



## Greta Christina: Resistance Is Not Futile

Sunday, January 19, 2014, 4 PM  
Gage Hall, 4 Archdale St, Charleston

Resistance Is Not Futile: Is Arguing About Religion Worth It? Many atheists think that trying to persuade people out of religion never works, and simply alienates people. But debating believers about their beliefs can be effective -- in changing people's minds about religion, as well as in achieving other goals of the atheist community. When does it make sense to debate about religion? How should we go about it? And what should our expectations be for what these debates can accomplish?

Greta Christina is one of the most widely-read and well-respected bloggers in the atheist blogosphere. She is author of the new book "Coming Out Atheist: How to Do It, How to Help Each Other, and Why," and of "[Why Are You Atheists So Angry? 99 Things That Piss Off the Godless](#)," an Amazon best-seller in the Atheism category. She writes regularly for [Salon](#), [AlterNet](#), [The Humanist](#), and [Free Inquiry](#), and her writing has appeared in numerous magazines, newspapers, and anthologies, including Ms., Sceptical Inquirer, the Chicago Sun-Times, and the anthology Everything You Know About God Is Wrong. She has been writing professionally since 1989, on topics including sexuality and sex-positivity, LGBT issues, politics, culture, and whatever crosses her mind.



You can find her on [Facebook](#), on Twitter at [@GretaChristina](#), and at [Greta Christina's Blog](#) on the Freethought Blogs network.

We will have copies of Greta's book "Why Are You Atheists So Angry? 99 Things That Piss Off the Godless" for sale. If you already have a copy, don't forget to bring it if you'd like her autograph! Her book will also be the book selection for our January Book Discussion Group.

When: Sunday, 1/19/14 at 4pm  
Where: Gage Hall, 4 Archdale Street  
Cost: Free!

Refreshments: **If your last name begins with the letters I-L**, 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.

As always, there will be the opportunity to go to dinner at a nearby restaurant after the meeting.

## Sunday Quest

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Sunday Quest, our new humanist youth program, will provide our children an opportunity to learn about humanism and all of its life-affirming ideals. Modeled after the Harvard Humanist Learning Lab and other secular Sunday schools, our goal with Sunday Quest is to create a safe space for children to explore their developing worldviews, think for themselves, connect with their community, and build a strong ethical foundation. Each class will offer fun, interactive games and activities.



Scheduled during our third-Sunday monthly speaker presentation at Gage Hall, Sunday Quest will be geared toward children

ages 5-12 years old. This is a drop-off program, and we welcome parents to attend the speaker presentation. If space allows, children older than 12 years old may attend as program assistants and children younger than 5 years old may attend with a parent. The program will last approximately an hour to an hour and a half.

Space is limited, so pre-registration is required. Please email [president@lowcountryhumanists.org](mailto:president@lowcountryhumanists.org) to register your child(ren) or for more information.

*Did you know?*

*2014 marks SHL's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary! Watch for upcoming special events!*

## Upcoming events

*Watch for our emails announcing event info. You can select which emails and event reminders you wish to receive by logging into your SHL email account. Or, check our [website](#), [meetup](#), [facebook page](#), and [facebook group](#) for postings!*

### SHL Movie Club

Saturday, January 4, 2014, 3:00pm

Terrace Theater, 1956 Maybank Hwy, James Island

Join us for a viewing of the film *Nebraska*. We will meet in the theater lobby at 2:45. Following the movie we will enjoy dinner at a nearby restaurant.

### Sunday Funday at the Park

Sunday, January 5, 2014, 11:00am

RM Hendricks Park, 4953 block of Virginia Ave, North Charleston

Bring the kids and meet other like-minded families in a fun, casual, and judgment-free environment. Dogs on leashes are welcome, too! Don't have kids? No problem! Come on out! Sundays are Funday for everyone. In case of inclement weather, we'll meet at Northwoods Mall play area. Our website will be updated by 10am that morning if the location is changed. Please contact Amy at [secularcharlestonmom@gmail.com](mailto:secularcharlestonmom@gmail.com) for questions or for more info.

### GloZone Laser Tag

Saturday, January 11, 1:00pm

The GloZone, 5900 rivers Ave, North Charleston

In addition to laser tag, GloZone also has mini golf, bumper cars, and other arcade games. Everything is indoors and under black lights and ready to glow. They've created this special ambiance just for you, so show your appreciation by coming out to play. This playdate takes the place of the regular monthly youth activity for SHL's families, but all are welcome. Adults. Kids. Kids at heart. Just no sore losers. You get the picture.

For more information, including costs and height/age requirements, please visit [www.theglozone.com](http://www.theglozone.com).

**SHL Happy Hour**

Tuesday, January 14, 2014

**Bambu Asian Bistro, 604 Coleman Blvd, Mt Pleasant**

Join us for a relaxing evening of stimulating conversation over drinks (alcohol is optional) and food with old and new friends!

**Volunteer Activity: Lowcountry Foodbank**

Saturday, January 18, 9:00am

**Lowcountry Foodbank, 2864 Azalea Dr, North Charleston**

Have you made a New Year's resolution to do more to help others? If so, here is a great opportunity:

Our first volunteer activity of 2014 takes us back to the Lowcountry Food Bank. Please join us on the morning of Saturday, January 18th from 9AM to noon at the Lowcountry Food Bank, 2864 Azalea Drive in North Charleston.

Many of us fondly remember the last time we were there making special packages for needy children. This time, we will be sorting and packing boxes for other agencies.

A few things to note:

- The warehouse we will be working in is not climate controlled. So, wear clothes appropriate for the outside temperature.
- You must wear closed toed shoes.
- Children 14 and up are welcome to help with this activity.
- We have to let them know how many people will be coming. So, if you do plan to participate, please e-mail us at [volunteers@lowcountryhumanists.org](mailto:volunteers@lowcountryhumanists.org) to let us know!

**Girls Night Out**

Wednesday, January 14, 7:00pm

**Bollywood Café, 6150 Rivers Ave, North Charleston**

A fun night for girls to socialize! Nursing infants okay, but otherwise adults only, please.

**SHL Book Club**

Sunday, January 26, 4:00pm

**Barnes & Noble, 1812 Sam Rittenberg Blvd, West Ashley**

Join us for a discussion of Greta Christina's *Why are you atheists so angry?* Greta will be our guest at this month's SHL meeting. You can purchase a copy of the book at Gage Hall during the meeting on the 19th or through [our Amazon link](#) and either will benefit our organization.

Please come to contribute to this interesting discussion. All are invited to participate, whether they have read the book or not. Will we see you there?

**Team Trivia**

Tuesday, January 28, 7:00pm

**Bighorn's Sports Grill, 7832 Rivers Ave, North Charleston**

Come out for a fun night of trivia and socializing! This is a team event and is free. The trivia questions begin at 7pm.

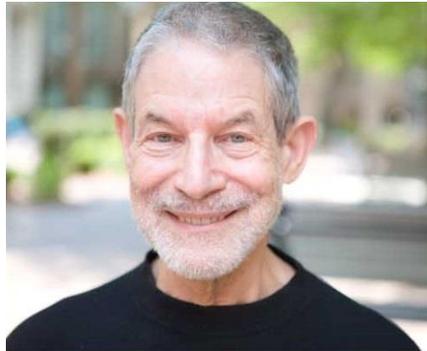
Our team Happy Humanists is officially registered, so our points will be going for season totals.

Team Trivia offers trivia nights at various places throughout the Charleston area on different days and times. Team members are welcome to play using the team name at any Team Trivia night, but SHL will list just one per month – the 4th Tuesday at 7pm at Bighorn's Sports Grill.

On Faith: Herb Silverman

## Honest and dishonest bias

Though most of us might be biased, not all biases are created equal. There are degrees of honest biases, and there are clearly dishonest biases. But I'll be generous and propose that biases are usually honest. The most common kind is Confirmation Bias: *The tendency to selectively search for and consider information that confirms your beliefs, and ignore or discount evidence that refutes your beliefs.* Political issues like Obamacare, Medicaid, Mideast policy, immigration, climate change, taxes, and whether government is a force for good or evil are certainly susceptible to confirmation bias. We usually recognize at some level when we are being biased, but we genuinely believe our position is correct and try to make the strongest possible case for it.



Perhaps a more honest and more naïve bias is what I'll call Magic Bias: *The belief that supernatural forces intervene in our natural world.* In his wonderful book, "The Demon-Haunted World," Carl Sagan argues for critical and skeptical thinking about such beliefs, while promoting science as a candle in the dark. Magic bias includes belief in gods, demons, horoscopes, psychics, tarot cards, miracles, and lots of other superstitions. People who accept some of these beliefs usually consider other magic beliefs ridiculous. I'm with "ridiculous."

Miracle believers can find "evidence" for miracles, disregarding coincidence or luck or medical skill; psychic believers have their faith strengthened when a psychic predicts something that can be interpreted as accurate, forgetting predicted inaccuracies. While many may truly believe in magic, some just pretend to believe the unbelievable either because they are expected to play "make believe" or because they profit from believers. (Just picture your favorite charlatan.)

Even when a magic belief is incontrovertibly proven wrong, some cite the cliché, "That's the exception that proves the rule." No mathematician would ever say, "That's the counterexample that proves the theorem." In fact, counterexamples disprove hypothesized theorems. And so it should be with magic.

A third kind of honest bias occurs among people who are ignorant of essential facts. For instance, some believe that our founders intended America to be a Christian nation under a Constitution that favors Christianity over other religions, and guarantees freedom of religion but not freedom from religion. They believe that all constitutionally based judicial decisions must, of necessity, be biblically based. They are honestly wrong.

Now for my "Dishonest Bias Award," which I hereby present to Todd Stames, host of "Fox News & Commentary," for his recent piece titled [American Humanist Association sues teacher who prayed for sick student](#). It's not

the only dishonest commentary from Fox News, probably not even the worst; but as a member of the [American Humanist Association](#) (AHA) Board of Directors, I can say it's the dishonest bias with which I'm most familiar. I, too, would be outraged if the AHA sued a teacher because she prayed for a sick student or because she organized a project to feed hungry children. Stames went on to claim that the AHA said it was unconstitutional for a Christian club to meet before the start of the school day, and that the AHA accused the teacher of owning a Bible. He closed his commentary with, "This over-the-top attack on Christianity is just unbelievable. Then again, what do you expect from a bunch of humanists who don't believe in anything that really matters?"

The AHA [press release](#) presented the facts of the case (which have nothing in common with Fox's report). AHA objections include: weekly Christian "devotional" prayer sessions led by a teacher in her public school classroom during school hours, in which the teacher tells students that God will punish them if they are not good; morning announcements by the principal over the school's public address system promoting the prayer sessions; a prominent display of the book "God's Game Plan" in a classroom during class time.

It's a clear violation of the First Amendment Establishment Clause for public school officials to

a non-prophet organization

encourage students to pray in class or to participate in prayer activities with students during class. In an attempt to resolve the situation and avoid court action, the AHA sent a [letter](#) six months earlier that outlined why school-sponsored and school-promoted classroom prayers are unconstitutional. School officials ignored the letter.

The American Humanist Association has no problem with students or teachers who pray privately or as part of an extracurricular religious group. However, the AHA definitely wants to end unconstitutional, staff-led religious activity during school hours. Fox News apparently never bothered to contact a spokesperson from the AHA for comment or even link to the AHA press release. Had it done so, the friendly folks at Fox News might at least have been true to its motto, [We report, you decide](#).

*Originally published December 13, 2013*

## Charity of the Quarter

*Four times a year SHL collects donations on behalf of a worthy local charity. You can donate by cash, credit card or check at our monthly meeting or by mailing a check to SHL, PO Box 32256, Charleston SC 29417-2256 (make checks payable to SHL and note COQ in the memo line). Or securely [donate online](#)!*

Our first Charity of the Quarter for 2014 is the [South Carolina Women's Choice Fund](#). Every year thousands of women sacrifice food, risk eviction, and pawn their possessions in order to raise money for an abortion. Some are forced to continue the pregnancy, abandon their education, and stay trapped in poverty. Women face these difficult situations because the government denies abortion funding to women in need. The South Carolina Women's Choice Fund (SCWCF) is an affiliate of the National Network of Abortion Funds and provides financial assistance to women seeking an abortion in South Carolina and to residents of South Carolina seeking an abortion in neighboring states.

## Time to join/renew!

It's time to pay your dues for the 2014 calendar year. Our largest expense is bringing in outstanding speakers for the monthly meetings. Although we usually balance things out with a handful of local guests who do not request travel or honorarium, the regional and national figures require us to pay travel costs and/or a small honorarium. We occasionally invest in sponsorships or marketing initiatives to hopefully reach potential new members such as an setting up an informational table at the Flowertown Festival and sponsoring a light display at the Holiday Festival of Lights. Finally, there are smaller costs such as the rental fee for Gage Hall, credit card processing fees, meeting refreshments, PO Box rental, member perks such as stipends for attendance at Humanist/Atheist/Freethought events, and more.

We are proud of the fact that we do not require membership to attend our activities. Instead, we hope that you see the great value in your annual donation to maintain a robust and active secular humanism organization in the Charleston area.

Membership is open to all who support the purposes for which this organization is founded. The available membership levels and corresponding dues are:

- Individual - New Member \$35.00
- Family - New Member \$50.00
- Individual - Renewal \$35.00
- Family - Renewal \$50.00
- Individual/Family - Sustaining \$100.00
- Individual/Family - Benefactor \$150.00
- Individual/Family - Lifetime \$500.00

Dues are tax-deductible, as we are a 501(c)3 non-profit corporation. (As we like to joke, we are also a "non-prophet" organization!) You can join/renew by cash, credit card or check at our monthly meeting or by mailing a check to SHL, PO Box 32256, Charleston SC 29417-2256 (make checks payable to SHL and note Membership Dues in the memo line). Or securely [pay online](#) and select your membership level in the dropdown box.

## Find us online! We're (nearly) omnipresent!



[Meetup](#)



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[Web](#)



[Email Lists](#)



[Facebook Page](#)

[Facebook Group](#)

[Facebook Families Group](#)



[Yahoo Families Group](#)

### The Secular Humanists of the Lowcountry

#### Contact us

Write:

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Call:

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[president@lowcountryhumanists.org](mailto:president@lowcountryhumanists.org)

#### Our Officers

President: Amy Monsky

Vice President: Herb Silverman

Treasurer: Jason Gregory

Secretary: Laura Kasman

Newsletter Editor: Sue Edward

### 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).*

#### 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 a chapter of the American Humanist Association and is affiliated with American Atheists, Americans United for the Separation of Church and State, Atheist Alliance International, Council for Secular Humanism, Secular Coalition for South Carolina, 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>