

Rationalists of East Tennessee Newsletter
April 2010 – written by Dave Buck

REQUEST:

Many of you may notice events and news and would like to pass them along to other rationalists. Please feel free to submit your summery and/or opinion of an event or news article to be published in future RET newsletters. Send your short submissions before the last week of the month to buck.dave@gmail.com.

RET APRIL / MAY CALENDAR:

Saturday, April 3rd - Reception

Reception for Ms. Judy Snyderman, Board Member, Final Exit Network. Ms. Snyderman is a national spokesperson for this organization and will be presenting the Forum at TVUUC on Sunday, April 4th, from 10:05 am to 11:05 am.

Reception Location: 9219 George Williams Road, Knoxville, 37922
Time: 6:00 pm RSVP at 690.8742

According to the Final Exit brochure, "Mentally competent adults have a basic human right to end their lives when they suffer from a fatal or irreversible illness or intractable pain, when their quality of life is personally unacceptable, and the future holds only hopelessness and misery. Such a right shall be an individual choice, including the timing and companion, free of any restrictions by the law, clergy, medical profession, even friends and relatives no matter how well-intended." FYI, three states (Oregon, Montana, and Washington) permit physician-assisted suicide. Thirty-four states—including Tennessee—have statutes explicitly criminalizing assisted suicide.

Sunday, April 4th – NO ROUNDTABLE – spring break and Easter break.

Sunday, April 11th - Skeptic Book Club

Book: The New Atheism; Taking a Stand for Science and Reason, by Victor Stenger
Time and location: 4:00 to 6:00pm, Barnes and Noble Booksellers, 8029 Kingston Pike.

"There is nothing new - and everything new - about the New Atheism. Victor Stenger (one of the New Atheists himself) eloquently reminds us that although the persuasive arguments against religious belief have existed for millennia, they are now strengthened and confirmed with the insights of modern physics and philosophy to such a degree that we are brought to a tipping point. We have surpassed the critical mass of evidence and reasoning where the time has come for atheists to step forward - and they are indeed stepping forward confidently - to occupy the intellectual and moral high ground that is their rightful place. What is truly 'new' about atheism is that the world, after too many centuries of giving religion a free rein, is now prepared to see and embrace the positive wisdom of doubt.' Victor Stenger, with his affirming, incisive and illuminating observations, shows us that there is truly grandeur in taking a stand, for something precious: science and reason."

Sunday, April 18st - Roundtable

Topic: The Radical Origins of our Right to Speak Against War: The Trial of Eugene V. Debs
Time/location: 10:30 - 12:30, Pellissippi State, Goins Bldg., Cafeteria Annex
Discussant: U.T. History professor, Ernest Freeberg.

Dr. Freeberg will discuss the government's attempt to silence war protestors in World War I, and the way citizens organized to protect the right of dissent. Freeberg suggests that our own right to speak against war took shape in this conflict a century ago. He is the author of the highly acclaimed "Democracy's Prisoner: Eugene V. Debs, the Great War, and the Right to Dissent", Harvard Univ. Press (2008).

Sunday, April 25th – Reflections Group (potluck dinner)

Topic: The New Atheism; Taking a Stand for Science and Reason – Questions for Stenger
Location: home of Schera Chadwick & Ted Lollis, 9219 George Williams Road, Knoxville 37922
Time: 4:00 to 6:00 pm. Call 865.690.8742 for detailed directions

Saturday, May 1st – Potluck Dinner for Victor Stenger

Location: Marsha Doyle's home, 7908 Queen Borough Lane, Knoxville TN, 37931
Time: 6:00pm Bring a covered dish to share.

Sunday, May 2nd – Annual Public Lecture

Topic: Is There Evidence for Life After Death?

Lecturer: Victor J. Stenger, emeritus professor of physics, University of Hawaii, author of the 2007 bestseller "God: the Failed Hypothesis -- How Science Shows that God Does not Exist."

Time/location: 10:30 - 12:30, Pellissippi State, Goins AUDITORIUM

Dinesh D'Souza and Deepak Chopra have claimed that reason and science "supply new and persuasive evidence for the afterlife- evidence that wasn't there before." They rely on studies of past-life memories, near-death experiences, various paranormal claims, and the notion that quantum mechanics gives reason to believe that consciousness is a separate entity from our bodies and brains, and is thus able to survive death. Stenger will examine this evidence from the point of view of a physicist who has spent forty years studying the fundamental structure of the universe.

Check out other books by Stenger: "Quantum Gods" (2009), and "The New Atheism: Taking a Stand for Science and Reason" (2009).

Sunday, May 9th- Skeptic Book Club

The Brain that Changes Itself: Stories of Personal Triumph from the Frontiers of Brain Science by Norman Doidge

Time and location: 4:00 to 6:00pm, Barnes and Noble Booksellers, 8029 Kingston Pike.

Sunday, May 16th - Roundtable

Topic: Tracing Our Cosmic Origins through Leadership-Class Computing

Time/location: 10:30 - 12:30, Pellissippi State, Goins Bldg., Cafeteria Annex

Discussant: Dr. Anthony Mezzacappa of the Oak Ridge National Laboratory.