

July AFS Meeting

Kym LaRoux of The Satanic Temple's National Council "What is The Satanic Temple really?"

On Sunday, July 14, Atlanta Freethought Society is fortunate to have **Kym LaRoux** as our speaker.

The Satanic Temple is changing a lot of pre-conceived notions about Satanism, religion, and morality. In the process, they're making a lot of people question if they know who the good guys really are.



Kym LaRoux

There are as many questions about it as there are opinions. What is The Satanic Temple really?

Kym LaRoux is a musician, producer, filmmaker, technologist, and a member of The Satanic Temple's National Council.

As a founding member of the NC, LaRoux has assisted in creating the framework of the organization, including organizational structure and goals, chapter guidelines, leadership policies, and member requirements. He also currently serves as the National Council representative for the Atlanta, Indiana, New York, Santa Cruz, and West Florida Chapters.

In addition to his work with The Satanic Temple, LaRoux is the founder, frontman, songwriter, instrumentalist, and primary producer of the band Denied Grace. He is an active creator in several disciplines, including architecture, engineering, design, and the fabrication of everything from movie props to hand-mounted flamethrowers.

He thinks light switches are outdated, wishes most people who call themselves "religious" knew their source material as well as atheists do, and sleeps best with the sound of a 3D printer running in the background.

Calendar

Jul 14	AFS Board Meeting	11:00 a.m.
Jul 14	AFS General Meeting	1:00 p.m.
Aug 11	AFS Potluck	12:00 p.m.
Aug 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:
www.facebook.com/AtlantaFreethought



Atheist LA comedian Grant Lyon is coming to Atlanta to record his debut comedy album on July 13th 8:00 & 10:30 at the Laughing Skull, 878 Peachtree St, Atlanta. He's been on Comedy Central, stars in the Amazon Prime movie Killer Kate and won the Laughing Skull Comedy Festival in 2014, beating out comedians from all over the country. His comedy is a delightful mix of smart and silly.

Members of Atlanta Freethought can use the promo code "GrantAlbum" to get **ticket discounts**. He'd love to see allies there!



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.

Aug 11: Ed Buckner - A Quiz, with Prizes (you know what Ed likes, in case you want to study up)

Sept 8: Beth Remmes - "The Great Turning"

Oct 13: Open

Nov 10: Open

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. 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.

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Atlanta Freethought News

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\$20 for low income.

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

Sustaining Membership is \$100.

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afs@atlantafreethought.org.

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Dear editor,

My arguments regarding what **Jack Egger** has proposed (AFNews, June 2019) are unchanged from what I've previously expressed. Turning the American Humanist Association (or AFS, etc.) into a "religious" organization for tax or other purposes would do far more harm than good—and AHA is on record as agreeing. (AHA went to considerable trouble and expense some years back to change their tax status so they would no longer be given "religious" status under IRS rules.)

Here's why I disagree with Jack:

A. in re IRS 501(c)(3):

1. the ordinary American thinks "religion" is some variation on believing in/worshipping/accepting a divine power;
2. we don't;
3. said average American will conclude that we are liars or hypocrites if we seek/get a tax exemption as "religious" (AHA and AFS are 501(c)(3) educational organizations.

B. in re property tax: every organization, including ours, that makes use of fire and police services, paved streets and roads, etc., should pay the taxes necessary to provide such services.

As always, I oppose letting churches/synagogues/mosques, etc., have an exemption, either.

Of course Jack Egger is under no obligation to agree with me or AHA.

Regards,

Ed B.

ED BUCKNER cell 678-662-3857

Author (with Michael E. Buckner) of *In Freedom We Trust: An Atheist Guide to Religious Liberty* (Prometheus Books, 2012)

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Opt-outs have no right to put others at risk

By ED BUCKNER

Galveston County *The Daily News* Jun 19, 2019

www.galvnews.com

Editor **Michael A. Smith** is right ("Vaccine opt-out law a disservice to Texas children," *The Daily News*, June 18), but I can almost hear some readers bemoaning the loss of religious liberty that requiring everyone to vaccinate their children entails.

Atheist though I am, I strongly support religious liberty for all. But all our liberties have some limits: if your religion teaches you that killing adherents of other religions is required, you can believe that — but not act on your belief.

Similarly, you can believe that the risk to your child from vaccination is real even if it isn't. But you cannot act on your belief when it puts many others at risk.

Ed Buckner

Atlanta, Georgia

FFRF ends coach-led prayer, chaplaincy program in Georgia high school

ffrf.org

A Cedartown High School coach and an official team chaplain will cease leading prayers with the football team following a letter of complaint from the Freedom From Religion Foundation.

In March, Cedartown High School football coach **Doyle Kelley** delivered an alarming sermon at the Georgia Statehouse where he discussed how people who do not adhere to his particular brand of religion would be tortured in hell for eternity. Given that Kelley abused his position as “chaplain of the day” to promote his personal religion, FFRF submitted an open records request to find out if he was similarly abusing his position at Cedartown High School. The records unsurprisingly confirmed FFRF’s concerns, indicating that Cedartown High School has an official team chaplain, the **Rev. Wayne Benefield**, who prays with the team.

It is well-settled law that public school employees may not pray with their students, as it constitutes a government endorsement of religion, FFRF reminded the district.

“We ask that the district take immediate action to end any official chaplaincy program at Cedartown High School and ensure that school-sponsored events do not include scheduled prayer,” FFRF Legal Fellow **Chris Line** wrote to district Superintendent **Laurie Atkins**. “We further request that all coaches be reminded that they may not promote religion while acting in their official capacity, nor enlist an outside adult to do the same.”

The district has taken action to inform the coach and the school principal that the chaplaincy program is to “cease immediately.” Additionally, Atkins has ensured that “district and school personnel have a clear understanding that no staff member, nor non-school-affiliated adult, is allowed to promote or endorse religion to students.”

FFRF applauds the district for thoroughly addressing this violation.

“FFRF is very pleased with the district’s prompt response to this issue,” comments FFRF Co-President **Annie Laurie Gaylor**. “We commend the district on its commitment to upholding the rights of conscience of its students and community members.”

The Supreme Court Has Accepted A Case That Could Undermine Church-State Separation And Public Schools

By Rob Boston / Wall of Separation Blog • www.au.org

On June 28, the U.S. Supreme Court announced that it will hear a case from Montana that could have potentially devastating consequences for separation of church and state.

The case, *Espinoza v. Montana Department of Revenue*, concerns a state **tuition tax credit program** that allows taxpayers to donate to organizations that grant “scholarships” for students attending private schools, the majority of which are religious in Montana. Donors would then receive full credit on their tax bills. It’s a voucher-like plan that’s designed to funnel public money to private schools.

Montana’s Supreme Court struck the program down late in 2018, holding that it violated Article X, Section 6 of the Montana Constitution. That provision bars “any direct or indirect appropriation or payment from any public fund or monies ... for any sectarian purpose or to aid any ... school ... controlled in whole or in part by any church, sect, or denomination.”

Americans United had filed a legal brief in the case opposing the tax credit scheme.

In a **press statement** about the Montana high court ruling, AU President and CEO **Rachel Laser** said, “Montana taxpayers should never be forced to fund

religious education – that’s a fundamental violation of religious freedom. The Montana Supreme Court’s decision protects both church-state separation and public education. It’s a double win.”

The fight over vouchers is playing out in state courts these days because the U.S. Supreme Court **ruled in 2002** that states may establish voucher plans under certain conditions, asserting that such plans don’t violate the U.S. Constitution’s First Amendment. But many state constitutions have church-state language that is much more explicit and flatly bars the diversion of tax money to religious schools. Americans United and its allies have used those provisions to invalidate voucher plans in several states.

An adverse ruling in the *Espinoza* case could undermine those provisions – or even wipe them out entirely. Inevitably, that would open the floodgates to lots more taxpayer money flowing to religious schools. That’s bound to place funding for our public schools in jeopardy.

In short, the fate of public education and church-state separation may hang in the balance in this case. Americans United is going to do all it can to protect both.



By Disparaging LGBTQ Pride Month, West Virginia State Senator Makes The Case For It

By Zachary Freiman / Wall of Separation Blog • www.au.org

Pride Month continued to be anything but for some public officials who would use their religious views to undermine LGBTQ rights.

The latest example of an elected official using his or her platform to spew hateful remarks about LGBTQ constituents comes from West Virginia. **State Sen. Michael Azinger** (R-Wood County) wrote an op-ed in the *Parkersburg News and Sentinel* entitled, “**The shame of LGBTQ Pride**,” in response to the paper’s coverage of a gay pride picnic. It’s not the most subtle piece.



Azinger begins his column with a quote from **D. James Kennedy** assailing tolerance as the “last virtue of a depraved society.” Yes, really – a call for less tolerance.

Kennedy, a now-deceased televangelist who helped to found Religious Right groups including the Alliance Defending Freedom, propagated the myth of the Founding Fathers creating America as a “Christian nation.” Additionally, Kennedy called for

the “conversion of homosexuals ... through the power of Jesus Christ” in his book, *What’s Wrong with Same-Sex Marriage*.

So that’s how Azinger begins his column, and it only goes downhill from there. Not only does he expound on his belief that homosexuality is an inherent sin and that celebrating LGBTQ pride is evidence that “[s]exual deviancy is going mainstream,” but he picks up Kennedy’s mantle of America as an officially Christian nation that should be governed by the Bible.

“There was a time in America – not too long ago – that the Bible was that fountainhead; that teacher of first principles; that arbiter of right and wrong. That is quickly fading,” Azinger wrote.

“So, who defines marriage? Who defines sexuality?” he continued. “There was a day in our country when God defined both; when Americans believed monolithically that transcendent absolute truth came from the Bible. In fact, we were, in those days, without the chaos that we have in our culture today. But no more.”

Alas, Azinger describes a country that has never existed. The U.S. is a secular nation, governed by our Constitution, not religious doctrine. And even while a majority of Americans historically have been Christian, it’s far from accurate to describe their views as “monolithic” – even Christians have a plurality of beliefs about LGBTQ equality and many other social issues.

Our Constitution grants Azinger and everyone else the right to believe whatever they want about God, religion, LGBTQ people, marriage and sexuality. But it does not grant Azinger or anyone else the right to insist that others live by certain religious beliefs or to use religion as the basis for public policy – particularly in ways that harm others.

Sadly, the head of West Virginia’s Republican party, **Melody Potter**, did not criticize or even condemn Azinger’s words. Rather, she endorsed his position, maintaining that Azinger is “right on and is biblically based.”

With views like these coming from people in power in West Virginia, it’s no wonder move.org ranked it as **the worst state in the country to start an LGBTQ family**. But West Virginia isn’t the only state with public officials trying to undermine the spirit of Pride Month in recent weeks – I **recently wrote** about an Alabama county official who disparaged LGBTQ people, and AU’s **Rob Boston wrote about** two Tennessee officials with similar views.

These folks demonstrate that we still have work to do to achieve full equality for LGBTQ people. That’s why Americans United’s work to ensure religious freedom remains a shield that protects people and is not used as a sword to harm others and is more important than ever. In honor of Pride Month, **please consider supporting our work!**



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. Club-house phone number: (404) 881-9188. This is similar to 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 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)

There will be a **meetup for Decatur Atheists** Sun, July 14th, 6 pm, Thinking Man Tavern, 537 W. Howard Ave, in Decatur. (www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Atheists)

Atlanta Astronomy Club will meet on the third Friday at 7:30 pm each month at Fernbank Science Center, 156 Heaton Park Dr, Atlanta, GA 30307 unless otherwise noted. Check website for more info. (www.atlantaastronomy.org)

Black Nonbelievers will have a brunch on Sat, July 20 11am to 1pm at The Peachtree Cafe, 50 S. Clayton St, Lawrenceville for the "Mature" Aged. This has been on the agenda for a while, but will finally happen. BN will be bringing mature aged members together for a meet and greet. All members are welcome of course, but they'd like for elder members to come together and share their experiences, and connect. www.meetup.com/Black-Nonbelievers

Atlanta Atheists Third Sunday Meetup is Sun, July 21st, 2-4 pm, Peach & the Porkchop, 12040 Etris Rd D100, Roswell. (www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Atheists)

Sunday Assembly Atlanta's upcoming assembly will be a July Picnic and Singalong on Sun, July 21th, 5:30 pm in the pavillion at Candler Park across from First Existentialist Congregation, 470 Candler Park Dr NE, Atlanta.

Come join SAA in July for something different - a picnic and sing-a-long! They will be assembling starting at 5:30 pm in a pavilion in Candler Park. The park is across the street from the First Existentialist Congregation building where SAA usually meets. Parking spaces are available in the park or walk from the Edgewood/Candler Park Marta station. In addition to a dish to share—home made or from the store, bring musical instruments and song requests, because Sunday Assembly will definitely be playing and singing. Frisbees, balls, and other outdoorsy equipment will be available, too and there's a playground nearby for the kids!

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, volunteering, queer beyond belief group, public speaking series, etc. (www.meetup.com/Sunday-Assembly)

Ethical Humanists of Atlanta: Are you outraged by injustice but don't know what to do? New to activism or looking to get more connected? Want to support your community in solidarity and love?

All are invited to join Activists Recruiting, Organizing and Mentoring in Atlanta (AROMA) for our metro-Atlanta meet and greets on Thurs, July 25, 7:30-9pm at Little Five Points Community, 1083 Austin Ave NE, Atlanta. These are informal and semi-structured networking events to support the local activist community in ATL. Relationships are the most important resource we have to win the world we need. Participate in Activist Speed-Friending, hear more about what it really means to organize for justice, and meet some of the folks on the front lines already doing the work needed to transform society and transition into a better world!

See how to be the change, and participate in efforts for justice right away. Please BRING FOOD, drinks, or donations to share, and SPREAD THE WORD by inviting others! POWER TO THE PEOPLE! (www.meetup.com/Ethical-Humanists-of-Atlanta)

Meetup for Atlanta Atheists Sun, July 28th, 4-6 pm, Kegan's Irish Pub, 4687 S. Atlanta Rd SE #224, Smyrna. (www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Atheists)

GUST (Gwinnett: Understanding Secular Truths) will meet at 7-9 pm, Mon, August 12th at UUCG, 12 Bethesda Church Rd, Lawrenceville. At press time, the topic was not announced. (www.meetup.com/brights-295)

Atlanta Skeptics has "Drinking Skeptically" on the first Friday of each month at 7 pm, Marlow's Tavern, 5590 Prado Pl, Sandy Springs, though location is subject to change. (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)



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 \$ _____

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 by making a payment via **Paypal** to:
afs@atlantafreethought.org

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: _____

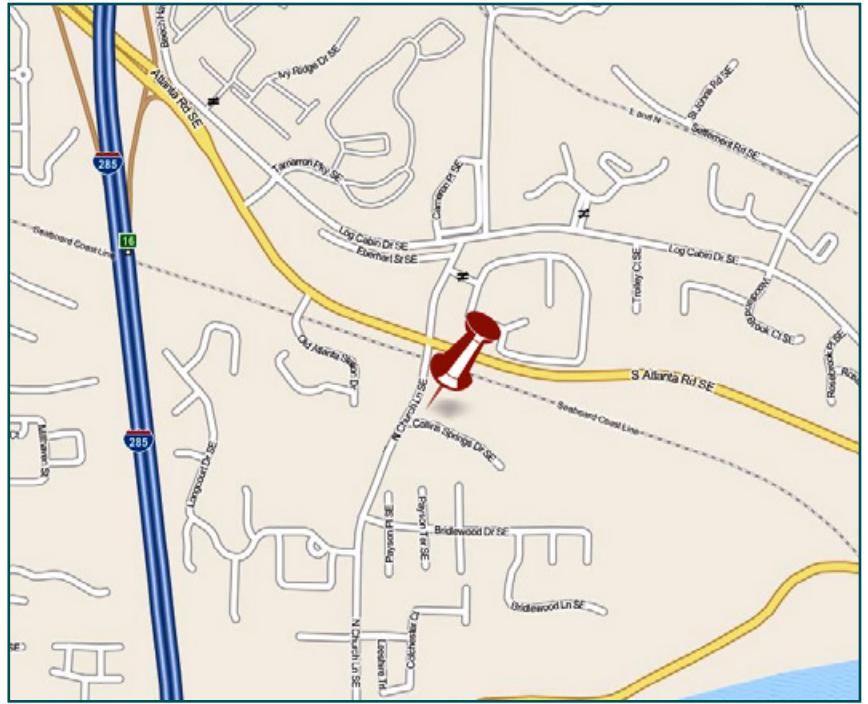
Signature/date _____

*Dare To Think
For Yourself!*



**July 14th meeting
1:00 at AF Hall
4775 N. Church Lane SE
Atlanta, GA 30339**

Kym LaRoux



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