

From: "Rationalists of East Tennessee" <admin@rationalists.org>  
Subject: RET News September 2016  
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## RET News September 2016 CE

### Rationalists of East Tennessee Newsletter

September 2016

The Second Annual Freethough Advance  
Townsend, TN                      September 3-4  
Be there!

#### **First Sunday Meeting**

**September 4    Sunday    10:30 - 12:30**

**Pellissippi State Community College, Goins  
Building, Cafeteria Annex**

**NO REGULAR MEETING**

#### **RET Second Annual Freethough Advance**

**September 3 and 4    Saturday & Sunday Labor Day**

## Weekend

Location: Tremont Lodge and Resort, 7726 Lamar  
Alexander Parkway, Townsend, TN (865)  
448-3200

Come hear from a list of nationally known speakers and some well-known local speakers. See list below.

Lodging still available.

## Registration

click to register >> [http://www.rationalists.org/  
event-2300725/Registration](http://www.rationalists.org/event-2300725/Registration)

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- **1 day registration – \$75.00 (USD)** Indicate either Saturday or Sunday.

This registration does not include meals.

- **2 day registration – \$140.00 (USD)** Attend both days at a discount.

Log in to [rationalists.org](http://rationalists.org) or send email to [aledendecker@att.net](mailto:aledendecker@att.net) to get a complete registration form and schedule or call: 865 982-8687 . Register by Friday, September 2 to receive a personalized name card. Registration is also

available at the event.

Last year's event was a great success. Let's do it again!

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## **The RET Skeptic Book Club**

**September 11      Sunday      2:00 – 4:00 pm**

**Location: Books-A-Million at 8513 Kingston Pike,  
Knoxville.**

“The Devil's Chessboard: Allen Dulles, the CIA, and the Rise of America's Secret Government” by David Talbot

America's greatest untold story: the United States' rise to world dominance under the guile of Allen Welsh Dulles, the longest-serving director of the CIA. Drawing on revelatory new materials—including newly discovered U.S. government documents, U.S. and European intelligence sources, the personal correspondence and journals of Allen Dulles's wife and mistress, and exclusive interviews with the children of prominent CIA officials—Talbot reveals the underside of one of America's most powerful and influential figures. Dulles's decade as the director of the CIA—which he used to further his public and private agendas—were dark times in American politics. Calling himself “the secretary of state of unfriendly countries,” Dulles saw himself as above the elected law, manipulating and subverting American presidents in the pursuit of his personal interests and those of the wealthy elite he counted as his friends and clients—colluding with Nazi-controlled cartels, German war criminals, and Mafiosi in the process. Targeting foreign leaders for assassination and overthrowing nationalist governments not in line with his political aims, Dulles employed those same tactics to further his goals at home, Talbot charges, offering shocking new evidence in the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

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## **RET Third Sunday Meeting**

**September 18 Sunday 10:30 a.m.**

**Pellissippi State Community College, Goins Auditorium**

**Mark Uhran will give a presentation titled “International Space Station – Mission Accomplished!”**

In August 2012, Mark Uhran joined Oak Ridge National Laboratory to work on the ITER Project – a partnership among China, Europe, India, Japan, Korea, Russia and the United States to build a ~500 megawatt industrial-scale hydrogen fusion reactor in southern France that will demonstrate the capability to sustain burning plasma for future electric power generation.

Prior to this position, he was Director of the International Space Station Division at NASA Headquarters in Washington, DC where he spent 28 years working with international partners on design, development, and operation of the ~500 metric ton, full-service, permanently crewed space station currently in orbit around the earth.

[Get Directions](#)

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## **RET Reflections Meeting**

**September 25 Sunday 2:00 p.m.**

**At Steve and Carol Tokay's** 8905 Garrison  
Drive, Knoxville TN 37913-2416 865) 691-6816  
Discussion and Potluck

Topic: Do the seasons of the year effect your inner mood? Are you happier in Spring, Summer, or Fall than you are in Winter? Do you find any particular season depressing or discouraging?

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## **Some Speaker Bios**

### **Matt Dilahunty**

Founder, owner of the IronChariots wiki and The Atheist Debates project - Host of The Atheist Experience for more than a decade - Former President of the Atheist Community of Austin - Popular debater and educator

Skeptic, Humanist, Magician, Jack-of-all-trades...

### **Sincere Kirabo**

Sincere Kirabo is the social justice coordinator at the American Humanist Association. Sincere is a longtime humanist activist who writes about atheism, culture, humanism and social issues from an intersectional approach. His work can be found on The Humanist, Everyday Feminism, and Patheos, among other media.

### **Shanon Nebo**

Shanon Nebo is the co-founder and President of Be Secular, an apparel company that promotes secularism and humanism with branding, image, and donations to secular organizations and the Treasurer of Recovering from Religion, an organization that provides resources and support for people in doubt and transitioning away from religion. She is a mother, feminist, atheist, and humanist with two children who feature frequently in her activism, which focuses especially

on science advocacy, education, separation of church/state issues, and secular values.

### **Jon D. Webster**

Jon is a stand-up comedian and the author of 5 books which include Nothing Sacred: An Atheist Quote-A-Day Calendar, Blasphemy: Atheist Quotes and Essays By An Apostate, Unreal News: A Collection of Satire, 10 Decisions I Could Have Made Better Than God: And Other Audacious Atheist Articles, and One Big Joke (And 300 Shorter Ones). Many times Jon is asked when he discovered a Talent for writing. And the answer is in the eighth grade when Jon's school Principal held a contest for the students to write a pledge to their school and Jon's pledge ended up winning. New Hope Christian School now has a pledge to their school which their students recite every morning written by the author of 5 atheist books.

### **Usama Al-Bini**

Born and raised in Jordan to a moderate Sunni family. Studied physics in Jordan and then in the US, where I obtained a PhD in theoretical physics. Left Islam during my late teens (about 20 years ago) but went through several stages before I became an atheist. In recent years I have come to realize the importance of activism and have committed to it. I am active in the Arab ex-Muslim online community, where I help run the Arab Atheist Network, the Arab Atheists Magazine and am a member of the Atheist Alliance of Middle East and North Africa.

### **Patrick Horst**

Patrick is a former missionary kid who speaks Italian, Spanish, Arabic (MSA and Levantine), Sicilian, and some German. His background is Mennonite/Amish and pacifist, but he is currently on Active Duty in the U.S. Army; he is a combat veteran and a member of Military Atheists and Secular Humanists (MASH) of Ft. Campbell. He is also Communications & PR director at Sunday Assembly Nashville, where he was a founding band member in 2013, playing guitar and bass. He is the father of two children he is raising with their Christian mother.

His talk is the product of repeatedly getting asked the tiresome question “So you don’t believe in ANYTHING?!” His search for a response led him through five years of research and reflection. The result is a coherent values system, which he has sharpened into an “elevator pitch” to help explain his humanist principles. Using this personal values system as just one example, participants will receive useful advice on how to articulate their own answers to these questions: Is it even possible to be a moral, upstanding person of character without the “righteousness” of religion? What ethical reasoning guides your decisions? As a “none”, what

values give your life meaning? Is it time for a new humanism?

### **Karon Park**

Karon Park is a retired middle school art teacher who makes it very clear how easy and ethical it is to keep church and state separate in the classroom. She manages to sneak in lots of humorous anecdotes from her 30 years in the art room whenever she gives this presentation.

### **Herb Silverman**

Herb is a long time activist in the Freethought movement and will describe his journey from Orthodox Jew raised in Philadelphia, to mild-mannered math professor, to accidental activist atheist when he moved to South Carolina. He'll talk about his challenge to the South Carolina Constitution and his Supreme Court victory, which paved the way for allowing atheists to hold public office in South Carolina. He'll also talk about his political activism and coalition building, including his adventures with the likes of Billy Graham and Jimmy Carter.

**And the always entertaining Freethought Jeopardy with Martin and Cheryl Lewiston**

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## **RET Skeptics Book Club - New Books List**

- 1. ***November 13, 2016: The Invention of the Jewish People*** by Shlomo Sand. A historical tour de force, *The Invention of the Jewish People* offers a groundbreaking account of Jewish and Israeli history. Exploding the myth that there was a forced Jewish exile in the first century at the hands of the Romans, Israeli

historian Shlomo Sand argues that most modern Jews descend from converts, whose native lands were scattered across the Middle East and Eastern Europe. In this iconoclastic work, which spent nineteen weeks on the Israeli bestseller list and won the coveted Aujourd'hui Award in France, Sand provides the intellectual foundations for a new vision of Israel's future. (344 pages).

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- **2. *December 11, 2016: Don't Sleep, There are Snakes: Life and Language in the Amazonian Jungle* by Daniel L. Everett.** A riveting account of the astonishing experiences and discoveries made by linguist Daniel Everett while he lived with the Pirahã, a small tribe of Amazonian Indians in central Brazil. Daniel Everett arrived among the Pirahã with his wife and three young children hoping to convert the tribe to Christianity. Everett quickly became obsessed with their language and its cultural and linguistic implications. The Pirahã have no counting system, no fixed terms for color, no concept of war, and no personal property. Everett was so impressed with their peaceful way of life that he eventually lost faith in the God he'd hoped to introduce to them, and instead devoted his life to the science of linguistics. Part passionate memoir, part scientific exploration, Everett's life-changing tale is riveting look into the nature of language, thought, and life itself.

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- **3. *January 8, 2017: Islam and the Future of Tolerance: A Dialogue* by Sam Harris and Maajid Nawaz.** In this short book, Sam Harris and Maajid Nawaz invite you to join an urgently needed

conversation: Is Islam a religion of peace or war? Is it amenable to reform? Why do so many Muslims seem drawn to extremism? What do words like Islamism, jihadism, and fundamentalism mean in today's world? Remarkable for the breadth and depth of its analysis, this dialogue between a famous atheist and a former radical is all the more startling for its decorum. Harris and Nawaz have produced something genuinely new: they engage one of the most polarizing issues of our time—fearlessly and fully—and actually make progress. (144 pages).

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- 4. ***February 12, 2017: The Utility Of Force: The Art Of War In The Modern World*** by Rupert Smith. From a highly decorated general, a brilliant new way of understanding war and its role in the twenty-first century. Drawing on his vast experience as a commander during the first Gulf War, and in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Northern Ireland, General Rupert Smith gives us a probing analysis of modern war. He demonstrates why today's conflicts must be understood as intertwined political and military events, and makes clear why the current model of total war has failed in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other recent campaigns. Smith offers a compelling contemporary vision for how to secure our world and the consequences of ignoring the new, shifting face of war.

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- 5. ***March 12, 2017: White Trash: the 400 year Untold History of Class in America*** by Nancy Isenberg. Surveying political rhetoric and policy, popular literature and scientific theories over four hundred years, Isenberg unpeels assumptions about

hundred years, Rosenberg upends assumptions about America's supposedly class-free society—where liberty and hard work were meant to ensure real social mobility. Poor whites were central to the rise of the Republican Party in the early nineteenth century, and the Civil War itself was fought over class issues nearly as much as it was fought over slavery. Reconstruction pitted poor white trash against newly freed slaves, which factored in the rise of eugenics—a widely popular movement embraced by Theodore Roosevelt that targeted poor whites for sterilization. These poor were at the heart of New Deal reforms and LBJ's Great Society; they haunt us in reality TV shows like *Here Comes Honey Boo Boo* and *Duck Dynasty*. Marginalized as a class, white trash have always been at or near the center of major political debates over the character of the American identity. (480 pages).

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- **6. [April 9, 2017](#): *BEING MORTAL: Medicine and What Matters in the End* by Atul Gawande.**

Modern Medicine has transformed the dangers of childbirth, injury, and infectious disease from harrowing to manageable. But in the face of death, what it can do often runs counter to what it should do. Through eye-opening research and gripping stories of his own patients and family, Atul Gawande reveals the suffering this has produced. He examines the profession's limitations and failures as life draws to a close. And he shows how the ultimate goal is not good death, but a good life --- until the very end. (282 pages).

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- **7. *May 14, 2017*: *The Serengeti Rules: The Quest to Discover How Life Works and Why It Matters* by Sean B. Carroll.** One of the most important

**Matters** by Sean B. Carroll. One of the most important revelations about the natural world is that everything is regulated--there are rules that regulate the amount of every molecule in our bodies and rules that govern the numbers of every animal and plant in the wild. And the most surprising revelation about the rules that regulate life at such different scales is that they are remarkably similar--there is a common underlying logic of life. Carroll recounts how our deep knowledge of the rules and logic of the human body has spurred the advent of revolutionary life-saving medicines, and makes the compelling case that it is now time to use the Serengeti Rules to heal our ailing planet. (280 pages).

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- **8. *June 11, 2017: All the Single Ladies: Unmarried Women and the Rise of an Independent Nation*** by Rebecca Traister. A nuanced investigation into the sexual, economic, and emotional lives of women in America, this “singularly triumphant work” (Los Angeles Times) by Rebecca Traister “the most brilliant voice on feminism in the country” (Anne Lamott) is “sure to be vigorously discussed” (Booklist, starred review). Today, only twenty percent of Americans are wed by age twenty-nine, compared to nearly sixty percent in 1960. The Population Reference Bureau calls it a “dramatic reversal.” *All the Single Ladies* is a remarkable portrait of contemporary American life and how we got here, through the lens of the single American woman. Covering class, race, sexual orientation, and filled with vivid anecdotes from fascinating contemporary and historical figures, *All the Single Ladies* is destined to be a classic work of social history and journalism. Exhaustively researched, brilliantly balanced, and told with Traister’s signature wit and insight, this book should be shelved alongside

with wit and insight, this book should be shelved alongside Gail Collins's *When Everything Changed*. (352 pages).

- - **9. *July 9, 2017: Makers and Takers: The Rise of Finance and the Fall of American Business*** by Rana Foroohar . Eight years on from the biggest market meltdown since the Great Depression, the key lessons of the crisis of 2008 still remain unlearned—and our financial system is just as vulnerable as ever. Many of us know that our government failed to fix the banking system after the subprime mortgage crisis. But what few of us realize is how the misguided financial practices and philosophies that nearly toppled the global financial system have come to infiltrate ALL American businesses, putting us on a collision course for another cataclysmic meltdown. Thanks to 40 years of policy changes and bad decisions, only about 15 % of all the money in our market system actually ends up in the real economy – the rest stays within the closed loop of finance itself. The financial sector takes a quarter of all corporate profits in this country while creating only 4 % of American jobs. The tax code continues to favor debt over equity, making it easier for companies to hoard cash overseas rather than reinvest it on our shores. Our biggest and most profitable corporations are investing more money in stock buybacks than in research and innovation. And, still, the majority of the financial regulations promised after the 2008 meltdown have yet come to pass, thanks to cozy relationship between our lawmakers and the country's wealthiest financiers. (400 pages).
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## Other Activities in the area

### East Tennessee Freedom From Religion Foundation Chapter

Meets on the 3rd Wednesdays of each month      7:00 PM  
Earth Fare Turkey Creek

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### RET/ASK Freethought Forum TV

Tuesdays      5:00 – 6:00 pm

**Note change: Due to Knoxville Beer Board Meeting changes there will be no FFTV on varying Tuesdays once a month.**

Freethought Forum TV is looking for people to be on the show. Contact Larry Rhodes or Lee Erickson if you are interested.

Knoxville: Comcast Channel 12    Charter Channel 6    Free streaming on [ctvknox.org](http://ctvknox.org).

Right after the show a co-host of the program holds The Atheist Society of Knoxville Meet-up at Barley's on Jackson Avenue in Knoxville's Old City. Volunteer hosts and suggestions for topics would be welcome for all of these programs. Contact Larry Rhodes at [larryr@usit.net](mailto:larryr@usit.net) or Lee Erickson at [forresterickson@comcast.net](mailto:forresterickson@comcast.net).

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**Sunday Assembly Knoxville**    Live Better, Help Often, Wonder More

**September 25 - Gender Rules**

Location: The International of OAO Blackstock Area    Knoxville, TN

Location: The International at 940 Blackstock Ave., Knoxville, TN

Time: 10:30 AM

For other SA activities go to <http://knoxville-tn.sundayassembly.com> and click on "Calendar."

Email: [saknoxville@gmail.com](mailto:saknoxville@gmail.com)

Website: <http://knoxville-tn.sundayassembly.com/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Sunday-Assembly-Knoxville/595906073848559>

Meetup: <http://www.meetup.com/Sunday-Assembly-Knoxville/>

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## **Future Activities**

### **Freedom From Religion National Convention Pittsburg, PA October 7-9**

The national convention, hosted at the Wyndham Grand hotel in downtown Pittsburgh, will include such notable speakers as cognitive scientist Daniel Dennett, award-winning author Susan Jacoby, biology professor Jerry Coyne and theoretical physicist and author Lawrence Krauss, who will receive FFRF's annual "Emperor Has No Clothes" award. Aleta Ledendecker will be receiving the "Nothing Fails Like Prayer" award for her role in giving invocations.

<https://ffrf.org/outreach/convention>

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***Please add your name to the RET Directory so friends can contact you.***

### **RET's New Web Site and Wild Apricot**

How to set up your new password and log in. Don't forget to enter your information into the RET Directory (viewable by members only and customizable by you so people see only what you want them to).

#### **TO LOG IN**

Go to Rationalists.org. There, just above The Thinkers head, you will see a "Login" button. That's right, click on it. Use the email address that is already associated with RET contacts and mailings and click on "Forgot Password". There you will enter the email address and Captcha code. From there follow the directions.

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#### **Help Needed:**

Please contact us at [info@rationalists.org](mailto:info@rationalists.org).

Anyone willing to serve on the board?

Anyone who has fundraising and/or PR experience and is willing to help RET?

Anyone willing to give secular invocations at public government meetings?

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## Member News:

Chuck & Joan Omarzu can no longer drive to meetings. They would appreciate anyone who can visit or call.  
(865-657-5027)

(Please contact me at [ledendecker@att.net](mailto:ledendecker@att.net) if you have any relevant news about RET members that they agree to share.)

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