

Annie Laurie Gaylor of Freedom From Religion Foundation

Our December speaker is **Annie Laurie Gaylor**, the co-president of the **Freedom From Religion Foundation**, which she co-founded in 1976 as a college student, with her mother **Anne Nicol Gaylor**. It was originally formed as a regional group.

Anne, FFRF's principal founder, was asked to take FFRF national in 1978.



Annie Laurie Gaylor

As a student, her request ended a 122-year tradition of religious invocations at graduation ceremonies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She has since been a plaintiff in or overseen many state/ church lawsuits.

Annie Laurie became editor of *Freethought*

Today (1985-2009), then she and her husband **Dan Barker** became co-presidents of FFRF in 2004.

FFRF has published three of her books, including *Woe to the Women: The Bible Tells Me So* (still in print); *Betrayal of Trust: Clergy Abuse of Children* (1988), the first nonfiction book about the topic, and the first anthology of women freethinkers, *Women Without Superstition: No Gods — No Masters* (still in print).

Her TV appearances include "Oprah," "Last Word with Phil Donahue," "O'Reilly Factor" and other Fox shows, "CBS Evening News" and "ABC World News Tonight." She and Dan have co-hosted the weekly **Freethought Radio** since 2006, and are co-hosts of **Freethought Matters**, a weekly TV show in its sixth season.

There will be time for some questions. Information below:

AFS December Meeting Dec. 11, 2022 1:00-2:30 PM (EST)

To join Zoom meeting go to this link:
us02web.zoom.us/j/89006560911

Calendar

Dec 25	Secular Celebration at Hall	5 pm
Jan 8	General Meeting on Zoom	1 pm
Feb 12	General Meeting on Zoom	1 pm

All events are via Zoom unless noted and are subject to change.



Atlanta Freethought Society, Black Nonbelievers, Ethical Humanists of Atlanta, and Sunday Assembly Atlanta are proud to bring an Atlanta

area secular celebration this year to the Atlanta Freethought Hall!

On the evening of December 25th, we'll have festive music, a fantastic potluck dinner, and a **HumanLight ceremony** to recognize the reason, compassion, humanity, and hope present in our broader secular community. We're inviting all our fellow groups to come, and please bring your friends and family!

Feel free to come as early as 4 pm to help set up. We will begin with the welcome at 5, and then food and fellowship. The ceremony and more music will follow, and we'll start packing up around 8 pm. Make sure to fill out the potluck sign-up form [here](#).

To make this dinner successful, we will need your help. No one is required to make or bring anything to come, but if you can, please do! Please be mindful of dietary restrictions as well, our vegetarian and vegan friends will thank you! Cups, plates, napkins, and utensils will be provided.

The venue at 4775 N. Church Lane SE, Atlanta 30339 has a small microwave and is wheelchair accessible via a ramp. If the weather is nice, we can also use the pavilion. There is a parking lot and also you can park along the side road.

We look forward to seeing you there!!!

Event will be indoors. Masks and vaccinations are strongly encouraged!!!



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 presented online due to global pandemic (see link on page 1). Programs start at 1:00 PM, but feel free to arrive at 12:30 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.

11 Dec	Annie Laurie Gaylor
8 Jan	Chuck Miller, "Religion and White Supremacy"
12 Feb	TBD
12 Mar	TBD
9 Apr	TBD
14 May	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 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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Steve Yothment

Intercultural Interview Reflection - Freethought

By Yunique A. Dunivan, College of Education, Grand Canyon University

This interview takes place between me and Ed Buckner of the Atlanta Freethought Society via email. The Atlanta Freethought Society is an organization that is member-run, and their focus is on protecting and creating

a safe place for freethinkers and their rights and reputations (Atlanta Freethought Society, n.d.). Freethinkers generally refer to atheists, agnostics, and humanists. “Freethought is a word from the 1800s and is generally used by atheists and or non-believers that want to be careful because the dominate culture had at times persecuted atheists, agnostics, etc.” (Buckner, 2022). The Atlanta Freethinking Society are big believers in separation of church and state as being the best means of liberty for all, and form-

ing opinions based on life and religion on the basis of reason and evidence (Atlanta Freethought Society, n.d.).

Ed Buckner of the Atlanta Freethinking Society identifies the most important or distinct practice in the freethought culture as remaining open-minded without intimidation from authorities and sacred books. Because the freethought society tends to be atheists and agnostics, believing in supernatural beings is common. Evidence, reason, and logic generally controls what the freethought community believes or does not believe. Although freethinkers share most of the same practices, things like politics, family relations, and other day-to-day aspects of life are not always shared and can vary from each person. Most freethinkers may be considered liberal, or leftist in their political views. Along with the different political and family views, gender roles can exist among freethinkers. Most freethinkers may be opposed with rigid and traditional roles, most if not all are feminists and are open to gay marriages, equal rights, and protected civil rights for all (Buckner, 2022). Along with political and gender roles, the social power, authority, and or social roles in hierarchy are expressed democratically in the freethinking society and community. In the freethinking society they can be described as a “justice-oriented society”, and this is because they generally hold honor or appreciation over what someone does and their actions rather than inherited or assigned status.

I learned a lot from this interview, because I did not previously know anything about freethinking societies, and it opened my eyes. Although I can describe myself as loosely Christian, after this interview with the helpful Mr. Buckner, I can say my perceptions may have changed if not the least been peaked by the freethinking community. I appreciated that the freethinking society holds the actions of a person higher than who that person is and

their background and is more of a justice-oriented society than an honor-oriented society (Moreau et al., 2014). This is because I think what a person does, and their actions can talk more about that person rather than the social impression that person wants the rest of the group to have of them. People in an honor-oriented society are expected to favor people within their own group over other people (Moreau et al., 2014).

The gender roles of the freethinking society also resonate with me on the fact that most of the society are opposed to traditional roles and can be seen as following more modern way of thinking. And because the freethinking community has more of a feminist outlook, they do not separate the roles of sexes as strongly as masculine roles that can be described as traditional roles (Moreau et al., 2014). With the answers of the interview, I can gather that the freethinking society hold a small power distance in the fact that if problems arise, they are dealt with in a more democratic way and with negotiations and discussions (Moreau et al., 2014). I found this important because not all cultures and people follow small power distance ways and can lead to more of a dictatorship than feeling more like an equal on a team that can hold discussions when upsets arise.

I think my culture as a Christian can sometimes come off as being persistent in the attempts and wants of changing the beliefs of other people instead of giving them the chance to think how they want to with their own beliefs. Although many people can find solace and peace within the Christian community, some may not be in the community for positive reasons and may even abuse the power or status they gain within their Christian community and society. I believe everyone can have a positive and negative perception of their own culture because they are in it themselves and often see both the good and not so good parts of that culture firsthand.

References

- Atlanta Freethought Society. (n.d.). *About AFS*. <https://atlantafreethought.org/about-afs/>
- Moreau, A., Campbell, E., & Greener, S. (2014). *Effective intercultural communication: A Christian perspective*. Baker Publishing. ISBN-13: 9781441245939

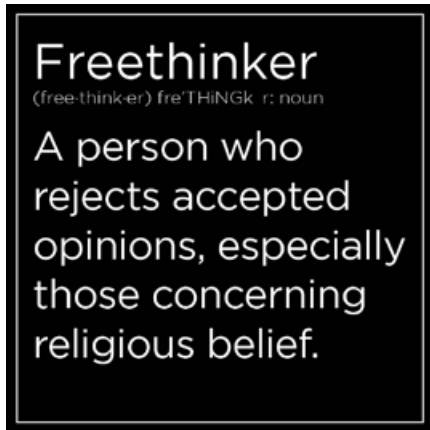


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Guest commentary: It's dangerous to blame a group for actions of one

By ED BUCKNER • Galveston County The Daily News • Nov 30, 2022

All too often we human beings, you and me alike, decide that a group someone belongs to should be credited or blamed for something an individual does. Is that reasonable or wise? Sometimes. But we need to be careful.

For example, should Christians get blamed or praised for the actions of **Thomas Clarkson**, or for those of **James Henry Hammond**? The two men's lives overlapped, and Hammond wrote at length to Clarkson, both were devout Christians, both knew their Bibles and both were passionate about the same subject: human slavery.

Clarkson, though religious, consciously chose a life of activism over the ministry, in England, campaigning against the slave trade at great length, and with peaceful help from many others such as Quakers like **William Southeby**, **John Hepburn**, **Ralph Sandiford**, and **Benjamin Lay**, and with violent help from, for example, **Toussaint Louverture** in Haiti. He succeeded in leading the effort to get the slave trade eliminated.

And, of course, the U.S. Civil War finally led to abolishing race-based slavery itself, though not racism, at least in the United States.

Hammond, who owned many square miles of South Carolina in his plantations and over 300 of his fellow human beings, sincerely believed God instituted race-based slavery and that it was a thoroughly moral, proper thing for everyone involved.

He wrote, "... American slavery is not only not a sin, but especially commanded by God through Moses, and approved by Christ through His Apostles." Hammond laid out his case exhaustively, with specific scriptural quotations.

And Hammond declared he could "indorse [sic] without reserve the ... sentiment of **Gov. McDuffie** that 'slavery is the cornerstone of our Republican edifice.'"

Hammond showed conclusively, in his writings to Clarkson, that the Bible, Old Testament and New, supported Hammond's side.

Modern Christians would of course much prefer to point to Clarkson as a credit to Christianity than to Hammond, based on a more humanistic, Sermon-on-the-Mount understanding of their religion.

Secular humanists like me, and like most modern Christians, strongly condemn slavery as immoral. Christianity is morally to blame for slavery only if one takes the Bible seriously.

Blaming a group for the actions of one of its members makes no sense if group membership is philosophically irrelevant — for example, blaming all citizens of Galveston County for the horrible things done by some Galvestonian.

But even if the group endorses ideas, that is not always proper grounds for blaming a group — after all, both Hammond and Clarkson followed Christian teachings in this matter, though Hammond had the Bible on his side.

And blaming Muslims or atheists or Buddhists or Baptists for actions individual Muslims or atheists or Buddhists or Baptists take should only be done with great care and with a real basis.

Another example, a person who in a way sums up the problems with group blaming all in one man: **The Rev. John Newton**, who commanded a slave ship but who also wrote "Amazing Grace."

Ed Buckner grew up in League City and now resides in Atlanta, Georgia.

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Americans Made It Clear They Want To See The Johnson Amendment Enforced. Take Note, IRS.

by Rob Boston • [AU.org](#) • Wall of Separation

The American people made one thing clear about the Johnson Amendment in 2022: They don't like it when partisan politics invades our houses of worship. A poll released Oct. 27 by the Pew Forum found that 77% oppose houses of worship intervening in partisan politics by endorsing or opposing candidates for public office. That number has actually increased in recent years.

But here's another thing that's clear: The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has not been very diligent in enforcing the federal law that bars partisan politicking by nonprofits.

That law is called the Johnson Amendment. It's named for former President **Lyndon B. Johnson**, who sponsored it when he was a U.S. senator in 1954. The provision covers all nonprofits that hold 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status, which includes houses of worship.

AU's Long Involvement In Protecting The Johnson Amendment

Americans United has been monitoring violations of the Johnson Amendment for decades. During the 1992 presidential election, AU reported a church in New York that ran full-page ads in newspapers telling people not to vote for **Bill Clinton**. The IRS stripped the church of its tax-exempt status. At the time, it was reported that this was the first time in history that ever happened. (Federal courts [later upheld the IRS's action](#).)

The IRS put increased emphasis on educating nonprofits about the Johnson Amendment in the 1990s and warned a few other churches about activities that crossed the line. But for various reasons, by the end of the 2000s the IRS's enforcement and educational activities around the Johnson Amendment dried up. Then **Donald Trump**, in his efforts to garner the support of Christian nationalist leaders, constantly attacked the Johnson Amendment during his presidency, sowing disinformation and confusion about the law.

It's time for that to change.



Recent Johnson Amendment Violations

A recent report by the Texas Tribune and ProPublica [was headlined](#), "Churches are breaking the law and endorsing in elections, experts say. The IRS looks the other way," which pretty much sums up the situation. The story quoted AU's **Andrew Seidel** about the dangers to the integrity of our elections and nonprofits if the law is not enforced: "If you pair the ability to wade into partisan politics with a total absence of financial oversight and transparency, you're essentially creating super PACs that are black holes."

In May, [Americans United wrote to the IRS](#) and urged officials there to look into the activities of Pastor **Greg Locke**, a Tennessee religious leader and Christian nationalist extremist best known for burning books in bonfires.

During a May 15 sermon, Locke told his congregation, "You cannot be a Christian and vote Democrat in this nation" and "If you vote Democrat, I don't even want you around this church. You can get out."

Violations of the Johnson Amendment don't come much clearer than that. If the IRS, which received a huge influx of new funding under the Inflation Reduction Act, is looking to reinvigorate its enforcement of the amendment, that's a good place to start.

The American people are waiting.

FFRF cheers abortion access victories

Freethought Today • [FFRF.org](#)

Abortion won big in the November elections, proving that abortion rights retain popular support. Abortion access received solid support in ballot measures in California,



Photo by [Gayatri Malhotra](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Montana, Michigan, Kentucky and Vermont.

- Michigan: Voters enshrined abortion in the state's Constitution by passing Proposal 3.
- California: Voters in the Golden State also enshrined abortion in the state's Constitution with Proposition 1.
- Vermont: Vermonters overwhelmingly supported Article 22, the Reproductive Liberty Amendment, which provides a constitutional protection to abortion.
- Kentucky: In a close race, voters in Kentucky rejected a ballot measure that would have denied any constitutional protections for abortion or abortion funding.
- Montana: Montanans voted down a deceptive abortion ban law that would have criminalized health care providers and limited their care options.

These election results demonstrate what public polls have shown: Abortion access receives overwhelming support across political lines. Free-thinkers lead the way with 87 percent supporting abortion in all or most cases, according to Pew Research. A YouGov analysis last spring found that atheists are the most likely to identify as pro-choice, at 91 percent.

While these measures are worth celebrating, there's much work to be done to protect abortion throughout the country. Most abortions are now banned in at least 13 states, with court battles taking place in these and many other states.

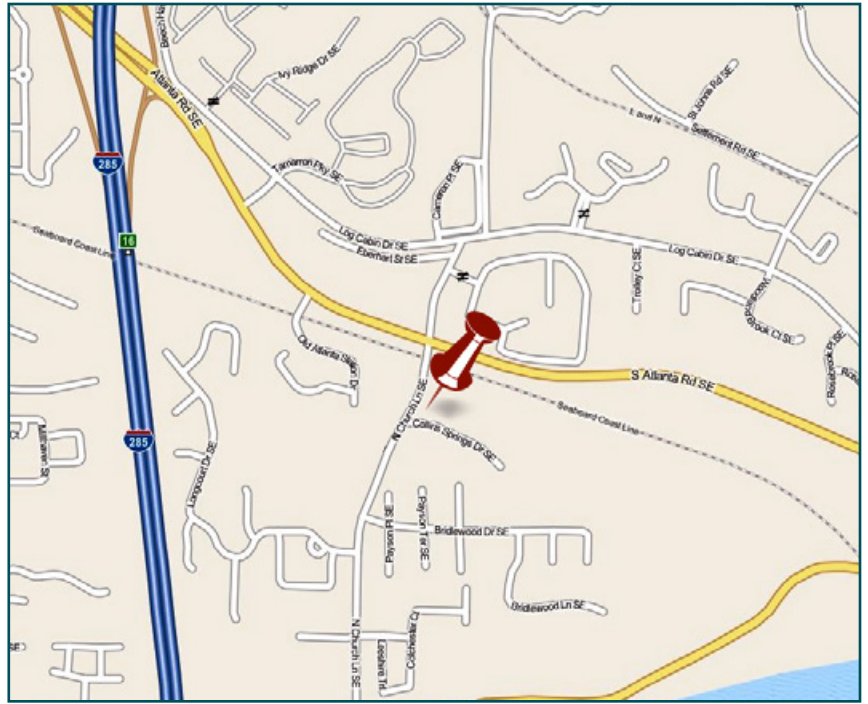
*Dare To Think
For Yourself!*



**AF Hall
4775 N. Church Lane SE
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**Annie Laurie
Gaylor**

**12/11/22 1:00 pm EST
(via Zoom)**



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