which may make some descendants of the many tribes he handled so roughly blanche whenever they spend one.

Finally, we have the far more troubling example of a high school in Jacksonville named for the wealthy speculator, plantation owner, slave trader, Confederate general, and Grand Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan, Nathan Bedford Forrest. Undoubtedly, Forrest earned a heroic reputation in the rebellious states for his bravery, audacity, and tactical genius in mobile warfare, and his methods have been studied at military schools around the world. But he and other leading Confederates rebelled against the mere possibility that

their legal right to own and exploit other people would be limited and that they would be denied the opportunity to expand that right. Not exactly an honorable cause for rebellion, although after the Union side declined to let the Confederate states go their own way, the rebels could pretend it was all about protecting their honor and rights, including maintaining a hierarchal society in which anyone of African descent was at the bottom.

The Daughters of the Confederacy sought to retain and honor Forrest’s legacy in 1959, when they urged that the school be



Nathan Bedford Forrest

named for Forrest, who had no historical connection with the city, as a protest against Brown vs. Board of Education, the 1954 Supreme Court case that held segregation is unconstitutional. Forrest’s name was selected not to honor his battlefield prowess but due to his famed connection to the KKK, which they felt would dissuade any non-white children from enrolling in the school, an erroneous assumption as the current student body is over 50% African American.

In November, 2008, the Jacksonville School Board earned national notoriety by deciding in a

5 to 2 vote to retain the name, the dissenters being the only two African American boardmembers. The “letters” pages of local newspapers were filled with arguments for and against the decision, some holding that most of the students, regardless of the color of their skin, neither knew nor cared who Nathan B. Forrest was, or why their school was named for him. The point may be true but is hardly a compelling reason to retain the name for a public institution that has a duty to provide a broad education to those students. This should include an honest overview of local history, including even the most shameful aspects which the naming of the school represents.

To paraphrase a cliché, one man’s hero is another man’s monster. Moreover, one generation may look askance at the heroes of a previous generation. We have at least progressed enough to no longer widely admire those who enslave or slaughter others for gold, glory or even god, although that primitive mindset still persists even in some quarters of our highly advanced, modern civilization. Columbus, Jackson, and even Forrest may yet be admired for certain achievements even as they are disparaged for their inhumane treatment of those who were not like them. Of course, we cannot change their mixed legacies even if we change the nomenclatures of all the places named in their honor. However, we can change how we choose to think about them, to be aware of those legacies, and to strive for greater wisdom and humanitarianism towards all people.



First Coast Freethought Society, Inc.
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<http://firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org>

Statement of Purpose

The First Coast Freethought Society, Inc. is an educational, nonprofit, 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization dedicated to supporting nonreligious persons in the Northeast Florida area and promoting a nontheistic approach to everyday life.

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. Meeting time: 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Meetings are free and open to the public. Doors open at 6:00 p.m.

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January Social

Where: OLIVE GARDEN on Philips Highway, near the Avenues Mall.

When: **Tuesday January 27, 2009** at 6:00 p.m. Proceed directly to our room. **Drinks at 6:00. Dinner at 7:00.** (Order from the menu.)

RSVP: CarrieRen@att.net (or 268-8826) by **Tues. a.m.**, if you plan to go!

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2009 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? Comments? _____			

Membership level (please select one):

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

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| <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) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family (\$45/yr.) | | |

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

- General member Committee member Officer Financial supporter

- Annual dues cover the period of January 1 through December 31.
- The initial dues for new members joining in July through September are half the regular rates.
- Membership extends to the end of the current calendar year.
- The initial dues for new members joining in October through December are the full, regular rates. Membership extends to the end of the following calendar year.

*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.