

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: 904-419-8826
E-mail: CarrieRen@att.net



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The First Coast

FreeThinker



Newsletter of the First Coast Freethought Society

February 2013

Volume 12, Issue 2

Inside this issue: **The Better Story**

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"The belief that the animals exist because God created them—and that he created them so we can better meet our needs—is contrary to our scientific understanding of evolution and, of course, to the fossil record, which shows the existence of non-human primates and other animals millions of years before there were any human beings at all."

—Peter Singer

Joe Varon

The other night I attended a book club meeting at a church about *The Life of Pi*. This is a great book (the movie is also wonderful and beautiful) which tells the story of a teenage Indian boy, Pi, who finds himself on a lifeboat in the middle of the ocean, with several animals, among which is a fierce tiger.

The story tells of his survival struggles, including some "fantastical" events, and how he comes to a spiritual understand-

ing of the world and himself. At the end of the book, the author suggests that the episodes with the animals might have been Pi's fictional way of coping with the more



horrific

events of his actual or—deals with other humans on the lifeboat. The book ends inviting the readers to decide

for themselves which story is true, but posits that the animal version is the "better story."

(Continued on page 3)

"People of faith . . . truly believe that, without god (atheism) it would be a cold world, without meaning and wonder."

February 2013 Meeting

"That Complex Whole: Darwinian Approaches to Cultural Evolution"

**Gordon F.M. Rakita, Ph.D., RPA, Associate Professor of Anthropology
Department of Sociology and Anthropology, UNF**

Monday, February 18, 2013, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

**In the Sanctuary, upper parking lot level • 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: Books-A-Million, 9400 Atlantic Boulevard, Jacksonville, FL 32225

What: Books planned for discussion:

- March 3, 2013 - *Nonbeliever Nation*, by David Niose
- April 7, 2013 - *Candidate Without a Prayer*, by Herb Silverman



Books may be found in the library, purchased from local book stores, or purchased online. The First Coast Freethought Society will receive a small remuneration from your purchase (at no additional cost to you) if you first go to <http://firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org> and then click the link to Amazon.com for your purchase.

Today's culture wars are more heated than ever. Education, public policy, and the separation between church and state have become a battlefield, and many are frustrated with the success the Religious Right has had in shaping the national agenda, from putting the brakes on gay marriage in California to stripping textbooks in Texas of references to Thomas Jefferson. But today, a growing nonreligious minority, nearly 20 percent of Americans, are finally organizing and taking explicit political positions. In *Nonbeliever Nation*, David Niose argues that America was never in fact a Christian nation and shows how the Religious Right successfully took control of the social and political narrative. He takes us across the country to meet the secular groups now forming in opposition to that force—from humanist gatherings to the rise of the New Atheists to the explosion of secular groups on college and even high school campuses. Niose discusses their political goals, including lobbying efforts, legal strategies, and outreach through advertising and education, and what still needs to be done to make the secular voice a game-changer in American politics.

— From the product description by Palgrave MacMillan, Ltd.

For more information, contact Herb Gerson at 904-363-6446, or 12herbert30gerson@bellsouth.net.

THE RISE of SECULAR AMERICANS

NONBELIEVER
NATION

"In this excellent book, David Niose lays bare the whole dismal history of how the Religious Right hijacked America. Fortunately, as he also documents, decent Americans are now fighting back." — RICHARD DAWKINS



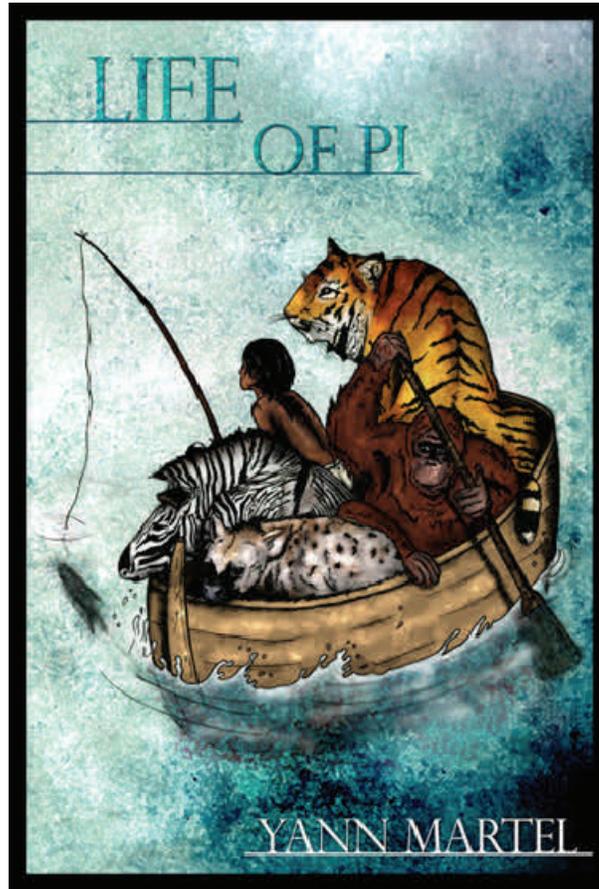
DAVID NIOSE

(“The Better Story”, cont’d from page 1)

The book has been thought to have religious meanings, some saying that the concepts of our god-based origins, even with its “fantastical” events is the “better story” when compared to the cold reality of a godless world. People of faith in the group (it was, of course, a church-based meeting I attended) seemed to agree that their faith was really important because it gave meaning, spirituality, and awe to their life.

My favorite comment of the evening came from a woman who said that she was totally enthralled with Pi’s interactions with the animals (which, by the way, takes up most of the book), but was really distressed when the author introduced the more plausible, “reality” version. She said that, once the more plausible concept

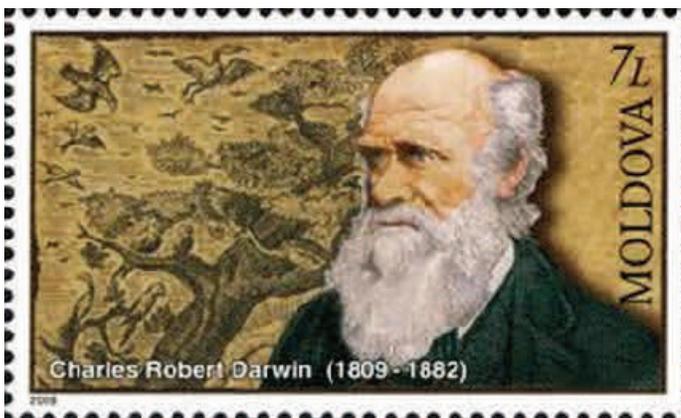
was introduced, she had a hard time re-connecting with the more spiritual “better story” that she had come to be so fond of.



It struck me that the reason people of faith around the world are so passionate and (often) de-

fensive about their religions (and so hostile to atheists and even people of different faiths), is that acknowledging another possible reality would make it more difficult to continue believing in their adopted faith (and its “fantastical” stories). They want to hold on to the meaning of life and awesome spirituality of their religion that is so nurturing. They truly believe that, without god (atheism), it would be a cold world, without meaning and wonder.

As an atheist, I, personally, am continually in awe of the wonders of our world. There is a plethora of amazing and beautiful people and things to celebrate. But, even though they are interspersed with some horrific events that we have to live with, I find that the secular approach, without fantastical, religious narratives, to be the “better story.”



“*It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent that survives. It is the one that is most adaptable to change.*”

—Charles Darwin

President's Message - February 2013

Earl Coggins

February is the birth month of Charles Darwin. The First Coast Freethought Society has for many years celebrated Darwin's birth month by bringing in a speaker with a presentation related to Darwin or the theory of evolution. We also encourage our writers (we need more) to write something informative about Charles Darwin or the theory of evolution.

When I sat down to write this message, I was going to tell you that Charles Darwin was born February 12, 1809, the same day as Abraham Lincoln, and discuss some aspects of his life.

I was also going to tell you that Charles Darwin was a believer in the Bible's creation story when he and the crew of the HMS Beagle set sail on their four-year historic voyage around the world—the voyage that ultimately gave the world a new way in which to interpret itself. I wanted to tell a story of the evolution of Darwin himself. But that changed when I opened the *Origin of Species* and

started rereading the book.

"Descended from the apes! My dear, let us hope that it is not true, but if it is, let us pray that it will not become generally known." This is the first sentence in the forward of my copy of *The Origin of Species* by Charles Darwin. It's a fairly well known quote in many freethought circles around the world. I bring it up for two reasons, the first of which is to share

"The study found a growing number of Americans rejecting evolutionary theory due to 'religious fundamentalism, inadequate science education, and partisan political maneuvering."

it with any of our readers who have not yet heard it.

According to the author of the forward, the above quote came from the wife of the Bishop of Worcester after hearing about Darwin's book.

My second reason for bringing up the quote is some new information (new to me, that is) I discovered while researching this article. As I read the first sentence of the forward, it occurred to me that I did not know who the Bishop of

Worcester was back around the date of the publication of *The Origin of Species*.



I decided then and there to take a look at any comments or writings on this mysterious quote, which Carl Sagan uses in his book, *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors: A Search for Who We Are*, coauthored by

his wife Ann Druyan. After many dead ends, one claiming the earliest known document to contain the quote dated back to the 1940s, I found an interesting website called the Quote Investigator. My interest in the origin of the quote started out meager but ended with fascination after reading the huge amount of research this website had compiled in its quest to find the original quote.

According to their website, which has good references, it turns out this famous quote has an incredible evolutionary past. The versions of the quote, practically all documented with author and publication, were not from 1859, the

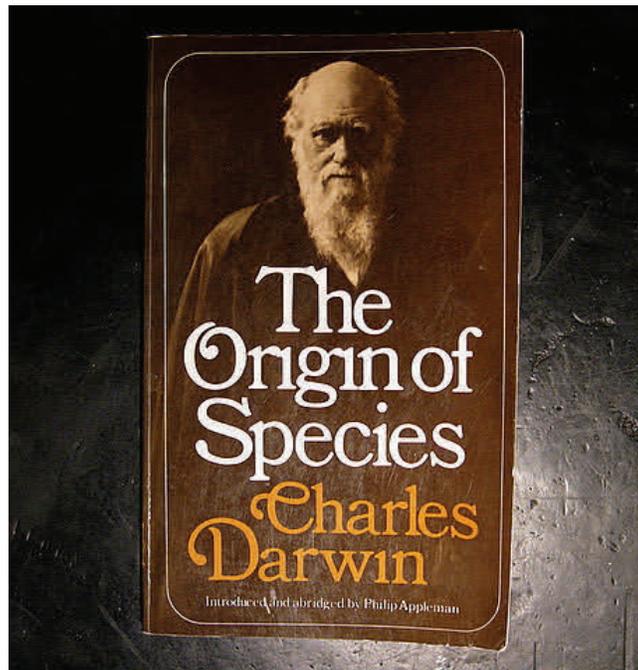
publication date of Darwin's book. Nor were any references to the quote found in 1860 or 1880, two common dates used when the quote is mentioned in publications. In their 1977 book on human evolution, *Origins*, for example, co-authors Richard Leakey and Roger Lewin use the quote and time-stamp the wife of the Bishop of Worcester as having uttered it in June 1860.

Turns out the quote was found in a document dating back to 1893. The person who wrote the narrative for the website was quick to say that although they were not able to find any reference to the quote earlier than 1893, it doesn't mean a reference doesn't exist. They simply could not find one while conducting their search.

What they did find was a lot of variation in the quote as it moved forward into the future from 1893. The first quote from 1893 refers to the person doing the talking as a timid and decorous spinster, not the wife of the Bishop of Worcester.

Here is a complete list of the people described in the quote: the wife of the Bishop of Worcester; the

wife of the Bishop of Birmingham; the wife of Samuel Wilberforce; a timid and decorous spinster; a timid and decorous lady; a woman with a daughter; two ladies; an amiable woman; a society lady and her daughter; a maiden lady; an old lady; the wife of an English Canon; the



An edition of the book that did become very much “generally known,” arousing consternation and anguish among creationists for over 150 years.

wife of the Canon of Worcester Cathedral; a society leader in an eastern city; and the last example, just two old ladies. Wow!

It appears the quote, or perhaps better stated as the “meme,” has mutated over the past 120 years from generation to generation similar, perhaps, to the way in which genetic muta-

tion occurs in genes.

Unfortunately, the evolution of the reaction by religious fundamentalists to evolution hasn't changed much in the U.S. John Allen Paulos discusses this phenomenon at length in chapter 2 of his book, *Irreligion*. He cites a recent international study in the

journal, *Science*, conducted by Professor Jon Miller of Michigan State University. The study found a growing number of Americans rejecting evolutionary theory due to “religious fundamentalism, inadequate science education, and partisan political maneuvering.” Professor Miller sums up succinctly and vividly a major difference between the U.S. and other portions of the world regarding politics and evolutionary theory: “There is no major political party in Europe and Japan that uses opposition to evolution as part of its political platform.”

And you thought the U.S. was just the leader of the “free” world. If we let the religious fundamentalists have their way, the U.S. will be the leader of the “science-free” world.



Pogo Would Cry

William H. White

If humanists had a hell, Northwest Florida would surely qualify. Or at least a purgatory where one might await, perhaps in vain, the coming of sanity. As a humanist celebrant/minister living here the best part of four decades, that may well demonstrate the thin line between insanity and a “calling.” Needless to say, there’s been little call for my celebratory services here between the piney woods and deep blue sea. Nonetheless I must join in sympathy with your president, Earl Coggins, in his May 2012 President’s Message. By the way, I must add your newsletter is a rare delight in these parts.

So it can’t hurt to raise yet another voice against “religion bashing,” not because it’s unfair or unwarranted, but more often a waste of time in the short amount allotted to us for our planetary stay. More than ever we must steer clear of things that don’t work, no matter how absorbing or pleasurable. The hour is late. So, as much of the country sends their Mayan calendars off to storage, or

dials up other End Times with rapt (or was that rapturing) attention, those of us paying attention must speak up. The Coming may indeed be closer than we think gazing upon the poisoned air and water He has cast upon us. It would be droll and amusing if we weren’t dragging our children down the rat hole to heaven with us. To be fair, many of the evangelical persuasion have finally figured out that they’re

“Perhaps like you, my true bottom line as a humanist is the survival, perhaps even flourishing, of our species, our wonderful blue island in space and its creatures.”

stewards of what God has given them and are beginning to get it. But the fact remains, nine out of ten humans practice some sort of religion or another. In fact, we humanists aren’t lacking for some time wasters under our own tent! But I digress. Some may be old enough to recall the Toffler’s book in the Fifties titled, *Future Shock*, where they forecast a time when so much data and drivel would be impinging upon us we’d be on the verge of mental meltdown. Surely

that day is here! The Tofflers refer to it as the *Third Wave*, following the paradigm shifts that were agriculture and industrialization. In my own little book, *Hope’s Fool*, cranked out as the millennium rolled



in, I call it SERMATION, shorthand for “Service-Information-Automation.”

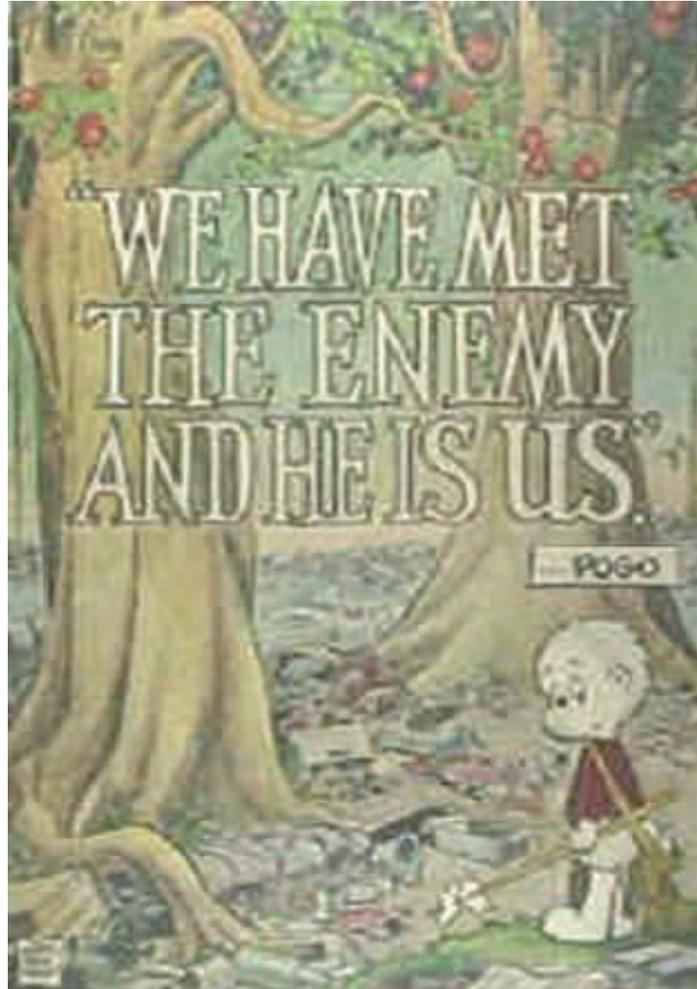
Whatever you choose to call our times, they’re like nothing humans have experienced before.

The final chapter of *Fool* contains my clumsy account of human potential, visualizing our final fulfillment as evolving into an “aristocracy of species” rather than a planetary cancer soon to be dismissed from the earth. Religion, clearly, plays a part either way. When theologies act on a temporal plane, feeding, sheltering, protecting, seeking justice and equity, they are simply following that humanistic thread that runs through EVERY one of them. My own life stance tells me, I

don't care how you got here as long as you've arrived! It's only when the cap of dogma, full of tickets to Forever Land, is tossed into the ring of life—the world goes mad! So regardless of views taken by our own secular brothers and sisters, to throw the baby out with the bath water is equally mad. In my own quest for concision, may I use the little old lady from Jehovah that sometimes frequents my door? This is a truly convinced lady, but she asks me what humanists believe in? To which I respond, "I believe in you." And a REAL conversation becomes possible.

Using the old cliché, "It really ain't rocket science," there's proof personal in that my wife Bell and I raised four remarkably honest and decent human beings based on not much more than that great humanist principle, "The Golden Rule." Also to be

found threaded through EVERY religion devised by man. Or as Unitarian minister and author Robert Ful-



Pogo by Walt Kelly

gum spells out in one of his book titles, *Everything I Needed to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*. Too true!

My own over-simplified thumbnail theme for a life of humanism is "Reason in the service of compassion."

Sound familiar? Perhaps like you, my true bottom line as a humanist is the survival, perhaps even flourishing, of our species, our wonderful blue island in space and its creatures. They can probably muddle along without us, but trite as it may sound, we ARE all in this together! "Creatures great and small, the Lord God loves them all," we used to sing in Sunday School.

So here we are, adrift in cognitive dissonance, riven in two. Much like bashing our own alter-ego. The outside seldom resembling the inside! Not a very sound psychological premise for sure, and look where it's getting our poor country right now...
Peace.



Monthly Social

Where: OLIVE GARDEN on Philips Highway, across from the Avenues Mall.
When: **Tuesday February 26, 2013** 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!

Gun Insurance: A Few Free Thoughts

Joque Soskis

A few ruminations on the problem of a society generously supplied with homicidal people with guns, and what to do about it.

In addition to the various measures currently under consideration (bans on assault weapons and high-capacity magazines, closing background check loopholes, etc), we could require that, without exception of any kind, each gun in America must be insured in the name of its owner.

A few specifics:

1. Insurers may sell any policy they like (subject to each state's insurance regulations), but the minimum standard policy must include the following:

2. A person injured accidentally by the insured gun, whether by the insured or another, would be compensated according to a grizzly schedule of benefits such as is common with life and accident policies: certain amounts for the loss of various body parts, certain amounts for various levels of disability, certain amounts for various levels of disfigurement, and so forth. In addition, ordinary and necessary medical expenses would be covered. Other health insurance would be then secondary.

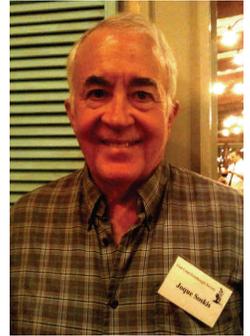
3. The beneficiary of a person who died of his or her injuries would receive a specified standard death benefit.

4. All of the benefit amounts would be multiplied

dramatically (perhaps ten times) if the injury or death was the result of an intentional act.

5. Except for medical expenses, there would be no recovery if the person injured or killed was related, by birth or marriage, to the insured. (The degree of relatedness would have to be established.) This would prevent an insured from killing a spouse and then himself, for example, in order to confer financial benefit on his children. (Of course, he could

perhaps at any price, and so can drive only at the continuous risk of serious criminal consequences. Over time, more and more uninsured guns (including those uninsured because their owners are uninsurable) would be discovered and confiscated, while responsible gun owners would enjoy very modest rates.



“...[W]e could require that, without exception of any kind, each gun in America must be insured in the name of its owner.”

obtain life insurance and then wait beyond the suicide exclusion period to act, but that is a different issue.)

6. Except for medical expenses, there would be no recovery if the injury or death was the result of the gun owner's (or another's) legally correct actions in defense of himself or others, or of his home.

If these or similar measures were in place, insurance companies would be doing society's work for us by rating those who sought insurance, just as auto insurers presently do drivers. A driver with a bad enough record cannot obtain insurance,

It might even be possible to provide by law that a gun owner who met certain criteria (no violent crime, no adjudicated mental problems, above a certain age, no restraining orders, sufficiently secure gun storage, passed a safety course, etc.) would be entitled to get his or her base policy for a certain specified (modest) annual premium. If the gun were kept at all times at a licensed gun club or shooting range, the premium would be even lower. On the other hand, it would be announced in advance that, after some specific period of time, a factor in rating an insured would be whether he or she had ever been discovered to have an uninsured gun.

Insurance companies would presumably require guns kept at home to be secured in specified ways, and guns to be kept at the ready (for example, in

(Continued on page 9)

(Continued from page 8)

businesses) would command a higher premium. They would probably also increase premiums for owners who purchased more than a moderate amount of ammunition per year, perhaps excluding that purchased and used at a licensed gun club or firing range.

Such a measure may turn out to have the full-throated support of the insurance industry (lots of new customers!). In all likelihood, some companies would decide simply to incorporate it as part of the liability provisions in their homeowners' policies.

The mere existence of this sort of program could be expected to have a favorable impact on health care costs in America, since some proportion of those injured with guns today, many fatally, have neither money nor health insurance, and therefore impose a

cost on the society at large which could be partially offset by this insurance.

There is already lots of precedent for this sort of requirement in modern American society. We have long required insurance for our cars,



motorcycles and aircraft, and an increasing number of states now require it for motorboats.

Furthermore, since the premiums for very responsible gun owners should be quite modest, the gun lobby might come to see it as an "it could be worse" outcome. In fact, the

gun industry might view it as a revenue opportunity and try to get licensed to sell insurance themselves.

And on a different note, we need (in addition to a no-exceptions comprehensive background requirement, of course) an obligation on the part of every gun owner (leaving aside the issues of insurance and registration) to report to the local police in writing, within 4 hours of its discovery, the loss or theft of any gun.

Would these measures eliminate the shootings that have so many people wondering whether they live in an acceptably civilized country, capable of governing itself in ways that provide for a secure and orderly society? No. Would they reduce the problem? Absolutely. Is there any excuse for not enacting them? None.



Ongoing FCFS Activities

Dinners for Doubters: Sign up to attend or to host a dinner yourself. If a dinner is scheduled, sign-up sheets will be found at the back table at the monthly meetings. For details, **see the website**, <http://firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org>, or **ask a greeter** at the back table, at a meeting.

Second Harvest Second Saturday: On the **2nd Saturday of every month**, 10:00 a.m. to noon, join FCFS members and JAM (Jacksonville Atheist Meetup) group members, to volunteer at the Second Harvest North Florida food bank warehouse, 1502 Jessie Street, to help distribute food to the less fortunate in North FL. See <http://firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org> or call Fed Hill, 904-358-3610.

Secular Sunday Morning in the Park: Freethinkers, let's get acquainted and enjoy intelligent conversation the **4th Sunday of every month** (unless inclement weather prevails) at 10 a.m. until ? under the pavilion at Losco Park, 10851 Hood Rd., S., Jacksonville 32257, between Shad and Losco Roads. For directions, call Beth Perry at 904-733-5489 or Google the address. We generally provide coffee. Bring a breakfast snack and **a chair or two**. Note, if it's too hot under the pavilion, we take our chairs to some trees with a nice breeze. Mark your calendar. We hope to see you there!

Caring Tree: If a telephone call, flowers, or a sympathy card to a member is in order, please contact **Judy Hankins** at 904-724-8188, or e-mail her at info@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org.

First Coast Freethought Society, Inc.
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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.

For other activities besides monthly meetings, please see the website, brochure, or newsletter!

FCFS 2012 Board Members

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Vice President	Carrie Renwick	268-8826
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At-Large	Fred Hill	358-3610
At Large	Richard Keene	386-1121

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Membership	Judy Hankins	724-8188
Publicity	Carrie Renwick	268-8826
Website	Mark Renwick	616-2896

First Coast FreeThinker

The *First Coast FreeThinker* is published for all freethinkers and potential freethinkers. Nonmembers may receive the e-mail version indefinitely. Nonmembers may receive three hard-copy issues free, 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 that stimulate thought and promote discussion on a variety of subjects.

Information for Contributors

We welcome submissions. Articles for consideration should be submitted via e-mail to the e-mail address shown below. Contributors who cannot submit manuscripts electronically may send them to Fred Hill, 1817 Egner St., Jacksonville, FL 32206. The

deadline for time-sensitive submissions is the THIRD SATURDAY of each month for the following month's issue.

We prefer articles no longer than 1,000 words. Longer articles will be evaluated in terms of whether their importance and degree of interest to our readers warrant publication.

Subject matter must tie in with freethought or with the Affirmations of Humanism (found on our website). All accepted manuscripts are subject to editorial modification. Our style guide is *The Chicago Manual of Style*. Manuscript submissions cannot be returned. Authors are responsible for the accuracy of all quotations and for supplying complete references where applicable.

E-mail Address for Submissions

Editor@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org

ADVERTISING RATES: Eighth-page (business card size) \$25.00, quarter-page \$50.00, half-page \$75.00, and whole page \$100.

To advertise, contact Fred Hill at 904-3610, or Editor@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org

First Coast Freethought Society, Inc.

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2013 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):

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| <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, distributed to other members? Yes No

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

- 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
904-419-8826 • CarrieRen@att.net • <http://firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org>
All inquiries are held in the strictest confidence.

Upcoming Freethought Events of Interest on the First Coast

- Monday February 18 FCFS Monthly Meeting, Jacksonville - 6:30 p.m.
Sunday February 24 FCFS Secular Sunday in the Park, Jacksonville - 10:00 a.m.
Tuesday February 26 FCFS Monthly Social at Olive Garden, Jacksonville - 6:00 p.m.
Sunday March 3 FCFS Humanist Book Discussion Group, Jacksonville - 2:00 p.m.
Saturday March 9 FCFS/JAM Volunteer at Second Harvest - 10 a.m.
Saturday March 16 FCFS Deadline to submit articles for April 2013 *FreeThinker*
Monday March 18 FCFS Monthly Meeting, Jacksonville - 6:30 p.m.

The March Jacksonville Atheist Meetup (JAM) will be held at a private residence on a date to be announced. Please check the website at <http://www.jaxatheists.com/> for more info.

First Coast Freethought Society (FCFS) • <http://www.firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org/>
Jacksonville Atheist, Agnostic, Secular Meetup Group (JAM) • <http://www.jaxatheists.com/>
Northeast Florida Coalition of Reason (NeFCoR) • <http://NorthEastFloridaCoR.org/>

**The FCFS is a proud member of the Humanists of Florida Association
and the Northeast Florida Coalition of Reason.**

Meet Our Feb. Speaker: Gordon F.M. Rakita, Ph.D., RPA

Gordon F.M. Rakita is a bioarchaeologist and Associate Professor of Anthropology in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at UNF. Dr. Rakita holds a Ph.D. and M.A. in anthropology from the University of New Mexico and a B.A. in anthropology from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. He currently serves as President of the UNF Faculty Association and on the University's Board of Trustees. His areas of expertise include evolutionary theory, bioarchaeology, human skeletal biology, mortuary and other ritual behavior, and the prehistory of the southwestern U.S.



The philosopher, Daniel Dennett, has referred to Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection as a "universal acid" capable of corroding "every traditional concept, and leav[ing] in its wake a revolutionized world-view." What happens when we apply Darwin's acid to human culture? We all recognize that culture changes over time, but does it evolve like plant and animal species?

In his talk, "That Complex Whole: Darwinian Approaches to Cultural Evolution," Dr. Rakita will discuss how Darwin's theory of evolution has been applied to human culture, what we can learn about how we live and the things around us by applying Darwin's ideas, and how cultural evolution is similar to and different from biological evolution.

