



WASHline

Christian Nationalism in Maryland

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Maryland Secular Advocacy Team members Mike Reid (L) and Dan Meyer testify in Annapolis before a committee of the Maryland State Legislature.

Opposing Christian Nationalism in Maryland

By Mike Reid

When one thinks of Christian nationalism, Maryland is not usually a state that immediately comes to mind. Christian nationalists are not nearly as influential in Maryland as they are in some other states, but they are here and they are active.

To combat white Christian nationalist and other attacks on our

(continued as Maryland on [page 3](#))



Editor's Corner

By Mike Reid

Yeah, I know. I'm late with this again. But hey, at least it's getting out. I'm happy that we have a lot of great content this month.

WASH president Heatherly Hodges is able to function again. Her ten-month (yes, TEN-month) migraine has finally abated to the point where she can function again. This past week, she underwent spinal surgery for an unrelated condition. Happily, it went really well and she is recovering. Heatherly is already organizing a major community service project for the Frederick Secular Humanists (FRESH) chapter of WASH in Frederick, MD. She hopes to be back in full force later this month. Thanks again to our wonderful vice president, Kari for taking over while Heatherly was indisposed.

Looking Ahead to the New Year

To say that 2025 was a trying year for secularism and humanism in general would be an understatement. We don't know what this new year of 2026 has in store for us, but I'm sure it will be ... Uh, interesting. Yeah, I'll just say "interesting."

On the bright side, the secular community can look forward to two great conferences coming up this year. In April, Americans United for Separation of Church and State will again hold their awesome Summit for Religious Freedom (SRF) in Alexandria, VA. It's pronounced "surf." Heatherly and I attended last year and the year before. They were both amazing.

Unfortunately, American Atheists will not hold a national convention this year. They had planned to hold it jointly with the World Humanist Congress (WHC) in Washington, DC in August, but had to cancel it when Humanists International, the organization which puts on the biannual WHC, moved it to Ottawa, Canada for safety reasons and because international attendees, particularly those from the global south, are reluctant to come to the U.S.A right now. I find this disheartening, but totally understandable. Heatherly and I have already purchased our tickets and reserved our hotel rooms for both the SRF and the WHC. We hope to see some of you there!

About WASH

The Washington Area Secular Humanists, Inc. is an independent 501(c)(3) non-profit organization incorporated in Maryland since 1989. It consists of multiple chapters which operate in Maryland, DC, and Virginia.

WASH is a chapter of the American Humanists Association and an affiliate of American Atheists.

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in articles in *WASHline* are those of the authors and not necessarily those of WASH or its chapters.



(Maryland continued from page 1)

nation's cherished separation of church and state, American Atheists has created Secular Action Teams (SAT) in several states. They are working on creating them in more states. SATs are groups of secular activists who work with American Atheists staff to oppose legislation and other threats to religious freedom and secularism at the state and local levels and to support legislative initiatives that protect it.

Two states with active SATs are Virginia and Maryland and WASH members are involved in both. The Virginia SAT is led by former WASH president Aiden Barnes and the Maryland SAT is co-led by yours truly and Dan Meyer.

On February 17th, Dan and I went to the Maryland state capital in Annapolis to testify to a committee of the state House of Delegates which is considering two bills that we oppose. One is a bill supported by Christian nationalists to place a monument to the Biblical Ten Commandments on the grounds of the state house. The other is a problematic state-level Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) bill that its supporters claim will protect the free exercise of religion from government interference except in the most egregious cases.

Working with American Atheists' State Policy Specialist Victoria Anderson, Dan and I each submitted written testimony ahead of the hearing as did Victoria. Dan and I also signed up to testify in-person. On February 17th, the day of the committee hearing, we went to the House Office Building in Annapolis where the committee was holding hearings. We had to wait for the bills of interest to be brought up for discussion and for our opportunities to testify. Fortunately, the same committee was hearing both bills on the same day and in the same place. The Ten Commandments monument bill (HB67) came up first. Its sponsor,

a conservative Christian delegate from a district east of Baltimore, testified to the committee in support of his bill. He also brought in a remote witness by video call who had introduced a similar bill in Arkansas. Both men justified displaying the Ten Commandments on state property by claiming that they are foundational to our form of government and the basis of our legal system. Christian nationalists across the country make these and similar claims, but they are ahistorical malarkey. The Founding Fathers of the United States did not structure the government on biblical principles. They patterned it after the ancient Roman republic and the English parliamentary system and judiciary. The U.S. legal system is based on English Common Law which developed over centuries of court rulings in England and traces its remotest roots to Roman Law. The Bible and the Ten Commandments are not foundational to any of these.

After waiting for the sponsor of the bill to deliver his falsehood-riddled testimony in support of his bill, Dan and I delivered ours. We both pointed out how a Ten Commandments monument on state property is a direct violation of the state and federal separation of church and state. We pointed out that Maryland is home to persons of every religion, including many non-Christians, and to many of no faith, such as we. We explained that placing such a sectarian monument would be alienating to many of us as it would in effect endorse a particular sect of Christianity and elevate it above all others. We pointed out that there are multiple versions of the Ten Commandments. The traditional Catholic, Protestant, Eastern Orthodox, and Judaic versions all differ. We challenged the popular Christian nationalist view that displaying the ancient Decalogue somehow encourages better and more moral behavior among the population. There is no evidence for this — zero!

Most of the committee members seemed skeptical of the sponsor's and his witness' arguments. Happily, this bill is unlikely to advance out of committee which means it should suffer a quick and deserved legislative death. Nevertheless, it's always a good idea to shoot a few more arrows into these bad bills just to make sure.

Wouldn't you know it, the RFRA bill was last on the committee's agenda for the day. This meant that Dan and I had to wait around for a couple of hours of other business to be completed before it came up. The RFRA bill is a different beast entirely from the Ten Commandments bill. This bill is similar to bills introduced and enacted in other states. RFRA started out as a federal law that the U.S. Congress passed in 1993 with overwhelming bipartisan support. The intent of the bill was to protect religious minorities from government interference.

In 1997, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that RFRA only constrained the federal government and did not apply to the states. Since then, fearing that state or local laws might interfere with religious practices, legislators across the country introduced RFRA-type bills in their own state's legislatures. The Maryland bill is one of these.

These laws, well-intentioned as they might have originally been, have created a big loophole which white Christian nationalists have used to avoid complying with civil rights and non-discrimination laws, particularly those relating to LGBTQ+ issues and reproductive rights. Others have used them to exempt themselves from health regulations such as mandatory vaccinations in public schools. Under RFRA, organizations or individuals engaging in religious discrimination or wishing to coerce others into complying with their religious-based policies simply need to claim that a civil rights or non-discrimination law

“substantially burdens” their free exercise of religion to avoid legal challenges.

The proposed Maryland RFRA law mirrors the federal one and similar bills in other states. Like those others, it is too broadly worded and invites abuse by Christian nationalists and others as has happened in other states.

The hearing on the RFRA bill was quite different than the rather clownish one on the Ten Commandments monument earlier in the afternoon. The sponsors and witnesses were well-prepared and articulate. Pastors and lawyers testified in support. I could certainly understand how someone hearing their arguments who is not aware of the side-effects of these laws could see it as reasonable. Dan and I were joined by several other people, including an Episcopal priest, in testifying against it. We all pointed out the potential for abuse and how RFRA laws had been abused in other states. Dan and I also pointed out that in Maryland religious minorities practice their beliefs freely without significant interference. A RFRA law, even a well-intentioned one, simply is not needed here. There is no reason to open our institutions up to abuse or burden them with costly litigation to solve a nonexistent problem.

The committee members all seemed to know about RFRA and its history, so I don't know that any of them were swayed by the testimony they heard from either side. Dan and I spoke to legislators later that day who did not think that the RFRA bill is likely to advance. It was introduced last year and failed. However, it has bipartisan support and I think a better chance than that silly Ten Commandments bill. We will keep a close eye on it.

Our cherished separation of church and state is under threat now more than it has been in decades. Problem legislation keeps popping up in

both Maryland and Virginia as well as other states. We would welcome more people to join us in American Atheist’s Maryland and Virginia SATs. Interested Maryland residents can contact me. Virginia residents can contact Aiden Barnes. Please see our notices on page 6 in this issue for contact information.

Mike Reid is the editor of WASHline, a former president of WASH, and Co-chair of the Maryland SAT for American Atheists.

Report from the Virginia SAT

By Aiden Barnes

The 2026 General Assembly is already underway, and it’s shaping up to be a pivotal moment for secular communities and LGBTQ+ equality in Virginia. From critical policy and budget fights to historic progress on marriage equality and reproductive justice, there’s a lot happening at the Capitol right now. As the General Assembly moves quickly, our Secular Advocacy Team (SAT) is tracking every bill that impacts secular communities in Virginia — from education and health care to civil rights and public safety.

Virginia legislators accomplished key milestones of the multi-year process to amend the Virginia Constitution to protect the freedom to marry, and reproductive freedom here in Virginia.

The Freedom to Marry Amendment, which passed the General Assembly with bipartisan support, will appear on Virginia’s 2026 ballot, giving voters the opportunity to finally remove the Marshall–Newman Amendment and enshrine marriage equality in our state’s Constitution, replacing the previous language that defined marriage exclusively as a union between one man and one woman with a new provision affirming marriage as a vital personal right. It would prohibit the Commonwealth and its political

subdivisions from denying marriage licenses to two adult persons based on sex, gender, or race, and require the recognition and equal legal treatment of lawful marriages between two adult persons, regardless of the sex, gender, or race of the persons involved. This change effectively repeals the previous same-sex marriage prohibition and aligns the state constitution with the 2015 United States Supreme Court decision in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, which legalized same-sex marriage nationwide.

The Reproductive Freedom Amendment will also appear on Virginia’s 2026 ballot, which will guarantee every individual the right to make decisions about their own reproductive healthcare, including prenatal care, childbirth, postpartum care, contraception, abortion care, miscarriage management, and fertility care. The amendment stipulates that this right cannot be denied, burdened, or infringed upon unless there is a compelling state interest that is achieved through the least restrictive means. While the Commonwealth would be allowed to regulate abortion care in the third trimester, it would be prohibited from banning abortions that are medically necessary to protect the pregnant individual’s life or health, or when a physician determines the fetus is not viable. The amendment also explicitly prevents the Commonwealth from discriminating against or penalizing individuals for exercising their reproductive rights, including those who assist others in accessing reproductive healthcare. A compelling state interest is defined as one focused on maintaining or improving individual health consistent with clinical standards, without infringing on personal autonomous decision-making.

These victories are the result of years of advocacy and organizing, and the work ahead is just as important. We are gearing up to ensure voters

have the information they need to protect their reproductive freedom and their freedom to marry for generations to come.

If issues like these are important to you, please consider joining our Secular Advocacy Team, or volunteer as an Assistant State Director for American Atheists. Reach out to Virginia State Director and SAT co-chair Aiden Barnes via email at abarnes@atheists.org for more info.

Aiden Barnes is the chapter coordinator of SEVASH, the Virginia State Director for American Atheists, and a former WASH president.

[Maryland residents who are interested volunteering as an American Atheists Assistant State Director or with the Maryland SAT, please contact MD SAT co-chair Mike Reid at mike.reid@atheists.org.]

My Proof of Mythicism

By Don Wharton

I was honored by *Free Inquiry* highlighting my article [A CERN level Proof of Mythicism](#) on the cover of their Feb/Mar 2026 magazine. That magazine publishes more secular pages per year than any of the other major national secular/atheist/freethinker organizations.

CERN is the most respected European center for nuclear research. They proved that the Higgs boson existed because their results were five standard deviations away from anything that could be expected by chance. That translates into roughly 34,000 to 1 odds against the claim being false by chance based on the available evidence. CERN uses this standard as equivalent to scientific certainty. I specified a very modest criterion for a couple of factual claims being accepted as likely to be true about a hypothetical

historical Jesus. I then reviewed the nature of our available evidence to show that there is no possible chain of causation by which the historical evidence base could yield fact claims that have a modest likelihood of being true.

It is not possible to prove that a hypothetical historical Jesus made some contribution to establishing Christianity. However, proving that we can have no knowledge of any reliability about that history relegates all of the stories to pure mythology.

I sketched out how the Jesus cult emerged from a heady brew of Greek, Roman, Egyptian, Syrian, and other surrounding Mesopotamian gods. Among that brew were ten dying and rising gods, many having properties similar to the Jesus cult.

Richard Carrier developed the Rank-Raglan hero type. This is a list of claims about various heroic figures, such as being born of a virgin, being the child of a god, being hailed as a king, etc. It has twenty-two criteria with only fifteen names satisfying over half the list. Removing Jesus, all fourteen of the remaining names on the list are clearly mythological figures with no reasonable suggestion that they were historical. But every one of them had stories portraying them as actors in historical events, just like the biblical gospels. Gospel stories about Jesus include the mythic elements of being born of a virgin, healing people from leprosy or blindness, raising people from the dead, or having precognition to see the future.

Carrier allowed for the possibility of four historical people being found with additional research. Alexander the Great was one that was eventually found to 13 of the 22 qualities. Two more lesser known but assumed to be historical figures were also added to the list. He now thinks his revised list should be considered complete. He used this list to compute a statistical prior probability for a member in the list being

historical. He had assumed one chance in three, but with the additions he revised that to one chance in four.

I reviewed the extra-Biblical evidence for Jesus and documented that there was none. The only candidate for possible such evidence was a couple of things included in the writings of the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus. There is overwhelming evidence that those references were probably added by Eusebius who was in charge of the Christian library that copied Josephus's works as prior copies disintegrated.

The first written of current New Testament books of the Bible were composed by St. Paul. He stated in *Galatians 1:12*: "For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught [it] but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." Given this claim, these "revelations" were creative imagination or hallucinations by any modern standards. Outside the canonical gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, there are no credible references to actual activities of a historical Jesus in any other New Testament book of the Bible.

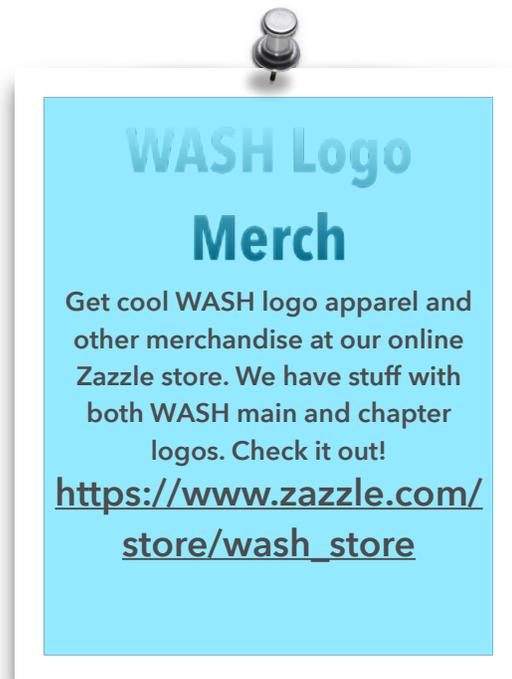
Mark was the first written of the canonical gospels. It was written in Greek for a Roman audience. The author of Mark lacked knowledge of Judaic law and the geography of the Levant supposedly traveled by Jesus. Thus, Mark is presumed to have been written outside that region, even possibly in Rome itself. *Mark 7:31* is cited as the most egregious geographic blunder. There are the absurd "seafaring" adventures occurring on the "Sea of Galilee." Quoting third century Porphyry of Tyre, "there is no 'sea' in the locality but only a tiny lake which springs from a river that flows through the hills of Galilee near Tiberias. Small boats can get across it within two hours. And the lake is too small to have seen whitecaps caused by storm." I documented how

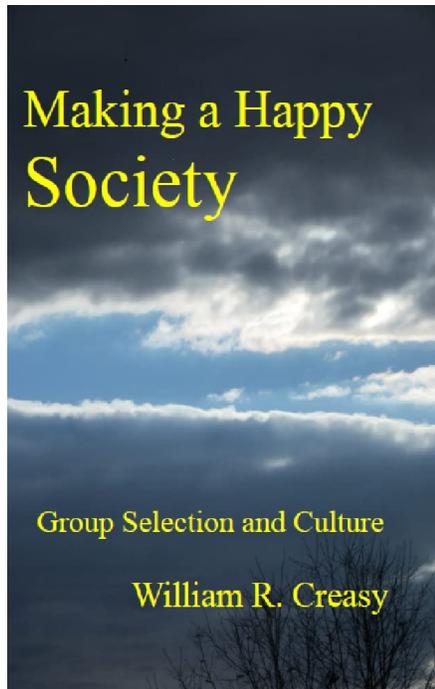
other evidence within the four gospel show them to not be independent observers of real events.

Anything called a fact must have some reason beyond a coin flip chance of being true. There is no chance of any such fact emerging from our current base of historical information. That means we can include speculation about a historical Jesus to things such as homeopathy, the flat earth theory of geography, young earth creationism, alien abduction and other categories of nonsense story mongering. It is pure myth.

Don Wharton is a long-time secular activist and WASH member.

Editor's note: WASH is aware of credible allegations of serious personal misconduct made against Richard Carrier. Citing his work in an article does not imply that we dismiss those allegations or in any way condone his behavior.





Making a Happy Society and Making a Happy Society II

by Bill Creasy

In 2021, I published a book called *Making a Happy Society* about using the theory of group selection, a theory of evolution, to understand the way that society works and how people should think about fitting into it. The book was based in part on essays that were written for *WASHline*. On Feb. 27th, I will publish a sequel, *Making a Happy Society II: Study the Controversy*, about further essays considering group selection and how to interpret the works of previous authors in terms of group selection. This book includes a discussion of the origin and purpose of religion, as well as other social issues.

Description of the first book

Ever wonder where you fit into society? Do you think politics is a confusing business that is impossible to understand? Sometimes it helps to get a view from orbit to see where you are. Are you liberal? Conservative? Moderate? Ideas in this book will make you feel good about your beliefs, but other ideas will annoy you. But the ideas will help you understand how others think and why both your views and their views are right from certain perspectives. The perspectives come from an understanding of evolutionary group selection and how to make it work. If you want to feel at ease in society and to make it a “happy” place to live, this book is a place to start.

The description of *Making a Happy Society II: Study the Controversy*

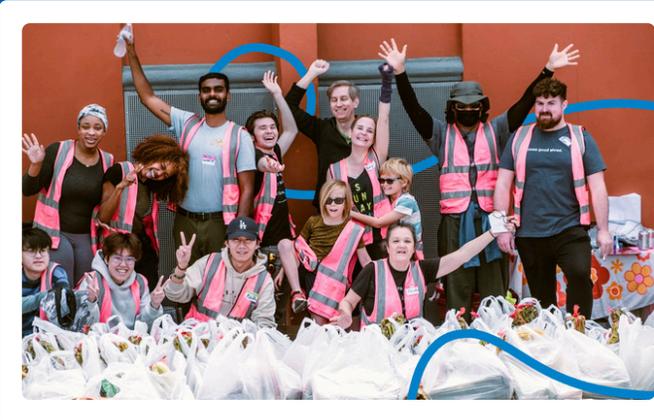
In the first book of this series, *Making a Happy Society*, the question was addressed, “Ever wonder where you fit into society?” Group selection theory was used to consider the way that society works. It is based on the prosocial efforts by the members of society. This kind of study of society isn’t new. This book reviews some previous philosophical and scientific work. This work can be reinterpreted in terms of group selection. Works include old studies by Ibn Kaldun, Thomas Hobbes, Peter Kropotkin, and Max Weber. Modern studies include work by Richard Dawkins on genetic evolution, Lena Cosmides and John Tooby on evolutionary psychology, and Peter Turchin on historical study and cliodynamics. It's time to Study the Controversy.

Both books are available on Amazon, [Making a Happy Society: Group Selection and Culture: Creasy, William R.: 9798501129269: Amazon.com: Books](https://www.amazon.com/dp/B098501129269). If you search on Amazon for my name, be careful! There is a William C. Creasy who is a Christian evangelist! (No relation!)

Bill Creasy is the current WASH secretary of and a former WASH president.

Join the fight for empathy.

[Click Here To Apply!](#)



THE AMERICAN EMPATHY PROJECT

On **May 2nd**, humanists are fighting back against the Trump administration's cruelty. Lead a service project in your community and **receive a \$1000 grant to plan your event!**

We will provide funding, project guides, event promotion, planning resources, and long-term support to help you mobilize your community for good.

Join the fight for empathy today.



Chapter Reports

Baltimore Secular Humanists (BSH)

BSH has meetings a various times and places around Baltimore, Baltimore County, and Harford County. Watch the meetup site for the latest events: <https://www.meetup.com/bsh-wash/>.

There are also several other non-WASH meetup groups in the Baltimore area, including Human Values Network Meetup (<https://www.meetup.com/the-human-values-network-hvn/>) and Baltimore Atheists, that hold monthly discussion groups. BSH also posts notices of university lectures that are held in person or on Zoom. These are posted with about a week's notice. We have posted events that are sponsored by Profs & Pints (<https://www.meetup.com/profs-and-pints-baltimore/>) with lectures from university professors. They charge an admission fee. Some of their past lectures can be found online: <https://www.profsandpints.com/online-talks>.

National Capital Area Skeptics (NCAS) is planning to attend a show of the play "Inherit the Wind" at the Arena Stage (Fichandler Stage at Arena Stage, 1101 6th Street Southwest, Washington, DC.) The show is scheduled for Feb 27 to Apr 5. NCAS is planning for a group on the March 24 show, which has a post-show discussion. We are inquiring about the possibility of a group to attend that show for a group discount. As far as we understand, group sales are for 10 to 19 tickets. We may need a down payment of \$10 per ticket, with full payment due 30 days prior to the performance (i.e., Feb 22).

Neither board (NCAS or WASH) has approved an expense to pay the advance. If you are

interested in attending for a discount, please contact Bill at wrcreeasy@aol.com. Of course, you can order your own ticket(s) in advance to avoid the possibility of a sell out, or you can attend any of the other shows. For tickets, go to [Fichandler Stage At Arena Stage Tickets - TicketSales.com](https://www.fichandlerstage.com/tickets)

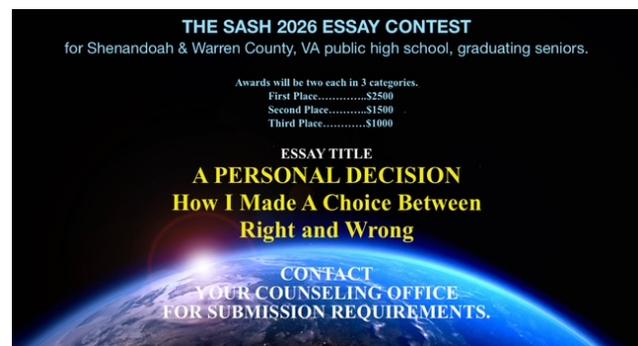
Shenandoah Area Secular Humanists (SASH)

We are looking forward to the arrival of essays from graduating high school seniors for our 2026 Essay Contest. I've attached the classy-looking announcement that went to the five high schools in Shenandoah and Warren Counties. We wanted to determine a topic that would (we hope) eliminate any artificial intelligence-aided essays. So, we asked the students to answer a personal question. We'll see what we get and are looking forward to some well-written essays.

Our monthly (second Sunday morning of each month) Zoom-based meetings always have interesting discussions on such things as Free Will. In addition, we have a vibrant book club on the last Sunday morning of each month. In March and April, we'll discuss Sarah Bakewell's *Humanly Possible*.

Please email sash@wash.org for more information or check our meetup page:

<https://www.meetup.com/shenandoah-area-secular-humanists/>



Frederick Secular Humanists (FRESH)

FRESH meets twice monthly in Frederick, MD. Our regular meetings are held on either the third or fourth Sunday of each month (based upon library availability) at the C. Burr Artz Public Library at 110 E. Patrick St., Frederick, MD 21701. Occasionally, if that venue is not available, we will meet at the Urbana Regional Library at 9020 Amelung St., Frederick, MD 21704.

Additionally, we meet on the second Sunday of each month at 6 pm for an informal social hour at the Brewer’s Alley restaurant at 124 N. Market St., Frederick, MD 21701. Our events are announced on our Meetup Page.

For more information, please visit our webpage at <http://wash.org/fresh>

For event details please visit our Meetup Page: <https://www.meetup.com/fresh-wash/>

All are welcome to attend our events, but an RSVP on Meetup is appreciated.

Maryland-DC Chapter (MDC)

Recent Past Events

On Sunday, September 28, 2025, at 2:00pm, the Washington Area Secular Humanists (WASH) visited the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, DC. The event was attended by 12 humanists (mostly WASH members) who explored African American history, culture, and contributions to the United States. Unfortunately, it appears that there is no longer an exhibit at the museum recognizing the contributions of Black Humanists and Atheists. Black history, social justice, and the human experience align with WASH’s humanist values, especially the worth, dignity, and rights of every human being. The event went smoothly.

We hosted **Humanism from the Heart with Steve Ghikadis**, Sunday, February 22 at 2:00 PM EST, via Zoom.

Upcoming Events

Our Humanist Imperative to Fight Racism with Jake Via Sunday, March 15 at 2:00 PM EDT, via Zoom.

MDC events are posted at <https://www.meetup.com/wash-202/>.

DC Region Atheists (DCRA)

We host a Secular Zoom Community meeting on the second Thursday of each month at 7pm. We nourish our connections with like-minded secular people and discuss a broad range of topics on religion, science and secularism. Please RSVP for a monthly meeting at: <https://www.meetup.com/dc-atheists>

DC Atheists, Humanists & Agnostics (DC-AHA)

DC-Atheists, Humanists, and Agnostics group (DC-AHA) meets at Madhatter (1319 Connecticut Ave NW, DuPont Circle) for happy hour the first Wednesday of the month at 6-8pm.

<https://www.meetup.com/DC-Atheists-Humanists-Agnostics/>



Northern Virginia Chapter (NVC)

We'll be hosting a Zoom event on March 8 at 1:00 PM — a conversation with author Gary Zacny about his book *A Humanist Christmas*. He'll read a short excerpt and then join us for Q&A and discussion. Information below:

[A Humanist Christmas — Conversation with Author Gary Zacny](#)

Atheists, Agnostics, and Secular Humanists of Richmond (AASHR)

We serve the greater Richmond, VA area. Our events are announced on

<https://www.meetup.com/aashr-wash>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/atheistsandagnosticsrichmond/>

WASH Contact Information

Web: www.wash.org

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Washington Area Secular Humanists

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WASH Volunteers

Heatherly Hodges, *President*

Kari Lomanno, *Vice President*

Bill Creasy, *Secretary*

Matt DeGrave, *Treasurer*

Mike Reid, *WASHline Editor*

Southeast Virginia Atheists, Skeptics & Humanists (SEVASH)

SEVASH volunteers continue our mutual aid efforts stocking and maintaining our Free Food Pantries in both Norfolk and Newport News, as well as working with the LGBT Life Center's Pride Pantry. We've been awarded with grants from affiliates like American Atheists to help keep our pantries stocked.

Our first Free Little Humanist Library in Norfolk continues to be actively used, and we're still working to secure a location on the peninsula for the installation of our second library.

The Naro, a local theatre here in Norfolk, has restarted their New Non-Fiction / Documentary & Discussion series and we attended screenings of *The Librarians*, and *Orwell: 2+2=5*. These events had been a regular for SEVASH prior to COVID, during which we would engage the audience in the post-film discussions, bringing our skepticism and critical thinking to bear on topics relevant to our activism.

All of this of course is in addition to our regular schedule of dinners, brunches, team trivia and other social / gaming events.

SEVASH events are announced on

<https://www.meetup.com/sevash/>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/sevash/>

Other Chapters

For information on WASH's other chapters, please see the Chapter Contact Information on the the chapter pages at wash.org.

Chapter Contact Information

1. Northern Virginia Chapter (NVC)

Arlington, VA
nvc@wash.org
wash.org/nvc

2. Baltimore Secular Humanists (BSH)

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3. Hartford County Secular Humanists (HCSH)

(A Subgroup of BSH)
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4. Charlottesville Atheists and Secular Humanists (CASH)

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