

CFI Celebrates 100th Anniversary of Scopes Trial with Conference in Chattanooga, Tennessee, July 18–20

Eric Shaver



This summer, the Center for Inquiry (CFI) and the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) will commemorate one of the most pivotal moments in the history of American education and law with the Scopes Trial Centennial Conference.

Scheduled for **July 18–20, 2025**, at the Chattanooga Hotel in **Chattanooga, Tennessee**, the event marks the 100th anniversary of a trial that tested the boundaries of science and religion in American schools. Often called the “Monkey Trial,” the Scopes case pitted evolutionary science against biblical literalism and raised the question of whether public schools would emphasize evidence-based education or promote religious doctrine, igniting a debate that still goes on today.

The Scopes Trial Centennial Conference will delve into the trial’s enduring legacy with a series of thought-provoking discussions and historical retrospectives led by experts in science, law, and history.

Attendees will hear from Judge John Edward Jones III, who delivered the decisive ruling in the 2005

Kitzmiller v. Dover case, which deemed teaching “intelligent design” in public schools unconstitutional. Actor John de Lancie will perform his acclaimed audio play, *The Dover Intelligent Design Trial*, bringing the modern-day relevance of the Scopes Trial to life.

Pulitzer Prize-winning author Edward Larson will receive the Clarence Darrow Award, and Judge Jones will be honored with the Defender of the Constitution Award for their steadfast dedication to upholding the separation of church and state.

Other distinguished speakers include:

- **Brenda Wineapple:** author of *Keeping the Faith: God, Democracy and the Trial That Riveted a Nation*, a magnificent historical exploration of the trial
- **Katherine Stewart:** award-winning journalist specializing in religious nationalism
- **Richard Katskee:** former legal director for Americans United for

[Continued on page 3]

Los Angeles Wildfires and CFI West

Jim Underdown



The Palisades fire as seen from Griffith Park.

On Tuesday, January 7, 2025, a deadly mixture of unseasonably dry conditions and Santa Ana winds combined to cause the worst set of wildfires in the Los Angeles area’s history. Seventy-to 100-mile-per-hour wind gusts sent flames raging through open land and kept firefighting aircraft grounded. Water systems and fire departments were overwhelmed, and soon residential neighborhoods caught fire in four major conflagrations.

Several longtime members of the Center for Inquiry West lost their homes, including CFI Board Chair Eddie Tabash, whose house

in Pacific Palisades was reduced to ash.

In response to this disaster, CFI West teamed up with local groups Atheists United and Sunday Assembly to provide day-use shelter to people displaced by the fires. The groups also collected donations of food, clothing, and other daily essentials. Any contributions not used at CFI will be forwarded to other area relief agencies better equipped to distribute or given to locals in need.

We at CFI West would like

[Continued on page 3]

CFI Responds to ‘Unacceptable’ Nomination of RFK Jr. for HHS Secretary

William Matthew London

On November 14, 2024, President-Elect Donald Trump announced he had selected Robert F. Kennedy Jr. to lead

the United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). CFI President and CEO

[Continued on page 5]

A Message from Our
Development Director

Dear Friends,

Conversations with CFI supporters like you are not just the highlight of my day; they are a source of endless inspiration. Your life experiences and values, the paths that led you to this community, make me curious about how you found CFI and what drives your commitment. While knowing which programs you support offers a glimpse into your priorities, nothing compares to hearing directly from you about what ignites your passion for our shared mission.

I invite you to immerse yourself in this latest issue of FREETHOUGHT IN ACTION. It's a record of our progress and reflects what we can accomplish together.

Every step forward we take and every milestone we reach—whether protecting consumers from medical quackery, exposing pseudoscience, promoting the separation of church and state, advancing skepticism and critical thinking, or combating disinformation—reflects your unwavering support and generosity. Your support is not just appreciated; it is indispensable.

One of the great joys of my role is helping align your philanthropic vision with opportunities that bring it to life. If you'd ever like to chat about what matters most to you and how you can make an even greater impact, I would love to hear from you.

► You can schedule a call or Zoom meeting at your convenience here:

calendly.com/debbieallen

Thank you for being an essential part of our work. Your dedication, generosity, and belief in reason, science, and secular values fuel everything we do. Here's to another year of progress—together.

With deepest appreciation,

Debbie Allen
Development Director
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Scopes Centennial Conference

[Continued from page 1]

- **Bertha Vazquez:** award-winning science educator and director of the Teacher Institute for Evolutionary Science (TIES)
- **Chris Cameron:** history professor and author of *Black Freethinkers*

The conference will also feature entertainment from comedian Leighann Lord, who will serve as emcee, and a musical performance by jazz singer Tahira Clayton, who will sing popular songs from 1925 accompanied by FFRF Copresident Dan Barker on piano.

One of the event's highlights will be a special CFI-hosted presentation by evolutionary biologist **Richard Dawkins** of the Richard Dawkins Award to Columbia University linguistics professor and *New York Times* columnist **John McWhorter**. This will be followed by an exclusive live conversation between Dawkins and McWhorter.

The conference concludes with a visit to the historic site of the trial, Rhea County Courthouse in Dayton, Tennessee, and the Clarence Darrow

statue erected by FFRF. This visit will also feature a rally on the courthouse grounds, providing attendees an opportunity to connect with the historical setting of this landmark case.

Seating is limited to 250 attendees, and registration is now open. Secure your spot early for this exceptional gathering that reflects on the legacy of the Scopes Trial, recognizing how far we have come in advancing science and secularism while highlighting the ongoing challenges in the pursuit of these ideals. Full details and registration are available at centerforinquiry.org/scopes-trial-centennial-conference or by scanning the QR code above.

Eric Shaver is outreach coordinator for the Center for Inquiry.



Scan the QR code for more information!

California Wildfires

[Continued from page 1]



to thank everyone who volunteered in these efforts and especially the firefighters and other first responders who have worked tirelessly to extinguish the flames and keep order.

Jim Underdown is the executive director of CFI West in Los Angeles, founder of the Center for Inquiry Investigations Group, and creator and host of *SkeptiLab: The Bunk Stops Here!*

A Message from Mubarak Bala



If you are not familiar with the story of Mubarak Bala, Columbia Global Freedom of Expression hosts a detailed summary of his case, which we have excerpted below. You can read the full case summary online at <https://globalfreedomofexpression.columbia.edu/cases/state-v-muhammad-mubarak-bala>. We are very pleased to share a message from Bala directly as well.

State vs. Muhammad Mubarak Bala

The High Court of Kano State in Nigeria convicted and sentenced Muhammad Mubarak Bala, a self-identified atheist, to twenty-four years in prison for blasphemy and breach of public peace.

Bala was arrested for posting messages on his Facebook page in March 2020 that were deemed blasphemous and potentially disruptive to public peace. Bala spent a year in detention without charges before finally being arraigned in February 2022. Two years after his arrest, he changed course and pleaded guilty to eighteen amended charges in April 2022.

The Court, in its decision, noted that Bala did not provide sufficient reasons to avoid conviction.

Bala was released from prison on January 9, 2025, after serving more than four years of his twenty-four-year sentence.

Dear Friends, Organizations, and the Community, especially the Human Rights Defenders around the World:

Mubarak here.

I am writing to you via the Center for Inquiry and its Secular Rescue program to express my gratitude and appreciation for your commitments and actions over the years toward not just my release but other injustices done to fringe individuals around the world. We shall prevail.

It is indeed a great day to write openly and freely once again after half a decade of unjust abduction and incarceration. I thank you immensely for the hours and resources you have expended to coerce and pressure my bullying government to not only release me but also not harm me. Do you know that I came out of prison without physical harm? I am intact with all my limbs.

I thank you all, and I specifically thank Matt Cravatta, a friend and colleague who, over the years through more than one platform, has helped secure individuals from harm, assured their freedoms and safety, and supported the relocation of them and their families to permanent safety and well-being. We need to do even more now that the challenges are tougher and the fringe communities are even more marginalized.

It sure has been the toughest decade I have ever

lived since I was born some four decades ago. I decided that I no longer want to belong to a religious practice I do not think suits my conscience, and then all hell broke loose. But I must also tell you, this is the best community to belong to; it's supportive, caring, and protective. Without your network of activists and friends, I may not have survived.

Dear readers, know that they may have wasted my time, threatened my life and well-being, and harmed my physical and mental health, as well as depleted my resources, but my resolve has never been dented, and I was never broken beyond repair. I am out strong and full of energy. Our work resumes.

Over the years, even under incarceration, I have had the means to still contribute to keeping people safe, to keeping families safe, to sending individuals under threat toward safety. All this was with the help of Cravatta and other friends in similar organizations. We all thank you and your donors for the efforts and commitments to our common cause.

You shall all hear more from me as I rejoin the world and contribute to human rights and human freedom, as well as minorities' safety and well-being. I am grateful for your contributions in time and resources. It surely paid off. We have prevailed.

I am currently strategizing on how to make my country more secular and entrench good governance. Within a few years, after relocating abroad temporarily, I hope to come back and make that happen—in person at the highest levels.

This will make Nigeria not only an abode of freedom but a safe haven for others to come and claim shelter and asylum, where people can live in freedom and safety. Time shall tell.



CEO CORNER

Robyn E. Blumner

The year 2024 was one of accomplishment.

I hope you come away duly impressed after reading this edition of FREETHOUGHT IN ACTION. It is chock full of successes on behalf of reason, science, and secularism.

- CFI's legal department broke new ground in 2024. Our case against Boiron, the world's largest manufacturer of homeopathic products, is moving toward trial. We intend to show that homeopathic "medicine" is little more than a giant fraud against medical consumers.
- In addition, we recently filed a lawsuit against the state of Texas to force it to give Secular Celebrants the same rights to solemnize marriages as that of religious leaders. We think secular people should be able to choose nonreligious officiants to marry them, and too many states make that difficult. It's a battle that CFI has been waging for years in state after state—and generally winning.
- In 2024, we monitored more than 100 bills in state legislatures around the country, lobbying aggressively against bills that would, for instance, force public school classrooms to post the Ten Commandments or teach the Christian bible.
- Secular Rescue helped dozens of overseas atheist activists in fear for their lives. We helped people such as atheist activist Mubarak Bala

of Nigeria, who was recently released from prison, where he had been serving a twenty-four-year sentence for blasphemy. In this issue of *FIA*, Mubarak documents how his sentence was reduced and the key role that Secular Rescue played.

- Our education programs greatly expanded their reach last year, with public school teachers clamoring for workshops from Generation Skeptics. Teachers are looking for ways to make their students better, more skeptical consumers of information online. Our program fits the bill perfectly, with new curriculum being added all the time.
- CSIcon, CFI's science and skepticism conference, was held in Las Vegas with featured speakers astrophysicist Neil deGrasse Tyson and physicist Brian Cox. Those lectures and many others made the conference the best one yet, in my humble opinion.

All this is just a small snippet of what was accomplished this past year by the committed staff at CFI with the help of numerous lay leaders and volunteers.

The year ahead will likely be a challenging one for our legal and lobbying departments, and they are rolling up their sleeves. But we are also planning some exciting programs for people to enjoy.

- Instead of holding CSIcon this year, CFI is hosting a joint conference with the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) that commemorates the 100th anniversary of the Scopes trial. The conference will explore all things Scopes and the still-ongoing controversy surrounding the teaching of

evolution. It's going to be the conference of the year! The Scopes Trial Centennial Conference will take place July 18–20 in Chattanooga, Tennessee. The hotel ballroom at the Chattanooga only holds 250 people, so register soon before it's sold out!

- At the conference, the Richard Dawkins Award will be given in person by Richard Dawkins to Columbia University linguistics professor and *New York Times* columnist John McWhorter. His impressive scholarship, open atheism, and clear-eyed and brave discussions of the growing threat to freedom by groupthink all contributed to his selection.
- Travelers can cruise with Richard Dawkins as well. There is a cruise to the Arctic in June and to the Greek islands in September. A portion of all fares to the Greek Islands count as a tax-deductible donation to CFI.
- In 2025, just like in 2024, roving CFI Ambassador Susan Gerbic will be helping to organize local skeptic groups into SkeptiCamps in various places across the country. Keep your eye on the *Cause & Effect* newsletters that come into your inbox every other week for any that may be coming your way.

As always, the scope and breadth of the work done at CFI is due to you! We will continue to stand up for the separation of church and state and the rights of nonbelievers here and around the world, and we will work to end pseudoscience wherever it arises, no matter what obstacles are in our way. All thanks to you.

Robyn E. Blumner is president and CEO of the Center for Inquiry and executive director of the Richard Dawkins Foundation for Reason & Science.

THE SEA OF HOMER CRUISE WITH RICHARD DAWKINS

This September, join Richard Dawkins for an epic voyage from Athens to Istanbul, exploring the fabled Greek Islands. Visit ancient monuments including the Parthenon, Minoan Knossos, and medieval Rhodes.

Richard Dawkins will present a series of lectures, and **eight percent of your passage is a tax-deductible donation to the Richard Dawkins Foundation for Reason & Science.**

SCAN THE QR CODE FOR FULL DETAILS!

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LEARN MORE

Interested in June's *New Scientist* Arctic Expedition Cruise with Richard Dawkins? Don't miss your LAST CALL to get onboard! Visit www.newscientist.com/dawkins to learn more.

RFK Jr. for HHS Secretary

[Continued from page 1]

Robyn Blumner issued a statement describing Kennedy as “wholly unqualified and manifestly unfit to lead America’s top public health agency—or any public health department at any level of government” and warned that his appointment would result in many Americans almost certainly getting sick or dying needlessly. She called for the Senate to “do its obvious constitutional duty and reject this nomination,” pledging, “CFI will do everything we can to prevent his confirmation.”

Azhar Majeed, CFI’s director of government affairs, followed up with an Action Alert page enabling CFI supporters a convenient means by which to tell their senators why they should oppose Kennedy’s nomination. The page included several of Kennedy’s most egregiously irresponsible and unsupported claims regarding public health matters, including vaccines, COVID-19 treatments, AIDS, and antidepressants.

CFI also created a lobbying document to spotlight Kennedy’s record of opposing vaccinations, alarmism about conventionally grown foods, and ways he could cause massive population harm as head of HHS.

Links to all these CFI-produced documents are archived on the “RFK Jr. Watch” resource page on CFI’s Quackwatch website at <https://quackwatch.org/rfk-jr-watch/>. The page also includes links to more than 110 information sources describing the activities of Kennedy and other nominees for public health agencies within HHS. New links have been added almost daily since November.

The page features links to *Skeptical Inquirer*, major media organizations, blog posts, medical publications, videos, and nongovernmental organizations. It includes information about



Robert F. Kennedy Jr. Credit: Juli Hansen | Shutterstock

coalitions of thousands of physicians, public health professionals, and scientists opposing Kennedy’s nomination. It includes the open letter from more than seventy-five Nobel Laureates that strongly urges senators to vote against the confirmation of Kennedy’s appointment as secretary of HHS.

The page provides links to articles addressing how Kennedy has been a threat to population health through germ theory denialism, alarmism about community water fluoridation, misguided

advocacy of unpasteurized milk, promotion of unproven stem cell treatments, demonizing psychiatric drugs, fear-mongering about WiFi and cell phones, hyping unproven psychedelic drugs as medicines, and his overall disregard for scientific evidence. A *NewsGuard Misinformation Monitor* article identified ninety-six different false claims advanced by Kennedy and Children’s Health Defense, the anti-vaccine nonprofit he founded.

In a guest essay in *The New York Times*, Dr. Paul A. Offit, a fellow of the Committee for Skeptical Inquiry and a pediatrician who specializes in infectious diseases at the Children’s Hospital, criticized the news media for improperly labeling Kennedy a “vaccine skeptic.” He described Kennedy as “a vaccine cynic, failing to accept studies that refute his beliefs.” Offit describes himself and everyone who serves with him on the Food and Drug Administration’s vaccine advisory committee as vaccine skeptics, because they will only recommend that a vaccine be authorized or licensed for use by Americans when pharmaceutical companies prove to the committee that a vaccine is safe and effective.

We need a scientifically literate skeptic—not a cynic, denialist, and quackery promoter such as Kennedy—to lead the Department of Health and Human Services. CFI’s Quackwatch will continue to report on Kennedy’s activities to undermine public health and consumer protection whether or not he takes office as secretary of HHS.

William Matthew London is the editor of *Consumer Health Digest*, the weekly electronic newsletter of CFI’s Quackwatch, and is an emeritus professor in the Department of Public Health at California State University, Los Angeles.

Digitizing the Robert Green Ingersoll Papers

Timothy Binga

Several years ago, the Robert Green Ingersoll Memorial Committee began raising funds to digitize the historical archive of Ingersoll’s papers. Happily, we finally reached our goal at the end of 2024, and the digitization process has begun in earnest.

The Robert Green Ingersoll Papers were microfilmed by the Library of Congress in the 1980s and consist of thirty-six reels of 35mm film. There are approximately 51,000 individual images contained on the microfilm.

The Library of Congress also created a finding aid for the materials, most recently completed in 2010. The finding aid lists the history of the papers as well as the disposition today and the history of their process for preparing the papers for scholarly use. According to the finding aid, there are nine series consisting of broad categories such as diaries and family correspondence writings. There are also some



unique items, including photographs, maps, and phonographic discs.

The process of converting these items to digital images is estimated to take between six and nine months. The scanning work will take place at the Backstage Company, a leading

digitization service primarily used by libraries and archives. They will create the images and conduct optical character recognition (OCR) on the resulting PDFs but will not correct any of the text created. The file structure will mirror the existing microfilm and finding aid as closely as is reasonable.

We can then go through and correct the OCR text and interpret the cursive text in the future. If the proper workflow can be developed, this might even turn into a volunteer project that could be done from anywhere.

One of the missions of the Center for Inquiry Libraries is to preserve and conserve the materials related to what we do. The history of the freethought movement and leaders such as Robert Green Ingersoll deserve no less. With the help of the Ingersoll Committee and the ongoing work of the Robert Green Ingersoll Birthplace Museum, we are continuing to show how Ingersoll’s writing (and the topics he wrote about) remain relevant today.

Timothy Binga is the director of the Ingersoll Birthplace Museum.

After a Successful Year of Lobbying in 2024, CFI's OPP Readies for the Challenges of a New Year

Azhar Majeed

Over the final weeks of 2024, CFI's Office of Public Policy (OPP) closed out a successful year of lobbying and advocacy with a final push on state-level legislation. The OPP has now hit the ground running for what's sure to be a busy and challenging new year at both the federal and state levels.

Advancing Secular Celebrant Legislation

As 2024 wound down, the OPP lobbied in favor of Michigan SB 1044, legislation that would allow marrying couples to choose a secular celebrant (rather than a religious official) to solemnize their wedding. The OPP has long supported such secular celebrant bills as a central part of CFI's effort to give secular-minded couples the opportunity to choose a wedding celebrant who matches their values and worldview. The OPP sent out an Action Alert on December 13, 2024, encouraging CFI supporters in Michigan to contact their legislator and voice their support for SB 1044.

As we stated at the time, existing Michigan law allows only religious leaders and a limited number of state and local officials to solemnize a wedding. SB 1044 would amend state law to allow a "civil celebrant" to solemnize any marriage, defining a civil celebrant as anyone who is at least eighteen years old and who "works in accordance with the wishes of the client couple." The bill is thus simple and open-ended, allowing marrying couples to choose the celebrant most meaningfully suited to perform their wedding ceremony. The OPP also highlighted CFI's Secular Celebrants Program, which provides training and certification to individuals who wish to become secular celebrants themselves.

SB 1044 passed in the Michigan Senate in December 2024 but, as of this writing, has not been approved by the House of Representatives. The OPP will continue to lobby Michigan lawmakers in favor of this ameliorative legislation in 2025.

Fighting Religion in Schools

In Texas, the Office of Public Policy advocated against the state government's effort to mandate biblical teachings in public schools. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) proposed curricular materials in Spring 2024 that would infuse K-5 education in the state with biblical lessons, and the Texas State Board of Education approved these materials in November 2024. Prior to their approval, the OPP sent out a mass mailing to the fifty largest public school districts in Texas, urging them not to adopt the new curriculum at the school district level.

The OPP's mailing pointed out the obvious First Amendment issues inherent in promoting one specific religion (in this case, Christianity) in the public school setting, at the expense of all other religions and belief systems. In addition to the Establishment Clause problems, we made clear that Texas schools and students alike would

be better served using this instruction time to focus on core academic subjects. By sending out our mailing prior to the materials being adopted as final, the Office of Public Policy hoped to inspire and promote resistance among Texas school districts to this unconstitutional effort to promote religion in public schools.

Since our Texas mailing went out in October 2024, the OPP has received positive responses from Fort Bend Public Schools and the Arlington School District, among others. We will continue to stay actively engaged with this issue in the new year.

The OPP has also been tracking pre-filed bills in multiple states as part of the new legislative season. For instance, legislators have introduced "Ten Commandments bills" in Texas, Missouri, Oklahoma, and Tennessee. These bills mandate that all public schools in the state post the Ten Commandments in every single classroom, and they are flagrantly unconstitutional. The OPP will fight tooth-and-nail against these bills (and copycat legislation in other states) throughout 2025.

Opposing RFK's Nomination

On the federal level, the OPP's biggest priority as we kick off the new year is opposing the nomination of Robert F. Kennedy Jr. for Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS). Kennedy is well known as an anti-vaccine advocate and has made a lucrative career out of promoting misinformation about the supposed ill effects of vaccines, including the debunked idea that they cause autism in children. Even though these claims have been scientifically discredited, Kennedy has continued to actively sow mistrust in modern science and spread conspiracy theories, which has led many people to opt out of having their children vaccinated against diseases such as polio.

The Office of Public Policy issued an Action Alert opposing Kennedy's nomination on November 21, 2024. Our alert argued that Kennedy is not at all qualified to hold such an important position in public health, given that he is a lawyer with no training in medicine or public health. As of this writing, more than 1,100 CFI supporters have used our Action Alert to submit messages to their Senators. CFI has also directly engaged with members of the Senate and their staffers; we put together a lobbying one-pager to better inform them about the issues raised by Kennedy's nomination. The OPP continues to lobby aggressively in the hopes that the Senate will vote against confirming Kennedy's nomination.

Battling School Vouchers

Finally, the OPP will lobby against the Educational Choice for Children Act (HR 9462) this year. This federal bill would authorize billions of dollars per year in tax breaks for individuals who donate to organizations that give money to private and

religious schools. This would create an indirect method of pushing funding away from public schools (and toward religious schools). The issue is, therefore, closely related to the OPP's advocacy against private voucher programs. Voucher programs divert public funding and students away from public schools and toward private, mostly religious schools—where students receive religious indoctrination instead of a secular, well-rounded education.

The Office of Public Policy will stay on top of this federal issue in 2025. With all this in addition to the rest of our federal and state portfolio, it's clear the new year will be a very busy and challenging one.

Azhar Majeed is the director of government affairs for the Center for Inquiry.



Spring Secular Celebrant Training Starts Soon!

Join us Saturday, April 25, 2025, to become a certified Secular Celebrant! The training covers important information about how to perform various types of ceremonies, including weddings, funerals, and commitment and naming ceremonies. You'll also learn how to fulfil legal requirements and have opportunities to practice officiating with other trainees.

See more info at
[centerforinquiry.org/
secular-celebrants/training](https://centerforinquiry.org/secular-celebrants/training).

Center for Inquiry's Branches Make Connections

Eric Shaver

The Center for Inquiry's branches wrapped up 2024 with thoughtful programming and community-focused celebrations. Branch activities provided meaningful opportunities to connect with fellow secularists and skeptics and engage with issues of critical importance for all of us. From documentary screenings to Winter Solstice celebrations, here's a look back at some highlights from the final few months of 2024—and ways you can join us in shaping CFI's future.

Documentary Screenings: Unpacking the Threat of Christian Nationalism

In the runup to the 2024 elections, CFI branches in Western New York, New York City, Indiana, and Portland hosted screenings of *Bad Faith: Christian Nationalism's Unholy War on Democracy*. This powerful documentary examines the growing influence of Christian nationalism and its implications for democracy, a topic of urgent relevance in today's political climate.

Each screening was followed by group discussions, with attendees diving deep into the film's themes and exploring ways to combat the erosion of church-state separation. A big thanks goes out to our branch coordinators in these cities for helping organize these events and foster critical conversations about the intersection of religion and politics.

Celebrating the Season with Secular Joy

CFI branches in Western New York and Indiana capped off the year with their ever-popular Winter



Bad Faith (2024) was shown at four CFI branches this fall.

Solstice Celebrations, events that have become cherished traditions in their respective communities.

In Western New York, the solstice celebration featured an emotional and compassionate lecture by Lyn Bartlett Taylor, who explored her personal response to the 2024 election cycle and reflected on

what support secular people might offer each other during trying times. The event was provocative yet inspiring, reminding attendees of the importance of community.

Meanwhile, CFI Indiana celebrated the season with warmth and gratitude at their Winter Solstice Celebration, where the spotlight was on their incredible volunteers. The evening culminated with the granting of the 2024 Volunteer of the Year Award, honoring Meredith Jones for her contributions to the branch and its activities.

Looking Ahead: A Call for Volunteers

As we gear up for an exciting 2025, we're calling on our supporters to help make our upcoming programs a success. This year, CFI will be guiding a series of SkeptiCamp mini conferences across the country, creating opportunities for grassroots skeptics to share their knowledge and passion for science, reason, and critical inquiry. These events are designed to empower local affiliate groups and spotlight diverse voices in the skeptic movement.

We need your help to make these SkeptiCamp events a reality. Whether you can lend a hand with planning, logistics, or on-the-ground support, your involvement will help us inspire and educate audiences nationwide.

If you'd like to volunteer or learn more about our upcoming programs, email us at outreach@centerforinquiry.org.

Eric Shaver is the outreach coordinator for the Center for Inquiry.

CFI's Legal Team Keeps Fighting

Richard Conn

As *Saturday Night Live* creator Lorne Michaels is often quoted as saying, "Sometimes the wheel turns slowly, but it turns." This is an adage that legal practitioners, and particularly litigators, know is true, though we say "the wheels of justice grind slowly but exceedingly fine." The cases we fight are not often quickly resolved, but they are important. However, as Robyn Blumner notes in her column elsewhere in this issue, it looks like 2025 will be a milestone year in CFI's years-long fight to protect consumers from homeopathy pseudoscience.

It has been almost three years since we first filed suit against the homeopathy manufacturer Boiron. Since then, we've undertaken lengthy and detailed foundational work. To convince the court that Boiron's products deceive its customers, we started from square one to establish the scientific foundation for that claim. This requires lengthy back and forth over expert witnesses and depositions about questions of law as well as scientific fact. Boiron has a lot at stake in this litigation, and

they have the resources to fight us at every turn. Nevertheless, the wheel *does* turn. I believe that 2025 will finally see this action go to trial, giving us the opportunity to show the world in open court that Boiron's products—and indeed the very premise of homeopathic "treatment" more broadly—are nothing more than a mirage deceptively marketed to consumers as scientifically based.

Protecting consumers from deceptive pseudoscience is a longstanding priority for CFI. It's important work that needs to be done, and we will continue to lead the way.

Another area in which CFI is proud to lead is the fight for legal recognition for secular marriage celebrants. I mentioned in our last issue that, as of late October 2024, CFI filed suit again in Texas to challenge a law that says only "officiants associated with organized religion" or state and federal judges can legally solemnize marriage. This is a fundamental question of rights, and it's one that CFI has championed for many years. Where we can

help change the law through legislative means—as my colleague Azhar Majeed has been working to do in Michigan—we will. And where that is *not* possible, we will continue to work to change the law through the courts, as we are now in Texas and have before in Indiana and elsewhere.

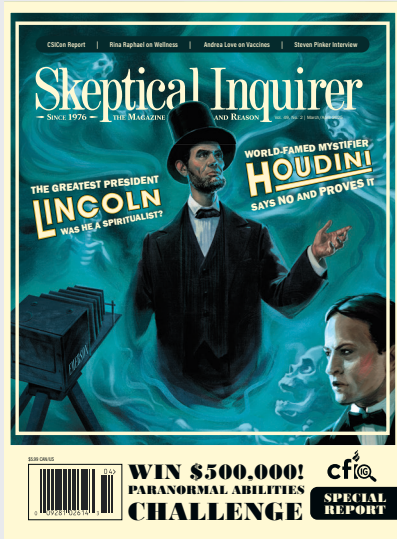
There will, no doubt, be more new fights to come in 2025, particularly in combatting government promotion of religion in public schools. The interest groups and politicians pushing to enshrine religious privilege into law have the wind at their backs. The advocates of pseudoscience continue to push the boundaries. But we will not be deterred. We will not be demoralized. And, when it comes to the work of defending nonbeliever's rights or protecting consumers from pseudoscientific nonsense, we're happy to take as much time as those efforts require.

Thank you for your support. None of this important work would be possible without it!

Richard Conn is the general counsel of the Center for Inquiry.

Was Abraham Lincoln a Spiritualist? *Skeptical Inquirer* Investigates

Julia Lavarney



Have you ever been disappointed to learn your favorite celebrity is a Scientologist or thinks everything Gwyneth Paltrow promotes through her “wellness” company Goop is just amaaaaazing? When Harry Houdini heard rumors that one of the people he most admired, President Abraham Lincoln, was a Spiritualist, Houdini was likely crestfallen at first. However, like the great skeptic he was, he didn’t take those claims at face value.

Instead, as someone quite well-versed in Spiritualism—Houdini exposed several so-called mediums as hoaxers—he investigated and

found that, no, Lincoln was not a Spiritualist. Award-winning Lincoln scholar and Civil War historian Jason Emerson tells the tale and lays out the evidence for *Skeptical Inquirer* readers in the March/April 2025 cover story, “Harry Houdini Debunked Claims of Abraham Lincoln’s Spiritualism.”

Elsewhere in the new issue, Rina Raphael’s feature article, “Why You Should Be More Skeptical the Next Time You Read a Health News Article,” tells readers why health news writers are prioritizing sensationalism over science. Raphael, a journalist who specializes in health, wellness, and misinformation and is the author of *The Gospel of Wellness: Gyms, Gurus, Goop, and the False Promise of Self-Care*, says,

With shrinking news audiences and dried-up advertising, social media platforms have become stiff competition. Reporters must churn out more stories to compensate, leaving less time for important stories that deserve more attention and less fanfare.

The latest *Skeptical Inquirer* also includes an in-depth special section on the Committee for Skeptical Inquiry’s annual conference. CSICON 2024 was held in Las Vegas

October 24–27, 2024. Reports cover everything from the opening reception on Thursday night to the conference-concluding Sunday Morning Papers. The section is full of great pictures from conference photographer Karl Withakay, which accompany lively summaries of the presentations from *SI* Editor Stephen Hupp, Brazilian journalist and science writer Carlos Orsi, *Skeptic Zone* podcast contributor Kat McLeod, CFI Education Director Bertha Vazquez, CSI Chief Investigator Kenny Biddle, CSI Fellow Susan Gerbic, *Skeptic Zone* podcast contributor Adrienne Hill, and New Zealand skeptic Craig Shearer. If you weren’t there, you’ll almost feel as if you attended last year’s greatest skeptical conference in the nation. If you were lucky enough to attend, the section will surely bring a lot of memories to your mind and smiles to your face.

And of course, this write-up would not be complete without a rundown of the superb contributions from our regular columnists: Robyn E. Blumner takes on the DEI apparatus’s role in determining grants for scientific research; Joe Nickell lets readers in on his role—or

we should say lack thereof—in the Netflix movie *The Devil on Trial*; Italian skeptic Massimo Polidoro reviews Paul Bloom’s *Against Empathy: The Case for Rational Compassion*; Stuart Vyse takes a look at a retracted article that had shown that performing rituals had a positive effect on performance and anxiety levels and concludes that maybe we should “stop believin’” in rituals; in her premiere column for *SI*, immunologist and microbiologist Andrea Love gives the lowdown on mRNA vaccines and gene therapy. And that’s not all! We also have columns from debunker Mick West and *SI* Deputy Editor Benjamin Radford.

The March/April 2025 issue of *Skeptical Inquirer* is on newsstands now. Even better, subscribe today—each print subscription includes unlimited internet access to the current issue and all back issues! Visit www.skepticalinquirer.org and click on the cover of the current issue of *Skeptical Inquirer* for more information.

Julia Lavarney is managing editor of *Skeptical Inquirer*.

SkeptiLab: The Bunk Stops Here!

Jim Underdown

Here’s a rundown of the full season of *SkeptiLab* episodes. The CFIIG-produced web series is your one-stop shop for science-based debunking mixed in with a little entertainment. Please share with friends and loved ones! All episodes can be found online at Skeptilab.tv.

Episode 1: Telekinesis

As host, I am joined by actor Jim O’Heir (Jerry on *Parks and Recreation*), who stops by to help shatter the concept of telekinesis. Featuring: Professor Ray Hall

Episode 2: Astrology

Actress and comedian Julia Sweeney (*Saturday Night Live*) joins us to explore the pseudoscience of astrology. Just like my horoscope said she would! Featuring: Astronomer Phil Plait

Episode 3: Telepathy

Veep star Matt Walsh and his wife, Morgan Walsh (*Games People Play*, *Burning Love*), show off their ability to communicate with each other telepathically. Featuring: Banachek and Dr. John Suarez

Episode 4: Dowsing

Actor and comedian Andy Richter (*Conan*, *The Three Questions with Andy Richter*) tries his hand at dowsing in the CFI West parking lot. Featuring: Donald Prothero

Episode 5: UFOs and UAP

Writer, performer, and podcaster Adam Felber (*Wait Wait Don’t Tell Me*, *Nobody Listens to Paula Poundstone*) helps us delve into the world of

UFOs—UAP—or whatever you want to call them. Featuring: Mick West and Seth Shostak

Episode 6: Ghosts and the Afterlife

Author and comedian Annabelle Gurwitch (*Dinner and a Movie*) joins the SkeptiLab to explore an age-old question: What happens to you when you die? Featuring: Dr. Steven Novella and Kenny Biddle

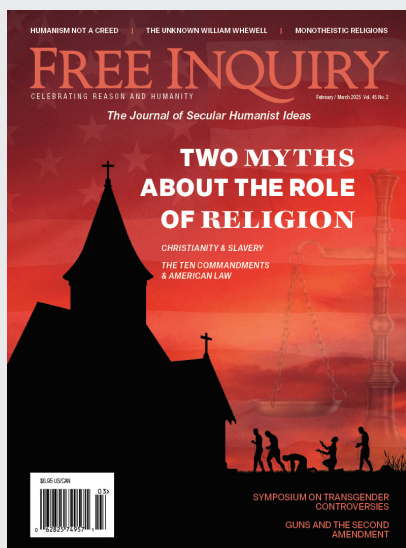
Episode 7: Fortune Tellers

Voice artist and actor Phil Lamarr (*Mad TV*, *Futurama*, *Samurai Jack*) helps unravel the mysteries surrounding fortune telling. Featuring: Professor Richard Wiseman

Jim Underdown is the executive director of CFI West in Los Angeles, founder of the Center for Inquiry Investigations Group, and creator and host of *SkeptiLab: The Bunk Stops Here!*

Transgender Controversies and Myths about the Role of Religion in the New *Free Inquiry*

Nicole Scott



One of the most hot-button issues of today is transgender rights and equality. *Free Inquiry* does not shy away from discussing controversial topics within its pages, and questions related to transgender rights are no exception. The magazine's February/March 2025 issue includes a Transgender Controversies symposium. *Free Inquiry* Editor Ron Lindsay introduces the section with an

excerpt from his book *Against the New Politics of Identity*. Lindsay outlines the topics of each article in the section and highlights a major point of contention within the larger discussion: medical interventions for children wishing to transition.

Writer Gary L. Francione offers "A Framework for Resolving the Controversy," providing examples involving equality claims and belief claims surrounding transgender rights. Ultimately, he states, "we must respect the equality claims of transgender persons, but we must reject their belief claims. And we must all be able to exercise our right of free speech to express whatever view it is we have of this matter." Francione ends with the example of J. K. Rowling's Tweet regarding sex being binary, leading directly to the next article in the section: "In the Toilet with J. K. Rowling: Reasons vs. Emotion in the Transgender Bathroom Debate" by Tilda Storey-Law.

Storey-Law outlines the scenario

in which Rowling's Tweet arose and then provides her reasoning for why so many "gender-critical" feminists are against transgender rights: fear. There is immense fear of men in women-only spaces, and many transgender women are seen in entertainment as villains, so there is a transference of fear onto transgender women. Storey-Law concludes: "When we use deeply felt emotion as evidence of an injustice, we forget that emotions are not necessarily accurate reflections of the world around us."

Rounding out the section on Transgender Controversies are Robert Pokorski's discussion on parental rights and anti-transgender legislation and Nathan H. Lents's insistence on getting gender ideology out of biology.

The cover stories of the February/March 2025 issue surround two persistent myths on the role of religion in history and law. Christo Roberts discusses "Christianity's Supposed Role in Ending Slavery," while *FI* Editor

Ron Lindsay outlines how "The Ten Commandments Are *Not* the Foundation for American Law."

As always, this issue includes several rousing presentations on religion: Herb Silverman shares his impressions on "Monotheistic Religions"; in *The Faith I Left Behind* Department, Ronald Reese Ruark tells of his experience with "Three Exorcisms"; Edmund Smith responds to a previous issue with his own "A Guide of Living (and Dying)"; and Justin Allen Rose compares "God and Kim Jong Un: Two Peas in a Pod."

The February/March 2025 issue of *FI* is available on newsstands now. Better yet, subscribe—each print subscription includes unlimited internet access to the current issue and all previous articles! Visit www.secularhumanism.org and click on the magazine cover for more information.

Nicole Scott is managing editor of *Free Inquiry*.

Offit, Vazquez Kick Off a New Season of *Skeptical Inquirer Presents* for 2025

Nicole Scott



After taking a brief hiatus to make way for CSICON 2024, the popular livestream series *Skeptical Inquirer Presents* returned in January 2025 with two powerhouse events.

On January 23, Leighann Lord hosted a conversation with vaccine expert and CFI Fellow Paul A. Offit, MD. Offit has become one of the go-to experts for reporters and analysts covering Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s nomination to head the Department of Health and Human Services—and just how much trouble America might be in if he's confirmed. (At the time of this event, Kennedy's first confirmation hearing had just been scheduled, but no official hearings or votes had taken place yet.) Offit discussed the importance of HHS and the many programs it oversees as they relate to protecting public health, pandemic preparedness, and promoting lifesaving science. Offit explained the devastating impact an anti-science misinformation booster such as Kennedy could have if he's put in charge and why it's important for

Americans everywhere to oppose his nomination.

On February 6, CFI's Bertha Vazquez and host James Underdown discussed Vazquez's new book, *What Teachers Want to Know about Climate Change*. In it, she challenged her fellow educators to introduce skeptical thinking skills to their students as a necessary aspect of understanding the politics of climate change. Vazquez argued science teachers are trained to teach critical thinking, emphasizing that science is falsifiable and requires tested hypotheses, evidence, and consensus—but they don't teach how our own flawed thinking and perceptions can get in the way of accepting facts.

The latest season is just getting started, with more free livestream events to come. Visit <https://skepticalinquirer.org/presents/> for information on upcoming *Skeptical Inquirer Presents* episodes and to find video from past events.

Nicole Scott is managing editor of *Free Inquiry*.

CFI Education: 2024 Year-End Roundup and Spring 2025 Preview

Bertha Vazquez



Top: Generation Skeptics sessions are always full. This is the California Science Teachers Annual Conference in Sacramento, California.

Bottom Right: Kenny Coogan at the annual Texas Science Teachers Conference in San Antonio. You can see examples of the skulls we had gathered funds for at CSICon 2024.

Bottom Left: Coogan's group in San Antonio.

CFI Education closed the year with a busy and productive few months. We delivered twenty-four educational workshops across our Teacher Institute for Evolutionary Science (TIES), ScienceSaves, and Generation Skeptics programs, reaching an estimated 430 teachers across the United States. The year's two most popular workshops were the TIES "Skull Comparison Activity" and Generation Skeptics' "Don't Believe Everything You Believe."

The Skull Comparison Activity (<https://tieseducation.org/resource/skull-comparison-activity-without-the-expensive-skulls/>) offers educators cost-effective methods for teaching about human evolution through skull analysis. Students explore the anatomical differences and similarities among seven related species, which enhances their understanding of human evolutionary history.

The skull models needed for this investigation can cost over \$1,000. However, the TIES activity provides educators with two less expensive options: 3D-printed skulls and 2D skull images.

TIES gives educators access to a website that offers printable 3D skull models, allowing students to examine and compare physical replicas of various hominin species. For an even more affordable alternative, they have access

to documents delivering high-quality images of different skulls. These can be printed out and used for comparative analysis without the need for physical models. We recommend the Smithsonian's amazing 3D Human Origins site for this activity. (If you love the topic of human evolution, you can explore their collection at <https://humanorigins.si.edu/evidence/3d-collection>.)

Don't Believe Everything You Believe sessions offer teachers a new perspective on source credibility. Teachers are skilled at showing students the importance of substantiating claims with evidence and checking for source credibility. However, they are not always familiar with teaching students how to check their own biases when processing new information. This session is often a true *a-ha* moment for teachers, leading them to realize this very important component of critical thinking has been missing from their instruction.

At CSICon 2024 in October, our CFI Education presentation really resonated with attendees, who generously donated over \$30,000 to support our mission! Also in October, TIES was recognized by prominent organizations such as the Middle Level Science Teachers Association and the Florida Science Teacher Association, which highlighted our program on their

webpages.

Our TIES webinar series had something for everyone in fall 2024. Elizabeth Shreeve presented her children's book, *The Oddball Book of Armadillos*. For dog lovers, we invited Vanessa Woods, a canine cognition expert at Duke University, to talk about her research into successful breeding practices for service dogs. Also from Duke University, *Star Trek* fan and CFI Fellow Mohammed Noor described how teachers can effectively use science fiction to teach evolution in an engaging manner. Our series was rounded out by two notable science authors, Jules Howard (*Infinite Life: The Revolutionary Story of Eggs and Evolution*) and Nick Lund (*Dinosaurs to Chickens: How Evolution Works*).

The ScienceSaves campaign to formally recognize National Science Appreciation Day has collected more than 2,000 signatures (and counting!). Additionally, Lanny Swerdlow, a prominent figure in California politics, drafted a resolution to support the National Science Appreciation Day declaration statewide.

Finally, Generation Skeptics expanded its reach beyond teacher workshops, hosting in-person presentations for atheist groups in California and even a high school class full of young-earth creationists, fostering critical thinking skills across different communities. We revamped our Generation Skeptics webpage to improve readability and added five valuable new lessons. These cover topics such as how tribalism affects our thinking, optical illusions and perception, and the difference between FDA- and non-FDA-approved products. I'm a big fan of journalist Rina Raphael's work, so we also added two new article analysis exercises for language arts classes based on her popular pieces. For more, check out the article on the Generation Skeptics program that was published in the November/December 2024 issue of *Skeptical Inquirer* magazine (<https://skepticalinquirer.org/2024/10/critical-thinking-in-the-classroom-how-cfis-generation-skeptics-can-help/>).

We're excited to continue our educational mission into the new year! So far, we have eleven workshops already confirmed with more to be scheduled. We'll also be announcing four informative TIES webinars for the winter/spring season. We invite all CFI members and supporters to join us for these free webinars (<https://tieseducation.org/webinars/>)!

We're committed to empowering educators and fostering a love of science in students nationwide. Thank you for your continued support!

Bertha Vazquez is the director of education at the Center for Inquiry.

Skeptical Investigations of the Spooky and Strange

Kenny Biddle

Welcome to another update of the spooky and strange! Let me catch you up on what I've been doing since the last issue.

First, I finally published a video of my adventures at the Grafton Monster Festival, which I attended (along with frequent *Skeptical Inquirer* contributor Daniel Reed) back in June 2024. The video begins with me and Reed visiting the location of the original 1964 sighting of the Grafton monster, which is described as seven-to-nine feet tall and four feet wide with white seal-like skin. In the original report, the monster had no discernible head, but over the years the monster has been described as having a "head" (mostly two red eyes and a mouth) in the middle of its chest.

The video features interviews with authors, conference organizers, and the daughter of the only eyewitness. Each provided their thoughts on whether there really was a Grafton monster. Finally, I shared a sidewalk bench with Reed, who had not only done a deep dive into the legend of the Grafton monster but also discovered a long-lost (yet very revealing) letter to the editor written by the original witness, Robert Cockrell, fifty years after his alleged sighting.

Next, I teamed up with another *SI* contributor, Autumn Sword, for a closer look at three self-proclaimed exorcists and demonologists. First was Ralph Sarchie, a former NYPD sergeant of the 46th precinct in South Bronx, New York, who in 2001 published *Beware the Night*, which chronicled his adventures as a cop-turned-exorcist inspired by (get ready to groan) Ed and Lorraine Warren. Then we looked at husband-and-wife team Chris and Harmony DeFlorio, who created New York Demonic Investigation, an outgrowth of their "New York City homeless ministry, Seek & Save Outreach" after Chris retired from the NYPD.

While Sword examined their heavily religious (and in one case, slightly racist) approach to determining demonic possession, I looked at the use of typical ghost hunting gadgets the DeFlorio couple use to "find demons." I broke down the use of electromagnetic field meters, an X-Box Kinect gaming peripheral, and FLIR thermal camera, explaining why they're not proper tools for finding anything considered "paranormal."

I also recently attended a psychic craft fair in Buffalo, New York. After getting a tip from CFI WNY Advisory Board member Dave C., I drove to the fair in hopes of interviewing a dowser who had advertised their alleged ability on Facebook. My intention was to extend an invitation to take the CFI Investigation Group's \$500,000 Paranormal Challenge. Unfortunately, I could not locate the dowser, but I *did* meet a "pendulum reader" named Kayla. Kayla is a self-proclaimed psychic and animal medium whose website offers pendulum board and tarot readings.

I introduced myself (including my title and job description) and extended the invitation to the



The author speaks with Kathleen Cockrell Arbuthnot, daughter of the original (and only) "eyewitness" to the Grafton monster.



The author with Shane Stephenson holding the portrait of George Sullivan, whose face reportedly disappears when photographed.

CFIIG Challenge to her. In an unexpected twist, Kayla invited me to sit for a reading (for \$20) to see if she could impress me with her ability—contacting deceased loved ones and conveying their messages to the sitter (me). This was unexpected because most psychic/mediums, in my experience, refuse to give a reading to someone like me. They prefer clients who already fully believe in superpowers.

I agreed, paid the fee, and sat for a fifteen-minute reading during which she allegedly contacted not one but *two* of my relatives. In another fortunate twist (for us), Kayla was fine with my recording video of the entire session. If you'd like to see the video along with my commentary, it can be found on skepticalinquirer.org under the title, "A Skeptic Gets a Pendulum Reading."

Finally, a local news segment aired in October 2024 that featured alleged ghost photographs taken

aboard the *USS The Sullivans*, docked at Canalside on the Buffalo waterfront. Sparked by questions from many of my *Skeptical Help Bar* viewers, my wife and I took a ride down to the ship and got a personal tour (arranged by CFI's Tim Binga) from Shane Stephenson, director of museum collections. I filmed the tour/investigation, visiting the areas where these ghost photos were captured. Recently, I was able to get the final piece of the puzzle when I met with museum docent Jess, the man who first presented the photos to the news crew.

What did I find? Well, you'll have to wait for the video to come out, which should be about the time you get this issue of *FREETHOUGHT IN ACTION*. Never stop learning!

Kenny Biddle is the chief investigator for the Committee for Skeptical Inquiry.

Center for Inquiry Investigations Group

Jim Underdown

The year 2024 was an active one for the Center for Inquiry Investigations Group (CFIIG). Our team fielded 148 applications for the \$500,000 Paranormal Challenge and ultimately tested eight individuals who believed they possess superpowers. Not one of them passed their preliminary demonstrations. (Each test for the prize money consists of a preliminary and final demonstration. No one has *ever* passed a preliminary demonstration.)

Notable tests included the following:

Our colleague, Chris French, tested Aleksei, a man in London, England, who claimed to be able to influence the numbers selected by a computer-based random number generator (RNG). Aleksei's claim differs somewhat from being able to *predict* a number from an RNG.

French and his team (Serdar and Anne) made sure Aleksei had no access to an internet connection in case he had somehow hacked an online generator. Aleksei's claim was that he could cause the RNG to select the number "6" six out of ten times. The odds against that happening by luck alone are a bit over 6,000:1.

The random number generator was set to pick from numbers one through ten; for Aleksei's first five trials, he got 5, 8, 1, 5, and 4. At that point the



Chris French at the testing table with Aleksei.

test was terminated because he could no longer win. Aleksei took it well and admitted he was not able to prove his ability.

The CFIIG also tested a man in Afghanistan named Mohammad, who had a random number generator claim as well. He claimed to be able to "roll doubles" (i.e., two or three of the dice rolled come up with the same number) using three virtual dice per roll at a much higher rate than probability suggests. In this case, probability indicates that doubles will come up about 44 percent of the time. Mohammad said he could influence the RNG to roll doubles 54 percent of the time.

Because rolling doubles with a standard pair of six-sided dice is not a rare event, we scheduled four hundred rolls. He had to roll doubles 216 times to

pass his preliminary demonstration.

After 352 rolls, he had only succeeded on 159 of them (about 45 percent). At that point, he did not have enough rolls left to reach the 216 successes required, and the test was officially over. Out of curiosity, he completed the remaining rolls anyway and finished with 176 successes out of 400 (exactly 44 percent).

Two aspects of this test were extraordinary. The first was that Eric, the CFIIG first responder who was assigned to Mohammad's claim, had to write some code for Microsoft Excel that would both generate numbers (corresponding to dice throws) *and* keep track of the overall results. The program also provided practice rounds and a button Mohammad could push to initiate the roll. Kudos to Eric for putting all that together.

The second unusual aspect of this test was that it was conducted without speaking one word. Mohammed does not speak English, and neither Eric nor I (who conducted the test) speaks Afghani. The entire exercise was done through texting on Zoom and using Google Translate.

Jim Underdown is founder of the Center for Inquiry Investigations Group.

New Additions to CFI's Online Store

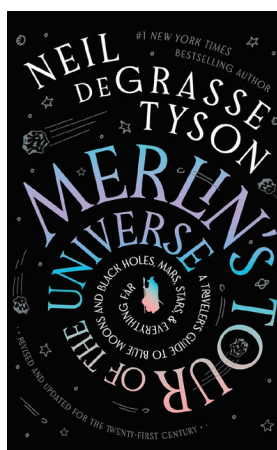
Timothy Binga

CFI's online store has recently added several new items, including this collection of new books:

- *Skeptic's Guide to the Universe* by Steven Novella, Bob Novella, Cara Santa Maria, Jay Novella, and Evan Bernstein (paperback)
- *Nobody's Fool* by Daniel Simons and Christopher Chabris (hardcover)
- *The Vaccination Picture* by Timothy Caulfield (paperback)
- *Relax* by Timothy Caulfield (Canadian version, paperback)
- *The Genetic Book of the Dead* by Richard Dawkins (hardcover)
- *Why Evolution Is True* by Jerry Coyne (paperback)
- *Weirdness!* by Taner Edis (paperback)
- *Astrophysics for People in a Hurry* by Neil deGrasse Tyson (signed hardcover copy!)
- *Our Fragile Moment* by Michael Mann (hardcover)
- *Merlin's Tour of the Universe* by Neil deGrasse Tyson (signed hardcover copy!)
- *Nonsense on Stilts*, 2nd ed by Massimo Pigliucci (paperback)
- *Anomalistic Psychology* by Christopher French and Anna Stone (paperback)

In addition to great books, we have several new branded items, including:

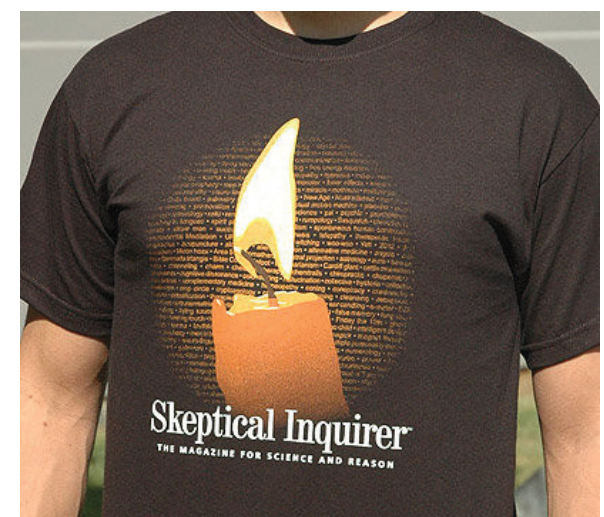
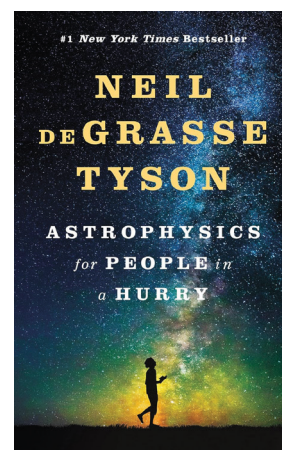
- Skeptic's bottle opener/keychain
- Skeptic's decorative slate coasters
- Retro CSICon T-shirts (four pack)



- CSICon 2023 T-shirts
- CSICon 2024 T-shirts
- Candle in the Dark T-shirts

That's right! The always popular "Candle in the Dark" *Skeptical Inquirer* T-shirt is back in stock! These shirts are gender neutral and available in sizes from small to XXX-Large. The shirt is black with a bright candle in the middle. Outside the flame are things such as superstitions, questionable claims, and quack medicine. Inside the flame are the names of famous skeptics and science heroes.

While at CSICon 2024, Neil deGrasse Tyson signed copies of several of his books. Choose from *Astrophysics for People in a Hurry* (hardcover, W. W. Norton & Company, 2017) and his newest work



Merlin's Tour of the Universe, Revised and Updated for the Twenty-First Century: A Traveler's Guide to Blue Moons and Black Holes, Mars, Stars, and Everything Far (hardcover, Blackstone Publishing, 2024). We were excited to be able to sell the latter book at CSICon 2024 before it was officially on sale for general release. Again, these are *signed copies*, so quantities are limited. Go to <https://centerforinquiry.org/store/> and check out the CFI Store to get yours today! Use the coupon code FIA2025 for a discount.

Timothy Binga is the director of CFI Libraries.