



The
Sep**a**ra**t**ion**i**st



Bill Moore: "Extremism American Style"

4:00 PM / January 20, 2008

Gage Hall / 4 Archdale Street / Charleston SC

At our first monthly meeting in 2008, Professor Bill Moore of the College of Charleston will speak to us about extremist groups in America today. We are indeed pleased to welcome Professor Moore *back* to an SHL meeting. In fact, he was the speaker at the very first meeting of our group in 1994 *and* also spoke at our tenth anniversary meeting in 2004!

This time, he will be providing an update including the latest information about American extremism. Topics to be discussed include Westboro Baptist Church (the group which pickets military funerals), *Army of God*, militia groups guarding America's borders, and how the use of the internet has affected extremist group activity.



William V. Moore is an expert on both Southern politics and extremist politics and is the author of the book

"Political Extremism in the United States". In his many investigations into American extremism he has had to infiltrate and correspond with many feared organizations. Among the many interesting things about these groups, the question of why people choose to join them is one that especially interests him, and is arguably the most important. (For instance, Professor Moore likes to point out the surprising fact that two leaders of the American neo-Nazi movement were Jewish.)

Moore received his bachelor's and master's degrees from Southern Illinois University and his doctorate from Tulane University. He has been a professor in the Political Science Department at the College of Charleston for thirty-five years, and has held the title of "Distinguished Professor" since 1999. In fact, he has been a recipient of nearly every faculty award offered by the College: he received a Distinguished Teaching Award in 1981, a distinguished Service award in 2000, a Distinguished Advisor Award in 2001 and a Distinguished Teacher-Scholar Award in 2001.

Charity of the Quarter: My Sister's House

Since September, the SHL has been collecting money from members for charities selected by the Board of Directors. An individual charity is selected for each quarter and members are urged to make contributions by giving a check to the SHL. At the end of that set time period, a single check for the entire amount donated is presented by the SHL to the chosen charity. We have already collected money for Komen Foundation for the Cure and for Lowcountry Orphan Relief during the Fall of 2007. (The final amount to be given to Lowcountry Orphan Relief by the SHL is over \$1,800!) Now, for January and February of 2008, we will be collecting donations for a different charity: My Sister's House, an organization located in North Charleston which provides support services for those who suffer from domestic violence in any form.

Two important purposes are served by this SHL policy of collecting money for charities from our members: we hope to be able to aid some charities in their valuable work, and we hope to also increase public awareness of our organization's Humanist principles.

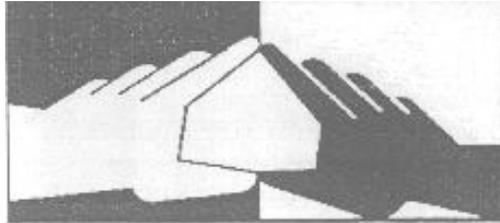
The mission statement of our latest charity reads: My Sister's House, Inc., founded by volunteers in 1980, provides safe shelter to victims of domestic violence and their children throughout the Tri-County area. Victims who are in immediate danger from verbal, emotional, physical or sexual abuse are eligible for services offered by My Sister's House, Inc. at no charge.

The Website for My Sister's House reports the following horrifying statistics:

- Battering is the single major cause of injury to women- more frequent than auto accidents, muggings and rapes combined.
- About 1/2 of all couples experience at least one violent incident; in 1/4 of all these couples, violence is a common occurrence.
- In 2001, South Carolina ranked first in the nation with the highest homicide rate for female victims by

male offenders. South Carolina's rate for this type of homicide is more than twice the national average.

- There were 48,720 victims of domestic violence in South Carolina in 2000. Based on national trends, an equivalent number of domestic violence incidents went unreported that year.
- Children are emotionally traumatized by witnessing violence; many of them grow up to repeat the pattern as victim or abuser.



Please help the victims of domestic violence, support this worthy charity, and help the SHL make a difference. Mail your check to the P.O. Box below or bring it to the next meeting. (Remember, the check should be made out to

“SHL” and should have “My Sister's House” written in the memo space at the bottom left.)

Humanist Book Discussion Group

By Sharon Strong

The first book group meeting of the new year will take place on the fourth Sunday of the month, as usual (January 27), once again in the Barnes and Noble bookstore at 1812 Sam Rittenberg Blvd., 4:00-5:30 p.m.

Appropriate to the political primary season, Alia Marks will be leading a discussion of the "New York Times" bestseller *Democracy Matters*. This 2004 book by the noted Princeton scholar and author Cornell West is an analysis of the "waning of democratic energies and practices in our present age of the American empire." Among other issues, he examines the impact of the Christian Right on America's political identity: "The battle for the soul of American democracy," he writes, "is, in large part, a battle for the soul of American Christianity, because the dominant forms of Christian fundamentalism are a threat to the tolerance and openness necessary for sustaining any democracy." Agree? Disagree? Either way, please feel free to join us, even if you haven't had a chance to read the book!

Contact Information for the SHL:

Phone: 843-556-4490

E-Mail: shl@lowcountry.humanists.net

Web: lowcountry.humanists.net

Mail: P.O. Box 32256
Charleston SC 29417

Quotes of Note

The Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights has commented on the release of Philip Pullman's *The Golden Compass*. The final line is, "And remember, his twin goals are to promote atheism and denigrate Christianity." Accordingly, the League "wants Christians to stay away from this movie." This is obviously different from when the Catholic League supported Mel Gibson's work, *The Passion of Christ*. The *Passion*, many would say, had similar twin goals: promoting Christianity and denigrating Judaism. Thus, we see what is not unexpected, especially when religion is at issue: People lend their support when their system of belief is advocated, and wish to do

anything but when the advocacy is for the belief systems of others. That is what the free speech and free exercise clauses of the First Amendment absolutely protect. Accordingly, let the clamor continue, and let each of us weigh in (or simply listen) with whatever biases we bring to bear. -

Michael Newdow at Wired.com 12/7/07

"Freedom requires religion just as religion requires freedom... freedom and religion endure together, or perish alone." - **Presidential Candidate Mitt Romney**

"Yet secular Sweden is free while religious Iran is not." - **Roger Cohen (in response to the previous quote) NYT 12/13/07**

"J.F.K.'s speech was to reassure Americans that he wasn't a religious fanatic. Mitt [Romney]'s was to tell evangelical Christians, I'm a religious fanatic just like you." - **John Krakauer in the NYT. 12/09/07**

Keeping the Ten Commandments out of an Alabama courthouse is one thing. But attacking a Christmas nativity scene on public property does more harm than good. Such secular crusades allow Christians—after all, the overwhelming majority of the country—to feel under attack, and even to declare that they are on the defensive in a "War on Christmas". When a liberal federal court in California struck the words "under God" from the pledge of allegiance, religious conservatives rallied. Atheists might be tactically wise to accept the overwhelming majority's comfort with such "ceremonial deism". - **Economist 12/11/2007**

Reminder! Our next Adopt-a-Highway litter clean-up is Saturday, February 2.



Our stretch of adopted highway is on Harbor View Road on James Island. We will meet at the parking lot of the First Federal Bank (next to the Piggly Wiggly) at 8:50 AM. In exchange for our participation, the SHL gets a roadside sign that enhances our group's image through community involvement. It's also good exercise! Please join us. If you have any questions, contact Roger Prevost at 224-9360.

News Briefs

Civil Rights Group Recognizes Nontheists' Struggle

The Secular Coalition for America has become the newest member of the oldest and most respected civil rights organization in the United States. As one of eight new members joining the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights (LCCR) this year, the Secular Coalition for America will work with the LCCR in its mission to unite all Americans as one nation true to its promise of equal justice, equal opportunity and mutual respect.

Recognition that the nontheistic minority must be included in the struggle for civil rights marks a milestone. There are several religious groups within LCCR's coalition, but the Secular Coalition for America is the first nontheist (atheists, humanists, and other Americans without a god belief) group to be included. Both organizations agree that religious freedom as protected by the Bill of Rights must also include the freedom to practice no religion.

Creationist to Chair Ed Committee

The 17-member South Carolina State Board of Education elected Kristen Maguire as their chairwoman elect, which means she would take control of the board in 2009. Ms. Maguire is a county Republican leader who has been a vocal opponent of the current evolution standards in our state science curriculum, and home-schools her four daughters. She is also co-founder of South Carolina Parents Involved in Education, a group that pushes for abstinence education, tax-

payer dollars spent on private schools and the teaching of intelligent design. Maguire, of Clemson, would be the nation's only home-schooling educator to lead a state school board if she took office this year, according to the National Association of State Boards of Education. The board's nominating committee preferred Trip DuBard, a Florence businessman with three children in public schools. He was voted down 9-7. The State Education Board approves education standards for South Carolina's 1100 public schools, including what textbooks are used and how teachers are certified.

Kristin Maguire has a reputation for partisan politics. She vigorously supported Jim Rex's opponent in the race for State Superintendent of Schools last year. Quoted in "The State" newspaper, former State Superintendent Inez Tennenbaum said "While she does read the material and come prepared, she represents an extreme, right-wing view. She looks at every decision by the board through a right-wing lens." "Unfortunately, she doesn't have children in public schools and is allowed to stay longer than anyone," Tennenbaum said. "So many times, something needed to be passed and was held up just because I recommended it and was a Democrat." According to "The State" reporter Bill Robinson, Lee Bussell of Columbia, the 2007 state Chamber of Commerce businessman of the year, said Maguire's election is shocking. "It's like having a CEO of an airline who has no experience flying," he said. "I don't think

(home-schoolers) ought to be put in a leadership position in something as important as public education. It is the foundation for everything we need to do to improve our state. The one place we don't need partisan politics is in our school."

White House sends out "most religious Christmas card in memory"

Barbara Walters revealed on "The View" in December that she had received a Christmas card from George and Laura Bush. Apparently it's not the first, since she said it was "the most religious White House Christmas card in memory." It features a 6-line bible verse (Nehemiah 9:6) extolling god as the creator of all things, and closes with "May the joy of all creation fill your heart this blessed season 2007." One can only speculate as to why the Bushes might have thought the traditional greetings of "Peace and Goodwill to All Men" were unsuitable for this administration.

Charleston Minister on Dawkins

An article in London's "Sunday Times" announcing a US tour by well-known atheist Richard Dawkins mentions our "Holy City":

Religious leaders in America dismissed Dawkins and his followers. The Rev David Cox, of the First Southern Methodist Church, Charleston, South Carolina said: "I would certainly like to protest. [Dawkins] is a tool of Satan, of the AntiChrist it sounds to me. All God-fearing people will be opposed to an atheist touring."

Nigerian Witchhunts

Evangelical preachers in Nigeria are behind a horrific development in the country in which children are accused of being "witches" and are blamed for everything from disease to job loss. Apparently, the motive of the preachers is monetary gain, as they charge parents huge amounts of money to "deliver" (cure) the children. Children of parents who are unable to pay are killed or tortured and then exiled. According to the British paper "The Guardian":

This is not just a few cases. This is becoming commonplace. In Esit Eket...,three to a bed like battery chickens, sleep victims of the besuited Christian pastors and their hours-long, late-night services. Ostracised and abandoned, these are the children a whole community believes fervently are witches. Sam Ikpe-Itauma is one of the few people in this area who does not believe what the evangelical 'prophets' are preaching. He opened his house to a few homeless waifs he came across, and now he tries his best to look after 131.

SC and Military Evangelism

An article by Jason Leopold published at TruthOut.Org discussing the fact that the US military pressures recruits to embrace Evangelical Christianity begins with a local example:

For US Army soldiers entering basic training at Fort Jackson Army base in Columbia, South Carolina, accepting Jesus Christ as their personal savior appears to be as much a part of the nine-week regimen as the vigorous physical and mental exercises the troops must endure.

That's the message directed at Fort Jackson soldiers, some of whom appear in photographs in government issued fatigues, holding rifles in one hand, and Bibles in their other hand.

The Christian right has been successful in spreading its fundamentalist agenda at US military installations around the world for decades. But the movement's meteoric rise in the US military came in large part after 9/11 and immediately after the US invaded Iraq in March of 2003. At a time when the United States is encouraging greater religious freedom in Muslim nations, soldiers on the battlefield have told disturbing stories of being force-fed fundamentalist Christianity by highly controversial, apocalyptic "End Times" evangelists, who have infiltrated US military installations throughout the world with the blessing of high-level officials at the Pentagon. Proselytizing among military personnel has been conducted openly, in violation of the basic tenets of the United States Constitution.

**The Separationist
Newsletter of the
Secular Humanists
of the Lowcountry**

**Editors:
Laura and Alex
Kasman**

**Secular Humanists
of the Lowcountry
P.O. Box 32256
Charleston, SC 29417**

SHL Calendar

SHL Movie Club

January 6, 2008

Contact Sue Edward bflosue@earthlink.net to join SHL members at a movie and discussion over dinner, first weekend of every month.

SHL Monthly Meeting

January 20, 2008 at 4PM

Our first meeting of 2008 will feature guest speaker Bill Moore on "Extremism American Style".

SHL Book Discussion Group

January 27, 2008 at 4PM

Barnes and Noble on Sam Rittenberg Blvd in West Ashley. Alia Marks leads discussion of "Democracy Matters" by Cornell West.

SHL Adopt-a-Highway

Saturday February 2, 2008 at 8:50AM

(See page 4 for more information.)

Join the SHL:

The Secular Humanists of the Lowcountry (SHL) is a group of free-thinkers who believe in the humanist philosophy. Members come primarily from the Charleston, SC area. The SHL is affiliated with American Atheists, American Humanist Association, Americans United for the Separation of Church and State, Atheist Alliance International, Council for Secular Humanism, and the SC Progressive Network.

Annual tax-exempt membership fees are \$24 (individual) or \$36 (couple or family); additional donations are always welcome. Members receive this newsletter and can participate in activities planned for the Lowcountry. For more information consult our Webpage at:

<http://lowcountry.humanists.net>

Contribute

Please contact the editors with any questions or comments about this publication. Contributions of short articles, news items, letters-to-the-editor or other information of interest to SHL members are always appreciated. Write to us at newsletter@lowcountry.humanists.net or use the contact information at the bottom of page 2.