

The April AFS Meeting

Jeremiah Camara and Ric Mathis will present their documentary "Contradiction: A Question of Faith"

The April 13 AFS Meeting will feature Jeremiah Camara and Ric Mathis, who will present their documentary



Jeremiah Camara

"Contradiction: A Question of Faith." Jeremiah is the producer and director of the film; Ric is the videographer.

In the documentary, Jeremiah Camara travels the country examining the paradox of Black neighborhoods saturated with churches in the midst of poverty, deprivation and despondency. Camara asks "If God answers all things (according to the Bible) and if praise, worship, belief and love for God are prerequisites to prosperity, then why are Blacks, as a collective, in such a non-prosperous position?" He seeks to find if there is a correlation between high praise and low productivity.



Ric Mathis

From the film's website (<http://www.contradictionthefilm.com/>) Camara notes that "...the tradition of using prayer as a first-line of defense and relying upon supernatural intervention to solve problems in an age of information reflects a people that are operating

The April Potluck

Before the regular November 10th meeting, we will have a Potluck Lunch, starting at noon. Join AFS members and guests for some good food and great socializing. Please bring food according to the first letter of your last name:

- A-G: Bring a main dish**
- H-P: Bring a dessert**
- Q-Z: Bring a side dish**

AFS will provide drinks, plates and silverware.

Grounds Committee

As the weather gets warmer, AFS is looking for people who can help out with mowing and such at AF Hall. See a Board Member for more information.

Calendar

- 4/13 Potluck lunch 12:00
+ time to bid on *silent auction* items.
- 4/13 AFS General Meeting 1:00 p.m.
- 4/26-27 Inman Park Festival
(<http://inmanparkfestival.org/>)
- 5/1 National Day of Prayer Protest 11:30-1:30
Acworth City Hall
- 5/11 AFS General Meeting 1:00 p.m.

All events are at AF Hall unless noted and are subject to change.

Be sure to like AFS's Facebook page for updates: <https://www.facebook.com/AtlantaFreethought>

outside of the context of a modern paradigm... Perhaps the most insidiously devastating generational hand-me-down proposal in African-American culture is when we were advised to 'lay our burdens in the lap of Jesus and that God will provide all of our needs.' Literal adherence to this biblical axiom has not only helped to hinder our will to be self-reliant, but it has also created a state of dependency upon divine intervention unparalleled in most other groups."

The documentary includes interviews with many notable people, including Norm Allen, Dan Barker, Annie Laurie Gaylor, Ayanna Watson, Mandisa Thomas, Lawrence Krauss, Martin Luther King III, Dr. Ray Hagins and Dr. Drew Smith.

"Contradiction: A Question of Faith" will also be shown in Salt Lake City, Utah at the American Atheists National Conference on 19 April 2014 CE at 8:30 p.m.



A silent auction will be held at the Sunday, April 13 meeting. Help support your Atlanta Freethought Society while helping yourself to great stuff! Viewing and bidding times start at noon, during the potluck lunch.

Programs and Speakers

All programs are on the second Sunday of each month at AF Hall, 4775 N. Church Lane SE, Atlanta, GA, unless otherwise noted. Programs start at 1:00 PM, but feel free to arrive at 12:00 for socializing. Visitors are always welcome.

The views and opinions expressed by speakers at AFS do not necessarily reflect those of AFS members or its policy.



Apr 13: Jeremiah Camara and Ric Mathis, who will present their documentary “**Contradiction: A Question of Faith.**”

May 11: TBA

Jun 8: TBA

Jul 13: TBA

Aug 10: TBA

AFS Email List

The AFS Announcements email list provides subscribers with reminders and updates on AFS activities. Send an email to AFS-Announce-subscribe@yahoo.com to subscribe. The AFS Forum email list is a place for discussions of freethought, atheism, agnosticism, church-state separation and religion. To subscribe to this list, send an email to AFSForum-subscribe@yahoo.com. For information on other AFS email groups, visit the AFS website at <http://www.atlantafreethought.org>.

The Atlanta Freethought Society is a member-run organization dedicated to advancing freethought and protecting the rights and reputation of freethinkers, agnostics, atheists and humanists.

We welcome anyone who is interested in learning about living a good life free from religion through attending AFS speeches, debates, and discussions. We employ protests, letters to the editor, broadcast appearances, and any other reasonable and civil means available to achieve our mission.

We define freethought as “the forming of opinions about life in general and religion in particular on the basis of reason and the evidence of our senses, independently of tradition, authority, or established belief.”

We actively support a strict separation of church and state as the best means to guarantee liberty for all, regardless of religious belief or lack of belief.

We seek to educate ourselves on many topics but especially on religion and non-religion. We do this through a series of thought-provoking speakers and programs, and by maintaining a web forum and an extensive library of freethought, religious, and related books, pamphlets, videotapes, and audiotapes.

We provide an organization where freethinkers and non-theists can develop friendships, talk freely, socialize and enjoy each other’s company. We do not discriminate against anyone on such irrelevant grounds as race, sexual orientation, age, gender, class, or physical disability. We welcome members and leaders of all political parties and preferences.

Because we are designated by the IRS as a 501(c)(3) educational organization, contributions to AFS are tax deductible.

Any who are like-minded are welcome to join us.

Atlanta Freethought News An AFS Publication

Editor: Laura Ross
Assistant Editor: Steve Yothment

How to Contact the Editor

Send correspondence to AFS at:
4775 N. Church Lane SE,
Smyrna, GA 30080-7224,
phone Laura at 404-634-1005, or send
e-mail to Laura@LauraRossDesign.com

Atlanta Freethought Society President

Rick Pace – 770-912-6974

VP for Internal Communication

Steve Yothment – 678-364-8703

VP for External Communication

Paul Broman – 678-237-2645

Secretary

Laura Ross – 404-634-1005

Treasurer

Diane Buckner – 770-432-3049

Board of Directors

Mark Banks – 770-354-1546

Mike Bucki – 404-550-0596

Michael Buckner – 404-633-2486

Bob Glassley – 678-488-9621

Bob Konopelski – 404-352-1230

Judy Thompson – 404-296-2020

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Membership includes AFNews by email or mail.
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afs@atlantafreethought.org.

AFS Webmaster: Paul Broman
AFS Facebook Site: Laura Ross & Rick Pace

Roberto Moraes Memorial

by Ed Buckner



Roberto Moraes

Roberto Moraes (1941–2014) was a familiar face at AFS meetings and events and, it turns out, at one heck of a lot of other organizations' events as well. A memorial held for him on 5 April was attended by around 100 people, including leaders or representatives of 15 different progressive cause organizations in the Atlanta area: Atlanta Freethought, Common Cause, Sierra Club, Grandmothers for Peace, ACLU, Cobb Democratic Women, and many others. Two Georgia Representatives came and spoke—David Wilkerson and Stacey Evans. Rep. Evans also presented two of Roberto's daughters who were

present, Vicki and Chris, with a formal resolution that had been passed by the Georgia General Assembly—a resolution that praised Roberto Moraes for his activism and support for human rights and that specifically mentioned the Atlanta Freethought Society.

Rep. Stacey Evans told us all that, like a mother with her children, an elected official is not supposed to admit to having a favorite. But she couldn't help it—Roberto Moraes was her favorite constituent.

Everyone that spoke about Roberto—probably 20 people including the several impromptu offerings—commented on his calm, level-headed demeanor, persistent activism, his love of his fellow human beings, his sense of humor, and his strong support for civil rights and for women's rights. He will be missed mightily by many, including those of us in AFS.



Rep. David Wilkerson



Rep. Stacey Evans



(Photos at Memorial are by Ed Buckner)

Chris (Roberto's daughter), Dr. Minnie Ruffin of Grandmothers for Peace, Vicki (Roberto's daughter), and Roberto's grandson

National Day of Protest Against the National Day of Prayer!

Atlanta Freethought Society to Lead Protest Versus National Day of Prayer in Acworth, GA

(Atlanta) Atlanta Freethought Society President Rick Pace announced today that AFS will take the lead in protesting an event apparently designed



Acworth City Hall

to make it appear as if Acworth, Georgia—and the whole US—is only for Protestant Christians.

The protest will be held near Acworth City Hall from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. on Thursday, 1 May 2014 CE. AFS members are urged to e-mail Ed Buckner, ebuckner@atheists.org, if they can participate. Pace noted that “the annual National Day of Prayer event is

exclusionary, pretending to fuse public and religious interests while excluding freethinkers, atheists, and even many of their fellow theists.”

The prayer event in Acworth at City Hall is a perfect example: though perhaps not an officially city-sponsored event (it is promoted by the city's Parks and Recreation Department), it is presented as if it is. And probably only Protestant Christians—no Catholics, Muslims, Mormons, or Jews—will be speaking or leading prayers. Acworth leaders seem determined to violate the edict against such ostentatious praying “to be seen of men” supposedly issued

by Jesus himself in Matthew 6: 5-6.

Pace added, “I cannot personally lead this protest, because I have to work then—but I've asked Ed Buckner, the chair of our Activism Task Force and a seasoned activist, to organize and lead our efforts in Acworth.” Buckner noted that “all Americans have and must keep the right to express their religious beliefs—but no one has the right to invoke governments in support of their religion. Governments, from the national government to the City of Acworth, lack any power to make religious decisions for Americans.”

Other organizations have been asked to join AFS in this peaceful, non-disruptive protest in favor of religious liberty, of separation of government and religion, and against religious hypocrisy.

Acworth City Hall is located at 4415 Senator Russell Ave, Acworth, GA 30101, (770) 974-3112. Be sure to dress comfortably for the weather and make placards.

Atlanta Freethought at Inman Park Spring Festival 2014

Saturday and Sunday, April 26 and 27, 2014, from 11:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

During the last full weekend in April each year, Inman Park proudly presents a neighborhood festival widely regarded as Atlanta's most spirited and eclectic. It's Atlanta Freethought's third straight year running a booth at Inman Park Festival. We've had an overwhelmingly positive response from the organizers and the community. The event is a great reminder of how diverse our community is and we are grateful to be a small part of bringing people together.

Inman Park Spring Festival takes place in one of Atlanta's oldest and most scenic neighborhoods. First developed in the late 1800s, Inman Park is home to many historic homes and parks. The Festival began in the early 1970s as a means

to attract attention to gentrification efforts that sought to revitalize the community.

Now celebrating its 42nd anniversary, the festival offers something for everybody. Music, kids activities, a Tour of Homes, a marvelous street parade, an artists' market, some of the city's best people-watching. Come early, stay late, and be our guests at Atlanta's best street festival.



Please remember that, by City of Atlanta Ordinance, pets are not allowed at Festivals, "unless part of a planned festival program or assisting persons with disabilities."

This prohibition includes "dogs, cats, snakes, birds, pigs, etc." and applies whether or not the pet is leashed. As the ordinance says, this is for the pet's protection as well as for the protection of festival patrons.

Police chief uses office to blatantly promote Christianity

<http://ffrf.org/news/news-releases/item/20235-police-chief-uses-office-to-blatantly-promote-christianity#sthash.9Pwi8dQ3.dpuf>

The Freedom From Religion Foundation sent a letter of complaint and records request March 11 to Birmingham, Ala., Police Chief A.C. Roper objecting to his organizing and endorsing a Christian ministry called Prayer Force United.

FFRF, a state-church watchdog based in Madison, Wis., has about 20,000 members nationwide and about 180 in Alabama, including a chapter, the Alabama Freethought Association. FFRF also addressed Roper's inclusion of Christian prayer at mandatory department staff meetings and events.



Chief A.C. Roper

Roper, an ordained minister, leads monthly prayer walks in different Birmingham neighborhoods under the auspices of the Prayer Force United ministry. The prayers are supposed to lower crime. FFRF Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel's letter details Roper's stated belief in the power of prayer and the powerlessness of his police force: "[T]he police are not the answer, never have been, never will be. Jesus said that he's the answer," and "one of the biggest problems [Birmingham is] facing is a lack of godliness."

Seidel explained the law to Roper: "It is unconstitutional for government officials to use their government office and email to advance, promote or endorse one religion over another, or religion over nonreligion. You must keep your religion to yourself when acting in your official capacity as police chief."

Seidel noted that prayer as a crime-fighting technique is ineffectual: "The walks themselves may lower crime simply by having crowds on the streets escorted by police cars with flashing lights, but that is not because of the power of prayer — it is the power of people. Prayer cannot stop violence. Scientific studies show that societies with less prayer have less violence."

FFRF called on the chief to stop forcing prayer on city employees: "Federal courts have found that prayers at government employee meetings constitute illegal government endorsement of religion."

FFRF has created a video with clips from Roper's sermons and Prayer Force United videos with commentary on their legality. "There was so much video footage, we thought citizens might like to see how the police are abusing their office 'in Jesus' name,' said Seidel, who put the video together. "It's an opportunity to explain the law and provide compelling examples of exactly how the Constitution is being violated."

Prayer Force videos show Roper appearing while using his title and office to endorse the ministry and "claiming the city of Birmingham for God." Roper also explains that Prayer Force is part of the police department: "[I]t's a prayer ministry, it's an intercessory ministry, that, in addition to our officers working every day to make the streets of Birmingham safe, we have a prayer force that's interceding."

FFRF also filed an open records request asking for all records relating to the department's official endorsement of the ministry.

The Freedom From Religion Foundation, based in Madison, Wis., a 501(c)(3) nonprofit educational charity, is the nation's largest association of free-thinkers (atheists, agnostics), and has been working since 1978 to keep religion and government separate.

Discrimination by a Notary Public—Insignificant?

By Ed Buckner

Back in late March the president and managing director of American Atheists, David Silverman and Amanda Knief, visited a New Jersey branch of TD Bank to get some documents related to AA's nonprofit status notarized. The employee they asked to do this was a notary public, duly authorized to attest to signatures under the laws of New Jersey. But that employee declined to serve as notary regarding their signatures because they were representatives of an atheist organization. They did manage to get the documents notarized, after a delay, by another staffer. There was substantial publicity over this incident—see, for example, <http://news.atheists.org/2014/03/27/american-atheists-responds-to-td-banks-statement/> or <http://www.examiner.com/article/bank-notary-refuses-service-to-american-atheists>. Some, including some online atheists, have decried the reaction of American Atheists as overkill or as mere publicity-seeking aggrandizement. But I'd argue that those critics are misguided, and I've actually experienced very similar discrimination myself, so my opinion is based both on experience and on important legal and social grounds.

First, my own experience: in 2010, while I was president of American Atheists, I needed to get some routine documents notarized involving real estate in California

(a member had left the organization some property in his will). I took the documents to our local bank, a Smyrna branch of Regions Bank where our family had banked for a couple of years, one that had notarized at least one document for me earlier. The staffer who had earlier notarized my signature looked over the real estate documents and said she'd need to check



with her manager before she could notarize anything. She knew me and I had plenty of ID as well as an account with the bank, but she came back and told me that she'd be unable to notarize. Pressed, she claimed that the bank did not notarize “those kind of documents” or similar words. I managed to get the documents notarized down the street at a public surveyor's office—and we took our bank account and business elsewhere thereafter. It seemed quite clear to me that I was refused service because of the name “American Atheists” prominently displayed on the documents and not for any other reason, but proving that would have been difficult.

Did the two women, both bank employees, from New Jersey in 2014 and Georgia in 2010, respectively, have a right to refuse service to atheists? And even if technically they had no such right, was it wise to make a fuss?

They had no such right, as I understand the law and the U.S. Constitution. The job of a notary public in such matters is to provide evidence that the person claiming to sign a document is in fact that person and did in fact sign.

The details of the transaction are mostly* irrelevant to the notary. A public service or accommodation was being offered and therefore the staffer should be denied the right to discriminate. It is parallel to whether lunch counters or bakers can refuse service because of the color of someone's skin or a perception that the customer is gay. And it is more broadly parallel to the current US Supreme Court Case involving Hobby Lobby. Legally, if Regions Bank can refuse to provide service for atheists or Hobby Lobby can avoid the effects of federal requirements based on the owners' religious beliefs, then no legislation or regulation for the public good can be effective.

The National Notary Association proudly evaluates the role of its members as being one of trustworthiness and integrity—and declares, “Impartiality is the byword of the Notary office and the

foundation of its public trust. Notaries are duty-bound not to act in situations where they have a personal interest. The public trusts that the Notary's critical screening tasks have not been corrupted by self-interest. And impartiality dictates that a Notary never refuse to serve a person due to race, nationality, religion, politics, sexual orientation or status as a non-customer.”

From http://www.nationalnotary.org/resources_for_notaries/what_is_a_notary/index.html

http://www.nationalnotary.org/resources_for_notaries/what_is_a_notary/index.html

Is one minor instance of inconvenience worth complaining about? It is if you want a society with justice and equality for all.

*To argue otherwise is to declare that knowing someone is an atheist is grounds for suspecting them of fraud: “No notary is obligated to perform a notarial act if he or she feels such act is for a transaction which the notary knows or suspects is illegal, false or deceptive.” — <https://www.gsccca.org/notary-and-apostilles/notaries/georgia-notary-law>

Other Meetings of Interest in Metro Atlanta

Atlanta Astronomy Club will have its April 19 general meeting from 3-5 at Fernbank Science Center, 156 Heaton Park Drive, Atlanta, GA 30307. (<http://www.atlantaastronomy.org>)

The Fellowship of Reason meets on the first Sunday of every month at 10:30 AM at AF Hall. There are meetings for book discussion, philosophy, a classic film course, and other events. (<http://www.fellowshipofreason.com>.)

There will be a **meetup for Atlanta atheists** on Sunday, Apr. 13, at 6:00 p.m. at Thinking Man Tavern, 537 W. Howard Ave, in Decatur. (<http://www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Atheists/>)

Another **meetup for Atlanta atheists** is scheduled for Sun., Apr. 27 at 4:00 p.m. at Five Seasons Brewery, 5600 Roswell Rd, in Sandy Springs. (<http://www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Atheists>)

The Fayette Freethought Society hosts lunches, dinners, book discussions, civic activities and more. (<http://www.meetup.com/Fayette-Freethought-Society/>)

The Peachtree City Humanists meet often for discussions at Starbucks, lunch, dinner at She's Bistro, and more. Several upcoming events in April. (<http://www.meetup.com/Peachtree-City-Humanists-PTCH/>)

GUST (Gwinnett: Understanding Secular Truths) meets on the 2nd Monday of every month at Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Gwinnett, 12 Bethesda Church Road, Lawrenceville, GA. Their next meeting is at 7:00, Mon. Apr. 14th and the topic will be "As Technology Advances, do Humanists need Humans?" (<http://www.meetup.com/brights-295/>)

IIG Atlanta will NOT meet this month due to Skepticamp on May 4th. Independent Investigations Group Atlanta is affiliated with IIG-West and Center for Inquiry, and promotes critical thinking about the paranormal, supernatural and unexplained. *It offers \$100,000 for anyone who can demonstrate evidence of the occult or paranormal under properly controlled conditions.* Questions? Visit IIGAtlanta.com or contact Shaune Beattie by email: shaune.beattie@gmail.com. (<http://www.meetup.com/IIG-Atlanta/>).

The Atlanta Skeptics will NOT meet this month, due to Skepticamp on May 4th. Be sure to check Meetup for more information. (<http://www.meetup.com/AtlantaSkeptics/>.)

Sunday Assembly Atlanta will meet on Sun. Apr. 20, 11:00 a.m. at SAA Venue, 3580 Pierce Dr., Suite 160, Chamblee. Celebrating life is one of the best parts of community. When we are surrounded by others we care about, we all get to share in the spoils of life!

In honor of building thriving communities, our April Sunday Assembly will celebrate one of our core tenants: **Help Often**.

We have quite the Assembly planned for our fellow helpers. We will:

- Learn about the psychology of helping others,
- Feel how simple random acts of kindness can change someone's entire day,
- See how one of our fellow members is doing his best,
- Discover how a local organization is building real houses for the homeless,
- Sing our cheerful hearts out together,

• And a few surprises!

Come with an open heart, open arms and a fascination for life and your community.

Also, come with an empty stomach! After the Assembly, we will be having a potluck! Food is the root of community, after all.

As always, we will provide childcare during the service, so everyone is welcome. Our venue is wheelchair accessible. For more about the global movement, check out: <http://sundayassembly.com/about/> (<http://www.meetup.com/Sunday-Assembly/>)

Recovery from Religion - Morrow Chapter is having the April meeting at Barnes & Noble Booksellers Southlake, 1939 Mount Zion Road, on Sun. Apr. 12 at 1:00 pm.

If you are one of the many people who have determined that religion no longer has a place in their life, but are dealing with the after-effects in some way or another, Recovering From Religion (RR) may be just the right spot for you. We welcome everyone, from doubting theist to ardent atheist, and our goal is to assist you in dealing with the negative impact of religion in your life. We are honored to be a part of your journey to be free from faith!

The RR Morrow Chapter is affiliated with the National organization, and is dedicated to helping former believers live happier and healthier lives. For more information and resources, please visit www.recoveringfromreligion.org. (<http://www.meetup.com/Recovering-From-Religion-Morrow-Chapter/>)

The Atlanta Science Tavern is meeting at Manuel's Tavern, Sat., Mar. 15, 7:00 pm, \$3.00 for non-students. **Mark Mandica** of Atlanta Botanical Garden will speak about "The Metro Atlanta Amphibian Monitoring Program - Frogs need our help." Be sure to check Meetup for more information and to RSVP. (<http://www.meetup.com/AtlantaScienceTavern>)

Black Nonbelievers is having a social event at Atlanta Rocks! Indoor Climbing Gym, 1019 Collier Road Northwest, Atlanta.

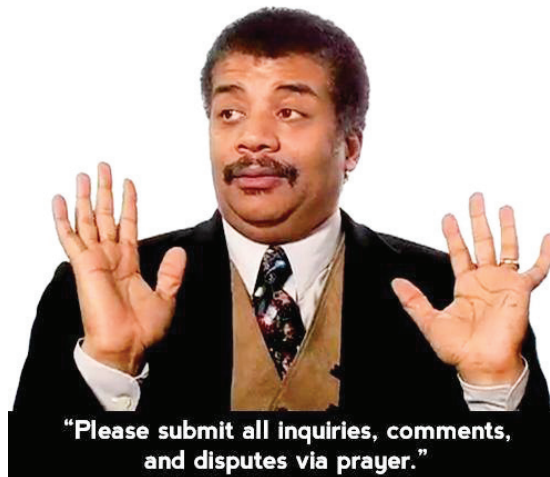
Atlanta Rocks! is the most popular indoor rock climbing gym in the Southeast, featuring more than 12,000 square feet of professionally-designed, seamless climbing surface. With more than 50 top-rope stations, crazy overhanging lead routes, and hundreds of climbs, Atlanta Rocks! has plenty of challenging routes for climbers of all skill levels.

Join us as we get in some exercise and have some fun! More information can be found at www.atlantarocks.com. Prices start at \$10 per person; no experience necessary. (<http://www.meetup.com/Black-Nonbelievers/>)

The SOS (Secular Organizations for Sobriety) meets on Tuesdays at 7:30 p.m. in Roswell. For more information, send an email to donnaajcore@yahoo.com.

Check out Atlanta Secular Directory (<http://AtlantaSecularDirectory.com>) for more Science/Skeptical/Secular events in the metro Atlanta area, or contact Laura Ross (laura@laurarossdesign.com) to suggest events or groups to add to the calendar—volunteers desperately needed to help with this project.

Creationists demand equal airtime on science show 'Cosmos'...



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(Or renew your membership with this form or online at www.AtlantaFreethought.org!)

If you've enjoyed what you've read, we enthusiastically invite you to join the Atlanta Freethought Society. Every month you will get our acclaimed monthly newsletter, the *Atlanta Freethought News*, voting rights in the organization—and enjoyment of the superb speakers we have coming up, as well as the social and activist events that we sponsor!

Individual memberships: One person can become a member for \$50 per year.

Sustaining memberships: One person can become a sustaining member for \$100 per year.

Life memberships: Avoid the hassle of renewing every year. A life membership lasts a lifetime.

Paper newsletter: We encourage members to receive the newsletter by email. This avoids the printing and mailing expenses. But if you really want the paper version of the newsletter, just let us know and we will send it to you at no additional charge. (You can also pick up a paper newsletter at any AFS meeting.)

Thank you for your support! We look forward to your being with us in the coming months!

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"Religious bondage shackles and debilitates the mind and unfits it for every noble enterprise, every expanded prospect."

—James Madison, 1774

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Woman's Dictionary—\$8

By the late, great Carol Faulkenberry (illustrated by Amanda Faulken-berry); like Ambrose Bierce's *Devil's Dictionary*—but better: more biting, funnier. Guaranteed to make you laugh out loud and to challenge at least one idea you hold.

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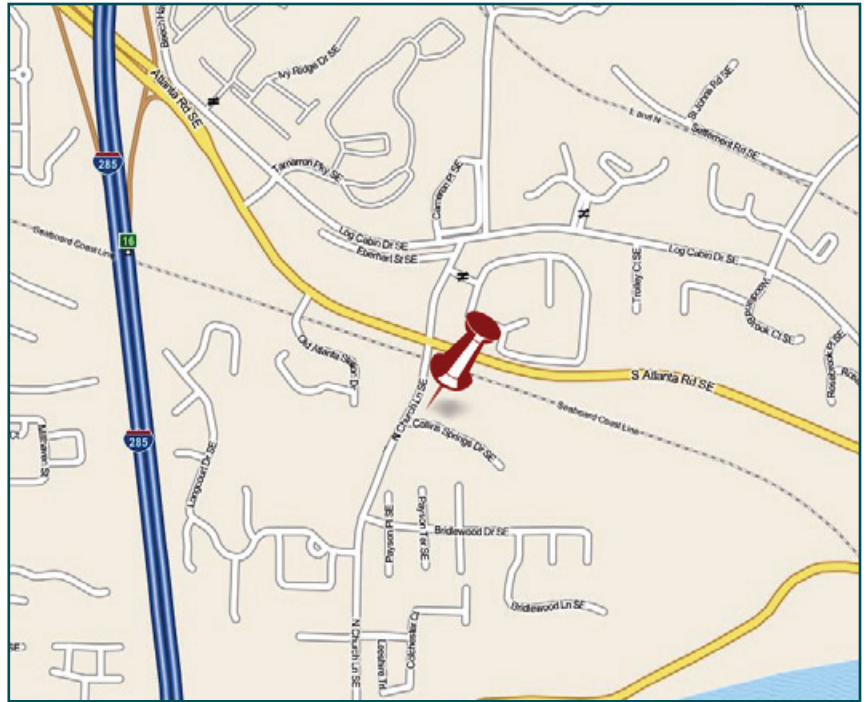
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*Dare To Think
For Yourself!*



**The April 13th
Meeting:
1:00 at AF Hall,
4775 N. Church Lane SE
Atlanta, GA**

**This Month's Speakers:
Jeremiah Camara
& Ric Mathis**



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