

From: Rationalists of East Tennessee admin@rationalists.org
Subject: RET News August 2016
Date: August 1, 2016 at 8:46 PM
To: Carl Ledendecker ledendecker@att.net

TR

RET News August 2016 CE



Rationalists of East Tennessee Newsletter

August 2016

The Second Annual Freethought Advance

Townsend, TN

September 3-4

Be there!

First Sunday Meeting

August 7 Sunday 10:30 - 12:30

Pellissippi State Community College, Goins Building, Cafeteria Annex

"Trees into Fat"

Tyrone Wells will discuss an overview of his current work at Oakridge National Laboratory's Bioscience Division involving bioconversion. His work entails taking lignin, a component in woody biomass that has limited market value, and converting it into higher-value essential oils using bacteria. This work has applications in green energy as the oils have use as a fungible biodiesel. Wells discussed this conversion process and other uses for specialty oils.

[Get Directions](#)

The RET Skeptic Book Club

August 14 Sunday 2:00 – 4:00 pm

Location: Books-A-Million at 8513 Kingston Pike, Knoxville.

“Galileo's Middle Finger” by Alice Dreger

This illuminating chronicle begins with Dreger’s own research into the treatment of people born intersex (once called hermaphrodites). Realization of the shocking surgical and ethical abuses conducted in the name of “normalizing” intersex children’s gender identities moved Dreger to become an internationally recognized patient rights’ activist. But even as the intersex rights movement succeeded, Dreger began to realize how some fellow progressive activists were employing lies and personal attacks to silence scientists whose data revealed uncomfortable truths about humans. In researching one such case, Dreger suddenly became the target of just these kinds of attacks. Troubled, she decided to try to understand more—to travel the country to ferret out the truth behind various controversies, to obtain a global view of the nature and costs of these battles. Galileo’s Middle Finger describes Dreger’s long and harrowing journeys between the two camps for which she felt equal empathy: social justice activists determined to win and researchers determined to put hard truths before comfort. Ultimately what emerges is a lesson about the intertwining of justice and of truth—and a lesson of the importance of responsible scholars and journalists to our fragile democracy.

RET Third Sunday Meeting

August 21 Sunday 10:30 a.m.

Pellissippi State Community College, Goins Auditorium

A DVD presentation from the Skeptics Society Distinguished Lecture Series by Professor Elaine Pagels

“Revelations: Visions, Prophecy, and Politics in the Book of Revelation”

A startling exploration of the history of the most controversial book of the Bible, the religious scholar Elaine Pagels tackles The Book of Revelation, the surreal apocalyptic vision of the end of the world...or is it? Pagels returns The Book of Revelation to its historical origin, written as its author John of Patmos took aim at the Roman Empire after what is now known as “the Jewish War,” in 66 CE. Militant Jews in Jerusalem, fired with religious fervor, waged an all-out war against Rome’s occupation of Judea and their defeat resulted in the desecration of Jerusalem and its Great Temple. Pagels persuasively interprets Revelation as a scathing attack on the decadence of Rome. Soon after, however, a new sect known as “Christians” seized on John’s text as a weapon against heresy and infidels of all kinds—Jews, even Christians who dissented from their increasingly rigid doctrines and hierarchies. In a time when global religious violence surges, Revelations explores how often those in power throughout history have sought to force “God’s enemies” to submit or be killed.

[Get Directions](#)

RET Reflections Meeting

August 28 Sunday 2:00 p.m.

At Steve and Carol Tokay's 8905 Garrison Drive, Knoxville TN 37913-2416 865) 691-6816

Discussion and Potluck

Topic: To be Announced later

Dinosaur exhibit at McClung Museum, UT Campus

August 13 Saturday 10:00 – 11:30 pm (flexible ending time)

Location: McClung Museum UT Knoxville Campus

An outing for Kids and Adults who like dinosaurs

This exhibition showcases the world of modern paleontology, introducing a dynamic vision of dinosaurs and the scientists who study them. New discoveries and technologies reveal how dinosaurs lived, moved and behaved. Find out how advanced technologies allow scientists to look at fossils in fresh ways. Examine realistic models and casts, and see dinosaurs walk, run and move their long necks in fantastic computer simulations.

RET Second Annual Freethough Advance

September 3 and 4 Saturday & Sunday Labor Day Weekend

Location: Tremont Lodge and Resort, 7726 Lamar Alexander Parkway, Townsend, TN (865) 448-3200

Come hear from a list of nationally known speakers and some well-known local speakers.

Lodging and meals available. Ask for event discount. Lodging discount ends August 3.

Mention Rationalists of East TN to get the discount.

Registration

<http://www.rationalists.org/event-2300725/Registration>

click to register >>

- **1 day early registration – \$70.00 (USD)**

To see the list of speakers and meal options ask for a PDF of registration form from aledendecker@att.net

Indicate either Saturday or Sunday.

- **1 day late registration – \$75.00 (USD)**

To see the list of speakers and meals ask for a PDF of registration form from aledendecker@att.net

Indicate either Saturday or Sunday.

This registration does not include fees for meals

- **2 day early registration (Before August 20) – \$120.00 (USD)**

Attend both days for a discount.

To see the list of speakers and meal options ask for a PDF of registration form from aledendecker@att.net

- **2 day registraion after August 20 – \$140.00 (USD)**

Attend both days at a discount. To see the list of speakers and meal options ask for a PDF of registration form from aledendecker@att.net

Send email to aledendecker@att.net to get a complete registration form that includes meal options and schedule or log in to rationalists.org and scroll to bottom of page.

The Hotel discount ends Aug. 3rd.

Last year's event was a great success. Let's do it again!

Or call: 865 982-8687

Some Speaker Bios

Matt Dilahunty

Founder, owner of the IronChariots wiki and The Atheist Debates project - Host of The Atheist Experience for more than a decade - Former President of the Atheist Community of Austin - Popular debater and educator

Skeptic, Humanist, Magician, Jack-of-all-trades...

Sincere Kirabo

Sincere Kirabo is the social justice coordinator at the American Humanist Association. Sincere is a longtime humanist activist who writes about atheism, culture, humanism and social issues from an intersectional approach. His work can be found on The Humanist, Everyday Feminism, and Patheos, among other media.

Shanon Nebo

Shanon Nebo is the co-founder and President of Be Secular, an apparel company that promotes secularism and humanism with branding, image, and donations to secular organizations and the Treasurer of Recovering from Religion, an organization that provides

resources and support for people in doubt and transitioning away from religion. She is a mother, feminist, atheist, and humanist with two children who feature frequently in her activism, which focuses especially on science advocacy, education, separation of church/state issues, and secular values.

Jon D. Webster

Jon is a stand-up comedian and the author of 5 books which include Nothing Sacred: An Atheist Quote-A-Day Calendar, Blasphemy: Atheist Quotes and Essays By An Apostate, Unreal News: A Collection of Satire, 10 Decisions I Could Have Made Better Than God: And Other Audacious Atheist Articles, and One Big Joke (And 300 Shorter Ones). Many times Jon is asked when he discovered a Talent for writing. And the answer is in the eighth grade when Jon's school Principal held a contest for the students to write a pledge to their school and Jon's pledge ended up winning. New Hope Christian School now has a pledge to their school which their students recite every morning written by the author of 5 atheist books.

Usama Al-Bini

Born and raised in Jordan to a moderate Sunni family. Studied physics in Jordan and then in the US, where I obtained a PhD in theoretical physics. Left Islam during my late teens (about 20 years ago) but went through several stages before I became an atheist. In recent years I have come to realize the importance of activism and have committed to it. I am active in the Arab ex-Muslim online community, where I help run the Arab Atheist Network, the Arab Atheists Magazine and am a member of the Atheist Alliance of Middle East and North Africa.

Patrick Horst

Patrick is a former missionary kid who speaks Italian, Spanish, Arabic (MSA and Levantine), Sicilian, and some German. His background is Mennonite/Amish and pacifist, but he is currently on Active Duty in the U.S. Army; he is a combat veteran and a member of Military Atheists and Secular Humanists (MASH) of Ft. Campbell. He is also Communications & PR director at Sunday Assembly Nashville, where he was a founding band member in 2013, playing guitar and bass. He is the father of two children he is raising with their Christian mother.

His talk is the product of repeatedly getting asked the tiresome question “So you don’t believe in ANYTHING?!” His search for a response led him through five years of research and reflection. The result is a coherent values system, which he has sharpened into an “elevator pitch” to help explain his humanist principles. Using this personal values system as just one example, participants will receive useful advice on how to articulate their own answers to these questions: Is it even possible to be a moral, upstanding person of character without the “righteousness” of religion? What ethical reasoning guides your decisions? As a “none”, what values give your life meaning? Is it time for a new humanism?

Karon Park

Karon Park is a retired middle school art teacher who makes it very clear how easy and ethical it is to keep church and state separate in the classroom. She manages to sneak in lots of humorous anecdotes from her 30 years in the art room whenever she gives this presentation.

Herb Silverman

Herb is a long time activist in the Freethought movement and will describe his journey from Orthodox Jew raised in Philadelphia, to mild-mannered math professor, to accidental activist atheist when he moved to South Carolina. He'll talk about his challenge to the South Carolina Constitution and his Supreme Court victory, which paved the way for allowing atheists to hold public office in South Carolina. He'll also talk about his political activism and coalition building, including his adventures with the likes of Billy Graham and Jimmy Carter.

And the always entertaining Freethought Jeopardy with Martin and Cheryl Lewiston

RET Skeptics Book Club - New Books List

It's time to vote for books again. We have a wide variety. Please pick 9 of the 13 listed books. Get your answers back to me by 13 August 2016 (the sooner the better – do it now while you are thinking about it) so I can have the new list ready by the time we use up the old one. Send to Rmorris126@comcast.net

1. White Trash: the 400 year Untold History of Class in America by Nancy Isenberg.

Surveying political rhetoric and policy, popular literature and scientific theories over four hundred years, Isenberg upends assumptions about America's supposedly class-free society—where liberty and hard work were meant to ensure real social mobility. Poor whites were central to the rise of the Republican Party in the early nineteenth century, and the Civil War itself was fought over class issues nearly as much as it was fought over slavery. Reconstruction pitted poor white trash against newly freed slaves, which factored in the rise of eugenics—a widely popular movement embraced by Theodore Roosevelt that targeted poor whites for sterilization. These poor were at the heart of New Deal reforms and LBJ's Great Society; they haunt us in reality TV shows like Here Comes Honey Boo Boo

and Duck Dynasty. Marginalized as a class, white trash have always been at or near the center of major political debates over the character of the American identity. (480 pages).

2. The Serengeti Rules: The Quest to Discover How Life Works and Why It Matters by Sean B. Carroll.

One of the most important revelations about the natural world is that everything is regulated--there are rules that regulate the amount of every molecule in our bodies and rules that govern the numbers of every animal and plant in the wild. And the most surprising revelation about the rules that regulate life at such different scales is that they are remarkably similar--there is a common underlying logic of life. Carroll recounts how our deep knowledge of the rules and logic of the human body has spurred the advent of revolutionary life-saving medicines, and makes the compelling case that it is now time to use the Serengeti Rules to heal our ailing planet. (280 pages).

3. Darwin's Dangerous Idea by Daniel Dennett.

In a book that is both groundbreaking and accessible, Daniel C. Dennett, whom Chet Raymo of The Boston Globe calls "one of the most provocative thinkers on the planet," focuses his unerringly logical mind on the theory of natural selection, showing how Darwin's great idea transforms and illuminates our traditional view of humanity's place in the universe. Dennett vividly describes the theory itself and then extends Darwin's vision with impeccable arguments to their often surprising conclusions, challenging the views of some of the most famous scientists of our day. (586 pages).

4. Islam and the Future of Tolerance: A Dialogue by Sam Harris and Maajid Nawaz.

In this short book, Sam Harris and Maajid Nawaz invite you to join an urgently needed conversation: Is Islam a religion of peace or war? Is it amenable to reform? Why do so many Muslims seem drawn to extremism? What do words like Islamism, jihadism, and fundamentalism mean in today's world? Remarkable for the breadth and depth of its analysis, this dialogue between a famous atheist and a former radical is all the more startling for its decorum. Harris and Nawaz have produced something genuinely new: they engage one of the most polarizing issues of our time—fearlessly and fully—and actually make progress. (144 pages).

5. The Way of the Heathen: Practicing Atheism in Everyday Life by Greta Christina.

So you're an atheist. Now what? The way we deal with life — with love and sex, pleasure and death, reality and making stuff up — can change dramatically when we stop believing in gods, souls, and afterlives. When we leave religion — or if we never had it in the first place—where do we go? With her unique blend of compassion and humor, thoughtfulness and snark, Greta Christina most emphatically does not propose a single path to a good atheist life. She offers questions to think about, ideas that may be useful, and encouragement to choose your own way. She addresses complex issues in an accessible, down-to-earth style, including: Why we're here, Sexual transcendence, How humanism helps with depression — except when it doesn't, Stealing stuff from religion, and much more. Aimed at new and not-so-new atheists, questioning and curious believers, Christina shines a warm, fresh light on the only life we have. (224 pages).

6. Nothing Sacred: An Atheist Quote-A-Day Calendar by Jon D. Webster.

The greatest thing about this book is it can be read year round any year. Featuring noted atheist birthdays with their most profound quote on that day and only the best quotes from the most prominent freethinkers ranging from U.S. Presidents such as Barack Obama and Abraham Lincoln to Nobel Prize winners to Sagan, Dawkins, Hitchens and Harris, this book is an excellent way to arm yourself with arguments before debating that next theist. Jon Webster grew up in a Christian home, going to a Christian middle school, graduating from a Southern Baptist college, and had been a ""born-again"" Christian for 16 years when he finally decided to read the Bible cover to cover for himself. This led him to become an atheist. (100 pages).

7. The Invention of the Jewish People by Shlomo Sand.

A historical tour de force, The Invention of the Jewish People offers a groundbreaking account of Jewish and Israeli history. Exploding

the myth that there was a forced Jewish exile in the first century at the hands of the Romans, Israeli historian Shlomo Sand argues that most modern Jews descend from converts, whose native lands were scattered across the Middle East and Eastern Europe. In this iconoclastic work, which spent nineteen weeks on the Israeli bestseller list and won the coveted Aujourd'hui Award in France, Sand provides the intellectual foundations for a new vision of Israel's future. (344 pages).

8. BEING MORTAL: Medicine and What Matters in the End by Atul Gawande.

Modern Medicine has transformed the dangers of childbirth, injury, and infectious disease from harrowing to manageable. But in the face of death, what it can do often runs counter to what it should do. Through eye-opening research and gripping stories of his own patients and family, Atul Gawande reveals the suffering this has produced. He examines the profession's limitations and failures as life draws to a close. And he shows how the ultimate goal is not good death, but a good life --- until the very end. (282 pages).

9. Merchants in the Temple: Inside Pope Francis's Secret Battle Against Corruption in the Vatican by Gianluigi Nuzzi.

A veritable war is waging in the Church: on one side, there is Pope Francis's strong message for one church of the poor and all; on the other, there is the old Curia with its endless enemies, and the old and new lobbies struggling to preserve their not-so-Christian privileges. The old guard do not back down, they are ready to use all means necessary to stay in control and continue the immoral way they conduct their business. They resist reforms sought by Pope Francis and seek to delegitimize their opponents, to isolate those who want to eliminate corruption. It's a war that will determine the future of the church. And if he loses the battle against secular interests and blackmail, Pope Francis could resign, much like his predecessor. Based on confidential information—including top secret documents from inside the Vatican, and actual transcripts of Pope Francis's admonishments to the papal court about the lack of financial oversight and responsibility—Merchants in the Temple illustrates all the undercover work conducted by the Pope since his election and shows the reader who his real enemies are. It reveals the instruments Francis is using to reform the Vatican and rid it, once and for all, of the overwhelming corruption traditionally encrusted in the Roman Catholic Church. (240 pages).

10. Makers and Takers: The Rise of Finance and the Fall of American Business by Rana Foroohar .

Eight years on from the biggest market meltdown since the Great Depression, the key lessons of the crisis of 2008 still remain unlearned—and our financial system is just as vulnerable as ever. Many of us know that our government failed to fix the banking system after the subprime mortgage crisis. But what few of us realize is how the misguided financial practices and philosophies that nearly toppled the global financial system have come to infiltrate ALL American businesses, putting us on a collision course for another cataclysmic meltdown. Thanks to 40 years of policy changes and bad decisions, only about 15 % of all the money in our market system actually ends up in the real economy – the rest stays within the closed loop of finance itself. The financial sector takes a quarter of all corporate profits in this country while creating only 4 % of American jobs. The tax code continues to favor debt over equity, making it easier for companies to hoard cash overseas rather than reinvest it on our shores. Our biggest and most profitable corporations are investing more money in stock buybacks than in research and innovation. And, still, the majority of the financial regulations promised after the 2008 meltdown have yet come to pass, thanks to cozy relationship between our lawmakers and the country's wealthiest financiers. (400 pages).

11. All the Single Ladies: Unmarried Women and the Rise of an Independent Nation by Rebecca Traitor.

A nuanced investigation into the sexual, economic, and emotional lives of women in America, this “singularly triumphant work” (Los Angeles Times) by Rebecca Traister “the most brilliant voice on feminism in the country” (Anne Lamott) is “sure to be vigorously discussed” (Booklist, starred review). Today, only twenty percent of Americans are wed by age twenty-nine, compared to nearly sixty percent in 1960. The Population Reference Bureau calls it a “dramatic reversal.” All the Single Ladies is a remarkable portrait of contemporary American life and how we got here, through the lens of the single American woman. Covering class, race, sexual orientation, and filled with vivid anecdotes from fascinating contemporary and historical figures, All the Single Ladies is destined to be a classic work of social history and journalism. Exhaustively researched, brilliantly balanced, and told with Traister's signature wit and insight, this book should be shelved alongside Gail Collins's When Everything Changed. (352 pages).

12. Don't Sleep, There are Snakes: Life and Language in the Amazonian Jungle by Daniel L. Everett.

A riveting account of the astonishing experiences and discoveries made by linguist Daniel Everett while he lived with the Pirahã, a small tribe of Amazonian Indians in central Brazil. Daniel Everett arrived among the Pirahã with his wife and three young children hoping to convert the tribe to Christianity. Everett quickly became obsessed with their language and its cultural and linguistic implications. The Pirahã have no counting system, no fixed terms for color, no concept of war, and no personal property. Everett was so impressed with their peaceful way of life that he eventually lost faith in the God he'd hoped to introduce to them, and instead devoted his life to the science of linguistics. Part passionate memoir, part scientific exploration, Everett's life-changing tale is riveting look into the nature of language, thought, and life itself.

13. The Utility Of Force: The Art Of War In The Modern World by Rupert Smith.

From a highly decorated general, a brilliant new way of understanding war and its role in the twenty-first century. Drawing on his vast experience as a commander during the first Gulf War, and in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Northern Ireland, General Rupert Smith gives us a probing analysis of modern war. He demonstrates why today's conflicts must be understood as intertwined political and military events, and makes clear why the current model of total war has failed in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other recent campaigns. Smith offers a compelling contemporary vision for how to secure our world and the consequences of ignoring the new, shifting face of war.

Other Activities in the area

East Tennessee Freedom From Religion Foundation Chapter

Meets on the 3rd Wednesdays of each month 7:00 PM Earth Fare Turkey Creek

RET/ASK Freethought Forum TV

Tuesdays 5:00 – 6:00 pm

Note change: Due to Knoxville Beer Board Meeting changes there will be no FFTV on varying Tuesdays once a month.

Freethought Forum TV is looking for people to be on the show. Contact Larry Rhodes or Lee Erickson if you are interested.

Knoxville: Comcast Channel 12 Charter Channel 6 Free streaming on ctvknox.org.

Right after the show a co-host of the program holds The Atheist Society of Knoxville Meet-up at Barley's on Jackson Avenue in Knoxville's Old City. Volunteer hosts and suggestions for topics would be welcome for all of these programs. Contact Larry Rhodes at larryr@usit.net or Lee Erickson at forresterickson@comcast.net.

Sunday Assembly Knoxville Live Better, Help Often, Wonder More

August - Resilience

Location: The International at 940 Blackstock Ave., Knoxville, TN

Time: 10:30 AM

For other SA activities go to <http://knoxville-tn.sundayassembly.com> and click on "Calendar."

Email: saknoxville@gmail.com

Website: <http://knoxville-tn.sundayassembly.com/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Sunday-Assembly-Knoxville/595906073848559>

Meetup: <http://www.meetup.com/Sunday-Assembly-Knoxville/>

Future Activities

Freedom From Religion National Convention
Pittsburg, PA
October 7-9

The national convention, hosted at the Wyndham Grand hotel in downtown Pittsburgh, will include such notable speakers as cognitive scientist Daniel Dennett, award-winning author Susan Jacoby, biology professor Jerry Coyne and theoretical physicist and author Lawrence Krauss, who will receive FFRF's annual Emperor Has No Clothes Award.

<https://ffrf.org/outreach/convention>

Please add your name to the RET Directory so friends can contact you.

RET's New Web Site and Wild Apricot

How to set up your new password and log in. Don't forget to enter your information into the RET Directory (viewable by members only and customizable by you so people see only what you want them to).

TO LOG IN

Go to Rationalists.org. There, just above The Thinkers head, you will see a "Login" button. That's right, click on it. Use the email address that is already associated with RET contacts and mailings and click on "Forgot Password". There you will enter the email address and Captcha code. From there follow the directions.

Last month's Newsletter? Where did it go?

Unfortunately it disappeared into the "ether" so to speak. I wrote it, but my vacation ate it. Alaskan internet is apparently still wild and untamed.

On the plus side, our vacation was great.

Carl

Help Needed:

Please contact us at info@rationalists.org.

Anyone willing to serve on the board?

Anyone who has fundraising and/or PR experience and is willing to help RET?

Anyone willing to give secular invocations at public government meetings?

Member News:

Chuck & Joan Omarzu can no longer drive to meetings. They would appreciate anyone who can visit or call. (865-657-5027)

Homer Wilkins could use some more help. He is once again in the hospital.

Joe Barnhart is recovering from hip replacement.

(Please contact me at ledendecker@att.net if you have any relevant news about RET members that they agree to share.)

Copyright © 2016 {Rationalists of East Tennessee, Inc.}. All rights reserved. Please request use of any material at contact below.

Contact email: info@rationalists.org

Edited by Carl Ledendecker ledendecker@att.net

Opinions expressed are those of authors and/or the editor.

You are receiving this message because you opted in at [{Organization_URL}](#).

[Unsubscribe](#)