# **AFS Publication - Volume 24**

### **July AFS Meeting**

### **Roberta Cook - River Line Historic Area**

Roberta Cook will speak about the River Line Historic District at the AFS meeting on July 8th. Atlanta Freethought Hall is located within this historic area, on the site of a church burned to the ground in 1864 by Sherman's troops.

"The River Line Historic Area derives its name from Johnston's River Line, a long line of Civil War trenches named after Confederate General **Joseph Johnston** who authorized its construction. Johnston's River Line is particularly significant due to its unique fortifications called Shoupades, a worldwide exclusive to Cobb County designed by Brigadier General Francis Abbey Shoup." - Mableton Improvement Coalition

Susan Kendall, retired manager of the Vinings Library, will staff our River Line Historic Area table where maps, literature, and other items will be available for a donation.

Susan is the author of Arcadia, Images of America, Vinings. She will have a few books on hand for sale at \$22 and will gladly provide autographs for those interested.



### **Calendar**

July 8 AFS Board Meeting II:00 a.m. July 8 AFS General Meeting I:00 p.m.

Aug 12 Potluck 12:00 p.m.
Aug 12 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

When Noah's ark finally rested atop Mount Ararat, the kangaroos stepped off and hopped 7,726 miles straight to Australia. And without any opposable thumbs, they picked up every bone from their own dead as to not leave a trace of their migration. Isn't that remarkable?



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.

July 8: Roberta Cook, River Line Historic Area

Aug 12: Eli Sanders, former Christian Leader/Official

Sept 9: Ed and Michael Buckner, "Religion and Politics in the Trump Era"

Oct 14: TBD

### **AFS Email List**

The AFS Announcements email list provides subscribers with reminders and updates on AFS activities. Send an email to AFS-Announce-subscribe@yahoogroups.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@yahoogroups.com. The AFS Facebook page is at facebook.com/AtlantaFreethought. For calender 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 friend-ships, 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. Any who are like-minded are welcome to join us.

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

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.

### Atlanta Freethought News An AFS Publication

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### **Atlanta Freethought News**

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Membership in AFS is \$50/year per person, \$20 for low income.

Membership includes voting privileges and AFNews by email/USPS (indicate preferences).

Sustaining Membership is \$100.

Life Membership is \$1000.

Subscriptions only are \$30 for 12 issues.

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### Fallacy of the Month Strawman

By Dennis Martin, PhD (AFS Secretary)

This is the sixth in a monthly series discussing the kinds of faulty reasoning that you are likely to run across in everyday discussions and debates. Atlanta Freethought Society's mission includes teaching how to avoid faulty reasoning so that your thoughts are free from mistaken reasoning and unsupported authoritative claims.



The **Strawman** fallacy is when a statement, standpoint, or theory is mischaracterized, usually on purpose, in order to more easily attack or refute it. Entire books, entire theories, entire careers have been based on the strawman fallacy. The fallacy gets its name from the figurative metaphor that it is easier to knock over a human figure made of straw than a real human.

The Strawman fallacy has several named

subtypes – **Distortion, Oversimplification, and Exaggeration** – being self-explanatory. **Extension** is when the original claim is extended to things it wasn't originally meant to cover. **Slippery Slope** is when it is claimed that adopting position A is purported to lead to B and then to C; C is then characterized so negatively that step A should not be taken. This can be seen as a Strawman if it is not known that A will lead to C, and it is done on purpose to attack A. **Attacking Illustrations** is when a person only focuses on the examples given to illustrate the original position, not focusing on the reasons given for the position. **Weakest Reasons** is similar, when one focuses only on the weakest reasons for the original position, not all of the reasons or the strongest reasons given.

**Quoting out of context** is another way in which the Strawman occurs. The meaning of a statement can be changed simply by pulling the statement out of its original context and placing it in another. Often this is done to make the original statement sound silly. Finally, **Stereotyping** (placing individuals in mischaracterized groups) can also be seen as a form of Strawman, if the characterization is used for an attack.

Caveat: The Principle of Charity in argumentation is to give your interlocutor the benefit of the doubt. Give them a chance to correct their fallacy. In the case of the Strawman fallacy, it is not fallacious if the criticizer simply doesn't understand the original statement or theory. But if not corrected when given the chance, or if the mischaracterization is done on purpose, then it is a Strawman fallacy.

### **How to Spot**

As with many fallacies, the Strawman fallacy is easiest to spot when it is being used against your own position. As a freethinker, when I am reading, I pay particular attention to the way freethought, secularists, science, evolution, atheists, etc. are characterized. It is easy to spot strawman characterizations, because they are mischaracterizations of my thinking. It is much more difficult to spot strawman attacks of views that you might disagree with or know nothing about.

Some terms frequently accompany strawman attacks which are trying to minimize the original, such as 'only' or 'merely'. Any time an author is characterizing their opponent's point-of-view, you need to be suspicious and seek other, outside characterizations of that same point-of-view. That might tell you if the author is pulling a strawman.

### American Atheists' Statement on the Retirement of Justice Anthony Kennedy

atheists.org

On June 27, 2018, in a letter to the President, United States Supreme Court Associate Justice Anthony Kennedy announced his retirement, effective July 31, 2018. In response, American Atheists' legal and policy director Alison Gill released the following statement:

"With the retirement of Justice Kennedy, President Trump has the opportunity to nominate someone who could maintain the Court's balance and garner broad, bipartisan support. Unfortunately, the President has shown that he is more interested in packing the courts from top to bottom with ideologues and extremists than he is in ensuring equal protection under the law for all Americans.

"The 'short list' of 25 candidates for the Supreme Court the President has released have been hand-picked by organizations that would gut civil rights protections, severely limit access to reproductive healthcare, and funnel billions

of our tax dollars into religious education, all in the name of their distorted conception of 'religious freedom.'

"The Senate must exercise its constitutional duty to fully examine the record of any nominee to



the Court and not simply serve as a rubber stamp for a President whose judicial nominees have shown a total lack of respect for precedent and outright hostility to the shared values of the American people. The American people deserve a Justice who will jealously guard true religious freedom for all.

"Considering the 'rule' invoked by Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell after the death of Justice Scalia, the Senate should allow the American people to first weigh in on the direction of our nation during this year's upcoming midterm elections before moving forward with any nomination. As Leader McConnell said, 'The American people are perfectly capable of having their say on this issue, so let's give them a voice. Let's let the American people decide.' We agree. The American people shouldn't be denied a voice."

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### Members Of Congress Showed Up To Denounce The Supreme Court's Muslim Ban Ruling and Call for a Legislative Fix

### By Emily Midyette/Wall of Separation Blog

www.au.org



On the steps of the U.S. Supreme Court June 26, 2018, Americans United, allies and activists gathered to hear community leaders and government officials speak in opposition to the Court's ruling that allowed President Donald Trump's Muslim ban to remain in effect indefinitely.

In a 5-4 decision, the Supreme Court upheld President Trump's Muslim ban, which bars immigration from several Muslim-majority counties. Any reasonable observer of Trump's campaign and presidency would conclude that

the ban was inspired by anti-Muslim animus—with Trump repeatedly declaring Muslims unworthy of basic dignity. But the Court ignored Trump's anti-Muslim statements. They allowed the government to single out one religion for discrimination, and brushed aside the fundamental American principle of religious freedom for all.

Seventeen members of Congress—four senators and 13 representatives—joined the rally outside the Court organized by the Justice for Muslims Collective to denounce the Supreme Court's ruling. These members of Congress spoke alongside many of our tireless allies and Americans United's own president and CEO, Rachel Laser. Fortunately, they promised

to continue fighting to protect Muslims and religious freedom in American.

"What has happened today is an absolute travesty to the core value of freedom of religion in the United States of America," U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley (D-Ore.) said at the rally.

Among the speakers were also Sen. Cory Booker (D-N.J.) and Rep. Joe Kennedy III (D-Mass.).



"We are not a country that bans people based on their faith, we are a country that embraces all," Booker said.

Kennedy, meanwhile, criticized the Supreme Court for not living up to the words engraved into the entrance of the building: "Equal Justice Under Law."

Throughout the rally, members of Congress condemned the ruling, and called for a legislative fix to the ban in Congress.

As Rep. Barbara Lee (D-Calif.) stated: "Congress has the power to overturn this hateful decision and pass a law to stop this cruelty." We agree with Lee, and we hope that Congress acts to end this ban.

Lee pointed to HR 4271, a bill introduced by U.S. Rep. Judy Chu (D-Calif.), which blocks the implementation of Trump's ban.

U.S. Rep. Don Beyer (D-Va.) appealed to his colleagues in the House and

Senate: "It is up to Congress to pass the Freedom of Religion Law, which would ban any law that would prevent other people from coming to this country because of their religious views."

Other members also pledged to fight back and called out the court for ruling in the favor of religious discrimination.

"To my Muslim brothers, friends and neighbors... we are going to fight this racist, discriminatory policy," U.S. Rep. Ruben Kihuen (D-Nev.) said.

U.S. Sen. Mazie Hirono (D-Hawaii), the only Buddhist serving in Congress, concurred. "This is not a nation of Christians only... We need religious diversity," she said.

Take U.S. Rep. **Debbie Dingell's** (D-Mich.) speech at the rally. She represents the 12th district of Michigan, which is home to the largest Muslim community in America. At the rally, she shared a heart-wrenching story.

"An 8-year old girl hugged me in school and started crying and she told me she feared that

someone would come in the middle of the night, knock on their door and tear her family away," she said. "I have now heard that story 30 times."

This is heartbreaking, and it's why we believe America is at its best when people of all religions feel welcome here. For people of all faiths and for non-believers — religious freedom means that the law treats everyone equally regard-

less of faith. Americans United will continue to protect this ideal because the fight against the Muslim ban is not over.

As U.S. Rep. Darren Soto (D-Fla.) stated, "There is nothing more un-American than a country founded on religious dissonance now having enshrined in our Constitution discrimination against those based upon religion."

You can watch the video of the full rally on Americans United's Facebook page. To follow along and take action as we continue to fight the ban in legislatures and the courts, we encourage you to join us.

### Ruling against Truth: NIFLA v. Becerra

### By Abigail Ulman

### thehumanist.com

On Tuesday, June 26, the Supreme Court ruled against women, against evidence- and sciencebased healthcare, and against truth. In a highly contested 5-4 vote, the justices decided in favor of the National Institute of Family and Life Advocates (NIFLA). The court said that the California Reproductive Freedom, Accountability, Comprehensive Care, and Transparency Act (the "FACT" Act) violated the First Amendment, and that NIFLA's free speech and free exercise rights were infringed upon with this act. The FACT Act required all state-licensed clinics to provide information about a range of family planning services, including the telephone numbers of abortion providers, and to do so in thirteen languages, while requiring unlicensed clinics, including those sponsored by NIFLA, to provide the same abortion services information and declare that they were unlicensed and not true medical providers. Justice Clarence Thomas, writing on behalf of the majority, decided that the notices are a "content-based regulation of speech" and that requiring clinics that oppose abortion to give information about the procedure "alters the content" of these clinics' speech enough to violate the First Amendment.



The clinics supported by NIFLA are commonly called crisis pregnancy centers and are almost always run by "pro-life" religious groups. These centers routinely target low-income women, shaming, pressuring, and misleading them into carrying their fetuses to full term. CPCs pretend to offer the "full range" of family planning services and appear to be an attractive alternative to state-sponsored family planning services for women who are unexpectedly pregnant but are maybe unsure about getting an abortion. However, what crisis pregnancy centers don't tell the women they claim to serve is that they're often not licensed and not staffed by real, credentialed medical doctors. Furthermore, as part of their "religious mission" against abortion, these CPCs

often spread lies that abortion causes breast cancer or that women who have abortions will never be able to conceive again. They play with vulnerable women's emotions by showing them ultrasounds of their fetuses, asking if they want to hear the fetus's heartbeat, telling them the sex of the fetus when the women have not asked for it, and going so far as to flat-out lie to their clients about how far along they are in their pregnancies, falsely pushing the date back so that when women go back to these CPCs or a true medical doctor for follow-up appointments, they're too far along to legally get an abortion. No wonder California enacted the FACT Act.

Ironically, the CPCs won their argument on free speech grounds. California argued that it could require medical centers to provide abortion information as a form of "professional speech," a category that allows states to require doctors and medi-



cal professionals to disclose other ethical and legal information. However, Justices Thomas and Kennedy disagreed. They thought the state was unfairly targeting these fake clinics "on the basis of their religious beliefs." But it seems to me as though the religious beliefs of CPC donors and staff interfere with the state's ability to safeguard public health.

To best protect public health, the state has a duty to make sure its constituents are as informed as possible. This includes providing information that may make certain religious adherents uncomfortable. But the state can do that because the First Amendment also states that "Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion." However, by ruling that CPCs can take religiously motivated actions and not disclose certain essential health facts because it would violate their freedom of expression according to their religious beliefs, it seems like the Supreme Court is giving Congress free rein to "respect the establishment of religion." In his concurring opinion, Kennedy wrote that the FACT Act "is a paradigmatic example of the serious threat presented when government seeks to impose its own message in the place of individual speech, thought, and expression." But by being allowed to operate and use their religious beliefs to restrict women's access to information, the government is instead letting NIFLA "impose its own message in the place of individual speech, thought, and expression."

Although this case was framed as a free speech case, it's also an Establishment Clause case, and therefore a humanist case. By letting so-called "medical professionals" use their religious beliefs to obstruct the advancement of public health, the Supreme Court has knocked down quite a few bricks of the now-shaky wall between church and state. Regardless of your feelings about abortion, we humanists have a responsibility to ensure that people's personal religious beliefs do not affect the proper functioning of the state. Therefore we must fight back against these CPCs and make sure religious advocacy doesn't prevent women from getting the information they need to make the best decisions possible for their bodies and their lives.

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### Other Meetings of Interest in Metro Atlanta

**The Atlanta Science Tavern** has several meetings planned. Please check meetup page for more information. (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 similar to Alcoholics Anonymous group.

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

The Peachtree City Humanists participate in social and educational activities such as dinners, lunches, coffees, outdoor recreation, discussion groups, and book clubs with topics that include science, psychology, philosophy. (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)

Recovery from Religion - Morrow Chapter meets

monthly at Barnes & Noble Booksellers Southlake, 1939

Mount Zion Road, Morrow, GA. Join the Meetup group for more information. 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)

GUST (Gwinnett: Understanding Secular Truths) will have a summer party, July 4. This is in place of the regular meetings, which will start up again in August. (www.meetup.com/brights-295)

There will be a **meetup for Decatur Atheists** Sun, July 8, 6 pm, Thinking Man Tavern, 537 W. Howard Ave, in Decatur. (www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Atheists)

There will be a **third Sunday meetup for Atlanta Atheists** Sun, July 15, 2 pm, Monday Night Brewing, 670 Trabert Ave NW, Atlanta. (www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Atheists)

**Black Nonbelievers** will have their general meeting on Sun, July 15, 3 pm at The Bakery ATL, 825 Warner St, Atlanta. They will discuss two black atheist books: Candace Gorham's The Ebony Exodus Project and Dauv Evans' Emancipation of a Black Atheist. The authors are expected guests at the meeting.

As always, there will be refreshments provided and merchandise for sale. (www.meetup.com/Black-Nonbelievers)

Sunday Assembly Atlanta at presstime had not announced

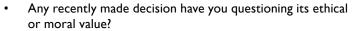
the topic for their upcoming assembly, but it will be held on Sun July 15, 5:30 pm at First Existentialist Congregation, 470 Candler Park Dr NE, Atlanta.

This is also a potluck supper. All are welcome. SAA is an extremely active community with a large number of upcoming events including rock chorus, secular support, mindfulness meditation, wonder club, urban wonder, book club, makers night out, volunteering, queer beyond belief group, public speaking series, trivia nights, etc. (www.meetup.com/Sunday-Assembly)

Atlanta Astronomy Club will meet on the third Friday at 7:30 pm each month at Fernbank Science Center, I56 Heaton Park Dr, Atlanta, GA 30307 unless otherwise noted. This month's meeting will be July 20. Check website for more info. (www.atlantaastronomy.org)

There will be a **meetup for Atlanta Atheists** Sun, July 22, 4 pm, 5 Seasons Brewing, 5600 Roswell Rd, Prado Shopping Center, Sandy Springs. (www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Atheists)

Ethical Humanists of Atlanta: Next meeting is Sun, July 29 12:30-2 pm at Manuel's Tavern, 603 N. Highland Ave, Atlanta. "Our shared task is to live decently, compassionately, and caringly in the world we inhabit." Come join the conversation. Ethical living is the philosophy of making decisions for daily life which take into account ethics and moral values, particularly with regard to consumerism, sustainability, environmentalism, wildlife and animal welfare.



 Maybe you're teetering or avoiding making a choice due to uncertainty.

There's no guarantee questions will be answered, nor an action plan fully evolved, but trust good conversation to occur. Come and let's learn from one another; building forward one step at a time. (www.meetup.com/Ethical-Humanists-of-Atlanta)

Atlanta Skeptics has "Drinking Skeptically" on the first Friday of each month. 5 Seasons Brewing, Prado Shopping Center, 5600 Roswell Rd, Sandy Springs. (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)

**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)

Freedom From Religion Foundation of Georgia does not have a meetup scheduled at press time. Check website or email for more information. (www.ffrfga.org - email is ffrfofga@gmail.com)



## Become a Member!

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

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

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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.) Paper newsletter: We encourage members to receive the newsletter by email. This avoids the printing

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

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### **AFS Art Display Program**

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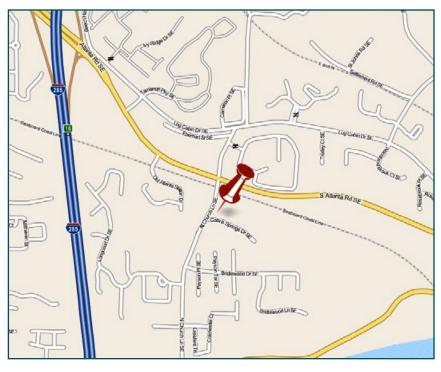
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Phone(s):Email:
Description of artwork (subject, color, dimensions, weight, frame, price, materials, other info — list on separate page if necessary):
Display dates: from to to
Address:
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ls artwork 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@atlantaf-reethought.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 posession.
Owner agrees to terms: Signature/date



July 8th meeting I:00 at AF Hall 4775 N. Church Lane SE Atlanta, GA 30339

### **Roberta Cook**



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Atlanta Freethought News
Atlanta Freethought Society
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