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April 2015

Volume 14, Issue 4

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Freedom of Speech

The Linchpin of a Free Society

What is it? • Why do we need it? • Who gets to decide?

Join us for a panel discussion on freedom of speech. Panelists:

Parvez Ahmed, PhD, Associate Professor of Finance, UNF

Susan Cooper Eastman, Writer-at-Large, *Folio Weekly*

Frank Denton, PhD, Editor, *Florida Times-Union*

François Kloc, Honorary French Consul, Jacksonville

Christopher J. Roederer, Professor of Law, Coastal School of Law

Brian Thornton, PhD, Professor of Communications, UNF

Moderator: **Staci Spanos**, WJXT-TV Channel 4

Tuesday, April 14, 2015 • 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.

ADAM W. HERBERT UNIVERSITY CENTER • UNF

(The building closest to the Kernan Blvd. entrance to UNF)

Free and open to the public • Free Parking

For map & directions: unf.edu/universitycenter/Map_and_Directions.aspx

For more info firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org

(If you have a disability and require an accommodation for this occasion, please contact the Dept. of Political Science & Public Administration, 904-620-2997, five days before the event to enable us to provide you a reasonable accommodation for the event.)

“Those who would give up essential liberty, to purchase a little temporary safety, deserve neither liberty nor safety.”

—Benjamin Franklin

April 2015 Meeting

- **What:** FCFS Monthly Meeting
- **Who:** David Schwam-Baird, Ph.D., Department of Political Science and Public Administration, University of North Florida
- **Title:** “ISIS Under Your Bed! What Are the Threats of the Current Mid-East Mess?”
- **When:** Monday, April 20, 2015, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. (doors open at 6:00)
- **Where:** Buckman Bridge Unitarian Church, 8447 Manresa Ave., Jacksonville, FL 32244 (From the I-295 Roosevelt exit, go north to the first traffic light, Collins Rd. Turn right on Collins. Go 400 ft. The church driveway will be on your right.)

Meetings Free and Open to the Public • Plenty of Free Parking

About the Speaker

Dr. David Schwam-Baird has served as Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science and Public Administration at the University of North Florida since 2005. He received his B.A. in Philosophy at the University of New Orleans, his Master's in Public Administration at the School of Urban and Regional Studies, University of New Orleans, and his Ph.D. in Political Science from Tulane University.



Additionally, he is an author and is a highly sought-after expert on Middle East politics. He has taught courses in Latin American politics, Middle East politics, political philosophy, and globalization. He has lectured extensively in this country and abroad. He is multilingual. He loves cappuccino, traveling, and walking in the rain. David is also one of the founding members of the First Coast Freethought Society and has served as vice president, program chair, and president several times in the past.

Speaking Out for Freedom: Sometimes It's a Dangerous Job, But Somebody's Got to Do It

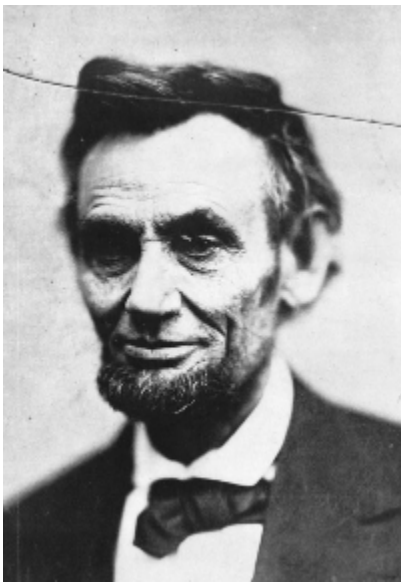
Fred W. Hill

As detailed elsewhere in this newsletter, a panel discussion on free speech issues initiated by FCFS President Earl Coggins in response to the *Charlie Hebdo* murders is scheduled to be held at the UNF University Center on the evening of April 14, 2015, which by happenstance is the 150th anniversary of the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. The assassin, John Wilkes Booth, one of the most famous actors in the United States at the time, was incensed not only because he was a Confederate sympathizer distraught because the ignoble cause of the Confederate States of America appeared truly lost by this date in 1865, but also because he was outraged by something he heard Lincoln say.

On April 11, pro-Union crowds in Washington, DC, celebrating the surrender of Robert E. Lee and his Army of Northern Virginia to Ulysses S. Grant two days earlier, had gathered in front of the White House, along with a band, to cheer and serenade the President and request a speech on the momentous occasion. Lincoln appeared



from a hallway window on the second floor to greet his enthusiastic audience, good-humoredly ask the band to play “Dixie”—a tune he liked, which he asserted the Union had “fairly captured”—and made what would become his last public address. He briefly touched on Grant’s victory, but his primary focus was on the various controversies related to reconstruction—determining the best means to restore the defeated rebellious states to the Union as well as protecting and expanding the rights of the former slaves in those states and, indeed, throughout the nation. After all, Lincoln had recently signed the 13th Amendment outlawing slavery everywhere in the United States of America, and although it still required ratification by three-fourths of all the states, it seemed certain to reach that goal and in fact did so by December 6, 1865. He specifically spoke about arguments to grant the privilege of voting to black men. Remember, even white women did not have the right to vote anywhere in the U.S. until the government of the then Territory of Wyoming enfranchised women, in 1869, and not in the entire U.S. until 1920 with ratification of the 19th Amendment.

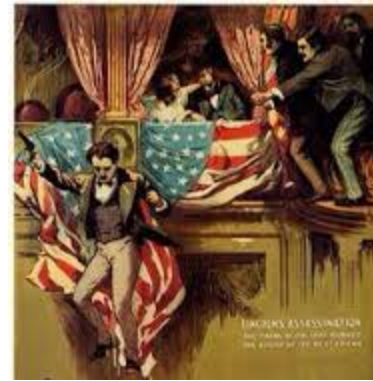


One of the last photographs taken of Abraham Lincoln, by Alexander Gardner on February 5, 1865.

Discussing the issues related to the re-admission of Louisiana to the Union under its new constitution, Lincoln remarked, “It is also unsatisfactory to some that the elective franchise is not given to the colored man. I would myself prefer that it were now conferred on the very intelligent, and on those who serve our cause as soldiers.” (See <http://www.mrlincolnwhitehouse.org/inside.asp?ID=626&subjectID=1> for the entire speech and description of the preliminary events and remarks.)

That was what did it for Booth, who was part of that crowd in front of the White House but was fuming rather than cheering the recent Union victory and the words of the Great Emancipator. Turning to Lewis Powell, his co-conspirator in a plot to kidnap Lincoln and ransom him for the release of Confederate prisoners, Booth is reported to have exclaimed, “That means nigger citizenship. Now, by God, I’ll put him through. That is the last speech he will ever give.” And three days later, in Ford’s Theatre, Booth shot a bullet through the back of Lincoln’s head, reciting *sic semper tyrannis*, the Virginia state motto, meaning “thus always to tyrants,” an ironic phrase to have uttered after murdering the President specifically because he favored expanding freedom for all people rather than allowing one faction to keep another in perpetual servile submission as Booth preferred. But Booth was apparently given to heavy theatrics, appropriate for his last stage performance given in mad devotion to a failed nation.

John Wilkes Booth leaps to the stage after the performance that would make him the most infamous actor in American history.



Possibly the first of our ancestors to vocally express an opinion was punched in the mouth by someone with an opposing view, and for all we know the second to last human on the planet may be slain by the last over a disagreement. Anyone capable of having a point of view is going to routinely encounter people with differing views, and although in the vast majority of cases the disputes are resolved amicably, too often they escalate into violence, including wars that leave millions dead. And let's be honest and admit that all too often the dispute is that one party wants to impose its will over the other, whether to take their land, force them into slavery, dictate what they should believe, or exterminate them because of their ethnicity or because they happen to have different religious or political beliefs.

French Jacobins, American white supremacists, Communists, Nazis, and religious fanatics of nearly every faith that has ever existed, among other dogmatists, have all engaged in terrorist tactics, intent on forever silencing anyone who disagreed with them and causing others to reconsider voicing contrary views. Theo Van Gogh was murdered on a street in Amsterdam in 2004 in retaliation for having produced a film, *Submission*, critical of the violence against women endemic in traditional Muslim cultures, and tolerated within European societies, thereby depriving Muslim women therein of their legal rights. Ayaan Hirsi Ali, who wrote the film partly based on her own experiences as a Muslim in Somalia, Saudi Arabia, and the Netherlands, has been the target of death threats, not only due to her sharp criticism of the more inhumane beliefs and practices of Muslims, but also for having entirely renounced her former faith, a crime punishable by death in several nations ruled by Islamic law. The *Charlie Hebdo* massacre was yet another act of terrorism to punish people who dared criticize or mock the abominable behavior of some Muslims and strike fear into others inclined to do likewise. Even in those democratic republics with constitutional protection for freedom of speech, such freedom may well be stifled by the fear of being the next victim of fanatics who believe they have a duty to eliminate anyone who in any way disparages their religion.



Protesting against freedom of speech and threatening violence in the name of religion

Even before his inauguration for his first term as President, Lincoln knew he was a target for assassination due to the views he had already expressed in opposition to slavery. Despite his repeated assurances that he would not interfere with slavery where it already legally existed, that he had publicly stated that he held slavery abominable was enough to earn the hatred of people who regarded slavery as a noble enterprise that should last indefinitely. Likewise, the cartoonists and other staff of *Charlie Hebdo* knew that they were targets for assassination due to the ideas expressed in their cartoons. And Martin Luther King, Jr., knew he was a target for speaking out for civil rights long before he was cut down 47 years ago this month. Sometimes practicing free speech is dangerous work, even when the federal government itself protects your right to speak freely. There are still plenty of governments that do not allow free speech or any genuine sort of freedom at all. Fortunately, there have been and still are people who have dared to take the chances, who championed freedom of speech and other civil rights (even knowing they might be arrested or even executed), who championed the cause of reason and civil discourse, even in the face of those willing to murder to maintain injustice and silence all criticism. The cause may never be fully won, but it remains worth pursuing despite all risks.

Theo Van Gogh and Ayaan Hirsi Ali: Advocates for freedom of speech and from religion



April 2015 Olive Garden Social

- **Where:** **OLIVE GARDEN** on Philips Highway, across from the Avenues Mall. The hostesses will know where we are seated. Proceed directly to our room.
- **When:** Tuesday, **APRIL 28**, 2015, at 6:00 p.m. Social hour at 6:00. Dinner at 7:00. We order from the menu.
- **RSVP:** E-mail CarrieRen@att.net (or call 904-268-8826) by Tuesday morning, if you plan to attend!

Wilhelmina Walton Celebration of Life!

Carrie Renwick

As you may know, Wilhelmina Marie Walton passed away in October 2014. Everyone is invited to attend a Celebration of Life for this founding member and devoted friend of the First Coast Freethought Society.

Many people have commented that the FCFS wouldn't be what it is today, if not for her. To view the obituary in the *Florida Times-Union*, click here:

<http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/timesunion/obituary.aspx?n=wilhelmina-marie-walton&pid=172935800#sthash.J0TIRRMC.dpuf>

- **What:** Celebration of Life, with a catered sit-down lunch to follow.
- **When:** Saturday, **JUNE 6, 2015, at 11:00 a.m.**
- **Where:** Unitarian Universalist Church in Arlington, 7495 Arlington Expressway, Jacksonville, FL 32211
- **RSVP:** Please RSVP to Willa's daughter, Lori, at katterhenrl@mail.montclair.edu or call 973-618-6523, if you plan to attend the catered lunch immediately following the celebration.



Note, if you are NOT staying for lunch, no RSVP is required. But bring your memories and stories to share, whether as part of the service, or informally. To view the somewhat more detailed obituary, by me, that appeared in the November 2014 issue of the *FreeThinker*, click here:

<http://us2.campaign-archive1.com/?u=60a4ff5743d8fe1ceb691b694&id=79f965c274&e=c5edbf927f#mctoc11>



Local AU Update

In this regular feature, you will be kept apprised of the actions of the local AU chapters which include the AU of Northeast Florida (Jacksonville) and the Clay County Chapter. If separation of church and state issues are important to you, we encourage you to join Americans United on the local and national levels.

The Northeast Florida Chapter (Jacksonville) of Americans United for Separation of Church and State continues to develop strategies to encourage the Jacksonville City Council to respect the diversity of all Jacksonville citizens and discontinue their divisive practice of offering exclusively

Christian prayers at City Council Meetings.

To Sign Petition

<https://www.change.org/p/sign-our-petition-in-the-name-of-unity>

To Join AU

Local: <http://www.meetup.com/AU-Americans-United-for-Separation-of-Church-and-State/>

National: <https://support.au.org/donate>

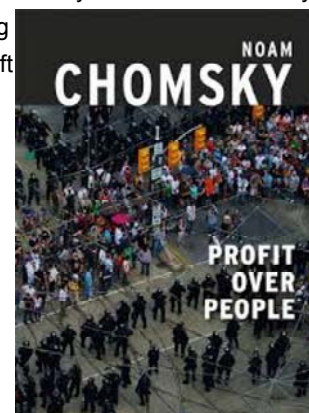


Humanist Book Discussion Group - Jacksonville

- **When:** 3:00 - 4:30 p.m., the first Sunday of each month.
- **Where:** Books-A-Million, 9400 Atlantic Boulevard, Jacksonville, FL 32225.
- **What:** Books planned for discussion:
 - May 3, 2015 - *Profit Over People: Neoliberalism & Global Order* by Noam Chomsky & Robert W. McChesney
 - June 7, 2015 - *One Nation Under God* by Kevin M. Kruse

Why is the Atlantic slowly filling with crude petroleum, threatening a millions-of-years-old ecological balance? Why did traders at prominent banks take high-risk gambles with the money entrusted to them by hundreds of thousands of clients around the world, expanding and leveraging their investments to the point that failure led to a global financial crisis that left millions of people jobless and hundreds of cities economically devastated? Why would the world's most powerful military spend ten years fighting an enemy that presents no direct threat to secure resources for corporations?

The culprit in all cases is neoliberal ideology—the belief in the supremacy of "free" markets to drive and govern human affairs. And in the years since the initial publication of Noam Chomsky's *Profit Over People: Neoliberalism and Global Order*, the bitter vines of neoliberalism have only twisted themselves further into the world economy, obliterating the public's voice in public affairs



and substituting the bottom line in place of people's basic obligation to care for one another as ends in themselves. In *Profit Over People*, Chomsky reveals the roots of the present crisis, tracing the history of neoliberalism through an incisive analysis of free trade agreements of the 1990s, the World Trade Organization, and the International Monetary Fund—and describes the movements of resistance to the increasing interference by the private sector in global affairs.

In the years since the initial publication of *Profit Over People*, the stakes have only risen. Now more than ever, *Profit Over People* is one of the key texts explaining how the crisis facing us operates—and how, through Chomsky's analysis of resistance, we may find an escape from the closing net. (From Amazon.com book description)

Link to Book Review: <http://www.phibetaiota.net/2002/03/profit-over-people-neoliberalism-global-order/>

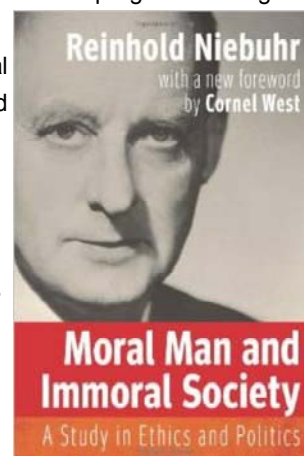
For More Info: Contact Herb Gerson at 12herbert30gerson@bellsouth.net, or call 904-363-6446.

Humanist Book Discussion Group - St. Augustine

- **When:** 7:00 - 8:30 p.m., the second Thursday of each month.
- **Where:** Clubhouse at a private condominium in St. Augustine (Anastasia Island).
- **What:** Books planned for discussion:
 - May 14, 2015 - *Moral Man and Immoral Society: A Study in Ethics and Politics* by Reinhold Niebuhr
 - June 11, 2015 - *The God Argument: The Case against Religion and for Humanism* by A. C. Grayling

Moral Man and Immoral Society is Reinhold Niebuhr's important early study (1932) in ethics and politics. Widely read and continually relevant, this book marked Niebuhr's decisive break from progressive religion and politics toward a more deeply tragic view of human nature and history. Forthright and realistic, *Moral Man and Immoral Society* argues that individual morality is intrinsically incompatible with collective life, thus making social and political conflict inevitable.

Niebuhr further discusses our inability to imagine the realities of collective power; the brutal behavior of human collectives of every sort; and, ultimately, how individual morality can mitigate the persistence of social immorality. This new edition includes a foreword by Cornel West that explores the continued interest in Niebuhr's thought and its contemporary relevance. (From Amazon.com description)



Link to Book Review: <http://www.firstthings.com/article/2000/03/reinhold-niebuhrmoral-man-and-immoral-society>

More Info: Contact Bill Stroop at bill@strooplaw.com for address, directions, and gate code.

NOTE TO ALL! Books may be found in the library, purchased from local book stores or 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.

My Christian Pedigree

Douglas R. Doan

We have an unusual treat for our "Why I Am an Atheist" feature this month. Past minister, now FCFS member, Doug Doan, will share the remarkable story of his de-conversion when he speaks at our May 2015 monthly meeting. (Ed. note)

I have a deeply religious heritage. My parents and both sets of grandparents were devout fundamentalist believers within the Wesleyan Methodist denomination. My grandfather on my mother's side was a Pastor for his entire adult life. He left Bible college before he got his degree because the end times were near and he needed to get out there and reach the lost. My mother's sister married a missionary and lived for 20 years with stone age people in Papua, New Guinea. My sister married a man at Bible college and they have been missionaries and pastors ever since.



My mother was the dominant religious influence in my life. She was a big personality and a strong believer. As a youngster, she was taken to the doctor because of knee problems which turned out to be due to how much time she spent in prayer. She went to Houghton College which was a conservative liberal arts college in Western New York. She taught Sunday School, was Sunday School superintendent, women's Bible study leader, Director of CYC (Christian Youth Crusaders), started after-school Bible Clubs, led the teen youth group at church, taught at a private Christian school, and actively attempted to evangelize neighbors and even students from the local university. She would weep when we had family prayer time. Once, when I burned my finger on the lawn mower muffler, she said, "As much as that hurts, imagine how hell will feel for eternity!"

My father was a committed Christian, taught Sunday School, assisted my mother with the teen youth group, and was a board member at church and on numerous other Christian organizations. He loved to volunteer, particularly using his carpentry skills. An all-around nice guy and loved literally the world over.

My parents were founding members of the Wesleyan Methodist church and were deeply involved with it from day one until they left to do missionary work in Haiti.



“As much as that hurts, imagine how Hell will feel for eternity!”

My Childhood

I “accepted Jesus” before I was five. As part of my family, I went to church every time the doors were open. On Sunday this would mean Sunday School and the worship service, and then back to church again at night for the “evening service.” On Wednesday nights we went to “prayer meeting” which was mostly adults. On Tuesday nights we would go to Christian Youth Crusaders (CYC) which is like a Christian Boy/Girl Scouts. We earned badges and pins related to the Bible and other wholesome subjects. I earned the “John Wesley Award” at the completion of six years. We went to Bible Club if my mother happened to be teaching one. We went to Vacation Bible School and Bible Club Camp in the summers, as well as the Wesleyan Methodist church camp.

Teenage Years

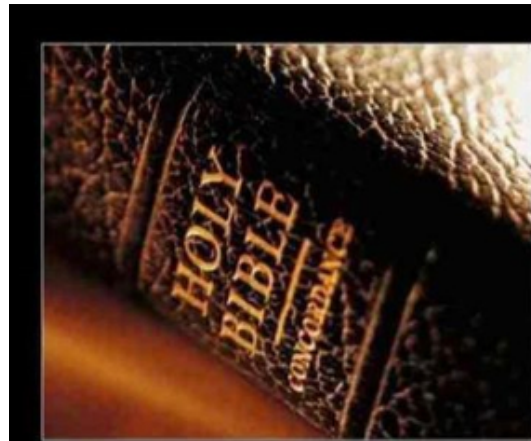
As a teenager I attended the church youth group and was its president during my senior year. One summer I spent a month at Word of Life Bible Camp in Schroon Lake, NY, where, among other things, we went downtown and evangelized people on the street. For two years I travelled and sang with a group called “All God’s Children.” I became a big fan of the new “Contemporary Christian Music” that was coming out at that time.

Colleges

I attended Houghton College for 4 years (the Wesleyan Methodist school my mother had gone to). I then had an experience where I devoted my life 100% to God and subsequently played in a Christian rock band and led the teen Bible quiz team at church.

I then went to Bethany Bible College (now Kingswood University) in Sussex, NB, Canada. This was a very small, very conservative school with a heavy emphasis on evangelism and missions. During my second year there I was president of the Ministerial Association. During spring break I took a dozen students to Manchester, NH and tried to convert the Catholics.

Biblical inerrancy played an important part in Doug's belief system.



Ministry

After Bible College I became Assistant Pastor and then Senior Pastor at the Lyncourt Wesleyan Church, where I excelled in preaching, administration, and church growth. I was influenced by John Maxwell to increase my emphasis and zeal regarding evangelism, since there was a lost world going to Hell. I loved studying and trying to understand the Bible. I was also president of the Central NY Wesleyan District Youth, and when the Billy Graham Crusade came to town, I was appointed Captain of the Counselors.

Seminary

I next attended Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in South Hamilton, MA, where I earned a Master's Degree in Counseling. Although the school was a mixture of mainline denominations, it was very conservative and towed a straight line when it came to Biblical inerrancy. During these years, I experimented with various denominations and spent some time in the Episcopal Church. All three of my children were baptized Episcopal as infants, and their Godparents were Tom and Lovelace Howard. Tom Howard is Elizabeth Elliott's brother. (She is the writer and speaker made famous for her missionary work with the Auca tribe in Ecuador after her husband was murdered by them.) Tom is a professor, author, and apologist for the Roman Catholic Church and is also a CS Lewis expert.

Adult Years

After seminary I worked for Minirth-Meier New Life Clinics (now called New Life Ministries), which is the largest Christian counseling organization in the U.S., founded by Steve Arterburn. I spent several years in sales and administration but ultimately became one of their leading phone counselors, blending a highly spiritual approach with good practical sense and much empathy.

At one point in my journey I had an experience which I will call the "baptism in the Holy Spirit." This led to a very emotional, experiential, powerful, and personal experience with God. I became bold in my faith and prophesied over people and spoke in tongues. I would spend hours writing out my prayers to God and then writing out what I believed he was saying to me. I was super-charged.

I attended a mega-church for a few years and became active in their Celebrate Recovery program which is a Christian version of the 12-steps. It was at this church that I baptized my teenage daughters as believers by full immersion. I met a man at this church that became my best friend. We would talk and pray on the phone almost every day.



And now... this!

Why am I Speaking in May??

This is a good question given my heritage, training, and experience. To put it succinctly, life happens, cognitive dissonance happens, learning happens, and you'll have to come on May 18th to find out "the rest of the story!" I hope to see you there.

Dignity U Wear Volunteer Opportunity - Update

Celia Abbruzzese
Community Outreach Chair

Dignity U Wear

136 North Myrtle Avenue
 Jacksonville, FL 32204

Phone: (904) 636-9455

Toll-Free: (888) 364-1305

Fax: (904) 636-8649

www.DignityUWear.org



The next DUW is April 18, 2015, 9:00 a.m.

I am excited for the new Spring season and want to see some free-thinking people come out, celebrate the season and our ability to help our fellow human beings who are less fortunate. We're still on for this Saturday, April 18, at DUW! Remember, a good FCFS turn-out will insure that this volunteer activity can continue.

The Way It Works

On the third Saturday of each month, from 9:00 a.m. until noon, FCFS members and friends gather, together with the Jacksonville Atheist Meetup group (JAM), to volunteer at the Dignity U Wear (DUW)

environmentally-controlled warehouse. Come to 136 North Myrtle Ave., Jacksonville, FL 32204. Sign in at the door with your name and group. In air-conditioned comfort, sort and fold new clothing to assist those in need. (Closed-toed shoes are required, as this is a working warehouse. Children under 16 are not allowed; children 16 and over are welcome, attended or unattended.) For dates and further details, visit the website: <http://firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org/cms/component/content/article/50/150>

And Now, to our Off-Shore Correspondent in Thailand...

Lance Stoll

(Sociologist Lance Stoll, long-time member and friend of the First Coast Freethought Society has accepted a teaching position in Thailand, which is leading him on a totally new and remarkable life adventure. Lance currently teaches English at the Chonburi Technological College. This is a private school which has students of many ages, and Lance is teaching grade levels from Kindergarten to college. When asked if he would be willing to share his "Thailand experience" with us, he replied, "I'd be proud to be your Thai or offshore commentator. Lance also observes, "I find that my perspective on America is quite clear from this far away and that my concept of the "Christian Taliban" destroying America is quite accurate! Religion is destroying America and the image of America in the rest of the world." —Ed note.)

Someone suggested that my views and those of ISIS are similar. I find this so silly. In fact, the views of ISIS and those of the Christian Right in America are identical. Both groups want theocracy, both want to eliminate "nonbelievers," both want to kill gay people, both want to restrict the rights of woman and make them property, again. The ONLY difference between ISIS and the Christian Taliban in America is the power of secular authority. ISIS operates in places without secular government or where government is very weak.

The Christian Taliban would be throwing gay people off buildings, making women marry their rapists and keep the baby. The Christian Taliban would be killing atheists and "converting" followers of other religions, and closing museums discussing evolution if they were in control, as well. The Christian Taliban is already increasing restrictions on birth control and abortion every place they have control. They have dumbed-down school text books, reducing science and increasing so-called "intelligent design" wherever they dominate school boards. In Texas, they have reduced pages in history books dedicated to founding father and legendary deist, Thomas Jefferson, in favor of drivel about Phyllis Schlafley, Christian Taliban lunatic and anti-gay rights advocate.



I think that the American Christian Taliban is envious of ISIS, as they see them behaving without secular control. ISIS has exactly the type of control over the societies they dominate that the Christian Taliban in America salivates for. Listen to the lectures of the leaders of the Teabag movement, Christian ministers,

and the pandering whores who represent them in congress. ISIS and the Christian Taliban are not enemies, they are colleagues!



**Lance and other
faculty members on
Graduation Day
February 23, 2015
at Chonburi
Technological College**

I've found that that old expression, "Ignorance is Bliss," is true for me here in Thailand. I realize that I am much calmer and less angry here in this lovely country. One thing for sure is the warmth of the people, their sweet and constant smiles, and the nice environment, weather, and food here. You rarely hear anyone raise their voice, never see anyone flip the bird or gesture in anger here. And you don't hear people say stupid things. WAIT A SECOND! Are Thai people more intelligent than American people? I know they don't have the idiotic Christians here, and Buddhists don't push their beliefs on others, but are they really smarter than Americans? WAIT A SECOND again! How would I know if they say stupid things in public or not? I don't speak Thai, so it's all white noise to me!! They are probably saying the same idiotic nonsense I heard every day in the Publix in Cowford or in a classroom at FSCJ, but I can't understand how stupid what they say is! So, IGNORANCE IS BLISS! The key to happiness isn't some asinine religious ideology, it's living in a nice place and NEVER learning the language so you never hear stupidity! I FOUND THE SECRET TO HAPPINESS...smile and enjoy the bliss of ignorance!!

NPR Corporate Sponsorship

Carrie Renwick, Fundraising Chair

We would love to see NPR contributions come in throughout the year!

To Donate on a Monthly Basis

1. Go to the FCFS website home page, <http://firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org>, where you will find a PayPal button to make an automatic monthly donation to our NPR fund. Automatic monthly donations via PayPal require you to have a PayPal account.
2. Set it up through your online banking system.

To Donate on a One-Time Basis

1. Visit the website, <http://firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org>, where you will find the opportunity to contribute on our homepage. You can pay via PayPal or with any major credit card (via PayPal).

2. Mail a check payable to the FCFS to PO Box 550591, Jacksonville, FL 32255.
3. Bring your contribution to a meeting or another FCFS event and give it to a board member.

Whichever method you select, you will receive a letter from the treasurer, suitable for your IRS records, acknowledging your tax-deductible contribution. Thank you!

About our newsletter, the *First Coast FreeThinker*

Information for Readers

The First Coast FreeThinker is published for all freethinkers and potential freethinkers. Nonmembers and members 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. Members are entitled to receive hard-copy should they prefer. The e-mail version is encouraged, as the newsletter is optimized for on-screen reading.

Readers are invited and encouraged to share 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, poetry, etc. should be e-mailed to Editor@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org. Material may be submitted only ELECTRONICALLY. Submissions may be formatted in MS Word, in a text file, or cut and pasted into an e-mail.

The deadline for time-sensitive material is the THIRD SATURDAY of each month for the following month's issue, but submissions are welcome anytime.

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: A Statement of Principles](#) (found on our website). All accepted submissions are subject to editorial modification. Our style guide is *The Chicago Manual of Style*. Authors (not the First Coast Freethought Society) are responsible for the accuracy of all quotations and for supplying complete references where applicable.

Musings on Tolerance and the First Amendment

Susan Ert-Ker

Can tolerance be taught? Here we are in America. Our First Amendment embodies tolerance with its protection of speech and a commandment to prevent one religion from receiving greater benefits than others.

We were all so very sad about the killings at *Charlie Hebdo*. Why do some people use violence when they disagree with ideas? How does that kind of hatred grow within a human being? When you dismiss or insult someone, are you fostering hatred in that person? How does one encourage civil discussions? How does a country encourage thoughtful conversations?



I think our city council could set a good example. They could allow all groups in the community (on a rotating basis) to offer a prayer or solemnizing message before the city council meetings. Please write your city council representative and ask that the rules for the invocation period be changed so that Council President Yarborough isn't allowed to make it appear that he is violating the establishment clause of the first amendment by requiring prayers specific to his faith tradition (to the exclusion of all others) be said at city council meetings.

First Amendment: Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

I am reading a wonderful book called *Madison's Music: On Reading the First Amendment*, by Burt Neuborne. Chapter 1 is called "Reading the First Amendment as a Poem." Here is an excerpt from that chapter: "...a careful study of ...Madison's First Amendment will trigger a responsive poetic chord in you that will enable us to recapture the music of democracy ..."



About the First Coast Freethought Society



First Coast Freethought Society, Inc.

P.O. Box 550591

Jacksonville, FL 32255-0591

904-419-8826

<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.

Membership

If you share our world view and would like to be a part of the FCFS, we encourage you to join. If you are new, or if you are renewing and your contact info has changed, you can pick up an application or a brochure at a meeting, or you can download and print an application on our website: <http://firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org/cms/app> and mail it in.

- You can join online: <http://firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org/cms/support>
- You can join by mail: Send your application and check, payable to the FCFS, to PO Box 550591, Jacksonville, FL 32255-0591.

Meetings

The FCFS meets the THIRD Monday of each month at the Buckman Bridge Unitarian Universalist Church, 8447 Manresa Ave., Jacksonville, FL 32244.

Directions: From the I-295 Roosevelt exit, go north to the first traffic light, Collins Rd. Turn right. Go 400 feet. The church driveway will be on your right.

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

Other Activities

- Two monthly **humanist book discussion groups**, one in Jacksonville and one in St. Augustine. Current books are listed in each newsletter. For further details, visit <http://firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org/cms/bdg>.
- A monthly **social and dinner at the Olive Garden**. See details in each newsletter.
- **Secular Sunday in the Park** - Coffee and conversation in the fresh air on a monthly basis. We meet the fourth Sunday of each month, 10:00 a.m. to noon, at [Losco Regional Park](#), 10851 Hood Road South, Jax, 32257. See Activities section of the FCFS home page: <http://firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org/cms/>.

- **Dinners for Doubters** (when scheduled).
- **Dignity U Wear** - a volunteer opportunity on a monthly basis at the Dignity U Wear warehouse in Jacksonville. Visit <http://firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org/cms/component/content/article/50/150> for details. Currently scheduled for the third Saturday morning of each month, from 9:00 a.m. - noon, through December 2015.
- A **Yahoo! Group** for freethinkers. To subscribe, send a blank message to jaxfreethought-subscribe@yahoogroups.com).

For information on all these activities, please visit <http://firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org>, or see the calendar of events at the end of each newsletter and on the website. You need not be a member to attend these activities!

FCFS 2015 Board Members

President - Earl Coggins: 904-521-5039

Vice President - Carrie Renwick: 904-268-8826

Secretary - Liz DuClose: 352-260-2880

Treasurer - Stephen Peek: 904-742-5390

At-Large - Herb Gerson: 904-363-6446

At-Large - Fred Hill: 904-358-3610

At Large - John Ruskuski: 904-419-8826

Other Appointments

Parliamentarian - Mark Renwick: 904-616-2896

E-mail Secretary - Carrie Renwick: 904-268-8826

Committees and Chairs

Community Outreach - Celia Abbruzzese: 904-982-8431

Editorial - Fred Hill: 904-358-3610

Finance - Stephen Peek: 904-742-5390

Fundraising - Carrie Renwick: 904-268-8826

Membership - Judy Hankins: 904-724-8188

Publicity - Carrie Renwick: 904-268-8826

Website - Mark Renwick: 904-616-2896

All FCFS personnel may be reached via e-mail at

info@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org

May 18, 2015 Meeting

Carrie Renwick, Program Chair

When former Catholic nun, Liz Murad, spoke in April 2013 ("From Nundom to Freedom"), and when former Methodist minister, Teresa MacBain, spoke in July 2013, many FCFS members and friends clamored for more de-conversion stories. We have found another truly remarkable story for you, and he

will be our May speaker! In his article, "My Christian Pedigree" (elsewhere in this issue), Doug Doan tells the story of his deeply-entrenched Christian beginnings. You need to come to our May 18 meeting to learn of Doug's de-conversion. How did it actually happen? How did he feel? Has Doug found peace as an atheist in a godless existence? Better come and find out!

Bequests

*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 can provide the appropriate wording to you and your attorney, depending upon your wishes. Or, just talk to your attorney. Our EIN is 20-1462737.

For further information, contact
Carrie Renwick, PO Box 550591, Jacksonville, FL 32255-0591 or
904-419-8826 • CarrieRen@att.net • <http://firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org>
All inquiries are held in the strictest confidence.

Northeast Florida Coalition of Reason

- First Coast Freethought Society: <http://firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org>
- Jacksonville Atheist, Agnostic, Secular Meetup Group (JAM): <http://jaxatheists.com>
- Secular Saint Augustine (SSA): <http://meetup.com/Secular-Saint-Augustine>

The FCFS is a proud member of the [Florida Humanist Association](#) (formerly the Humanists of Florida Association).

Freethought Events on the First Coast

- Monday, April 13 - JAM Session, 6:30 p.m. (See <http://www.meetup.com/jaxatheists/> for details.)
- Tuesday, April 14 - Special Event - **FREEDOM OF SPEECH: The Linchpin of a Free Society** - panel discussion at UNF, 7:00 p.m. (See first page for details.)
- Friday, April 17 - [Secular St. Augustine Meetup](#) - St. Augustine, 7:00 p.m. (Meetups are generally the third Friday, but you need to visit the website to RSVP and for meeting details.)
- Monday, April 20 - FCFS Monthly Meeting at Buckman Bridge Unitarian Church, 6:30 p.m.
- Saturday, April 25 - FCFS January 2015 Newsletter Deadline
- Sunday, April 26 - FCFS Secular Sunday in the Park, Jacksonville, 10:00 a.m.
- Tuesday, April 28 - FCFS Monthly Social at Olive Garden, Jacksonville, 6:00 p.m.
- Sunday, May 3 - Humanist Book Discussion Group - Jacksonville, 3:00 p.m.
- Thursday, May 14 - Humanist Book Discussion Group - St. Augustine, Anastasia Island, 7:00 p.m.
- Monday, May 18 - FCFS Monthly Meeting at Buckman Bridge Unitarian Church - 6:30 p.m.
- Saturday, June 6 - Celebration of Life for Wilhelmina Walton - Unitarian Church in Arlington - 11:00 a.m.

Directions to Monthly Meeting at BBUUC

Our monthly meetings are held at the **Buckman Bridge Unitarian Universalist Church (BBUUC)**, 8447 Manresa Ave., Jacksonville, FL 32244. The address is Manresa, but the main entrance to the church is located on Collins Rd..

- From I-295, take the Roosevelt exit. Go north on Roosevelt Blvd. to the first traffic light which is Collins Rd. Turn right onto Collins. Go 400 feet. The main entrance to the church is located on Collins Rd., on the right.
- Going south on Roosevelt, look for Atlantic Self-Storage on the left. This is the Collins Rd. intersection. Turn left onto Collins. Go 400 feet. The main entrance to the church is on Collins Rd., on the right. (If you come to I-295, you've gone too far, turn around, and you will turn right onto Collins Rd.)

MAP ON FCFS WEBSITE

See accurate map at this link: http://firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org/cms/lib/fcfs_bbuuc_map.gif (Please note, Google Maps, as well as other maps, may not be consistent with the actual street signs.)

Membership Application



Use this PDF form

to print the application and mail it in with your check, or join on our

[website](#).

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