

The April AFS Meeting

Atlanta Freethought Society's next speaker is Bharat Bhatia

Bharat really enjoys science, but that wasn't always the case. Throughout school, he always saw science as a requirement to take in order to finish school rather than the wonderful thing that it is. He studied health and fitness in college and became a personal trainer. Because he didn't make much money in personal training, he joined the family jewelry business. While he didn't enjoy it, he stayed in it as his mother had epilepsy, although



Bharat Bhatia

many years later, he found a good doctor for her at Emory, and now his mother is in remission from seizures. This is one of the stepping stones that gave Bharat a true respect for science and how it can do wonders for humankind. But until then, Bharat found joy in learning about different cultures, supporting animal rights, doing charity work, and meeting friends in other groups.

Bharat's parents were Hindu, but they never pressured religion on him. In fact, the first religion Bharat studied was in 7th grade, and it was Christianity. Jehovah's Witnesses came to his house, but what got him interested in the first place was a TLC show called "Miracles and Other Wonders," thus opening him up to the Jehovah's Witnesses. In 8th grade, however, Bharat studied Hinduism and found more things appealing about it. He also studied other religions like Judaism, Islam, and others. In 10th grade, he heard about Bahai' Faith and found it appealing as it honors prophets from Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, and Buddhism. During the summer after 10th grade, Bharat became interested in Jainism and its impersonal concept of God...that is, God as an "essence" that permeates the universe. This vague "essence" was a transition point from theism to atheism. In 11th grade, Bharat started questioning why he believed in God and eventually rejected the concept of God.

Many years after college, he saw Neil Degrasse

Calendar

- 4/9 Clean up at AFS 10:00 a.m. (rain date 4/23)
- 4/10 AFS Board Meeting 11:00 a.m.
- 4/10 AFS General Meeting 1:00 p.m.
- 4/29 AFS Game Night
- 5/8 AFS Potluck 12:00 p.m.
- 5/8 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: www.facebook.com/AtlantaFreethought

Tyson and started seeing the beauty of science. Tyson's poetic way of speaking and use of comedy in science won Bharat over. Now Bharat finds anatomy easier to remember than when he was in college. As he has a respect for medicine, Bharat has just started a class at Kennesaw State to become an EKG technician. Outside of his career goals, Bharat continues to engage in multi-cultural awareness. He is also a marathon-runner and studies martial arts, namely Muay Thai Kickboxing and Brazilian Jiu Jitsu. Bharat also is a staunch advocate of animal rights and various vegan groups.

Yard Day at AF Hall
4/9 10:00 or so (Rain date 4/23)
Lunch provided

Just as entertaining shows such as "Miracles and other Wonders" brought him to religion, Bharat feels that approaches such as done by Neil Degrasse Tyson are needed to bring people to science. Many science museums do a good job of that, but Bharat wants to see more... he wants to see science become a social phenomenon just like religion with stories (albeit true stories like the origin of the universe and evolution of life on Earth as opposed to myths), charities (and they already exist with medicine, environmental conservation, and other scientific causes), fun events, and even marriage ceremonies. A science congregation can appeal to atheists without alienating religious people.

For the latest in upcoming AFS events, join our Meetup group!
meetup.com/Atlanta-Freethought-Society

Programs and Speakers

All programs are on the second Sunday of each month at AF Hall, 4775 N. Church Lane SE, Atlanta, GA, 30339 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 10: Bharat Bhatia

May 8: TBA

June 12: Barry Lynn of Americans United for Separation of Church and State

We are always interested in finding new speakers. If you have an idea for a speaker, let a board member know. AFS pays an honorarium.

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. The AFS Facebook page is at facebook.com/AtlantaFreethought. For calendar information on AFS activities, please join the [Meetup group](#). The AFS website is www.atlantafreethought.org. To keep up to date on the Atlanta Freethought Society calendar of upcoming events, please join our Meetup group: meetup.com/Atlanta-Freethought-Society.

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.

Views, opinions, positions or strategies expressed by authors are theirs alone and do not necessarily reflect the views, opinions, positions or strategies of the Atlanta Freethought Society or any member thereof. The editors of *Atlanta Freethought News* reserve the right to edit or alter in any manner it sees fit any articles deemed to be obscene, offensive, defamatory, threatening, in violation of trademark, copyright or other laws, or is otherwise unacceptable; and also to correct grammar and to conserve space.



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Atlanta Freethought News

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“Did Jesus Exist?”

Dr. Richard Carrier Debates Dr. Craig Evans at KSU

Wednesday, April 13 - 7:00 p.m.

On April 13, 2016 Ratio Christi at Kennesaw State University and Atheists, Humanists, and Agnostics at KSU will co-host a public moderated debate between Dr. Richard Carrier and Dr. Craig Evans on the topic “Did Jesus Exist?” As part of the debate there will be an open mic Q and A with the audience. This event is free and open to the public.

Location: Social Sciences Auditorium 1021

Time: 7:00 pm

Parking: West Parking Deck.

Following the debate, there will be books sales and signing in the Social Sciences Atrium with refreshments available.

About speakers:

Dr. Richard Carrier is a world-renowned secular author and speaker. He is the author of books such as *On the Historicity of Jesus, Proving History, Sense and Goodness without God, Not the Impossible Faith, and Why I Am Not a Christian, Hitler Homer Bible Christ*, and a contributor to *The Empty Tomb, The Christian Delusion, The End of Christianity, and Christianity Is Not Great*. Dr. Carrier earned a PhD at Columbia University in ancient history. He specializes in the intellectual history of Greece and Rome, particularly ancient philosophy, religion, and science, with emphasis on the origins of Christianity and the use and progress of science under the Roman Empire. He is currently working on several upcoming projects, but also teaching affordable online courses in secular philosophy, history, and methodology at Partners for Secular Activism, and blogging and speaking about history, philosophy, feminism, and other moral causes. His website is www.richardcarrier.info.



Dr. Craig Evans is a New Testament scholar and an internationally distinguished authority and lecturer on the historical Jesus. He is the John Bisagno Distinguished Professor of Christian Origins at Houston Baptist University in Houston, Texas. Dr. Evans received his M.Div. from Western Baptist Seminary in Portland, Oregon, and his M.A. and Ph.D. in Biblical Studies from Claremont Graduate University in southern California. He has also been awarded the D.Habil. by the Karoli Gaspard Reformed University in Budapest. Dr. Evans is author or editor of over 70 books and over 600 scholarly studies. He regularly lectures and gives talks at popular conferences and retreats on the historical Jesus, Archaeology, the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Bible. Dr. Evans is a member of the Institute for Biblical Research, the Society of Biblical Literature, and the prestigious Society of New Testament Studies. He has served as the editor-in-chief of the *Bulletin for Biblical Research*, and has served on several editorial boards of journals and scholarly monograph series. He is a regular guest on many national media outlets, including NBC, The History Channel, The Discovery Channel, and BBC. His website is craigevans.com.

April 2016



Reader: Trump is not a Christian

Marietta Daily Journal, March 17, 2016

Liar, liar — pants on fire! I’m referring to Rev. Nelson Price’s column of March 13th (Only God Knows if Trump is a Christian.) Price has the temerity to write “The purpose of this column is not to say if a person should or should not support Trump for president.”

[He says this] after a discourse on being “born again” as simply “having a new nature.” (I never realized “being born again” was so flexible. Just think of all those prisoners claiming to find Jesus in jail. Hey guys, you were “born again” when you changed your nature and became a criminal.)

About Price’s claim that his column is neutral concerning support for Trump — he goes on to quote Trump’s reply to an inquiry about [asking for] forgiveness as follows: “I’m not sure I have ... I don’t think so ... I don’t bring God into that picture. I don’t.”

Don’t try to tell me that is going to endear evangelicals to Trump. Another example for keeping religion separated from government.

Jack McKinney
Kennesaw

Correction: The headline for a Letter to the Editor from Jack McKinney that ran on March 17 did not reflect the content of the letter, which was to refute Nelson Price’s claim of neutrality in regard to supporting Donald Trump.

Pat Buchanan Should Attack the Religion, Not the Believers

Marietta Daily Journal, unknown date

It would not be at all difficult to take many verses from the “holy” scripture of a religion, plus the actions of many followers of that religion, as a basis for attacking or opposing the religion. Context of the verses would matter, as would details of how the words are interpreted, sometimes violently, by some of the followers.

But not all Christians accept the verses or the interpretations offered, so it’s best to oppose Christianity, not Christians.

The same goes for Islam and Muslims, Pat Buchanan (“Is ISIS Faithful to Islam?,” *Marietta Daily Journal*, 31 March 2016).

Ed Buckner
Smyrna

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Sibling Rivalry: Religious Freedom Fights Put Economic And Religious Conservatives At Odds

by Sarah E. Jones in Wall of Separation

www.au.org/blogs/wall-of-separation/sibling-rivalry-religious-freedom-fights-put-economic-and-religious

It's no secret that Donald Trump's candidacy has created a conundrum for the Republican Party. In primary after primary, America's most famous businessman peels the party's bloc away from establishment candidates like Ohio Gov. John Kasich (R).

Meanwhile, state legislatures in Georgia and North Carolina just propelled discriminatory bills to the desks of their respective governors – much to the dismay of business communities in both states.

Georgia's business community, dominated by giants like Apple, Salesforce, Home Depot and some film and TV productions, successfully urged Gov. Nathan Deal (R) to veto H.B. 757. If passed, this bill could have allowed individuals, businesses and publicly-funded social services groups to refuse to adhere to anti-discrimination laws that conflict with their religious views.

Supporters never branded North Carolina's bill, H.B. 2, a "religious freedom" measure. Instead, they intended it to nullify local anti-discrimination ordinances designed to protect LGBT people; it also forces transgender public school students to use bathroom and locker facilities that don't correspond to their real gender. Gov. Pat McCrory (R) signed it. And in North Carolina, as in Georgia, major businesses protested: The National Basketball Association has announced it may move next year's All-Star Game from Charlotte.

In a provocative piece published yesterday, *The Washington Post's* James Hohmann argued that the controversy reveals a growing split within the Republican Party. Social issues, he wrote, no longer hold the party together. Instead, they've created an "almost irreconcilable divide" between value voters and business interests.

"Each side remains influential," he wrote. "Evangelical leaders can mobilize large numbers of activists and voters in key states and congressional districts. Corporations, meanwhile, operating in a post-Citizens United world of unlimited political spending, have the ability to put enormous pressure on policymakers."

That pressure trumps the Religious Right's agenda with accelerating frequency.

Indiana's Gov. Mike Pence (R) listened to Salesforce, Angie's List and other corporations last year after his decision to sign a discriminatory "religious freedom" bill earned his state nationwide condemnation; he eventually signed a less discriminatory "fix" to the bill.

This hasn't deterred religious conservatives. "One of the largest cultural imperatives that helped lead to the rise of Christianity was the view of the sexually licentious nature of the Roman Empire," GOP operative Gregg Keller told Hohmann. "This is not a bug of evangelical Christianity; this is a feature. This is a hill on which evangelical Christians are going to be willing to die."

There has long been a martyr narrative built into Religious Right rhetoric. Its loyalists put great stock in a passage from I Corinthians that says the message of the cross is foolishness to the perishing and asserts that Christ has come to destroy the wisdom of the wise. The widening cultural gap between religious social conservatives and the rest of the country only confirms what the former already believe about the sinful character of the world. To individuals with a millenarian bent, it's also evidence that the world has truly entered the End Times.

The tension between these two camps is long-running. It's difficult to tell what it might mean for the Republican Party. The party may split, but conservatives in both camps may also decide to stick with it as their best chance for continued electoral success.

The Religious Right, however, isn't going anywhere: religious fundamentalists who believe culture war is a divine obligation are unlikely to surrender because the CEO of Salesforce thinks they're on the wrong side of history. Instead, observers should expect the movement to become increasingly active – and aggressive.

Godless Money for "Sale"

by Ed Buckner

Thanks to longtime member/leader of AFS Priscilla Vandecar, you can be the proud owner of some godless US money.

Until the 1950s, "In God We Trust" did not



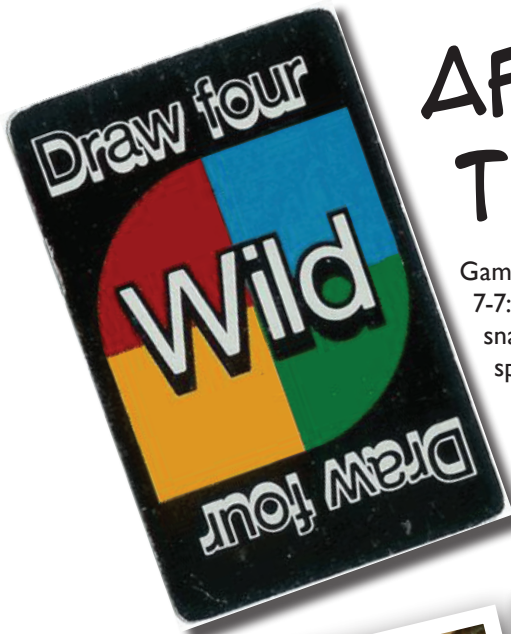
appear on the reverse of our paper money. In the fearful,

anti-communist, Joe McCarthy days, that changed. But these bills—a \$10, a \$20, and a \$100, all issued in 1950, lack the unAmerican national motto.

If you would like to own any or all of these, just let Ed Buckner, ebuckner@atheists.org, know what they're worth to you. Anything higher than the face value might get you a godless bill—highest offer, for each of the three, will get the bill at the May meeting or as soon after that as we can manage.



Net proceeds go to AFS.



AFS GAME NIGHT: TIME TO DRAW 4!

Game Night is officially a thing, we're having another game night on Friday, April 29 at 7-7:30ish (depending on traffic) to 11:00 pm or so. Bring board games, card games, snacks, drinks, money for pizza if we decide to order some, and even a boom box or speaker for music would be nice too!

Discussions and plans are being made on Meetup (possibly for an additional Saturday afternoon game event), so go ahead and join up for a free Meetup membership:

www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Freethought-Society/



Photos by
Keith Nalumungo &
Ed Buckner

There are only two professions on this planet that will consistently mislead you, and yet, you will still go back to them for advice and information. Weathermen and the priesthood.

~ Steve Fradkin



Other Meetings of Interest in Metro Atlanta

The Atlanta Science Tavern no longer meets at Manuel's Tavern as it has closed for renovations for the next few months. However several events are listed—check the meetup page. (www.meetup.com/AtlantaScienceTavern)

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

We Agnostics Atlanta meets on Tuesdays at 7:30 p.m. at the Galano Club, 585 Dutch Valley Rd NE, Atlanta, GA 30324. Clubhouse phone number: (404) 881-9188. This is like an Alcoholics Anonymous group.

Marietta Skeptic/Humanist Meetup has various get-togethers and discussion groups. Several upcoming events. (www.meetup.com/Marietta-Atheists-Meetup/)

The Peachtree City Humanists meet often for discussions at Starbucks, lunch, dinner at She's Bistro, and more. Several upcoming events each month. (www.meetup.com/Peachtree-City-Humanists-PTCH/)

The Southern Crescent Freethinkers sponsor Navigators, Owl & Ibis: A Confluence of Minds, and meet for dinner, etc. Several upcoming events each month. (www.meetup.com/Southern-Crescent-Freethinkers)

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. (www.fellowshipofreason.com)

The Georgia chapter of **Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF)** meets on the first Sunday of each month at AF Hall from 2:00 to 4:00. You can learn more about their topics at www.meetup.com/Freedom-From-Religion-Foundation-of-Georgia.

Recovery from Religion - Morrow Chapter meets on the second Saturday of each month at 1 p.m. at Barnes & Noble Booksellers Southlake, 1939 Mount Zion Road, Morrow, GA (This was not listed on Meetup, though). There is no proselytizing of any kind allowed at these meetings. For more information and resources, please visit www.recoveringfromreligion.org. (www.meetup.com/Recovering-From-Religion-Morrow-Chapter/)

There will be a **meetup for Atlanta Atheists** on Sunday, Apr. 10, at 6:00 p.m. at Thinking Man Tavern, 537 W. Howard Ave, in Decatur. (www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Atheists/)

GUST (Gwinnett: Understanding Secular Truths) has their monthly meeting on Monday, Apr. 11, 7:00 p.m. at UUCG, 12 Bethesda Church Road, Lawrenceville. The topic is "Problems of Ethics and Morality." (www.meetup.com/brighths-295/)

Recovery from Religion - Atlanta Northside Chapter will meet Thurs., Apr. 14, 7:00 p.m. at Harry's Market, 70 Powers Ferry Road, Marietta, GA. Visit www.recoveringfromreligion.org. (www.meetup.com/Recovering-from-religion-Atlanta-northside/)

Atlanta Astronomy Club will have their general meeting on April 16 3-5 pm at Emory U, Physics, Math & Science Center, 400 Dowman Dr., Atlanta, GA 30322. Lots more events are available so check out the website (www.atlantaastronomy.org)

Black Nonbelievers will have their general meeting 3:00 p.m. Sun. Apr. 17 at Atlanta Fulton Public Library - Central Branch - 3rd Floor Conference Room, 1 Margaret Mitchell Square, Atlanta, GA. Check their Meetup page for more info. (www.meetup.com/Black-Nonbelievers/)

Atlanta Atheists Parents Meetup will have a play date at Medlock Park, 874 Gaylemont Cir, Decatur near the North Decatur/Embry Hills area Apr. 17 from 11-2. If the weather is too cold or rainy it will be at Leapin Lizards, 185 Sams St, Decatur, GA 30030. (www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Atheist-Parents-Meetup)

Sunday Assembly Atlanta will have a general meeting on Sunday April 17 at 6 p.m. Normally SAA meets at First Existentialist Congregation (470 Candler Park Dr NE, Atlanta) but this month it will be held at The Phillip Rush Center Meeting Annex (328 Mell Ave NE, Atlanta). Please check out the meetup page for more information—there are a lot of upcoming

events and it's a warm and welcoming group. (www.meetup.com/Sunday-Assembly/)

Alpharetta Atheists and Humanists will have a meeting on Sat. Apr. 23, 2:15 p.m. at Sharon Forks Library Meeting Room, 2820 Old Atlanta Road, Cumming. The topic is "How to be good Atheist ambassadors and role models in society." (www.meetup.com/Alpharetta-Atheists-Humanists/)

Atlanta Atheists Parents Meetup will have a play date at East Cobb Park, 3322 Roswell Rd, Marietta, near Marietta and Sandy Springs, Apr. 24 at 11-2. If the weather is too cold or rainy it will be at Catch Air at Town Center Market, 2505 Chastain Meadows Parkway Northwest, Suite #103, Marietta, GA 30066. (www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Atheist-Parents-Meetup)

Another **meetup for Atlanta Atheists** is scheduled for Sun., Apr. 24 at 4:00 p.m. at Five Seasons Brewing, 5600 Roswell Rd, Sandy Springs. (www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Atheists)

Atlanta Skeptics - At press time, the only upcoming meetup for Atlanta Skeptics is Drinking Skeptically at 5 Seasons Brewing, Fri., May 6 at 7 pm. Check their meetup page for more info. (www.meetup.com/AtlantaSkeptics)

Atlanta Atheists has first Sunday meetups each month: the place varies. Check Meetup for info on the get-together. (www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Atheists/)



Become a Member!

(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!

Annual dues are:

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Subscription only \$30 _____ Any other things you'd like to tell us? _____

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Shipping and handling for Books \$ _____

Extra donation (Thank you!) \$ _____

Total: \$ _____

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AFS Art Display Program

4775 N. Church Lane SE Atlanta, GA 30339
www.atlantafreethought.org afs@atlantafreethought.org

Person or entity displaying art: _____

Address: _____

Phone(s): _____

Email: _____

Description of artwork (subject, color, dimensions, weight, frame, price, materials, other info — list on separate page if necessary):

Display dates: from _____ to _____

Owner if other than above: _____

Address: _____

Phone(s): _____

Email: _____

Is artwork for sale? Yes / No \$ _____ Upon sale
owner agrees to pay AFS a 33.3% fee.

Terms: All artwork displays will be submitted to Atlanta Freethought Society art committee for approval (afs@atlantafreethought.org). Installation & removal will be done by artist/owner overseen by AFS art committee. Damage to building will be repaired by artist/owner. The owner assumes all risk for artwork at all times. AFS will not be responsible for any damage or loss while artwork is in our possession.

Owner agrees to terms: _____

Signature/date _____

AFS Art Committee approval: _____

Signature/date _____

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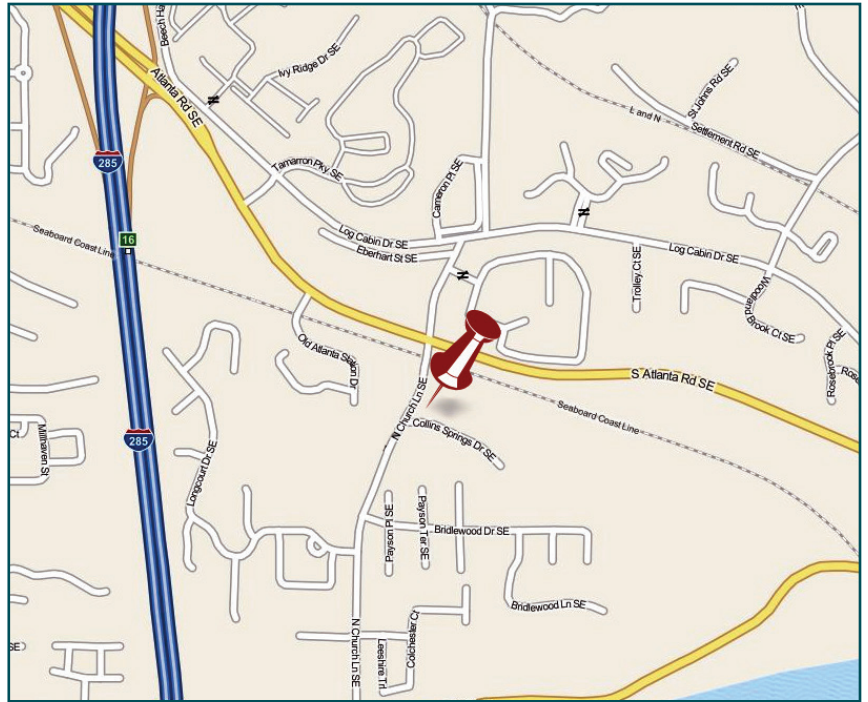
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Dare To Think
For Yourself!



**April 10 meeting
1:00 at AF Hall,
4775 N. Church Lane SE
Atlanta, GA 30339**

Bharat Bhatia



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