

Rationalists of East Tennessee Newsletter

May 2014
Edited by Carl Ledendecker

The National Day Of Reason

From President Lee Erickson

We are reviving a lapsed RET activity, the observance of The National Day Of Reason.

Past RET observance of The National Day Of Reason has included efforts to get members to donate blood (you can do so at Medic 1601 Ailor Ave NW, Knoxville, TN 37921 or call them at (865) 524-3074 to find their bloodmobiles. Tell them RET sent you.).

Also we have held picnics with RET providing a hot as Hades bed of charcoal and hot dogs and veggie burgers and buns. Also members have brought some soft drinks and side dishes and (dare I say it) deserts!

May 1st Picnic

So let's do it again.

This year, as in other years, let us meet at the Carl Cowen Park at 10058 S. Northshore 37920. There are two picnic pavilions at the park and no reservations. So, we just show up at 6:00 PM and hope for an open one. Please try to RSVP so we can get an appropriate amount of hot dogs/vegi burgers as well as coordinate beverages and side dishes which you bring. RSVP by using the Facebook pages, Freethought of East Tennessee or Atheist Society of Knoxville, or call Lee Erickson at 865-805-2437.

Background on National Day of Reason

From the web site <http://nationaldayofreason.org> we learn what that The National Day of Reason is and why:

"A consortium of leaders from within the community of reason endorsed the idea of a National Day of Reason. This observance is held in parallel with the National Day of Prayer, on the first Thursday in May each year. The goal of this effort is to celebrate reason—a concept all Americans can support—and to raise public awareness about the persistent threat to religious liberty posed by government intrusion into the private sphere of worship."

They offer a template for a proclamation to be offered to local governments and I have sent a request to the Mayor of Knoxville and the Blount County Mayor. I did so with only a week's notice, but I can still hope something will come of it.

The template is as follows:

WHEREAS, the application of reason, more than any other means, has proven to offer hope for human survival upon Earth, improving conditions within the universe, and cultivating intelligent, moral and ethical interactions among people and their environments, and

WHEREAS, those who wrote the Constitution of the United States of America, the basic document for governing the affairs of humankind within the United States, based it upon principles delineated within the philosophies distinguishing the historical Age of Reason, and

WHEREAS, most citizens of the United States purport to value reason and its application, and

WHEREAS, it is the duty and responsibility of every citizen to promote the development and application of reason

NOW, THEREFORE, I [name, title] hereby proclaim Thursday, the 1st day of May, 2014 a

DAY OF REASON

and I encourage all citizens, residents and visitors to join in observing this day and focusing upon the employment of reason, critical thought, the scientific method, and free inquiry to the resolution of human problems and for the welfare of human kind.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF I hereunto set my hand and cause the Seal of [government] to be herein affixed.

First Sunday Meeting

May 4, 2014

10:30 - 12:30

Pellissippi State Community College, Goins Building, Cafeteria Annex

**Lectures on "Biology and Human Behavior: the Neurobiological Origins of Human Behavior."
Presented by Professor Robert Sapolsky of Stanford University.**

As a result of popular demand we will continue viewing these taped lecture series but this will be the last one for a while.

The RET Skeptic Book Club

"The Fact of Evolution" by Cameron M. Smith.

May 11 , 2014

4:00 – 6:00 p.m.

Barnes and Noble Booksellers, 8029 Kingston Pike.

"Zealot: The Life and Times of Jesus of Nazareth" by Reza Aslan.

Two thousand years ago, an itinerant Jewish preacher and miracle worker walked across Galilee, gathering followers to establish what he called the "Kingdom of God." The revolutionary movement he launched was so threatening to the established order that he was captured, tortured, and executed as a state criminal.

Within decades after his shameful death, his followers would call him God.

Sifting through centuries of myth-making, Reza Aslan sheds new light on one of history's most influential and enigmatic characters by examining Jesus through the lens of the tumultuous era in which he lived: first-century Palestine, an age awash in apocalyptic fervor. Scores of Jewish prophets, preachers, and would-be messiahs wandered through the Holy Land, bearing messages from God. This was the age of zealotry—a fervent nationalism that made resistance to the Roman occupation a sacred duty incumbent on all Jews. And few figures better exemplified this principle than the charismatic Galilean who defied both the imperial authorities and their allies in the Jewish religious hierarchy.

Balancing the Jesus of the Gospels against the historical sources, Aslan describes a man full of conviction and passion, yet rife with contradiction; a man of peace who exhorted his followers to arm themselves with swords; an exorcist and faith healer who urged his disciples to keep his identity a secret; and ultimately the seditious “King of the Jews” whose promise of liberation from Rome went unfulfilled in his brief lifetime. Aslan explores the reasons why the early Christian church preferred to promulgate an image of Jesus as a peaceful spiritual teacher rather than a politically conscious revolutionary. And he grapples with the riddle of how Jesus understood himself, the mystery that is at the heart of all subsequent claims about his divinity. (Amazon Review)

RET Third Sunday Meeting Annual Public Lecture

May 18 , 2014

2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Pellissippi State Community College, Goins Building, Cafeteria Annex

Theology Professor Dr. Robert Price of the Council for Secular Humanism, Center for Inquiry, will present our annual public lecture. His topic is "Ethics: For Humans, by Humans". - Non-theists are constantly assailed with the claim that, in rejecting God, they are removing any basis for morality. This genuine fear probably accounts for much of the public's revulsion at atheism and humanism. Replying, "Hey! We're moral! Don't worry!" is not a sufficient answer. But there is one. Robert M. Price combines elements from Thomas Aquinas, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Emil Durkheim to outline a basis for consistent humanist ethics, asking also whether the supposed need to derive morality from God is not actually fatal to theism, and if perhaps much current humanist political ethics is not implicitly faith based after all.

Tokay Backyard Olympics Memorial Day

Monday, May 26, 2014

Kids of all ages can compete in all events, including The Nerf Ball Put, The Javelin Straw Throw, The Cross Country Tricycle Race, Sidewalk Art, and The Watermelon Spit! Just bring your own meat for the grill, and a side dish for six people (single guys bring chips) Buns, condiments, and drinks will be provided. Tokay Olympic Medals will be awarded! Please RSVP to Steve and Carol Tokay at 691-6816. The location is 8905 Garrison Drive, Knoxville TN 37931.

RET Reflections Meeting

May 25, 2014

Potluck Lunch

TBA

RET/ASK Freethought Forum

Tuesdays 5:00 – 6:00 pm

In Knoxville: Comcast Channel 12

Charter Channel 6

Surrounding areas: free streaming on ctvknox.org.

May 6, 2014 Pauline Hamilton and Faithless Forrest. Bible and Science Over Time

Show topics are subject to change.

In Keeping with the National Day of Reason

The Freedom from Religion Foundation issued this News Release

FFRF defends appellate win before Colorado Supreme Court

April 30, 2014

The Colorado Supreme Court will hear oral argument May 1 in Gov. John Hickenlooper's appeal of a unanimous state Court of Appeals decision ruling in favor of the Freedom From Religion Foundation against a "Colorado Day of Prayer."

The Court of Appeals [ruled in 2012](#) that gubernatorial proclamations designating a "Colorado Day of Prayer" each year violate the state Constitution. Coincidentally, the case is being argued on the first Thursday in May, which is proclaimed as a "Colorado Day of Prayer" by the governor and a "National Day of Prayer" by Congress.

In the lead appellate opinion, Judge Steve Bernard wrote, "[T]he six Colorado Day of Prayer proclamations [2004-09] at issue here are governmental conduct that violate the Preference Clause [of the Religious Freedom section of Colorado's Constitution]." The content is "predominantly religious; they lack a secular context; and their effect is government endorsement of religion as preferred over non-religion."

The proclamations "have the primary or principal effect of endorsing religious beliefs because they convey or attempt to convey a message that religion or a particular religious belief is favored or preferred." The appellate decision noted that the "inclusion of biblical verses and religious themes," statements urging "that individuals will unite in prayer" and the governor's signature, imprimatur and seal make "no doubt here that the religious message is attributed to the Governor." In May 2013, the Colorado Supreme Court granted the state's petition for review. The court will decide whether to uphold the appellate decision, which ruled that FFRF and four of its members had standing and that the state Constitution disallows the governor's prayer exhortations. FFRF's litigation attorney, Richard Bolton, will argue the case.

“We want to see reason prevail and constitutional rights of citizens affirmed by the court,” said Annie Laurie Gaylor, co-president of FFRF, a Madison, Wis.–based state-church watchdog with more than 20,000 members nationwide and about 600 in Colorado.

Oral argument is being held in the La Junta Junior/Senior High School in La Junta as part of an education outreach program by Colorado courts.



Dues

Dues are \$35 for most individuals but students & low-income persons may join at a reduced rate of \$15.

Dues and donations can be sent to “RET, P.O. Box 51634, Knoxville, TN 37950”, or via Pay Pal through the link at www.rationalists.org. Direct payment can also be made to RET treasurer, Eliot Specht

Reimbursement

Remember that you can ask for reimbursement for food, supplies, etc. that you provide for RET.