



# THE SEPARATIONIST

APRIL 2013

## JAMES CROFT: FULFILLING THE PROMISE OF HUMANISM SUNDAY, APRIL 21, 2013, 4 PM, GAGE HALL, 4 ARCHDALE ST.

**H**umanists have high moral principles and lofty goals: a true Humanist vision would lead to nothing less than the transformation of the world. And yet, in the decades since Humanism became a well-defined creed, we have not had the political and cultural impact we might wish for. If we are to build a better world—what Robert Ingersoll called the Temple of the Future—we need to work harder, smarter, and with greater conviction than ever before. In this presentation James will draw on his history, culture, science and his experience as an activist to show Humanists how they can come together, build community, and begin to fulfill the promise of their beliefs.

Please join us on Sunday, April 21, for our regular monthly speaker meeting, when James Croft will discuss



the ways in which we can use our Humanist principles to build a better and brighter future for ourselves and our children.

James Croft is the Research and Education Fellow at the Humanist Community at Harvard, where he works on the Humanist Community Project, help-

ing build communities for nonreligious people. He is a graduate of the Universities of Cambridge and Harvard, and is currently studying for his Doctorate in the philosophy of education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, while training to become a leader in the Ethical Culture movement. He is an in-demand public speaker, an engaging teacher, and a passionate activist for human rights. James was raised on Shakespeare, Sagan and Star Trek, and is a proud, gay Humanist.

James also has a blog entitled “Temple of the Future” which he uses to empower Humanists to express their worldview with the eloquence and immediacy of Ingersoll, and to build ethical communities—“temples of the future.” You can read more at <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/templeofthefuture>

As always, we will go to dinner at a nearby restaurant after the meeting.

**SAVE THE DATE! POTLUCK AND PICNIC  
SUNDAY, MAY 19, 2013, 4 PM**

Dig out your flip-flops, shorts, and sundresses, and get ready to enjoy good food and good conversation with your fellow freethinkers and nontheists. This year our annual May potluck will be held at the home of Matt Dean and Todd Frech. There’s lots of space for eating outside, picnic-style, and we’ll have games and activities for grown-ups and kids alike.

### FIND US ONLINE! WE’RE (NEARLY) OMNIPRESENT!

 <http://bit.ly/shlmeetup>

 <http://bit.ly/shlhome>

 <http://on.fb.me/shlFB> (main)  
<http://on.fb.me/shlfamFB> (family)

 <http://bit.ly/shltube>

 <http://bit.ly/shllist>

 <http://yhoo.it/shlyahoo> (family)

**BOOK GROUP**

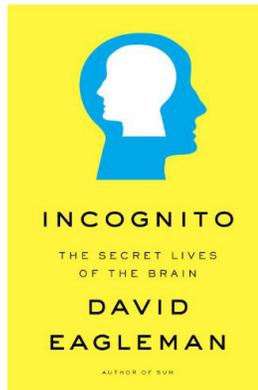
**SUNDAY, APRIL 26, 2013, 4 PM  
WEST ASHLEY BARNES & NOBLE  
1812 SAM RITTENBERG, CHARLESTON**

On April 26, 2013, our book group will discuss *Incognito: The Secret Lives of the Brain*, by David Eagleman.

This book answers the question: If the conscious mind--the part you consider to be you--is just the tip of the iceberg, what is the rest doing?

Please consider purchasing the book through our site (<http://bit.ly/shlbooks>) so that SHL can receive a small kickback from Amazon.com.

As always, we'll meet at the West Ashley Barnes & Noble, located at 1812 Sam Rittenberg. The discussion runs from 4:00 until 5:30, and we'll go out to dinner afterward. Everyone is welcome, including those who have not had a chance to read the book.



**SWAMP FOX TRAIL NATURE HIKE**

**SATURDAY, APRIL 27, 2013, 8 AM  
SEWEE ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CENTER  
5821 HIGHWAY 17 NORTH, AWENDAW**

Six miles, rare carnivorous pitcher plants, and a picnic! SHL members Sharon Yomtob and Mandy Johnson will be our fearless leaders! They regularly plod the Palmetto Trail and will be fantastic guides.

The first section of the Swamp Fox Passage is a very nice hike. We can picnic at Halfway Creek campground (our end point). We have also seen a few snakes on this portion of the trail as well as the recovering downy woodpecker. Wildlife is an iffy with large groups but the plants aren't going anywhere. No public restrooms on the trail or at either end.

We will meet at the Sewee Visitor Center on Hwy 17N in Awendaw at 8 a.m. Each person should bring his/her own picnic lunch. If people want to bring appetizers/desserts to share that is fine too.

For more info on the trail visit <http://bit.ly/swampfox>

**TEAM TRIVIA**

**TUESDAY, APRIL 23, 2013, 7 PM  
BIGHORN'S SPORTS GRILL  
7832 RIVERS AVE, NORTH CHARLESTON**



Do you know which US state calls itself the "Breadbasket of America"? What 3-1/2 hour film, released in 1980, is the biggest flop of all time? If you travel due south from London until reaching a foreign country, which one would it be? If you can answer these questions and more, we need you! Join us for Team Trivia on Tuesday, April 23, at Bighorn's Sports Grill. Our team is "The Happy Humanists."

**FAMILY ACTIVITY: EARTH DAY CRAFTS**

**SATURDAY, APRIL 20, 2013, 1 PM  
CHARLES PINCKNEY NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE  
1254 LONG POINT ROAD, MOUNT PLEASANT**

In celebration of Earth Day, we will have several earth-friendly activities that the kids will love. We will plant seeds in empty eggshells, make a peanut butter pinecone bird seed feeder, read a fun story, and the older kids can make a solar oven where we can attempt to make some s'mores. All ages welcome!

This activity is free to attend and supplies will be provided, but if you are able to bring something that is great! There should have enough egg shells, potting soil, and seeds for everyone. We need pinecones, peanut butter, and birdseed. For the solar ovens, if each family will bring a clean pizza box, that would be great. We also need graham crackers, marshmallows, and chocolate for the s'mores. As said, if you can bring something, great! If not, we will provide the supplies.

RSVPs are not required, but are very helpful to ensure we have enough supplies. To RSVP or for questions, please email [SecularCharlestonMom@gmail.com](mailto:SecularCharlestonMom@gmail.com)



**STATEWIDE FAMILY MEETUP  
SUNDAY, MAY 5, 2013, 11 AM  
RIVERBANKS ZOO  
500 WILDLIFE PARKWAY, COLUMBIA**

Please join us on Sunday, May 5, 2013, for our third annual state-wide meetup for freethinking families and adults at the Riverbanks Zoo in Columbia. This will be a great opportunity to meet other like-minded families, so get your wild side on and come make some new friends! Obviously, families are welcome, but so are childless adults.

We will meet for lunch and socializing at 11am at the public picnic area which is located at the west end of the zoo's parking lot (as opposed to the parking lot for the garden entrance). It is outside the zoo's entrance gate, but you may leave and re-enter the park with your admission ticket. The zoo does not allow outside food or beverages to be brought inside the park, but you are free to bring your own lunch to this picnic area. If you have a Camp Quest, SHL, or other favorite freethought shirt, now would be a great time to wear it!

To RSVP, visit <http://bit.ly/shlzoo> or email [president@lowcountryhumanists.org](mailto:president@lowcountryhumanists.org)

**CHARITY OF THE QUARTER  
THE PALMETTO HOUSE**

Every two months, SHL selects a local charity to support. The Palmetto House is our charity of the quarter for March and April. We are hoping to raise \$800 for this charity by the end of April.

The Palmetto House is a temporary residence for single women and families who find themselves homeless. The mission of the Palmetto House is to provide a safe and comfortable residence and nourishing meals while assisting residents in the successful transition into the workforce, a stable home and becoming a self-reliant and contributing member of the community.

Unlike most of our bimonthly charity drives, we will use a portion of the monies collected to purchase supplies for our May 4th volunteer efforts at Palmetto House as part of the Summerville Cares Day of Service.

To donate to The Palmetto House, please visit <http://bit.ly/shl-community>

**REASONFEST  
THURSDAY, MAY 2, 2013, 7 PM  
GAGE HALL  
4 ARCHDALE STREET, CHARLESTON**

In celebration of the National Day of Reason, SHL will be hosting a "Reasonfest" at 7:00 PM on Thursday, May 2, to mark the National Day of Reason and raise funds for a local charity. The event will be held at Gage Hall, 4 Archdale Street, Charleston. Reasonfest's headliner will be the piano-playing stand-up comedian Jennifer Bianchi, a.k.a. the Humorous Humanist. She will be followed by an open-mic session hosted by local poet and songwriter Jim Lundy. Audience members will be invited to share their personal "pathways to reason" (how they left religion to become atheists or agnostics) or read quotes or passages from their favorite freethought writers. A \$10 suggested donation at the door will raise funds for Summerville's Palmetto House, a homeless shelter for women and families. Baked goods will also be available for purchase.

We need donations of baked goods, either homemade or store-bought. If you are able to donate baked goodies or soft drinks, please let us know. You can comment below or email [president@lowcountryhumanists.org](mailto:president@lowcountryhumanists.org).



## WHAT ATHEISTS CAN LEARN FROM THE GAY RIGHTS MOVEMENT HERB SILVERMAN

I'm not gay. But I am jealous. How did homosexuality shift in public opinion from less respectable than atheism to more? And what can the atheist movement learn from the LGBT movement?

The psychiatric community considered homosexuality a mental disorder until 1974, and it wasn't until 2003 that the U. S. Supreme Court declared sodomy laws unconstitutional. When the public is polled about a willingness to vote for a well-qualified person for president who happens to be gay or atheist, gays are now ranked ahead of atheists.

The most obvious and effective lesson atheists are learning from LGBTs is to come out of the closet. Attitudes toward gays changed rapidly when people learned that their friends, neighbors, and even family members were gay. Attitudes about atheists are slowly changing as atheists are slowly coming out.

Like most Americans, I gave little thought to fundamentalist, soul-saving Christians until they began to focus on politics. I've never been a closeted atheist, but I was an apathetic atheist for most of my life. While a graduate student in New York and later a math professor in Massachusetts in the 1970s, my friends and I had more important things to discuss than religion. For instance, our sex lives. Most of my friends were probably apathetic atheists, and some of them, unfortunately, felt the need to be closeted gays.

The LGBT movement deserves enormous credit for framing and publicizing their issues, forming a big tent that allows for cooperation between activist and laid back gays, and developing a well-organized community with a constituency recognized by politicians. And so it should be with atheists, which is a goal of the Secular Coalition for America and its member organizations.

At a Human Rights Campaign meeting about fifteen years ago, I mentioned that most in the atheist commu-

nity openly backed gay rights and wished the gay community would reciprocate. "After all," I said, "the same religious-right people who object to us also disapprove of you." A number of gays acknowledged privately that

they were atheists who wished to remain quiet about it because they were trying to appear "normal" in our culture. Continued LGBT successes are making it easier for gay atheists to emerge from both closets.

An evidence-based case can be made for why many religious people are less accepting of atheists than gays. Most aren't worried about homosexuals "converting" heterosexuals, but they worry about hearing sound arguments from atheists that might resonate with their flock. You're much more likely to stay with your childhood

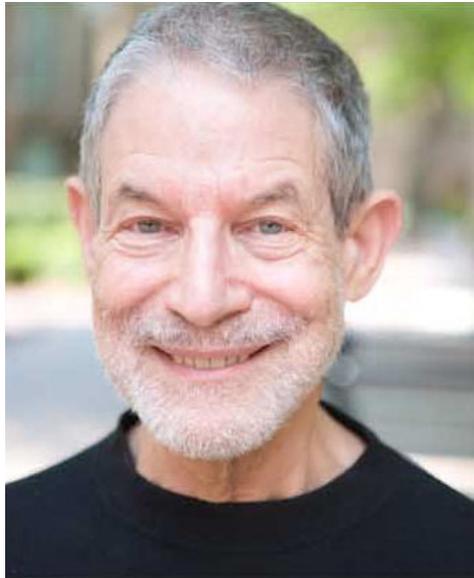
religion if no one ever questions those beliefs.

And then there's marriage. After "living in sin" with me for 10 years, Sharon thought we were getting too old to be called boyfriend and girlfriend, and suggested we marry. I argued that if it ain't broke don't fix it, and also that we should boycott marriage because gays couldn't marry. Despite my weak counter arguments, we married at 12:01 AM on January 1, 2000.

I've been happily married for thirteen years, and neither of my arguments would work today. I expect that the next generation will look back and wonder why there had been such a fuss over gay marriage. Even conservative religionists will probably find ways to reinterpret their holy books.

I still don't like the "institution" of marriage because I don't think the government should play an official part in a couple's relationship. But if opposite-sex people can marry, then so should same-sex people. And if religious people can become president, so can atheists. Maybe someday our president will be an openly gay atheist.

See all of Herb's On Faith posts at <http://bit.ly/herbonfaith>



## ARE THE WESTBORO BAPTISTS RIGHT?

MICHAEL E. BUCKNER, VP, ATLANTA FREETHOUGHT SOCIETY

The Westboro Baptists do seem to be right in claiming that the Bible depicts God as judgemental, domineering, inflexible, sadistic, obsessed with humans' sex lives, and petty. For example:

“If a man has sexual relations with a man as one does with a woman, both of them have done what is detestable. They are to be put to death; their blood will be on their own heads.” Leviticus 20:13

(Of course in the 14th chapter of Deuteronomy the same word in Hebrew which translates to “abominable” or “detestable” is used to describe eating pork or shellfish as is used in Leviticus to describe man-on-man sex).

Again according to the Bible, I can't see God being too fond of rich preachers like the aptly-named Rev. Dollar:

“Jesus answered, ‘If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then, come follow me.’ When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth. Then Jesus said to his disciples, ‘Truly I tell you, it is hard for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.’” Matthew 19:21-24

Heck, Jesus seems to be against not just being “rich,” but even against simply being prudent with money:

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Matthew 6:19-21

Now, as for most freethinkers, we don't think two consenting adults who love each other (or, heck, just two consenting adults who lust for each other) are necessarily doing anything “detestable” or “abominable.” We don't like Creflo Dollar or his ilk, but we don't hate all rich people just for being rich—there are rich people

who have become rich not just by fleecing the gullible but because they've done things at least some of which are admirable, like found companies that employ thousands of people and provide goods and services that enrich people's lives. While we agree it's good to take a somewhat philosophical attitude towards life and material goods, to literally take no thought for the morrow is dangerously imprudent (and if someone is claimed to be the Son of God, there's a real danger people will take his words—sorry, His Words—all too literally). We also don't think we should hate our families or hate our own lives (Luke 14:26).

Of course, all the sane Christians and even the most of the crazy ones “interpret” this and everything else in the Bible in some way or another that lets them off this or that hook—those on the right ignore (or re-interpret) the parts about the sinfulness of the rich and those on the left ignore (or re-interpret) the parts about the sinfulness of gays; pretty much everyone ignores (or re-interprets) the parts about slaves obeying their masters or women being silent and obeying their husbands or about the need to put worshippers of false gods to death. Most 21st century American Christians don't take any of this stuff from the Bible literally (even increasingly including the gay-bashing). Most American Christians nowadays are basically humanists—they believe in democracy, equal rights for women, freedom of religion, and even gay marriage—but too many of them still feel some need to try to contort these ancient texts into agreeing with what people nowadays believe in, regardless of what the words actually say.

All of which is far too long-winded to easily fit on protest signs, alas. There are bizarre and goofy Bible verses that don't necessarily say anything about homosexuality, or even Creflo Dollar, like the one about hating your family—a particularly pernicious one.

We're glad to be Americans, freethinkers who can celebrate the Fourth of July without having to feel guilty about it.

And when it comes to verses like Leviticus 20:13, as atheists and freethinkers, we don't have to hate people just because of who they love.

# THE SEPARATIONIST

## THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SECULAR HUMANISTS OF THE LOWCOUNTRY

*Opinions expressed in *The Separationist* are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of SHL.*

*Please contact the editor 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 welcome. Contact the editor at [newsletter@lowcountryhumanists.org](mailto:newsletter@lowcountryhumanists.org).*

# THE SECULAR HUMANISTS OF THE LOWCOUNTRY

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## OUR OFFICERS

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Treasurer: Jonathan Lamb

Secretary: Laura Kasman

## JOIN SHL

*SHL is a group of freethinkers who believe in the humanist philosophy. Members come primarily from the greater Charleston, South Carolina, area. 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 South Carolina Progressive Network. Annual tax-exempt membership fees are \$35 (individual) or \$50 (couple or family). Additional donations are always welcome. To join, visit our website at <http://bit.ly/joinshl>, and for more information about our activities, visit <http://bit.ly/shlevents>*