

Newsletter of the  
New Orleans Secular Humanist Association

**NOSHA NEWS**

Summer 2011

**New Orleans Secular Humanist Assoc.**

*(a 501c3 corporation)*

4314 Bancroft Drive  
New Orleans, LA 70122  
[www.nosha.info](http://www.nosha.info)

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**NATIONAL AFFILIATIONS**

Council for Secular Humanism  
American Humanist Association  
Atheist Alliance International  
American Atheists, Inc.

**GENERAL MEETING**

3rd Saturday of the month, 4pm  
Dominion Learning Center  
Audubon Park Zoo

**NOSHA TV**

New Orleans Cox Cable  
**CH 76** "Humanist Perspective"  
Fridays, 8:30am, 8:30pm  
Saturdays, Midnight & Sundays, Noon  
**CH 99** "Atheist Viewpoint"  
Tues. 10:30am; 10:30 pm

**New Orleans Secular Humanist Association  
Honors Kopplin for Repeal Efforts**

NEW ORLEANS SECULAR HUMANIST ASSOCIATION  
PRESENTS ITS HUMANIST AWARD  
TO

**Zack Kopplin**



Kopplin spoke to the audience about his experiences organizing the repeal, media exposure and what he plans to do next.

For his dedication to the separation of religion from government, to the separation of science from faith in education, and for his relentless efforts toward repeal of the Louisiana Science Education Act which opens the door for teaching alternative explanations to the scientific theory of evolution as well as matters related to global warming and human cloning.

*By unanimous vote of the Board of Directors*

**This 18th day of June 2011**

**NOSHA Receives Generous Donation!**

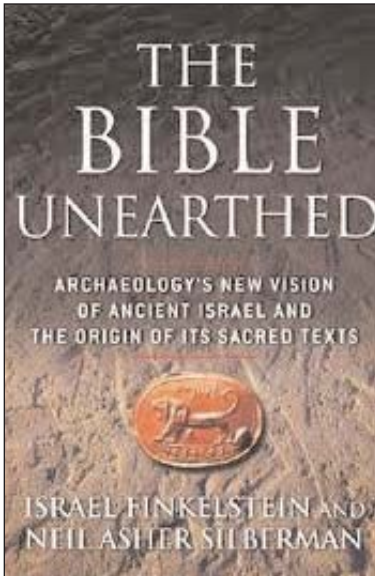
As with all non-profit organizations, NOSHA relies upon dues and donations for its operating expenses and costs of special events, out-of-town guest speakers and public awareness activities.

We are exceedingly pleased to have recently received a contribution of \$1,000 from a NOSHA member who chooses to remain anonymous.

We want to publicly thank our donor for his support of our mission and want to encourage others to consider making tax-deductible contributions to NOSHA in whatever amounts are comfortable for them.

## **Summer Book Review: *The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology's New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of Its Sacred Texts***

During most of the nineteenth century, secular scholars of the Hebrew Bible -- what Christians call the Old Testament -- believed its contents were almost entirely folklore, with very little factual history. This assumption had to change, however, as the discipline of archaeology began to mature near the end of that



century. Inscriptions and artifacts began to show that there was real history in the Bible, at least in outline. The ancient city of Jericho, for example, turned out to be a real place, and its walls really did fall down, even if not quite how and when the Bible claimed. Well into the twentieth century, believers in Biblical historicity tended to claim vindication by what archae-

ologists unearthed.

After about 1970, though, claims of archaeological support for the historicity of the Hebrew Bible became increasingly difficult to make. Accumulating data required revisions to dates and changes to understandings of ancient cultures, leading to a new synthesis that was much more of a challenge to the Bible. An apt summary of this new synthesis can be found in *The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology's New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of Its Sacred Texts*, written by **Israel Finkelstein** and **Neil Asher Silberman**, and published in 2001. While no interpretation of archaeological data is completely uncontroversial, these authors are qualified archaeologists and their synthesis has been well received by the archaeological mainstream, even if not universally accepted.

The main inference drawn by Finkelstein and Silberman is that much of the Hebrew Bible was heavily edited, adapted, and refocused during the seventh and sixth centuries BCE, long after the Exodus and the times of Joshua, David, or Solomon. The rewrites took place during two centuries marked by monotheistic reform, the destruction of Jerusalem, the exile of its elite to Babylon, and their later return to rebuild. The rebuilding of Jerusalem was not just physical, but was

also political and religious, and revamping sacred texts played an important role in establishing the new order. The new redaction was designed to promote worship of one God only, to establish Jerusalem as the only legitimate center of sacrifice, and to legitimate the territorial claims of the Davidic dynasty that was based there. Finkelstein and Silberman say this explains the many anachronisms, omissions, and exaggerations in Biblical lore.

The Exodus from Egypt could not have happened as described in scripture, Finkelstein and Silberman explain, because 600,000 and more people wandering in the Sinai for 40 years would leave clear archaeological remains, of which absolutely nothing can be found. Nor is there evidence of a military incursion of foreign Israelites into Canaan. Much more likely, the Children of Israel were one of many closely related Canaanite populations who only gradually distinguished themselves from their neighbors by territory and religious practice. While archaeology can confirm the existence of a Davidic dynasty beginning a little before 1000 BCE, it also indicates that the kingdom of Saul, David, and Solomon was nowhere near as large or opulent as the Bible describes, Jerusalem and Judah being rustic backwaters by the standards of those times.

Where the new archaeological synthesis does confirm Biblical content, it often supports details that Biblical literalists would rather not face. Most significantly, archaeology confirms the continued presence of polytheism among Israelites, as described extensively in the books of Kings and elsewhere. Figurines and other cult objects found throughout the kingdoms of Israel and Judah show that the general Semitic pantheon that Israelites share with Canaanites, Phoenicians, Assyrians, and others, was worshiped well into the sixth century BCE, the time of the final rewrite of Hebrew scripture. It is impossible to say when monotheism became one of the elements of the Israelite religious milieu, but it cannot have eradicated polytheism before the reconstruction of the Jerusalem Temple in 516 BCE, or even later.

Some readers will find *The Bible Unearthed* a bit too archaeological for their tastes. But anyone with more than a passing interest in what archaeology can tell us about the ancient Children of Israel will find it a worthy read.

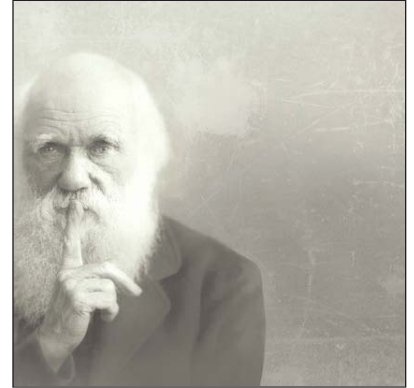
*Reviewed by Jim Dugan, NOSHA Board Member and Ph.d. candidate in anthropology at Tulane University.*

## UNO Hosts Darwin Day 2011

Professor **Mark Phillips** put together an exceptional program for the University of New Orleans celebration of Darwin Day in March.

**Trenton Holliday**, Tulane University, Department of Anthropology: *New Perspectives on the Origin of the Genus Homo*

**Janelle Schwartz**, Loyola University, Department of English: *"Something far more deeply interfused: Evolution as Illusion in Darwin and Shelley"*



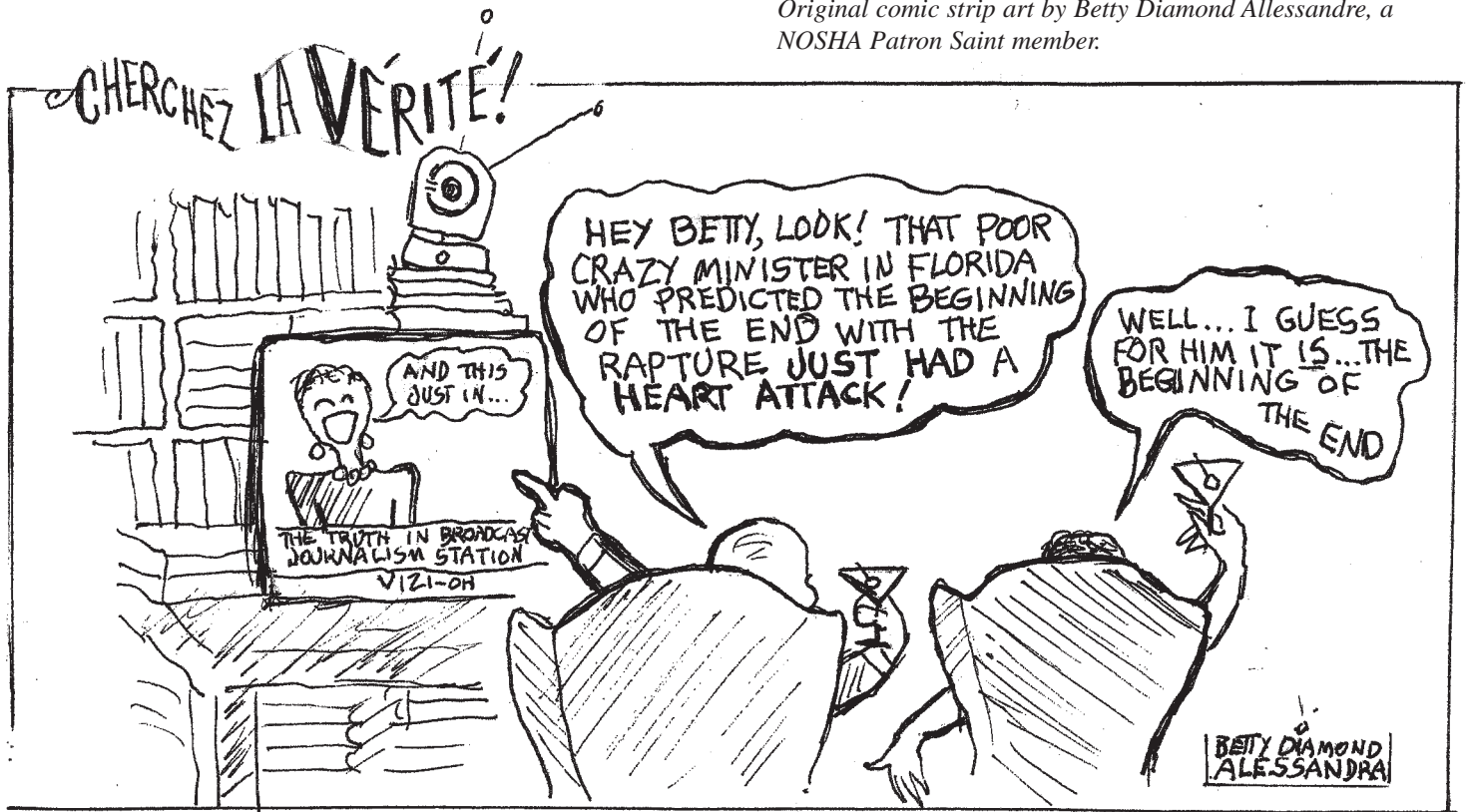
**Mark Phillips**, University of New Orleans, Department of Philosophy: *Homo Religiosus - or - Why Primates Talk to God*

**Victor Stenger**, University of Colorado, Department of Philosophy; Professor Emeritus in Physics, University of Hawaii, & Author of "God: The Failed Hypothesis" and "The New Atheism": *Taking a Stand for Science and Reason: Cosmic Creationism*

*Original comic strip art by Betty Diamond Alessandre, a NOSHA Patron Saint member.*



Above l to r: Victor Stenger, Mark Phillips, Janelle Schwartz and Trenton Holliday were the featured guests at a reception held at NOSHA president Harry Greenberger's lovely home (below).



## Baton Rouge Non-Believers Celebrate One Year Anniversary

By Douglas Parfait

One of Louisiana's newest and fastest growing atheist groups is now moving towards its second year of growth in Baton Rouge, appropriately named **Capital Area Atheists & Agnostics, Inc.**

Led by their president, **Melissa Streeter** and vice-president, **Adam Gartelman**, CAAA began their operation as a MeetUp group in May 2010. Not stopping there, they soon became a non-profit organization with the State of Louisiana in March of this year.

As stated on their Meet-Up webpage: "*Capital Area Atheists and Agnostics, Inc. is a non-profit corporation dedicated to providing a sense of community and a support network for atheists and agnostics and improving the public opinion of atheists and agnostics through education and community service. We promote reason over superstition and advocate for the absolute separation of church and state.*"

The group is fast approaching 100 members (myself and my wife, Yvette, included!) and they meet every other Wednesday evening at a restaurant in Baton Rouge for some serious discussion and idea exchanging. After which they move the meeting to a local college-style

watering hole for some serious fun!

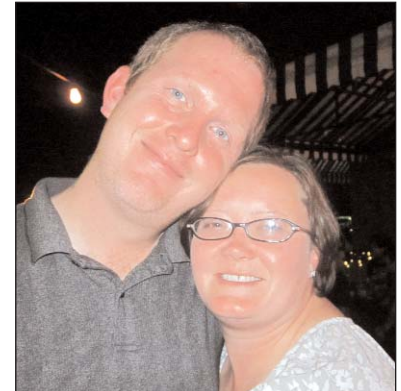
The diverse members bring their individual stories and experiences related to religious dogma which is salutary for all involved. Their determination to be recognized as good human beings (which they are) matched with their playfulness affords them some enviable camaraderie.

Unselfish as well, this group pulled together in an instant to assist those in need as demonstrated recently with their ongoing flood relief efforts.

Indeed, CAAA may have blown out only one candle to date, however you can count on this cake getting bigger every year for a very long time to come!

Cheers to CAAA!

To learn more about Capital Area Atheists & Agnostics, visit their website <http://capitalareatheists.org/News.html>



**Adam Gartelman and Melissa Streeter** head up CAAA  
(photo by Doug Parfait)

## BACKGAMMON ANYONE?



**The New Orleans Backgammon Club  
meets every Wednesday at 6:30pm.**

Friendly games and a weekly tournament  
(includes a consolation bracket)  
*\$7 entry fee*

**FLORA'S CAFE • In the Marigny**  
*at the corner of Royal St. and Franklin Ave.*  
Lots of on-street parking

**Questions? Call Will Hunn at 504.366.7498**

## Americans United Baton Rouge Chapter Gaining Momentum

On the heels of a "miracle" this legislative season, when a Senate committee voted 5-2 to reject the attempt to put a monument of the Ten Commandments on Capitol grounds, **Americans United for the Separation of Church and State-Louisiana** is re-energizing to address the needs of our citizens.

President **Dr. Thomas J. Hannie** said, "Everyone thought this bill was a done deal. I told AU that, but we wanted to at least give them something to deal with. This letter [sent by AU-LA to the committee members] and its apparent effect demonstrates just how powerful we can be."

### Americans United

#### NEXT MEETING:

Tuesday, August 2 at 7pm  
Baton Rouge Main Library  
7711 Goodwood Blvd.



*Meetings are free and open to the public*

## More Letters To The Editor by NOSHA Members

### Lawmakers ignoring history: Monday, June 13

Given Louisiana's fiscal difficulties, I would hope our legislators would work to solve existing problems rather than create new ones. But no, they've passed House Bill 277 to put a Ten Commandments monument at the Capitol. Tax dollars will now have to be spent defending this boondoggle from the predictable lawsuit.

There's nothing wrong with acknowledging the historical influence of the Ten Commandments in American culture. But the only discernible purpose for this monument is to promote the false notion that our legal system is based on the Bible, in spite of history, which shows the vast influence of secular humanism and the laws of ancient Greece and Rome.

If our legal system were based in the Bible, we'd have kings who were the executive, legislator and judge all in one, or we'd live in communes as did the earliest Christians, sharing all our possessions, allowing a local council of elders to dole them out as needed. A man would be allowed to have multiple wives, to marry his own niece, or his first cousin. Women would be second-class citizens, and slavery would still be a valid institution.

We need to acknowledge our full history, not just part of it.

**Jim Dugan**  
New Orleans

### Time to get tough on wage theft in community: Sunday, June 19

A day's pay for a day's work. This is one of the most basic ideas of justice, shared by many different faith traditions. And yet for too many construction, restaurant and domestic workers in our community, wage theft is a reality. That is why we, as community religious leaders, are standing united to call on our City Council to pass a meaningful wage theft ordinance for New Orleans.

In April, the judges, constable and clerk of First City Court, with the encouragement of City Council members, created a new process of monthly one-day hearings for workers to allege wage theft.

A process was established for translators where needed and fee waivers for workers who cannot afford court costs. This is a good first step, and we take heart from the words of the City Council Resolution passed in support of the new process on April 7: "pledging to continue to work with all parties to seek additional effective instruments to address wage theft in New Orleans." In addition, Councilman Arnie Fielkow said, "We look forward to continuing to address wage theft in the most effective manner."

The most effective manner to address the justice issue of wage theft is a city ordinance on wage theft -- such as recently passed by the Seattle City Council, making wage theft a crime. Don't we all agree that it is indeed a crime, to take someone's money away from them? If done by a thug on the

street, we recognize it as a crime. Why isn't it a crime when done by a business owner or manager or contractor?

A day's work for a day's pay. It is simple justice. Our country's economy, and our city's recovery, depend on the productivity of all our workers. It is hard to be productive when one cannot be sure one will be paid for one's work.

We call on all religious people and all concerned community members to join us on this important issue of justice in our community.

**Rev. Jim VanderWeele**, Chairman  
Interfaith Worker Justice Committee  
New Orleans

### Vote on Ten Commandments is a monumental embarrassment: Wednesday, June 15

I can't believe what is before our state Senate to vote upon soon: the illegal display of the fabled Ten Commandments on our Capitol grounds.

This is absolutely absurd, prohibited and just plain wrong! I sure do hope that our senators are the wiser ones here and elect to stop this madness before it gains the attention of the world that Louisiana thinks itself better than the Constitution of the United States of America. Not to mention the costly lawsuits that will soon follow! If our leaders decide to tell the world that an "imaginary man in the sky" is more important than the U.S. Constitution, we've got major problems. What would be next, throwing virgins into volcanoes?

We are already the laughing stock of the level-headed scientific and secular community with the passage of the Louisiana Science Education Act. Let's not take any more embarrassing steps backwards, please!

**Douglas Parfait**  
Slidell

## NOSHA CALENDAR

### NOSHA Monthly Meeting

**3rd Saturday** of the month

Audubon Zoo, Dominion Learning Center

#### Upcoming Dates:

July 16, August 20, September 17

### NOSHA Happy Hours

**1st Wednesday and 3rd Tuesday** of the month

### The Heretics' Brunch

Usually the **last Sunday** of the month.

#### Upcoming Dates:

July 31, August 28,

*(Locations vary and dates or times may change, so check the NOSHA website for current details.)*

## ARE YOU IN THIS NUMBER?

NOSHA would like to acknowledge our dues paying members for 2011 and those who've donated a little more.

Ricky Adams	Dale Alsandor	James Baram	Jason Berry
Cheri Babich	Betsy Bainbridge	Marty Bankson	John S Batson
Marcy & Kevin Bladsacker	Walter E. Block	Robert Bober	Donald & Dolores Boos
Howard Bostock	Helen Bostock	Joe Boudreaux	Martha Boudreaux
Matthew Breed	Del Brennan	Don Bruce	John Calvin
Jean Cassels	Gina Cedotal	Jessie Chism	Terry Christensen
Cathy Cohen	James Conrad	Chris Cook	Joe Cook
Phillip Crenshaw	Steve Darwin	Bob Dillemath	Jim Dugan
John & Judy Emery	Barbara & Clark Forrest	Warren Frught	Rod Gates
William Gautreaux	Florence Gillen	Langston Goldfinch	Connie R. Gordon
Harry Greenberger	Danny Gros	Gerald O Gussoni	Galen R. Hall
Eugene Hamori	Marshall Harris	Chad Hartman	Chastity Hartman
Sarah W. Holt	Craig S. Hood	Farrar Hudkins	Will Hunn
Paulette Hurdlik	Michael Idoyaga	Leandro Illin	Jonathan Irvin
Kishore Kamath	Bill Katzenmeyer	Bonnie Keller	Barbara Kelty
Kathleen Kilgen	Douglas King	Joyce Kisner	Joseph Kirchem
Randall & Judy Kolb	Bryce Landry	Bruce Lobitz	Patrick & Patricia Lestrade
Christine Losee	Chad Matise	Bob & Chris Merrell	Laura Midgett
Oliver & Mary Mithoff	David Morais	Patrick G Murphy	Julia O'Neal
Rusty Parker	Susan Plasko	Rita Premo	Percy Prestenbach
Darlene Reaves	Walter Ross	Timothy M. Ruppert	Glen Sandberg
Dane Sandquist	David L. Schultz	Swati Shah	William Sierichs
Wil Sinda	Dorothy Smith	Melissa Streeter	Amy Smith & Francisco Alecha
Doug H. Stewart	Tom Stine	Peter Stone	Lisa Suarez
Frank Tournier	Jim VanderWeele	Chris Villasana	Faris Vinson
Yan Wang	Jimmie C. Washburn	Lucy Wells Tierney	Alaine Townsend
Keith Welsh	Corky Willhite	John Williams	Barbara Workman
Jerry Zachary	Bob Zauner	David Zuber	

Annual dues are \$20.00 and cover a household. NOSHA relies on annual memberships to fund our monthly programs and advertising to promote secular humanism in the Greater New Orleans area.

### Martyrs (\$100-249)

Sheila Curry	Beth Dietch	Randall Hayes
Justin Hinckley	Paulette Hurdlik	Charlotte & Thomas Klasson
Mark Meunier	Raoult Ratard	Douglas & Yvette Parfait
Grant Smith	Marie Taylor	Frank Tournier
Charlotte Upadhyay		

### Patron Saints (\$250-499)

Betty & Manny Alessandra  
Michael Malec

### Archangel (\$500 +)

Georges Maillot  
Anonymous

**Thank you to all of our donors who make these activities possible!**

## The End of the World As We Know It!

As national and international news media reported, some Christian groups claimed that **Saturday, May 21, 2011** would be the “Rapture” when *true* Christians are taken into heaven, earthquakes would strike the entire planet and the dead would rise from their opened graves. This would then be followed by five months of “tribulation” with the end of the physical universe on October 21.

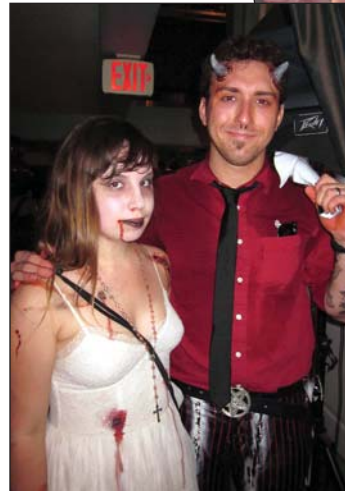
Needless to say, we decided to celebrate! NOSHA held a balloon release at the Moonwalk behind Jackson Square, where participants sent messages up to our “raptured” family, friends and neighbors, followed by a procession past Jackson Square to a “Left Behind Party” at **Napoleon’s Itch** on Bourbon Street.

Partiers enjoyed raffles, a costume contest, sales of indulgences and general camaraderie. All “Left Behinds,” including those risen from their graves on that day, were encouraged to do their best, saint, sinner or zombie and welcome in the new era.

(Hint: If you’re reading this, you didn’t make the cut.)



Billboards, like this one in downtown New Orleans were seen in several locations around the area.



Betty Alessandra won the best essay contest “How Will You Cope With Being Left Behind?” Bryce Landry won the best costume contest as a devil in tight leather pants.

*"Go to Heaven for the climate, Hell for the company." ~Mark Twain*

# Become a bonafide member of NOSHA!

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Name(s)*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Address*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Apt. #*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*City*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*State/Zip*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Phone*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Email*

*I request a mailed newsletter*

\$20 Annual dues (*Household*)

\$100 Martyr

\$250 Patron Saint

\$500 Archangel

\$\_\_\_\_\_ Other

Make checks payable to NOSHA and mail to:

**Connie R. Gordon, Treasurer**  
**2509 Giuffrias St., Apt. 603**  
**Metairie, LA 70001**

*Contributions in excess of  
basic dues are tax deductible.*

*You can also pay online via*

*[www.nosha.info](http://www.nosha.info) using PayPal.*



The New Orleans Secular Humanist Association (NOSHA) was formed to provide an opportunity for like-minded people to meet and exchange ideas and to promote awareness of secular humanist viewpoints in the community. We are committed to the application of reason and science to the understanding of the universe and the solving of human problems. We reject efforts to denigrate human intelligence, to explain the world in supernatural terms, and to look outside nature for salvation. We believe in enjoying life here and now and in cultivating moral excellence. We strive to make the public aware of the importance of the separation of church and state, to oppose the teaching of creationism and other religious doctrines in the public schools and to provide a voice of reason when superstition is presented in the media. We believe in the fullest realization of the best and noblest we are capable of as human beings.

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look for us online: [www.nosha.info](http://www.nosha.info)

