

SECULAR
HUMANISTS



OF THE
LOWCOUNTRY

About SHL

The *Secular Humanists of the Lowcountry* was founded in 1994 by a group of local non-theists in Charleston, South Carolina.

Our members are freethinkers of many kinds. We call ourselves agnostics, atheists, skeptics, secular humanists, rationalists, and scientific naturalists. We welcome you and all who are interested in participating in our friendly community, either as members or observers.

The purpose of our non-profit, educational organization is to promote the non-theistic, human-centered viewpoint as a valid contribution to public discourse and to strive to maintain the First Amendment guarantee of separation of state and church.

The Separationist is 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 SHL president (president@lowcountryhumanists.org) with any questions or comments about this publication. Contributions such as short articles, news items, letters to the editor, or other information of interest to SHL members are always welcome.

The Separationist

Volume 25, Issue 3

March 2018

Amy Monsky: Shaping the Next Generation of Secular Leaders

**Sunday, March 18, 2018, 4:00 PM, Gage Hall
4 Archdale Street, Charleston, SC**

At our March 2018 meeting, Amy Monsky will discuss ways in which we can enable our children to become active, confident, and self-actualized agents of positive change in the world, in a talk titled “Building a Hopeful Future: Shaping the Next Generation of Secular Leaders.”

From Good News Clubs to churches planted in public schools to events such as Bring Your Bible to School days (all designed to enable legally “student-led” evangelism in public schools), the Religious Right invests heavily in strategies that target kids. They know what they’re doing, and they’re doing it well.

Our government is teeming with politicians who want to shove religion into the public sphere, restrict marriage and gender identity, disregard evidence-based approaches to birth control, and otherwise impose misogynistic, bigoted, and patriarchal values on the public, with a shameful disregard for our country’s essential plurality and diversity.

Fortunately, organizations like Recovering from Religion are there



to help people overcome the trauma of childhood religious indoctrination, and others like the American Humanist Association and SHL are there to provide community and respite. But what if we created a community that actually built whole and healthy adults from childhood instead of fixing broken adults?

Amy Monsky is a former president of SHL. She is currently the executive director for Camp Quest Southeast, bringing a week of fun, friends, and freethought to kids “of all ages” in the Carolinas, Georgia, Florida, Tennessee, Mississippi, and Alabama.

President's Corner: Boosting Attendance at SHL Events

There has been a noticeable decline in attendance at SHL events. Our monthly meetings, which used to draw 30 to 40 people, now generally have only about 20.

Volunteer activities once attracted 10 to 15 people, but now only a handful of dedicated volunteers show up. The once-popular "SHL Trivia Nights" have disappeared.

This month's column is a plea to you—the *Separationist* reader, the SHL member—to provide us with feedback so that we can understand and deal with this problem.

One possibility is that we are doing something wrong. Perhaps the speakers we invited to give talks are not interesting to our members. Maybe the times or locations we picked for our events are not very convenient. Although we are trying to use every possible method to communicate (e-mail, snail mail, Facebook, Meetup, etc.), it could be that we are not advertising in the right way. And, maybe something we have said or done has scared away some people who otherwise would have participated in more events.

If any one of these things is true, I would feel very bad about it, because it would be at least partially my fault. But, one good thing about the possibility that we are doing something wrong is that then we could change and start doing it right instead. So, if you can think of anything we could do differently that would attract more participants to our events, please

write to me at

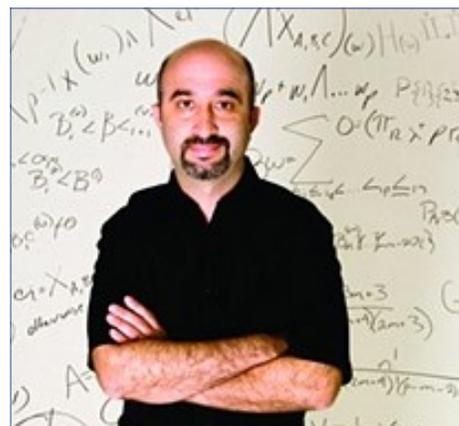
president@lowcountryhumanists.org to let me know, and we will make every effort to correct our mistakes.

Another possible explanation for the problem is that secularism and church/state separation are just not the high priority issues today that they were in the recent past. Again, although there is a sense in which it would be bad if SHL was not as important to people today as it once was, there is also a bright side to this explanation: maybe organizations like SHL that promote the non-theistic viewpoint have *largely succeeded*. In other words, it could be that atheists and agnostics in the South Carolina Lowcountry no longer feel as isolated or oppressed and so have less need for the Secular Humanists of the Lowcountry.

The third possible explanation I will list is my least favorite. There is no denying that human society has changed due to the ubiquity of internet connected devices. Nearly everyone is communicating and connecting through social media. I worry that people might still want to go to SHL events, people might still have the same need for this organization that they had before, but either because they are overwhelmed with choices or because they are sapped of willpower by clickbait, they end up sitting at home "liking" virtual things instead of getting together in

person with other actual like-minded individuals. To me, this would be the worst possible explanation because it would mean that our organization is still needed, but unable to attract participants to our events for societal reasons that are beyond our control.

Of course, there may be other explanations as well. **To help us figure out what has caused the recent decline in attendance at SHL events and how we should handle it, please e-mail your thoughts to me at president@lowcountryhumanists.org. Or, complete the online survey that board member Steffi Green has created at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/3RF9N73>.**



Alex Kasman is a math professor at the College of Charleston. He has been on the board of SHL for 15+ years. During that time he has served various roles including volunteer coordinator, newsletter editor, Webmaster and is currently serving as SHL President.

Upcoming SHL Events

Family-Friendly Activity: Annual Spring Egg Hunt

Sunday, March 18
11:00 a.m.—1:00 p.m.
Hampton Park
Charleston, SC



Feel free to bring along extra eggs to hide, but we will have plenty for an eggstra fun hunt. Afterwards, there will be games for the kids and small prizes. Bring a picnic lunch for your family, and we can all socialize at the picnic tables near the pond. **Please RSVP** on SHL's Families Facebook group (facebook.com/groups/SecularHumanistFamiliesofCharleston/) and let coordinator Steffi Green know how many little ones you plan to bring. Afterwards there will be time for you and your family to help the needy at SHL's Potluck in the Park.

Volunteer Activity: Potluck in the Park

Sunday, March 18
Set up 12:45 p.m.
Start serving 1:00 p.m.
68 Columbus St.
Charleston, SC



We are again sponsoring the weekly community potluck in Mall Park, downtown Charleston. SHL members bring the food and help serve 30 to 60 people. Tables, chaffing dishes, paper plates, and utensils will be provided. **Please, RSVP** on Meetup (www.meetup.com/lowcountryhumanists/) and/or SignupGenius (<http://signup.com/go/bibcCet>), where you can let us know what you plan to bring (casseroles or rotisserie chickens, or grab-n-go items like fruit and hardboiled eggs for folks to enjoy later).

March 2018

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
4: Herb Silverman debate 8:30 AM, Columbia	5	6	7	8  International Women's Day	9	10  St. Patrick's Day
11 Daylight Savings Time begins 		13: SHL Happy Hour 6:00 PM Daniel Isl. Grill	14 $\pi = 3.141592$ Pi Day		16  Freedom of Information Day	
18: Egg hunt, Volunteer event, Monthly Mtg.	19	20  Vernal Equinox	21	22	23	24
25: SHL Book Club 4:00 PM Barnes & Noble	26	27	28	29	30	31

SHL Book Group

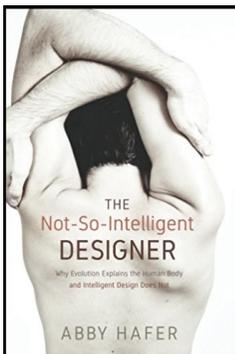
Sunday, March 25, 4:00—5:30 p.m.

Barnes & Noble

1812 Sam Rittenberg Blvd.
Charleston, SC

Look for us in the music section on the right-hand side of the store, about halfway towards the back.

Our March selection combines science and humor and was written by SHL's February speaker, biologist Dr. Abby Hafer. It's titled *The Not-So-Intelligent Designer: Why Evolution Explains the Human Body and Intelligent Design Does Not* (2015). Hardcover 244 pages \$49.00, Paperback \$20.99, Kindle \$9.99.



Come and find out “Why Testicles Matter,” how the human eye (and throat and appendix and...) exemplifies bad design, and ponder whether the Creator loves squid better than us.

You are welcome to RSVP on SHL's Meetup

SHL Happy Hour

Tuesday, March 13, 6:00—9:00 p.m.

Daniel Island Grill

259 Seven Farms Drive
Suite 1A

Charleston, SC



Happy Hour is always a fun and relaxing evening of stimulating conversation over drinks (alcohol is optional) and yummy food among old and new friends! Everyone is welcome—we hope to see you there!

So we can get an idea of how many people to expect in advance, **please RSVP** on SHL's Meetup page (www.meetup.com/lowcountryhumanists/) or Facebook group (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/90436456767/>).

page (www.meetup.com/lowcountryhumanists/) or Facebook group (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/90436456767/>). And no, you don't need to have read the book in order to participate!

Letters to the Editor: Non-secular gay marriage?

SHL members submitted letters to the *Post and Courier* concerning an SC House bill (H. 4949) that seeks to delegitimize gay marriages. The bill claims such unions are unconstitutional because they are “non-secular,” since they are “part of the religion of Secular Humanism.” SHL founder Herb Silverman's letter can be read on the P&C website (“[Misconceptions](#)” 2/26/18). The following has yet to be published:

* * *

Dear Editor,

It is a pleasant surprise to see a bill acknowledge that the “state is

prohibited from favoring or endorsing religion over non-religion” (“Same-sex marriage would be a ‘parody marriage’ under new South Carolina bill”, P&C 2/19/2018). However, the bill's authors have a very strange interpretation of what this means.

Their argument is based on the idea that sexual orientation is a “matter of faith”. That is actually an easily refuted claim, but it is also beside the point.

Let us consider two examples of marital preferences. Most religious Jews want to marry another person who is Jewish. Also, many people

who are short also wish to marry someone else who is short. Notice that one of these is associated with faith and the other is not.

Could the government refuse to fully recognize those sorts of marriages? Not if its only justification for doing so was religious in nature. If the explanation for treating Jewish/Jewish or short/short marriages as being inferior to others is that the legislators subscribe to a religion which prohibits those sorts of marriages, then that law would be a violation of the couple's religious

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Charity of the Quarter: People Against Rape

Since 1974, People Against Rape (PAR) has been offering support services for adult survivors of sexual assault in Charleston, Berkeley, and Dorchester Counties. PAR has been selected as SHL's Charity of the Quarter for January through March 2018.

PAR operates a 24-hour hotline; offers accompaniment during Sexual Assault Forensic Exams, police and law enforcement meetings, and court appointments; can assist with follow-up services in the days after an assault; and provides support groups. PAR services are available free of charge to all adult victims of sexual assault and their loved ones.



In addition, PAR has expanded its education department to teach sexual assault prevention in high schools, colleges, medical facilities, churches, and other community locations. Find out more at www.peopleagainstrape.org.

Donate Today!

Four times a year, SHL collects donations on behalf of a worthy charity. You can donate by cash, credit card, or check at our monthly meeting or by mailing a check to:

SHL

P.O. Box 32256

Charleston SC 29417-2256

Make checks payable to SHL and note "COQ" in the memo line.

Or securely **donate online** on our website (go to lowcountry-humanists.org and select "Join/Donate > Donate to our Charity of the Quarter" from the top menu.)

Continued from page 4

freedom regardless of whether their marriage preferences were faith based.

In the same way, the problem with the proposed "Marriage and Constitution Restoration Act" is that its denial of full and equal governmental recognition of same-sex marriages is an attempt to impose the legislator's religious views on other people. Would that not be an example of "favoring religion" in exactly the way that they admit is prohibited?

Alex Kasman, SHL President

P.S. For the sake of full disclosure, let me mention that I am rather short and that my wife is somewhat short as well.



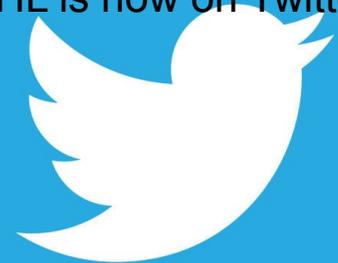
New Debate Video Available

SHL founder Herb Silverman debated Christian apologist and seasoned public speaker Richard Howe on the existence of god on March 4 at the "ungodly" hour of 8:30 a.m. The event took place at the Shandon Baptist Church in Columbia, in front of an audience

of about 300 teenagers.

In case you missed it, you can now watch for yourself online at SHL's video library (<http://lowcountryhumanists.org/default.php?page=videolibrary&vidname=shandon>).

As of February 15, SHL is now on Twitter!



Follow, reply to, & retweet us @CHShumanists!

SHL Board for 2017-2018

Alex Kasman, President

Bonnie Cleaveland, Vice President/
Secretary

Garrett Gehlhausen, Treasurer

Tom Amon

Steffi Green

Vera Hannaford

Ed Stephens

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Newsletter editor:

Sharon Strong

SECULAR HUMANISTS



OF THE LOWCOUNTRY

Contact us!

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president@lowcountryhumanists.org

SHL is a non-prophet organization!

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



Web (check out SHL's one-stop-shop)



Meetup (find future events and RSVP)



Email Lists (manage your notifications)



YouTube (watch video debates etc.)



Zazzle (buy SHL T-shirts & more)



Twitter (@CHShumanists tweets)



Facebook Page (public postings)



Facebook Group (closed group for conversations about atheism/humanism)



Facebook Lounge (closed group for wide-ranging discussions)



Facebook Families Group (closed group for parenting support)



Facebook Pay-It-Forward Group (exchange free stuff & info on good causes)