

AFA UPDATE

A PROJECT OF THE ASATRU FOLK ASSEMBLY

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RAGING RITA!

Rita is expected to hit Texas early on Saturday. More than a million Texans are evacuating, with the official word that flooding may reach 75 miles inland.

Among those affected are quite a number of Asatruar, many of them people I personally know and like. The TexasAsatru group (<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/TexasAsatru/>) is abuzz with tracking news, evacuation information, and so forth.

Good luck, my fellow Texans!

“WINTER NIGHTS IN THE REDWOODS”: AN IN-DEPTH EXPERIENCE

As the schedule for Winter Nights comes more and more into focus, we've been able to schedule additional time for our participants to talk with the Board of Directors and with yours truly, Steve McNallen. This opportunity for personal interaction, combined with some of the transformational spiritual items on the agenda, promise to make Winter Nights an even deeper experience.

On a somewhat different level, we're adding an informative talk on personal finances and a session on the possibility of future AFA-owned businesses. (See my comments on prosperity in the article below).

AFA members and friends of the AFA are urged to be with us for this milestone event! Contact us at info@runestone.org for more information.

COMMENTS ON THE "CULTURE" OF ASATRU

Every organization has its "culture," its way of doing things. This culture often has little to do with the official organizational chart or the mission statement, but instead reflects the ambiance, the customs, and the habits that the members of that organization generate in the course of going about their business.

An outstanding example of organizational cultures is the contrast between IBM and Apple. For decades, IBM stood for blue suits and white shirts, and formality. Apple, on the other hand, conjured up pictures of young bearded geniuses in jeans and tie-dyed shirts, breaking all the rules and succeeding through unconventional thinking.

Religious groups have their culture, too. Think of the Mormons, and what images come to mind? Or Southern Baptists? How about Scientologists?

How about Asatru?

Surf through Asatru web sites or go to an Asatru gathering, and what impression do you get of our culture?

Now, I understand that not all Asatruar, or kindreds, or gatherings are alike. The criticisms I am about to make may not apply to you or to your friends, but they do seem applicable to all too many of us. They are things that we, as a group, need to be working on.

The first one is alcohol. My own observation is that Asatruar are drinking less than they did twenty, or ten, or even five years ago. Some of us are doing really well on this score; I am proud to say that the AFA provides a comfortable environment for non-drinkers. Still, our movement as whole has much room for improvement on this score. This is not to say that we have to become teetotalers - I like a good drink or two and I have no intention of stopping - but we need to strictly condemn drunken behavior and we must not fall into the trap of glorifying alcohol consumption for its own sake, as part of the "rough, tough Viking" image.

Ale is not so good as they say
For the sons of men.
A man's mind knows less,
The more he drinks.

The reasons for addressing this problem are three-fold: 1. We do not want to drive away good people (or attract the bad) by oafish and stupid behavior. 2. We want a good environment for children. 3. We will be happier and be more effective as a group if we avoid the health issues, relationship problems, and the wasted income that accompany excessive use of alcohol.

Fine - so what can we DO about this? We can moderate our own drinking, and set guidelines for our gatherings that encourage moderation in others (not drinking until after blot, for example). We can also not invite to our gatherings people who cannot control their alcohol consumption.

Moderate use of alcohol is a blessing. Immoderate use of alcohol is a curse. Let's choose to be blessed!

A second feature of our culture that needs to be fixed revolves around the way we relate to money. Asatru has its sprinkling of doctors, lawyers, and entrepreneurs but my perception is that many of us are just getting by. Maybe our jobs are low-paying, or our jobs got outsourced to China, or perhaps making a lot of money has just never been our top priority. I know that I, personally, would have a much fatter bank account had I not chosen the good of the AFA over my own financial interests - and I know that's true of others out there, as well.

There's no shame in living modestly, and all work is honorable if approached in a spirit of honor. Nevertheless, it's better to have wealth than to not have it. We need to encourage a spirit of prosperity in Asatru, invoke some of that good Vanir energy, and get some wealth flowing our way!

How can we do this? Individually and on a kindred level, we can encourage thrift and good money management. We can promote a culture of seeking job advancement and of industriousness. We can help our fellow Asafolk make the right choices on things like finishing education and choosing (and staying with) the right marriage partner - areas of immense financial significance. We can network to help each other get not just good jobs, but the best possible jobs.

On a larger scale, I'd like to see the AFA get involved in businesses. The Mormons have done this since the 1800's, and even the Nation of Islam has operated profitable bakeries and a security company. One of the topics for discussion at Winter Nights in the Redwoods will be how the AFA can do likewise. But that's another subject...

No doubt we can think of other things about the modern-day Asatru culture that can and should be fixed, but these two issues - too much drinking and too little prosperity - are fine places to start! If we can make some improvement here, we will all benefit greatly.

Throughout the AFA and all of Asatru, we need to encourage an ethos of excellence. I have heard it alleged that only in the Indo-European tongues do we find the tripartite

classifications of “good,” “better,” and “best.” Let us honor our forebears, and strive for the last of these three!

LINKS RELEVANT TO THE AFA’S DECLARATION OF PURPOSE

Environment -

...“Global Warming Past the Point of No Return” - (As posted on the Climate Ark web site, this article is a little confusing - they posted it twice, once above the other, so it seems much more repetitive than when it appeared in the original newspaper.)

<http://www.climateark.org/articles/reader.asp?linkid=46230>

...So what can you, as an individual, do about climate change? Here are some ideas. I don’t know if we can save the world - but we CAN refuse to willingly participate in the destruction of life on Earth.

<http://www.climateark.org/articles/reader.asp?linkid=46305>

Freedom -

...“Barcelona Clubbers Get Chipped” - The wave of the future? Clever idea, making chips attractive by associating them with the “fun” life...

<http://newsvote.bbc.co.uk/mpapps/pagetools/print/news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/technology/3697940.stm>

...“Dutch to Create Cradle-to-Grave Database” - Welcome to the machine...

<http://newsobserver.com/24hour/technology/story/2721575p-11287186c.html>

Peoples -

...White non-Hispanic youth ages 12 to 17 reported the highest frequency of binge drinking (9 per cent) as compared to 6 percent of Hispanic and 3 percent of black non-Hispanic youth, according to this article. We must fix the soul of our people!

<http://www.health.org/govpubs/rpo995/>

...Along similar lines, check out this story from Forbes. Why am I listing it here? Because European-American kids smoke cigarettes at a higher rate than youth of other backgrounds. Do what you can to discourage smoking, among our youth and our adults, alike!

<http://www.forbes.com/lifestyle/health/feeds/hscout/2005/09/22/hscout528099.html>

...A site created by Tibetans who seek freedom for their people. I never buy anything made in China if I can possibly avoid it!

<http://www.boycottmadeinchina.org/>

...White farmers face ethnic cleansing in Zimbabwe. Everyone knows Mugabe is an idiot...but where is the anger on the part of those being ethnically cleansed?

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,3-1789816,00.html>

THE BATTLE FOR THE HEART OF WILDNESS

Wolves, those ultimate symbol of wildness, are in dire danger in Norway. Special interest groups and complacency have brought them to the edge of annihilation, and if they die out, something wonderful will be gone from the world.

The AFA is trying to avert such a tragedy. Kimberley Remen, leader of the AFA's Norwegian Wolf Project, has delivered stacks of signed petitions to leaders in the Norwegian government. (You can sign that petition by going to <http://www.thepetitionsite.com/takeaction/399085910?tl=1127421847> .) She was recently interviewed by Nationen, one of Norway's leading newspapers, about the Norwegian Wolf Project and the "Walk for the Wolves" she is coordinating for next August 9th.

Please visit the NWP web site at http://groups.yahoo.com/group/norwegian_wolf/ for much more information...and lend your support!

LORE CLASSES

The AFA sponsors twice-monthly classes on Eddic lore in the Sacramento area. Anyone interested in attending can contact us at info@runestone.org.

ODIN LIVES!

The groundbreaking radio program Odin Lives! is broadcast every Thursday night at 8 PM Eastern Time on a frequency of 7.415 MHz. This broadcast is repeated the next Tuesday morning at 12:15 AM on the same frequency. You can learn more by going to their web site at <http://www.odinlives.org>.

IMPORTANT DATES

September 22 - Winter Finding. Now, at the fall equinox, is the time when day and night are of equal length. Raise a horn of your favorite drink to our two deities connected with fertility and prosperity - Freya, and her brother Frey, and to other Gods and Goddesses for blessings in the coming winter season!

October 8 - Day of Remembrance for Erik the Red. Erik was the stouthearted father of Leif Erikson, and a dedicated follower of Thor. Hot-headed and clever, Erik made his mark on history by organizing the Viking settlement of Greenland. Raise a toast to this rascal, or read from his saga, in honor of his intrepid spirit.

October 9 - Leif Erikson Day. This holiday was first officially proclaimed by President Lyndon Johnson in 1965. Remind your friends of the Norse colonization of North America more than a thousand years ago!

Hail the AFA!

Stephen A. McNallen
Asatru Folk Assembly

DO YOU HAVE A FRIEND WHO SHOULD BE GETTING THESE UPDATES?
Please refer him or her to AFA_Bearclaw-subscribe@yahoogroups.com.

VISIT OUR WEB SITE at <http://www.runestone.org>.