



# THE SEPARATIONIST

OCTOBER 2013

## JT EBERHARD: REASON AS A MORAL OBLIGATION SUNDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2013, 4 PM, GAGE HALL, 4 ARCHDALE ST.

As an avid advocate of reason, JT Eberhard will speak about “Reason as a Moral Obligation.” He will explain how it is our duty to care about what is true to ensure that our good intentions are realized in the results we create. He will further explain why it is also our charge as a well-intentioned person to encourage others to care about what is reasonable and true because we’re all working together down here on earth, and errant beliefs affect us all. Is being “fanatic” about reason a very, very good thing to be? Come find out!

When not defending the planet from inevitable apocalypse at the rotting hands of the undead, JT is a writer and public speaker about atheism, gay rights, and more. He spent two and a half years with the Secular Student Alliance as their first high school organizer. During that time he built the SSA’s high school program and oversaw the development of groups nationwide. JT is also the co-founder of the popular Skepticon conference and served as the events lead organizer during its first three years.

As a writer he has contributed to Atheism Resource, ShitZombiesSay.net, and numerous other sites. JT currently writes a regular column for American Atheist Magazine and is a gaming columnist for the feminist/geek site The Secular View.

JT maintains a regular speaking schedule and has appeared at the American Atheists national convention, Apostacon, Skepticon, the SSA Leadership Conference, the American Humanist Association’s national convention, the Pennsylvania Atheist/Humanist convention, and many, many more.



In his personal life, JT is a trained opera singer who has worked under the directorship of two-time Grammy award winner James Billings.

*Refreshments:* If your last name begins with the letters D-F, please consider bring a snack for the refreshments table. Suggested snack foods are cheese, crackers, fruit, granola bars, cookies, cake squares—anything that one can eat without need of a fork or spoon. The snack item should be for about 8-12 people, which is the average number of servings in a typical container/bag. As always, SHL will supply the paper goods and beverages.

If you have an elementary-aged child who would like to take part in our new Humanist “Sunday School,” please check out our event for Sunday Quest.

### 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)

### FALL PICNIC

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2013, 5 PM

WEST FARM CORN MAZE

2641 COOPER STORE ROAD, MONCK'S CORNER

Our fifth annual Fall Picnic will be Saturday, October 19, from 5 to 9 pm. It will be at the West Farm Corn Maze in Moncks Corner. The six-acre corn maze features three miles of trails as well as a mini maze for small children and a mystery to solve by collecting clues within the maze. Other attractions include a children's play area, small petting zoo, and hay rides. We will have a potluck dinner in the party shed, so please bring a dish to share.

Admission to the farm includes the corn maze and is \$8 for ages 12 and up, \$3 for kids 3-12 and free for those 2 years and under. If you'd like to come, but don't want to do the maze, a reduced admission-only rate of \$4 is available. These admission prices reflect a group discount, so please tell the cashier that you are with SHL to ensure you receive the discounted rate. And please note that West Farm accepts cash and checks only—no debit or credit cards. For directions and more information, you can visit their website (<http://www.westfarmcornmaze.com>).

RSVPs are not necessary, but are helpful. To RSVP or if you have any questions, please email Amy at [president@lowcountryhumanists.org](mailto:president@lowcountryhumanists.org).

### TEAM TRIVIA

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 22, 2013, 8 PM

BIGHORN'S SPORTS GRILL

7832 RIVERS AVE, NORTH CHARLESTON



Can you name the only room in the White House named after a foreign country? Which child actor played the role of TV's Dennis the Menace? New born babies of what animal are six feet tall and weigh almost 200 pounds? If you can answer these questions and more, we need you! Join us for Team Trivia on Tuesday, October 22, at Bighorn's Sports Grill. Our team is "The Happy Humanists."

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### BOOK GROUP

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2013, 4 PM

WEST ASHLEY BARNES & NOBLE

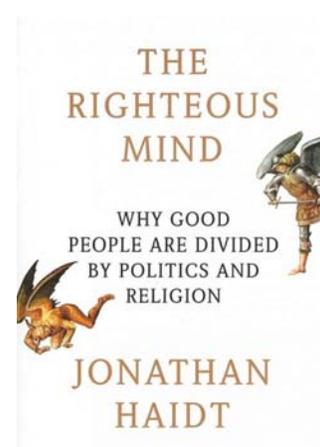
1812 SAM RITTENBERG, CHARLESTON

As America descends deeper into polarization and paralysis, social psychologist Jonathan Haidt has done the seemingly impossible—challenged conventional thinking about morality, politics, and religion in a way that speaks to everyone on the political spectrum.

Drawing on his twenty five years of groundbreaking research on moral psychology, he shows how moral judgments arise not from reason but from gut feelings. He shows why liberals, conservatives, and libertarians have such different intuitions about right and wrong, and he shows why each side is actually right about many of its central concerns.

In this subtle yet accessible book, Haidt gives you the key to understanding the miracle of human cooperation, as well as the curse of our eternal divisions and conflicts. If you're ready to trade in anger for understanding, read *The Righteous Mind*.

On Sunday, October 27, SHL's book group will meet to discuss *The Righteous Mind*. As always, We'll meet at the West Ashley Barnes & Noble, located at 1812 Sam Rittenberg Blvd. Our discussion runs from 4 pm to 5:30 pm and we usually go out to dinner afterward.



### SHL HAPPY HOUR

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 8, 6 PM

THE BLIND TIGER PUB

36-38 BROAD ST, CHARLESTON

This month Happy Hour returns to downtown. We will meet at the Blind Tiger, 36 Broad Street. (It's between Church and State!)

If the weather is nice, we will be out on the patio. Everyone is welcome, alcohol is optional, and discussions about anything and everything are fair game.

**CHARITY OF THE QUARTER  
LEUKEMIA AND LYMPHOMA SOCIETY  
LIGHT THE NIGHT**

**L**ight The Night is an annual evening fundraising walk that raises funds to cure leukemia, lymphoma, Hodgkin's disease and myeloma. Once again, Camp Quest South Carolina and SHL are teaming up with Foundation Beyond Belief to support this worthy cause.



Our local walk will be held on November 7, 2013, and

will begin at 7:00 pm, with registration beginning at 5:30 pm and a Remembrance Ceremony at 6:45. Teams will walk rain or shine. (Strollers are welcome, please no pets, skateboards, bicycles or skates.)

Last year, our team raised \$3700 and was named the top corporate fundraising team in the Lowcountry. Across the US and Canada, 150 FBB teams raised \$430,000 combined, the largest amount ever raised by a first year non-corporate team and the 4th largest amount raised by any team in the nation in 2012.

To learn more, visit <http://bit.ly/lfsfbb>.

To participate, visit <http://bit.ly/shl-cq-ltn>.

**BLOOD DRIVE WEEK**

**OCTOBER 14 THROUGH OCTOBER 19, 2013**

**S**aving lives never looked so good! Please donate blood and platelets during SHL's upcoming blood drive week, from October 14 through 19.

There are two donor centers to choose from:

*West Ashley Donor Center*

2000 Sam Rittenberg Blvd.

Hours: Mon-Wed: 11-7; Thu: 9-5; Fri-Sat: 6-2

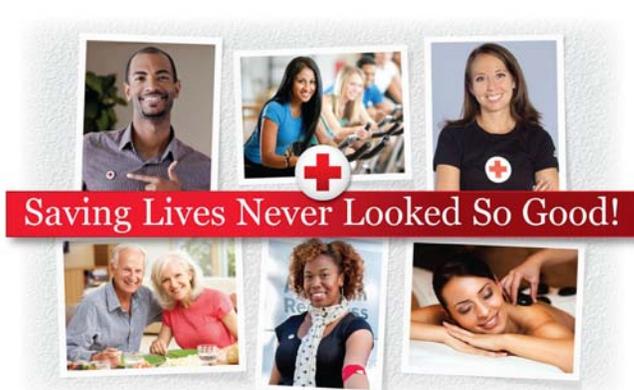
*Mt. Pleasant Donor Center*

920 Houston Nothcutt Blvd.

Hours: Wed: 11-7; Thu: 9-5; Fri-Sat: 6-2

All presenting blood and platelet donors will be entered to win one of three \$1,000 gift cards to use toward looking and feeling your best. All donors receive a coupon for a free cup of frozen yogurt, courtesy of Sweet CeCe's Charleston.

To schedule an appointment, visit <http://redcross-blood.org> or call 1-800-RED-CROSS.



**MEMBERS!**

**TAKE ADVANTAGE OF OUR STIPENDS**

**I**f you plan to attend a regional or national secular conference or a child will be attending Camp Quest or Camp Inquiry, you are encouraged to apply in advance for a \$200 stipend to help defray the travel/event costs. In return, we ask applicants to submit a newsletter article summarizing the event.

Only one stipend per membership per year. An individual may not receive more than one stipend every two years. We award a maximum of five stipends per year.

If you're interested (or would like more information), e-mail your name, the event you're going to attend, the date of the event, and an estimate of expenses to [treasurer@lowcountryhumanists.org](mailto:treasurer@lowcountryhumanists.org) for consideration.

## A PAC FOR ATHEIST CANDIDATES HERB SILVERMAN

Although I'm an atheist, I almost always vote for a Christian, not because I'm impressed by their declared God beliefs, but because I usually have no other choice – unless I vote for a third party or write-in candidate who has no chance of winning, and even they are probably religious believers. Nonetheless, in reality, closeted atheists have received hundreds of thousands of votes from constituents who probably didn't know they were voting for an atheist.

The good news for atheists, agnostics, and humanists is the creation of the Freethought Equality Fund, a new Political Action Committee (PAC) dedicated to expanding voters' choices by backing the candidacy of open nontheists to public office. It is the first such PAC with a paid staff. (Full Disclosure: I'm an unpaid advisory board member of the Freethought Equality Fund.)

Launched by the American Humanist Association's Center for Humanist Activism, the Freethought Equality Fund will support candidates who share our goals of protecting the separation of church and state and defending the civil liberties of secular Americans. And it will probably also support some theists and "closeted" atheists who advocate for our causes.

But wait, there's more. In the future, the Secular Coalition for America will form its own PAC, and other freethought groups are also considering similar political engagement.

Why now? I first heard talk of PACs like this some 20 years ago, but back then politicians would not want to be branded with the stigma of accepting money from "godless" Americans. However, to quote Bob Dylan, the times they are a changin'.

More than 20 percent of Americans now claim no religious identity, and the percentage is even higher among young people. Nonreligious Americans are one

of the largest minorities in the United States, but you'd never know it because they have lacked political power. However, atheist and humanist communities are now better organized and more cooperative, and the new Freethought Equality Fund hopes to provide candidates who are good without a god the opportunity to make their voices heard.

Atheists are willing to be copycats, especially when there is evidence of success. The LGBT movement taught freethinkers that the most effective way to change public perception is to come out of the closet. Attitudes toward gays changed rapidly when people realized that their friends, neighbors, family members, and even famous people were gay. And so it will be with atheists. Interestingly, Congressman Barney Frank came out

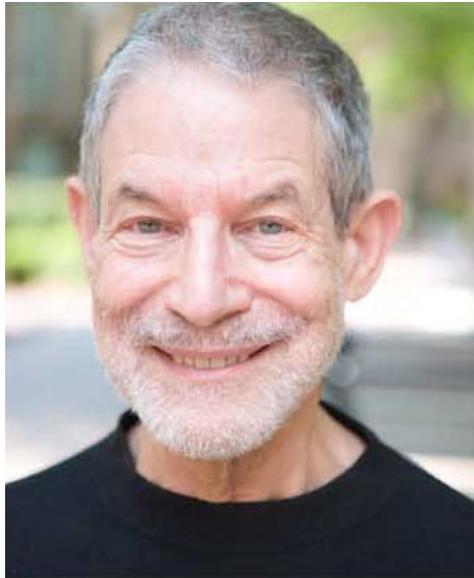
as gay more than 30 years ago, but didn't come out as an atheist until he left office. We are also learning from EMILY's List, the successful PAC founded in the mid-1980s to help increase representation by women candidates who share the List's views. (EMILY is an acronym for "Early Money Is Like Yeast.")

Before issuing an endorsement, the Freethought Equality Fund PAC will question candidates about their personal and political views on issues where religious belief could influence public policy.

Besides advocating a more secular government, the PAC hopes to dispel the bigoted notion that atheists are "immoral" and lack values.

As its assets grow, the Freethought Equality Fund PAC can be a substantial step forward. Though atheists and humanists don't believe in an Almighty deity, we do believe in the almighty dollar. We've seen evidence of its power and influence in the political process, so it's not beyond belief.

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



## FFRF WINS STANDING TO SUE IRS OVER FORM 990

The Freedom From Religion Foundation, which has three historic lawsuits in federal district court over preferential treatment of churches and ministers by the Internal Revenue Service, says it now has “three bases loaded.”

On August 19, 2013, U.S. District Judge Lynn Adelman ruled that FFRF’s case against church electioneering may proceed.

U.S. District Barbara Crabb, in the Western District of Wisconsin, ruled August 22 that the national state/church watchdog, based in Madison, Wisconsin, has standing to pursue its lawsuit against the IRS for exempting churches from annual accountability requirements.

FFRF was previously given standing and is awaiting a decision over its challenge of the 1954 federal “parish exemption” law—uniquely gifting “ministers of the gospel” with the right to deduct church “housing allowances” from taxable income. This case is also before Judge Crabb.

In her Form 990 ruling, Crabb wrote that the plaintiffs—FFRF and Triangle FFRF, its chapter in Raleigh, N.C.—have been injured because “the government is relieving an ongoing burden from some taxpayers on the basis of religious affiliation.”

She added, “it is not plaintiffs’ ‘belief’ that gives them standing. Rather, it is their status as organizations that are burdened with requirements not imposed on churches.”

In exchange for the significant advantage of retaining tax exemption, all 501(c)(3) organizations except churches must file an annual, onerous Form 990 with the IRS. These forms are available to the public, and reputable charities now place 990 forms on their websites for easy access.

Tax-exempts report to the public on what they do with donations, financial oversight policies, salaries of top employees, how much of the income is used for fundraising versus mission or management, etc. Most active nonprofits, such as FFRF, hire a certified public account-

tant to prepare the form, incurring significant accounting expenses.

“Don’t get us wrong. We think the cost and transparency is worth it,” says FFRF co-founder Annie Laurie Gaylor. “We’re grateful for the privilege of the government designating donations to FFRF as deductible for income-tax purposes. But since we began filing these forms in 1978, we’ve been acutely aware that churches don’t play by the same rules, yet get equal or better privileges.”

Dan Barker, FFRF co-president, asks, “What do churches have to hide? Why don’t they want to be accountable to the public?”

“Look at Jonestown, Guyana, to see can happen when tax-exempt churches are not accountable to the government, or necessarily to anyone,” Gaylor added. “Had Rev. Jim Jones had to account to the government for the wealth, armory

and even the foster children he and his church amassed, I believe that heinous slaughter in 1978 would have been averted.”

FFRF’s parish exemption challenge has received national exposure in the last week due to a bizarre legal twist.

The federal government, seeking to get FFRF’s challenge dismissed, claims FFRF’s co-presidents should qualify for a clergy tax break for leading an atheist organization. They are saying, “No thanks.”

“We are having to tell the government the obvious—we’re not ministers and FFRF isn’t a church!” Gaylor said.

FFRF’s Form 990 lawsuit also challenges the expensive filing fees which all groups seeking 501(c)(3) tax exemption must file—except churches. Crabb ruled that FFRF and its chapter have already paid the fees, and likely won’t incur more. Crabb asked FFRF to “show just cause why that claim should not be dismissed.”

*The Freedom From Religion Foundation, based in Madison, Wis., a 501(c)(3) nonprofit educational charity, is the nation’s largest association of freethinkers (atheists/agnostics).*



# 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 our editor, Matt Dean at [newsletter@lowcountryhumanists.org](mailto:newsletter@lowcountryhumanists.org).*

# THE SECULAR HUMANISTS OF THE LOWCOUNTRY

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## OUR OFFICERS

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Vice President: Herb Silverman

Treasurer: Jason Gregory

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>*