



# LIVING OPENLY SECULAR IN BLACK COMMUNITIES

A Resource for African-Americans



*Living Openly Secular in Black Communities: A Resource for African-Americans.*  
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## ABOUT THE OPENLY SECULAR CAMPAIGN

Openly Secular is a coalition project that promotes tolerance and equality of people regardless of their belief systems. Founded in 2013, the Openly Secular Coalition is led by four organizations - Richard Dawkins Foundation for Reason and Science, Secular Coalition for America, Secular Student Alliance, and Stiefel Freethought Foundation. This campaign is also joined by national partner organizations from the secular movement as well as organizations that are allies to our cause.

## OUR MISSION

The mission of Openly Secular is to eliminate discrimination and increase acceptance by getting secular people - including atheists, freethinkers, agnostics, humanists and nonreligious people - to be open about their beliefs.



## SPECIAL THANKS

We would like to thank secular activist Bridget Gaudette, and Mandisa Thomas from Black Nonbelievers, Inc., [www.blacknonbelievers.org](http://www.blacknonbelievers.org), for providing direction and feedback on this project.

## USING THIS TOOLKIT

In this toolkit you'll find key ideas, quotes from openly secular individuals, and links to the Openly Secular website that will provide you with more information about various topics. The following icons will help you identify each of these elements.



Key Idea



Supporting Quote



Weblink

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## WELCOME

If you're reading this booklet, it is likely that you identify as an African American who is questioning religious beliefs, or who already identifies as a nonbeliever. We've developed this resource because we recognize that the experience of living openly secular, for us black people, can often be very different from those of other secular people. Whether this is for you or somebody you know, this booklet offers some practical tips for living openly as a member of our community. The Openly Secular Coalition hopes this information will help you live your one and only precious life as openly and authentically as you choose.

## DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

**Atheist:** The term atheist simply denotes a lack of belief in a god or gods. This comes from the prefix "a-" which means "without" and the root "-theos" which means "belief in a deity or deities."

**Agnostic:** This word also comes from the prefix "a-" which means "without" and "-gnostic" which is a word referring to knowledge and its existence/nature. Therefore, an agnostic is a person that does not know if there are god or gods, or feels one cannot know if there is a god or gods. One can be an agnostic and also be a nontheist or a theist.

**Humanist:** An individual that embraces human reason, ethics, social justice, and philosophical naturalism, while specifically rejecting religious dogma, super-naturalism, pseudo-science or superstition as the basis of morality and decision-making.

**Living Openly:** A state in which secular individuals are open about their nontheistic identities in various public, social, and professional contexts.

**Nones:** The term "nones" refers to the growing segment of the population who claim no religious affiliation. These individuals are not necessarily nontheists, but do not identify with organized and/or mainstream religion.

**Opening Up:** The act of disclosing one's secular identity. Synonymous with the term "coming out."

**Religious Ally:** Ally: An individual who identifies with a religion, but is not hostile towards secular individuals and supports their efforts to live openly without discrimination.

**Secular:** Refers to those things which are not concerned with or connected to religion.

## AFRICAN-AMERICAN RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

African American religious experience is extremely complex, often oversimplified, and above all, incredibly diverse. Religion and spirituality are so deeply ingrained in our cultural identity that belief in something supernatural can seem mandatory.



*"In most African-American communities, it is more acceptable to be a criminal who goes to church on Sunday, while selling drugs to kids all week, than to be an atheist who ... contributes to society and supports his family."*

– Wrath James Wright <sup>1</sup>

A 2009 Pew study found that African Americans (and specifically black women) are markedly the most religious group in the United States. Compared to the general public, we report higher rates of belonging to formal religious organizations (the majority of which are in the Protestant tradition, though Islam is a fast growing tradition within African American communities), attend services and pray more, and express higher levels of religious belief.

In the same study, almost half of religiously unaffiliated African Americans (45%) express the importance of religion in their lives – attending services at least once a month

<sup>1</sup> Full blog can be accessed at: [wordsofwrath.blogspot.com/2008/05/invisibility-of-black-atheist.html](http://wordsofwrath.blogspot.com/2008/05/invisibility-of-black-atheist.html)

(28%) and praying daily (48%).<sup>2</sup>

Offering more than spiritual expression and enlightenment, black religious communities are a place for empowerment where real community needs are met. Sustaining involvement in our spiritual communities is understandable, especially when they:

-  Provide social support and business networking opportunities
-  Cultivate an informal helping culture
-  Validate life's struggles through communal worship
-  Are spaces of refuge from an oppressive white culture
-  Facilitate civic engagement through political and community activism
-  Offer therapeutic, educational, and health resources

Many of us were taught that religion is the key to liberation. Our historical legacy of racial oppression and our treatment as cultural outsiders makes liberation theology and black spiritualism appealing options for dealing with the everyday realities of oppression, poverty, and racism and keeps religious adherence central to contemporary black life in the United States.

<sup>2</sup> Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, [pewforum.org/2009/01/30/a-religious-portrait-of-african-americans](http://pewforum.org/2009/01/30/a-religious-portrait-of-african-americans)

## YOU ARE NOT ALONE!

“...Announcing to African Americans, that it’s ok to, ‘Not’ identify with any religion, and that you are among millions of African American clandestine Nonbelievers.”

- Darrell C. Smith

To be black and secular is to be in good company! Here are just a few well-known historical and contemporary openly secular African Americans - scholars, activists, award-winning celebrities, and more.

**Norm Allen**, author and editor

**James Baldwin**, Novelist, poet, and playwright

**Jamila Bey**, Journalist and public speaker

**Bree Crutchfield**, Founder of *Minority Atheists of Michigan*

**W.E.B. DuBois**, Sociologist and founder of the NAACP

**James Forman**, activist, presented the Black Manifesto at Riverside Church

**Arian Foster**, NFL All-Pro running back, actor, poet

**Morgan Freeman**, Award-winning actor and director

**Bridget Gaudette**, Speaker and co-founder of *Secular Women*

**Debbie Goddard**, Speaker, activist, and Director of *African Americans for Humanism*

**Whoopi Goldberg**, Award-winning Hollywood personality and activist

**Hubert Henry Harrison**, Scholar, labor activist, and educator

**Mark D. Hatcher**, Speaker and founder of *Secular Students of Howard University*

**Langston Hughes**, Novelist, poet, and activist

**Zora Neale Hurston**, Anthropologist and writer

**Sikivu Hutchinson**, Writer, speaker, and activist

**Samuel L. Jackson**, Award-winning actor and producer

**Alix Jules**, Secular activist

**John Legend**, Grammy award-winning singer-songwriter and actor

**Leighann Lord**, Comedian and secular activist

**Butterfly McQueen**, Emmy award-winning actress and 1989 recipient of the FFRF Freethought Heroine Award

**Chandler Owen**, Editor, writer, and labor activist

**Anthony Pinn**, Scholar, speaker, and author

**Robin Quivers**, Radio personality

**A. Philip Randolph**, Key leader of the labor and civil rights movements

**Chris Rock**, Award-winning comedian, actor, and producer

**Darrell C. Smith**, Author of *You Are Not Alone: “Black Nones”*

**Mandisa Thomas**, Speaker, activist, and founder of *Black Nonbelievers, Inc.*

**Neil Degrasse Tyson**, Astrophysicist, author, and television personality

**Ayanna Watson**, Activist, speaker, and founder of *Black Atheists of America, Inc.*

**Carter Woodson**, Founder of Black History Month

**Donald Wright**, Author and founder of *Day of Solidarity for Black Nonbelievers*



## BEING OPEN BEGINS WITH DOUBT

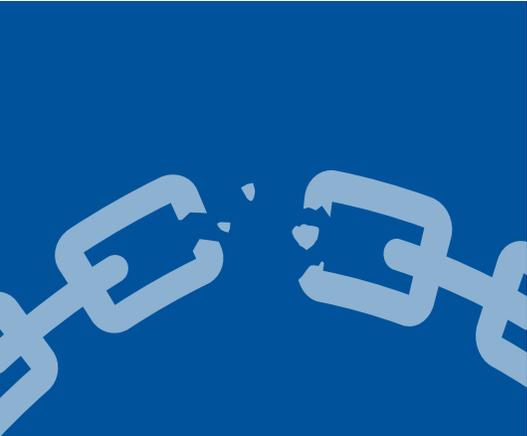
Like most people in America, you probably grew up believing in Santa Claus. You might have been told that if you didn't believe in him, you wouldn't receive any gifts under your tree on Christmas morning. You had to believe in Santa – period! Then, as you got older, something about the Santa story just seemed...off, and eventually you accepted the truth – Santa isn't real.

When we were children, most of us didn't doubt Santa's existence, even when we saw him on every other street corner. Our understanding of the world was limited by age. As we got older, things changed, and we began to question small inconsistencies; we began to doubt what we believed, and we questioned the claim. Questioning your religious beliefs isn't any different. In fact, it's perfectly normal. Most people experience doubt when confronted by ideas that don't align with or seem contradictory to what they already know. Doubt forces us to re-think what we know to be true.

## A.J.'S STORY: BREAKING UP WITH FAITH

I was born and raised Christian in Las Vegas—a modern-day Sodom and Gomorrah in the eyes of most religious people. Church never appealed to me. Sleeping in was better than Sunday sermons, and Saturday-morning cartoons were infinitely better than the Song of Solomon. All I needed to know was that treating people as I wanted to be treated was the way to go, and that I'd get into heaven because Jesus died for my sins.

As an adventurous college kid, I racked up quite a few transgressions. Shortly after graduation, I took a hard look at my faith. That's when everything fell apart. I realized I didn't believe God had a son and that the Trinity made no sense to me. Christianity was like the dusty family photo album you never look at but immediately notice once it goes missing. I mourned my loss of faith, even though I hadn't cared much for the religion in the first place.



**“The internal struggle proved far greater than the external consequences of being honest about my secular beliefs”**

Oddly enough, the internal struggle proved far greater than the external consequences of being honest about my secular beliefs. Grappling with doubt was harder than grappling with the wave of questions from people who were unable to initially understand why I stopped believing. In many ways, opening up strengthened some relationships. I was able to have open, honest conversations with my family and close friends. And those who chose to abandon me never truly had my back in the first place.

There’s a lot to be mad about losing people after opening up – but that’s not your cross to carry. I realized that if people were willing to separate from me over religion, they weren’t worth holding onto in the first place. I stood firm in my boundaries not to be proselytized to or bullied for my decision. Those who respected that decision, respected me. Those who didn’t, faded away.

I love life. I don’t know what happens after we die, and I’m in no hurry to find out. As many Christians say, “It’s not religion, it’s relationship.” If this is true, we should be able to break up with our faith, especially when the relationship requires so much, but gives back so little. Isn’t not having a choice to engage in a relationship where the other party benefits immensely at your expense sort of like, I don’t know...*slavery?*

*A.J. is a freelance writer, communications professional, and questioner of everything.*



## BEING OPEN TAKES COURAGE

It can be quite difficult for people to come to terms with religious doubt, and it is often more difficult for us because we may feel alone and think that it's simply impossible to give up faith. Being secular in our community is seen as more than just a rejection of faith, but also as a rejection of our history and racial identity.

The prejudice goes further depending on one's gender. Opening up as secular in our black community affirms a double minority status at best – triple for secular black women, who not only lose status as a “good” black person, but also lose status as women. The prejudice that exists in both our black community and larger society can make you want to hide the way you feel, from yourself and from others.

*“There [is] little societal pressure on black men to exhibit the kind of religious devotion that black women exhibit in their everyday lives and relationships.”*

## **VANESSA'S STORY: "IT'S BEEN A TEN YEAR JOURNEY."**

I grew up in an Episcopal church. I started having doubts when I was 17 years old. It was 2004, and my very best friend in the world came out to me as a lesbian. She was one of the most compassionate and loving people I knew. Even today, we are still very close friends. When she came out about her sexuality, I experienced extreme cognitive dissonance. She was the same person she had always been, but now that she was a lesbian, my family told me that she would be going to hell. I was confused and didn't know quite what to do.

Shortly thereafter, I started attending a non-denominational church, and it was fine for a while. I enjoyed going to church because of the social support that I received from my church peers. After a few years, I began going through some hard times. I was taught that church is the place you go when you need healing. And then it happened in 2010 or 2011. I was sitting in church and it just so happened

that a very close friend was preaching the message that day. The message was full of misogynistic tones and anti-gay and -lesbian tones. There was something truly unsettling in that moment to hear these messages of hatred and prejudice coming out of the mouth of someone I called a friend. I literally got up in the middle of the sermon and left. I just knew that I couldn't do this [going to church] anymore, but I still wasn't quite ready to admit it to myself; I thought maybe it was just this particular church, or this particular pastor, or this particular congregation that made me aversive to church.

When I started graduate school two years ago, I went on a hunt for a new church. I found the most liberal church here in my small Southern city. I went to this church for a little while, but it was still the same message. Hatred. Misogyny. Prejudice. Repeated hints that I would never, ever be good enough, no matter what I tried, because I'm just a "natural born sinner." That's when I told myself, 'Ya know, I'm just not really into Christianity anymore.' I felt a huge loss once I let go of Christianity. I was

**“LIVING MY TRUTH HAS BEEN THE MOST LIBERATING AND COURAGEOUS ACT OF MY LIFE.”**

afraid to let it go; I just didn't know any better, and I felt like I was failing my family. My entire life I had been taught that a large part of being a "Strong Black Woman" was identifying as a fervent follower of Jesus Christ and living the life of a "Proverbs 31 Woman."

It took another year before I got up the courage to send my mother an email, telling her that I was questioning my beliefs. I followed up with a phone call telling her that I just didn't believe anymore and that my current romantic partner and I wouldn't be attending church with the family this Easter. That did not go over well, but I had to be true to what I was feeling. I can honestly say that living my truth has been the most liberating and courageous act of my life. That was this year, 2014. It's been a 10 year journey.

*Vanessa is a graduate student finishing her doctoral degree in psychology at a university in the south.*



## BEING OPEN BEGINS WITH YOU

Figuring out who you are can be a difficult and lengthy process. Regardless of the label you use to describe your secular self, the important thing is that you can come to a place of acceptance.

**Being honest with yourself and having the courage to live openly is a critical milestone in your life – and one that you should be proud of.**

## DAMOND'S STORY: "I DON'T EVER REMEMBER BELIEVING IN GOD!"

The first time I was ever asked about God was when I was in kindergarten. I was in a group of kids and one of them asked the rest of us if we believed in God. Automatically, I said, "Yeah." But in my head I was asking myself, "Do I?"

For the next few years, I started paying close attention to everything people said and did in relation to God. Of all the people in my life, my mother made the biggest impact where religion is concerned. She referred to God every time she spoke, brought me to church with her every Sunday, and anointed me with oil and prayed over me at night. She made me attend Vacation Bible School every summer. Each time she left home, she stopped in the living room and touched the giant family bible. She never actually read anything from the bible.



**“I SAW THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING ‘OUT’ AND ENCOURAGING OTHERS WHO ARE ON THE FENCE OR SEARCHING FOR ANSWERS.”**

By age 13, I had read the entire bible and learned to use a concordance. These two things made me skeptical of religion on a whole new level. Since that time, I’ve had first-hand knowledge of what the bible says and I’ve known how to find any subject that I was unsure of. In other words, I can call you on your bullshit. I started challenging what I heard in church and eventually I was asked not to come back to church.

I was invited to a church picnic when I was 21. I went for the food, but was impressed by how well these people actually knew the bible. By this time, I had read the bible cover to cover - twice, but these people could answer my challenging questions about religion without breaking a sweat. In short, I got baptized and

stayed with this church for the next 5 years.

I really wanted this church to convince me that every other church I had contacted was false and that this church was the true church. Over the years, as I got to know the leadership and followers on a very personal level, I could see that this church was no different from the others. I left this church as a staunch non-believer with a solid knowledge of major religions, prepared to debate anyone regardless of their faith. But if you asked me what my religion was, I would still answer “Christian.”

A few years later, when I moved to Las Vegas, I found a pretty strong community of atheists, agnostics, humanists, skeptics, etc. After that, I saw the importance of being “out” and encouraging others who are on the fence or searching for answers. Since then, I’ve called myself an atheist with no apologies. My name is Damon, and I’m openly secular.

*Damond is a Web Developer and Free Thinker residing in the southwest.*

## STRATEGIES FOR OPENING UP

- 🌀 Start with openly secular people or with someone you are already close to
- 🌀 Disclose gradually
- 🌀 Find a time when it is easier for people to concentrate
- 🌀 Find a place where there will be no interruptions
- 🌀 Go slowly and at each stage see how the person is responding
- 🌀 Ask for their support
- 🌀 Give them time to process your news

 For more information on opening up, visit:  
[www.openlysecular.org/resources](http://www.openlysecular.org/resources)

Many people in our community have used the term “social suicide” to describe the consequences of opening up. Increases in marginalization and the potential cost of living openly contributes to making opening up one of the most difficult things we may ever do. Other barriers include:

- 🌀 Having multiple marginalized identities
- 🌀 Emotional anxieties about negative reactions from family and friends
- 🌀 Concern about how others will react to your family because of your beliefs
- 🌀 High social costs - loss of status, trust, and community acceptance
- 🌀 Lack of secular resources for African Americans
- 🌀 Dealing with secular myths and stigma

Living openly requires self-liberation from all forms of oppression, starting with the tyranny of religious oppression; however, it does not mean that you have to be open at all times or in all places. There is no right or wrong way to live openly, and opening up is not a one-time event. When, where, how, and who you open up to is completely your choice and these decisions need to be made based on what is right for you.

## LIVING OPENLY AS A SECULAR BLACK PERSON

Despite the high costs and potential risks, many brothers and sisters who live openly secular have found peace and do not regret our decision to open up.



*“It’s one of the best decisions I’ve ever made in my life, and I completely advocate people ‘coming out’”*  
- Mark Hatcher <sup>1</sup>

Nobody can make the decision to live openly but you, and while there may be a lot to lose with very little foreseeable gain, living openly will help others in our community do the same.

<sup>1</sup> Mark D. Hatcher is the CFO of Black Atheists of America. Quoted in, “The Stigma of Being an Atheist in the US,” available at: [bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-28616115](https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-28616115)



## RISKY, BUT WORTH IT

Historically, the churches have been the most influential institutions in the African American community, and African Americans have been ardent believers. Church leaders have professed to have the solutions to the social, political, and economic ills with which African Americans must contend. But despite their claims - or perhaps because of them - problems continue to plague the African American community. Great strides have been made during the past forty years, but many problems have worsened, and new ones have arisen. More attention must be given to the importance of critical thinking in the quest for freedom, justice, and equality for African-Americans.

- excerpt from *An African American Humanist Doctrine*<sup>2</sup>

Unfortunately, American media and culture have made “coming out” as a nonbeliever difficult. We deal with fear of rejection by our friends and family and have to grapple with the knowledge that we’re looked down upon. My hope is that my story will convince other nonbelievers of color to come out about their skepticism, as well as correct some of the misinformation. The more we grow and find our voices, the more we can combat the misconceptions and prejudices about us.

- Darrin Johnson, aspiring journalist and Documentary-maker<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Published in Free Inquiry vol. 10, issue 2 (Spring 1990): 13– 15.

<sup>3</sup> Read Darrin's Full Interview at:

[theroot.com/articles/culture/2014/08/black\\_atheists\\_first\\_person\\_perspective\\_on\\_media\\_fueled\\_stereotypes.html](http://theroot.com/articles/culture/2014/08/black_atheists_first_person_perspective_on_media_fueled_stereotypes.html)

## CONTRARY TO POPULAR BELIEF...

Secular people are **NOT** immoral, and secular morality **DOES** exist

Secular individuals are typically just as moral as theists. Secular people, like theists, derive their morals from many different areas. Regarding our communities in particular, Dr. Sikivu Hutchinson argues that “moral secular values should provide the basis for robust critique of the serious cultural and socioeconomic problems that have been allowed to thrive in communities of color under the regime of organized religion.”

**The Civil Rights Movement was NOT a Christian Struggle**

When asked to speculate if the civil rights movement could have been successful without Christianity, Mark D. Hatcher gives a compelling response, “The better question here may be, ‘Would the civil rights movement have been necessary without Christianity?’ Christianity can easily

**“All people yearn to move unimpeded and unoppressed. It’s not a Christian desire to be unoppressed. It’s a human desire.”**

be used to keep a population from rising up in revolution. Yes, the civil rights movement centered in the churches, but again, that’s just because that is where our fellow ancestors got together and talked about serious issues. We mustn’t forget that the movement came on the heels of the Harlem Renaissance, an era of enlightenment and critical thinking that was rife with atheists and agnostics; nor should we forget that plenty of open atheists, such as A. Philip Randolph, played integral parts in the civil rights movement.”

Giving us a much needed reminder of the painfully obvious, atheist activist Jamila Bey adds, “All people yearn to move and to breathe unimpeded and unoppressed. It’s not a Christian desire to be unoppressed. It’s a human desire. Those who want freedom need not be religious, [and] those who agree that freedom and justice are good values need not be religious. Those values and those desires stand apart from the need for a supernatural higher being.”

### **Secularism is NOT a “White” Thing, and Secular Blacks Aren’t “Race Traitors”**

As Jamila Bey explains, “African Americans have allowed the story to be told that we are a God-fearing people. Our culture dictates - mandates, even - that we be spiritual. Accepting that definition of who we are forces us to defend our blackness should we have doubts about spirituality. [Accepting that definition means accepting that to be] authentically black is to be religious, wrongly, and that to doubt God is a white thing - wrongly. We let others define us, and we dare not buck that expectation.”

*Jamila is a prominent atheist activist. Read her full interview at:  
[theroot.com/articles/culture/2011/12/on\\_black\\_atheism\\_jamila\\_bey.html](http://theroot.com/articles/culture/2011/12/on_black_atheism_jamila_bey.html)*

## TEN WAYS TO REDUCE SECULAR STIGMA IN THE BLACK COMMUNITY

Create a sense of community among secular African Americans, as well as other racial/ethnic minorities. Build openness and safety to talk about the interplay of religion, cultural attitudes, race/ethnicity, social inequality, and secular stigma.

Critically examine the costs of religiosity on the African Americans, and black women in particular. Consider possible correlations between belief and race (e.g., black women are the most religious group in the U.S. and also score the lowest on all measures of social health).

Build commitment to change attitudes. Discourage reliance on a divine other to make people's situations better. Help friends and loved ones develop skills and strategies for self-liberation.

Take action to reduce stigma and discrimination. Don't be afraid to get involved at the forefront of the black secular movement.

Address fears and misconceptions about secular individuals. Correct false stereotypes and talk to loved ones about what it means to be black and secular.

Even if you don't personally experience religious discrimination, realize that others do. Name the problem: get people to describe how religious discrimination and secular stigma occur in different contexts.

Challenge the judging and blaming built into stigma. Help others recognize that while the types of oppression historically marginalized groups face are different, experiencing oppression is something we all have in common.

Help secular African-Americans overcome self-stigma. Build up your and others' self-esteem.

Help people to openly identify as secular and adopt a label to describe their particular worldview - atheist, agnostic, humanist, etc.

Share your story and encourage others to do the same.



Countless tools and resources exist on the web to help you take action in all of these areas. We recommend the SPLC *Teaching Tolerance* blog as a good starting point: [www.tolerance.org](http://www.tolerance.org).

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

## ORGANIZATIONS

### **African Americans for Humanism**

Program of the Center for Inquiry that supports skeptics, doubters, humanists, and atheists in our African American community, provides forums for communication and education, and facilitates coordinated action to achieve shared objectives.  
[aahumanism.net](http://aahumanism.net)

### **African Americans for Humanism DC (AAH DC)**

Meetup group that exists to bring secular humanists together, to provide a forum for communication, and to

facilitate coordinated action. In an irrational world, those who stand for reason must stand together.  
[meetup.com/aah-dc](http://meetup.com/aah-dc)

### **Black American Freethought Association (BAF/TA)**

Online group for our Black American public to engage in discussion and dialogue about forces which inform or misinform our individual and collective perspective on race, culture, theology, religion, logic and reason.  
[baftahome.com](http://baftahome.com)

### **Black Atheist Alliance**

A Facebook forum where black atheists, agnostics, the nonreligious, and open minded believers can get together to express their views. All are

welcome, regardless of your race or religious views.  
[facebook.com/groups/blackatheistalliance](https://facebook.com/groups/blackatheistalliance)

### **Black Atheists of America**

A non-profit educational Facebook group for Black Atheists. Closed group, must request to join.  
[facebook.com/BlackAtheistsofAmerica](https://facebook.com/BlackAtheistsofAmerica)

### **Black Freethought Discussion Group, Atheist Nexus**

This is a group for ALL interested in the subject of black atheism, freethought, & humanism. "Black" pertains to all people of African descent.  
[atheistnexus.org/group/blackfreethought](http://atheistnexus.org/group/blackfreethought)

### **Black Nonbelievers, Inc.**

BN is a non-profit fellowship of nonbelievers, headquartered in the Atlanta area, that is dedicated to providing an informative, caring, festive and family friendly environment.

[blacknonbelievers.wordpress.com](http://blacknonbelievers.wordpress.com)

### **Harlem Community Center for Inquiry**

The Harlem Community offers an opportunity to put your principles into practice by joining other rationalists to work for positive change in society. In addition, the Harlem Community sponsors social events for freethinkers as well as intellectual programming, and assists with campus outreach.

[centerforinquiry.net/harlem](http://centerforinquiry.net/harlem)

### **Minority Atheists of Michigan**

A Meetup group of individuals from diverse backgrounds and cultures who convene regularly to promote logic, reason and - most importantly - to offer each other support.

[meetup.com/Minority-Atheists-of-MI](http://meetup.com/Minority-Atheists-of-MI)

### **BLOGS**

#### **@Happiest Atheist**

[happiestatheist.blogspot.com](http://happiestatheist.blogspot.com)

#### **BlackFemLens**

[blackfemlens.org](http://blackfemlens.org)

#### **Black Skeptics**

[freethoughtblogs.com/blackskeptics](http://freethoughtblogs.com/blackskeptics)

#### **Black Woman Thinks**

[blackwomanthinks.blogspot.com](http://blackwomanthinks.blogspot.com)

#### **Godless and Black**

[godlessandblack.blogspot.com](http://godlessandblack.blogspot.com)

### **BOOKS**

*African American Humanism: An Anthology*

Norm R. Allen, editor

*African American Humanism and Black Secular Humanist Thought*

Norm Allen

*African American Humanist Principles: Living and Thinking*

*Like the Children of Nimrod*

Anthony B. Pinn

*Black and Not Baptist: Nonbelief and Freethought in the*

*Black Community*

Donald Barbera

*By These Hands: A Documentary History of African American*

*Humanism*

Anthony B. Pinn

*Godless Americana: Race and Religious Rebels*  
Sikivu Hutchinson

*Infidel*  
Ayaan Hirsi Ali

*Moral Combat: Black Atheists, Gender Politics, and the Values War*  
Sikivu Hutchinson

*The Black Humanist Experience: An Alternative to Religion*  
Norm R. Allen

*The Caged Virgin: An Emancipation Proclamation for Women and Islam*  
Ayaan Hirsi Ali

*The Ebony Exodus Project: Why Some Black Women Are Walking Out On Religion - And Others Should Too*  
Candace R. M. Gorham, Lpc

*The End of God-talk: An African American Humanist Theology*  
Anthony Pinn

*The Only Prayer I'll Ever Need: Let My People Go*  
Donald R. Wright

*Writing God's Obituary: How a Good Methodist Became a Better Atheist*  
Anthony B. Pinn

*You Are Not Alone "Black Nones"*  
Darrell C. Smith

## **DIGITAL MEDIA VIDEOS, TALKS, PODCASTS**

**Bridget Gaudette: The Black Atheist Experience**  
[youtu.be/X520qo9R1k8](https://youtu.be/X520qo9R1k8)

**Doubts About Religion? You're One of Many Series**  
[youtu.be/cleknrAyejA?list=PL15DD3D0BB59D6BC3](https://youtu.be/cleknrAyejA?list=PL15DD3D0BB59D6BC3)

**Mandisa Thomas: How Religion Crippled the Black Community**  
[youtu.be/lo\\_-ioeyVUY](https://youtu.be/lo_-ioeyVUY)

**Non-Believers of Color: Atheists and Skeptics in the Black Community**  
[youtu.be/InzsWmWcJ-4](https://youtu.be/InzsWmWcJ-4)

**Stray From The Flock: Story Of A Black Atheist**  
[youtu.be/FBf2J-N\\_yb8](https://youtu.be/FBf2J-N_yb8)

**The Rise of Black Secularism**  
[youtu.be/LFzwl4QtaMw](https://youtu.be/LFzwl4QtaMw)

## CALL TO ACTION: GOING PUBLIC AND GETTING INVOLVED

For too long now it has been assumed theism defines the only recognizable and viable life orientation for African Americans. But while theistic organizations, like churches, are plentiful in African American communities, they have never been the only source of activism, social transformation, and personal enhancement. This is because, historically, African Americans have held to a variety of life philosophies, including secular humanism.

For major historical figures and individuals whose names will be forgotten over time, secular humanism has nurtured life and marked a progressive path. Despite what some theists might say and what media might report, for many African Americans it is a life path of deep importance, one without supernaturalism and one that highlights both human potential as well as recognizing human shortcomings. And in this way it works to foster human accountability and responsibility for improving the quality of life for all. How can such a position on life be anything but important and valuable?

Maybe you are a part of this historically significant community of African American humanists, but you've

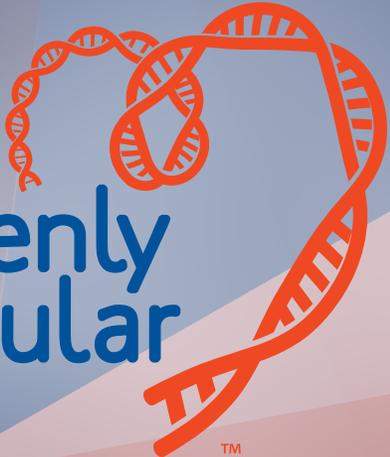
thought yourself alone? Well, you're not. If you've decided this is the time to go public with your secular humanism, please recognize you are part of a vibrant and meaningful community spread across the country.

Be proud of your life philosophy; share it with others in thoughtful and respectful ways. Anything with such life-transforming potential shouldn't be kept to oneself. More important than simply handing out documents or recommending books, your personal life story and your activism are the best testimony of secular humanism's value.

There's a lot individuals can do to advance a humanist agenda as a public agenda. Keep in mind: this work to advance a secular and healthy society also requires development and support of organizations committed to advancing the best of our secular humanism's values and principles.

You're not alone. There are lots of us, and the numbers are growing. Be proud of your humanism and, to the extent you can, be public about it.

*Dr. Anthony Pinn is the author of thirty books on religion, African American religion, theology and humanism.*



Openly  
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Opening Minds,  
Changing Hearts™

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