

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion ..."  
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## January meeting program

### Group Discussion

At our January meeting, we will kick off the new year with a group discussion on "What we want for SFA in 2010". We'd like to get everyone's ideas on what they would like to see SFA do this year. Some things to think about:

1. Types of speakers - authors, scientists, politicians, activists, ?
2. Local live speakers vs. more well known national figures on video?
3. More or less discussion. Types of discussion: day-to-day lifestyle, current events, scientific/evolutionary issues, national policy, ?
4. Activities: Marches, group picnics/dinners, other

5. Feedback on newsletter, website, communication
6. Other issues

We look forward to seeing you and hearing your ideas.

**Meeting at Schroeder's San Francisco on January 30<sup>th</sup> at 6:00pm, 240 Front St San Francisco, CA 94111**



## December meeting

### Winter Solstice Party

Thanks to everyone for a very fun and successful Winter solstice party. We had a great group of 43, so everyone got a seat. Very lively and chatty crowd, lots of our old regulars attended. The food was good, margaritas were tasty, service was bustling. We raffled off 10 atheist books to enthusiastic winners. Special thanks to Larry Kaufman



for handling invitations, RSVPs, collecting cash, raffle tickets, and Chevys logistics. A festive wrap up to a successful year at the San Francisco Atheists.

[Click here to see the photos](#)

## Walk for Life

### Come and show your support

With the passage of Prop 8, banning same sex marriage, the Gay Rights movement has become not only increasingly angry with the level of discrimination they face, but also increasingly aware of the role played by the Religious Right in determining government policy. Recent large anti-Prop 8 demonstrations have prominently demanded the separation of church and state. If we as Atheists want to develop even the beginnings of political strength, we must respond to this budding awareness.



Coast Walk for Life in on Saturday, January 23, 2010 in San Francisco. The kick-off rally with community speakers and performers begins at 10:00a.m. at Justin Herman Plaza's Music Concourse (toward the right as Market street ends), followed at 11:30 a.m. by a multi-issue counter-demonstration to the "Walk for Life" route along the Embarcadero waterfront.

**Please join us on Saturday, January 23, 2010 in the Concourse at 11:00 for the March.**

**Our banners will be visible.**

This year East Bay Atheists and San Francisco Atheists will join the counter march to the Religious Right's West

## Who we are

### Web site update

It is important as an Atheist to let others in our community know who we are. By doing this we present people with alternatives and might motivate them to rethink their beliefs.

Help let visitors to our web site know who we are. Send me your one or two paragraph testimonial on how you arrived at your Atheist conviction, along with a head-shot photo. We would like to post them on our web site under the [who we are](#) section.

Send them via email to: [info@sfatheists.com](mailto:info@sfatheists.com)



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## San Francisco Atheists

January 2010 Newsletter

### Atheists Obituary by Don Havis

#### Pioneer San Francisco atheist dies

Mr. Harold (Hal) Verb passed away on December 4, 2009. Mr. Verb came to meetings in the S.F. Atheists, able to walk those of you who he was somewhat atheist" in the San



Hal was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on April 14, 1931. Mr. Verb reported in his own autobiography that he became completely convinced that atheism was the conclusion that made sense to him in 1948 or '49 when he read about it in the so-called "Little Blue Books" published by Emanuel Haldeman-Julius; (E.H.J. was a well-known atheist and Socialist who published his inexpensive and popular little booklets from 1919 to 1955.) He ordered some of these books at that time, and then began collecting them in about 1950, which he continued all of his life—particularly trying to find the rare very early ones. Hal amassed one of the largest collections of "Little Blue Books" and "Big Blue Books" in the United States. His collection of thousands of these books is now housed in the Freethought Library at the Center for Inquiry in Amherst, New York. (I boxed all 42 boxes of them, and sent them off about 4 years ago. They were very pleased to receive them.)

Mr. Verb moved to San Francisco in 1962. He worked at various jobs including as a printer and independent bookseller. In San Francisco he worked with another atheist pioneer, Jack Massen—still very much alive at age 94, and living in San Francisco—to form a group called the "Atheists of the San Francisco Region," which was affiliated with Atheists United. Later, other atheist pioneers such as Jim Heldberg and David Kong formed the now much more dynamic "San Francisco Atheists", affiliated with the American Atheists, in 1999.

Hal Verb was a very active atheist and Socialist all of his life—very much dedicated to the social causes of equality and liberty and rational thought. Let us hope that we in the San Francisco Atheists, as well as other broader-based rational organizations, will continue the sort of activism which Hal Verb embodied. We atheists know that we don't "exist," after death, in any form other than in the atoms that formed our bodies. The only legacy we leave behind is the causes we helped enable. Even though some may remember Hal Verb as a "crotchety old man," which he was at times; let it be remembered that Hal Verb was helpful.

### Atheists News by David Millett

#### Many Americans Mix Multiple Faiths

Sun Tzu in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC wrote the Sūn Zǐ Bīng Fǎ (The Art of War), which is a Chinese military treatise. In it he made the now very famous quote: "If you know both yourself and your enemy, you can win a hundred battles without a single loss". The article below gives us some insight into our "enemies" (well let us say the misguided). This knowledge may help us win our battle (well how about struggle) against irrational, superstitious, and illogical thought.

#### From the Pewforum.org

The religious beliefs and practices of Americans do not fit neatly into conventional categories. A new poll by the Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life finds that large numbers of Americans engage in multiple religious practices, mixing elements of diverse traditions. Many say they attend worship services of more than one faith or denomination -- even when they are not traveling or going to special events like weddings and funerals. Many also blend Christianity with Eastern or New Age beliefs such as reincarnation, astrology and the presence of spiritual energy in physical objects. And sizeable minorities of all major U.S. religious groups say they have experienced supernatural phenomena, such as being in touch with the dead or with ghosts.



One-third of Americans (35%) say they regularly (9%) or occasionally (26%) attend religious services at more than one place, and most of these (24% of the public overall) indicate that they sometimes attend religious services of a faith different from their own. Aside from when they are traveling and special events like weddings and funerals, three-in-ten Protestants attend services outside their own denomination, and one-fifth of Catholics say they sometimes attend non-Catholic services.

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## East Bay Atheists

### Meeting program



This month we watch a video of Daniel Dennett, author of [Breaking the Spell](#), speaking at the 2007 Atheist Alliance Convention. His focus is on the mechanism of belief, and the nature of belief in belief itself. Dennett points out that many proclaimed theists fall into the latter category, rather than believing in God. He examines many convoluted critiques of New Atheism by theists, and their equally foggy arguments for God. He differentiates between theists who prefer vague, mysterious language and those who out rightly promote supernaturalism. Vague language somehow is considered more sophisticated than crude supernaturalism, and seemingly more difficult to counter.

Dennett is the least known of the “Four Horsemen,” the four major authors of the New Atheism. This talk provides an insight into his approach, along with a number of other insights. Please join us for the video and subsequent discussion.

**Berkeley Meeting Sunday, January 17, 1:30 - 3:30 PM Berkeley Main Library, 3rd Floor Meeting Room 2090 Kittredge St., One Block From Downtown Berkeley BART**

Larry Hicok, Coordinator: 510-222-7580, Ski Grabowski, Treasurer: 510-652-8350, [info@eastbayatheists.org](mailto:info@eastbayatheists.org)

## Quote of the month

### Stephen Roberts

I contend that we are both atheists. I just believe in one fewer god than you do. When you understand why you dismiss all the other possible gods, you will understand why I dismiss yours

## Joke of the month

