



THE SEPARATIONIST

JANUARY 2013

KATHERINE STEWART: THE GOOD NEWS CLUB

SUNDAY, JANUARY 20, 2013, 4 PM, GAGE HALL, 4 ARCHDALE ST.

In January, 2009, Katherine Stewart learned that the Santa Barbara public elementary school her children attended had added a Bible study class called the “Good News Club” to its after school program.

Stewart’s curiosity turned to concern as she discovered that the unstated purpose of the club, which is sponsored by the Child Evangelism Fellowship, is to convey the impression to its young members and their schoolmates that their school favors a particular form of the Christian religion.

Astonished to discover that the U.S. Supreme Court has deemed this—and other forms of religious activity in public schools—legal, Stewart set off on an investigative journey to dozens of cities and towns across the nation to document the impact. In this book she demonstrates that there is more religion in America’s public schools today than there has been for the past 100 years. The movement driving this agenda is stealthy. It is aggressive. It has our children in its sights. And its ultimate aim is to destroy the system of public education as we know it.

Katherine Stewart was born in Boston, Massachusetts. She started her career in journalism working for investigative reporter Wayne Barrett at *The Village Voice* and freelanced for *Newsweek International*, *Rolling Stone*,

Marie Claire and others. She cowrote the book about the musical *Rent* and, after moving to Santa Barbara in 2005, published two novels about 21st century parenting. Most recently she has written for *The New York Times*,

The Guardian, *Daily Beast*, *Bloomberg View*, and *Religion Dispatches*. She lives with her family in New York City.

On Sunday, January 20, at our monthly speaker meeting, Katherine will talk about the Good News Clubs and the well-funded, highly coordinated fundamentalist agenda they represent. We will have copies of her book available for purchase at the meeting.

Read more about her book on her web site <http://www.thegoodnewsclub.com>. You can also download a PDF press release with critical acclaim from Richard Dawkins and others. If you’re on Twitter, you can follow Katherine at <https://twitter.com/#!/kathsstewart>

Because this topic may be of particular interest to parents, childcare will be available. Pre-registration is required to ensure we have sufficient child-care providers. The cost is \$5 per family for non-dues-paying members and FREE for dues-paying members. To register your child(ren), please email the name(s) and age(s) to president@lowcountryhumanists.org.

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



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/shlyoutube>



<http://bit.ly/shllist>



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

BOOK GROUP

**SUNDAY, JANUARY 27, 2013, 4 PM
WEST ASHLEY BARNES & NOBLE
1812 SAM RITTENBERG, CHARLESTON**

Please join us on January 27, 2013, when our book group discusses *The Good News Club*, by Katherine Stewart, our monthly speaker.

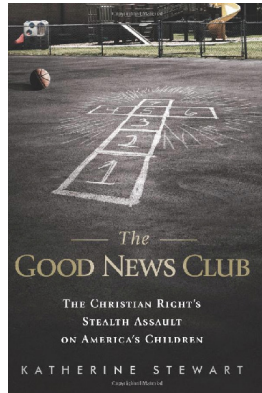
We have several copies for sale for \$15 apiece. To purchase a copy, visit our book page at <http://bit.ly/shlbooks>, or see an SHL board member at the speaker meeting on January 20th.

An excerpt from *The Good News Club*:

The bumper stickers plastering the SUVs in the parking lot are defiant: “Evolution is a Big, Fat, Lie,” “Abortion Stops a Beating Heart,” “Marriage = 1 Man + 1 Woman,” “Obama is not Jesus: Jesus Could Build a Cabinet.” I wonder if I stand much chance of blending in with this crowd. I spent some time the previous evening considering just what one should wear to a National Convention of the Child Evangelism Fellowship. I’ve chosen a knee-length skirt and pale pink sweater, and I have my hair pulled back in a prim braid.

It’s late May in Alabama, and the air smells of white cedar trees and the spicy bloom of wild geraniums. The walkways are lined with forsythia, columbine, and Virginia pine. Neat cinder-block buildings dot the hills of the 600-acre wooded campus. Along the hiking trails that snake throughout the property are rest stops outfitted with benches for contemplation and ten-foot-tall crosses. A tranquil pond is stocked with floats and rowboats. I find my way to the large, multi-use building that serves as one of the convention center’s main gathering spots, as does the large, cathedral-like chapel....

Every morning of the convention starts with a 7 a.m. prayer session for CEF workers in a room designated as one of the convention center’s smaller chapels. This morning, about fifty attendees take their seats, ready for prayer. From my spot toward the back of the room, I can smell coffee and fried breakfast foods being prepared elsewhere in the convention building.



SHL HAPPY HOUR

**TUESDAY, JANUARY 15, 2013, 6 PM
CHA CHA TEQUILA BAR
1409 FOLLY RD., CHARLESTON**

Due to popular demand, this month’s happy hour will return to Cha Cha’s Tequila Bar, 1409 Folly Rd, James Island!

Join us on Tuesday, January 15, 6pm for food, drinks, and lots of stimulating conversation. Everyone is welcome - alcohol is optional, no topic of conversation is taboo, and a good time will be had by all!

Hope to see you there!



YOUTH ACTIVITY

**SATURDAY, JANUARY 19, 2013, 1:30/2:30/3:30 PM
JAMES ISLAND COUNTY PARK
871 RIVERLAND DR., CHARLESTON**

January’s youth activity will be split into two programs, one for younger kids, one for older kids. Both are fun, educational programs featuring Charleston County Park and Recreation’s indoor, inflatable planetarium.

The first program, Moving Right Along/Sun and Earth, is geared for elementary school aged kids and younger, along with their families. In this program, we’ll examine movements of the moon, earth, and others in our solar system, including how it translates to day and night. Due to high demand, there are two sessions for this program. The first begins promptly at 1:30 pm and the second is at 3:30 pm. Please arrive 15 minutes early.

The second program, World in Motion/Constellations, is geared for middle and high school kids. In this program, we’ll examine the moon’s influence on Earth, including phases, eclipses and tides. This program begins promptly at 2:30pm. Please arrive 15 minutes early.

Cost: \$6 per person/all ages (includes admission to the park), payable to SHL by cash, check, or credit card.

RSVPs with accurate numbers are crucial. The structure only holds about 25 people, so attendance will be limited to the first 25. To RSVP, email Amy at president@lowcountryhumanists.org

CHARITY OF THE QUARTER RYAN WHITE PROGRAM



The Ryan White Part C HIV Care Management Program is our charity of the quarter. The federally funded program helps coordinate comprehensive medical care for people living with HIV/AIDS. The program is an early intervention service program designed to help improve the quality and availability of primary health-care for those with HIV/AIDS.

The program provides Doctor Care, Medications, Dental Care, Mental Healthcare, Support Groups, Substance Abuse Treatment, Insurance Continuation Services, Clinical Case Management, Wellness Care, Free HIV Testing, and Housing Services.

The Ryan White Program recently expanded and opened a comprehensive HIV clinic, now dubbed “The Wellness Center.” The name reflects our commitment to a holistic approach to wellness, as well as helping to ensure that clients feel comfortable about receiving care in a discrete, welcoming environment that does not identify as an “HIV clinic.”

The Ryan White HIV/AIDS Treatment Modernization Act of 2006 is named after a 15 year-old boy who experienced great discrimination because of his HIV status.

Please contribute by bringing a check to our monthly speaker meeting or by donating via credit/debit card at <http://bit.ly/shlcommunity>.

GOOD WITHOUT GOD RECENT CHARITABLE EFFORTS

Y'all love some books! In November and December we raised \$1092 for Begin With Books. That will provide books for more than 30 kids!

Our Light the Night team, which served as our charity of the quarter in September and October and benefited the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society, raised \$3700. The Stiefel family match brings the grand total to \$7200.

A hearty and heartfelt thanks to everyone who contributed.

DUES ARE DUE

It's time to pay your dues for the 2013 calendar year. In 2012 we received 77 dues payments for a total of \$3,395. Our largest expense is bring 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. For example we sponsored a light display at the Holiday Festival of Lights, and we were a sponsor of the Carolinas Secular Conference. Finally, there are smaller costs such as the rental fee for Gage Hall, credit card processing fees, meeting refreshments, PO Box rental, etc.

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 \$35 or \$50 annual donation to maintain a robust and active secular humanism organization in the Charleston area.

CAMP QUEST FAMILY WEEKEND

Camp Quest South Carolina's Family Weekend offers a chance to have a fun-filled mini-vacation in the middle of winter and meet like-minded families.

Where: Great Wolf Lodge, a resort hotel with an indoor, year-round 80,000 square foot waterpark.

When: February 15-17, 2013, Presidents' Day weekend.

Cost: Camp Quest South Carolina's registration fees are \$50/adult, \$50/youth (12-17 years old), \$35/child (4-11 years old), and free for children 3 and younger. This fee includes a catered lunch on Saturday as well as fun Camp Quest group activities on Saturday afternoon. In addition to CQSC registration fees, each family will be responsible for booking its own hotel room. The deadline for registration is 1/15/13. After that date, we may accept reservations as space allows, but there will be an increase in price.

Hotel Reservation: We have a limited number of rooms reserved for our group at a discounted rate of \$179/night.

Registration: <http://bit.ly/cqscfam2013>

GUN RIGHTS (IL)LOGIC JULIO CACERES

No matter how hard I try to avoid it, the argument about gun control and gun rights rages on around me. When this first started I was aligned quite squarely with the gun rights and Second Amendment rights group. However, the more I hear the shrill arguments of a desperate group of gun owners that act as though their guns are the victims instead of 27 innocent lives, the more it has put me in a mood to question these arguments. Much like Christians with their single-minded stubbornness and inability to listen to opposing views made me question what I believed, so this shrill and angry defense repeating the same worn-out arguments have made me question them. What I am discovering is that some of these arguments simply do not stand under the scrutiny of reason and logic.

Now before I continue, understand that for every argument that is made, pro or con, there will be an argument in response, there will be a study that proves the point, there will be a response to refute what has been said. That is the nature of a debate, a discussion. There would be an easy solution and very little debate if the “facts” were as clear cut as *both* sides try to make it appear. However, it is important for you to understand that these are my personal views, something that is as protected by the First Amendment as your right to bear arms is protected by the Second Amendment.

Having said that, consider the following...

1. “Making new laws will not do any good. Criminals

will not obey them anyway.” This is one of the most common arguments I hear. Laws will only take the weapons out of good people’s hands since criminals will not obey the laws anyway. The logic on this is so flawed that it pains me I never saw it. What is the point of any law then? Why even have traffic laws? Why make laws about DUI? Why make laws about privacy and identity theft? If criminals are going to break the law anyway and that is the reasoning behind not having gun laws, then how far do you want to take this logic?

2. Let’s consider bans against semi-automatic and automatic assault rifles. First, let us consider the purpose

of these weapons. They are not weapons to hunt with; they are weapons that are intended for hunting only one type of prey, humans. Second, the argument used here is, and I quote, “Do you really think that if James Holmes and the Conn shooter (guns were technically legally purchased) had different guns and smaller magazines, that they still wouldn’t have killed as many before police could get there? I do not think so.” Let us stop and consider this question with logic and mathematics. The Bushmaster .223 has a capacity of 30 rounds. Watching a news report on these yesterday I learned that a semi-automatic fires 30 rounds in about 15-20 seconds. An automatic will fire those same 30 rounds in about 1-2 seconds. Further reading on the rate of fire of an AR-15 shows that depending how fast your finger can pull the trigger you can shoot as many as 800 rounds per minute. Adam Lanza shot and killed 26 people at the school and did so firing multiple rounds into first graders because one was not enough! If you mathematically take the amount of time it would take



SHL Welcomes debate and opinion on a variety of topics—particularly difficult topics. This Op-Ed is the author’s opinion alone and does not constitute an official position of SHL or its board or officers.

GUN RIGHTS (IL)LOGIC (CONT'D)

to reload a single shot bolt action or pump action shot gun versus the amount of time it takes to fire off a magazine of 30 rounds, mathematically it would have taken more time to kill as many and there would have been time to get police there and even a possibility of rushing the gunman. If you apply logic and mathematics to this argument it comes up lacking.

3. Let's consider bans against high-capacity ammo magazines. In a news story on NPR that I was listening to just a couple of days ago, a point was made about the European Hunter's Association (I think it is actually referred to as FACE or the Federation of Associations for Hunting and Conservation of the EU). Apparently FACE represents upwards of 7 million hunters across the continent and the representative of FACE in the interview stated that gun laws vary across the countries but overall the consensus is a maximum of three rounds, one in the chamber and two in the cartridge with the exception of high-risk aggressive prey such as wild boar. The logic is that you will not get more than three shots off before the target is no longer viable and therefore it makes sense that the limit is three. Let's apply this limit of three rounds to the Connecticut shooting. If it takes 15-20 seconds to fire 30 rounds from a single magazine, 10 cartridges would need to be changed out. Logic and mathematics would dictate that if Lanza had had to change cartridges every three rounds, it would have taken him longer to kill as many people. Other variables would have come into play as well. For example, would he have 10 cartridges or would he reload cartridges? Simple facts and simple logical deduction make it clear that if he had been forced to deal with a reload process of any kind there is a strong possibility that there would have been fewer body bags and more of an opportunity for heroes to rush him and bring him down rather than get mowed down by his semi automatic.

4. Let's consider the availability argument. This argument goes that if crazy people want to kill they will be able to get the weapons. There is actually a grain of truth to this but it is inconsistent. Let us consider the Connecticut shooting. Consider the demographics of New-

town, CT. Population 27,000 in a rural area, this town is the poster child for "sleepy little town." There are no gangs peddling drugs, prostitutes, and guns to the kids of Newtown. Adam Lanza was a troubled youth that most in the town did not trust. He was moody, temperamental, did not make friends, would not look people in the eye, and could not hold a job. Even his mom did not talk a lot about him. This is not somebody that would have had access to a weapon unless his mom had them already. The logic does not hold up in this case because, yes, if his mom did not have the weapons it is highly unlikely this young man would have had access to the weapons needed for this violence. He would not have had the money to purchase them, he would not have had friends to lend him one or cooperate with him as did the Columbine students. In all likelihood this terrible violent episode would not have happened.

5. Only a very small extreme left-wing group is calling for a full ban on all guns. Most Americans agree that the Second Amendment must be upheld. The answer to this small extreme left-wing group is a growing right-wing group that wants guns available everywhere in every situation. This group totally disregards the fact that other people have principles as well. For some of us a gun in our child's classroom is a nonstarter. You will not accept a simple ban on semi-automatic weapons or limits on ammo amount but want us to accept lifting gun free zones and allow arming of our teachers. Your rights on guns do not supersede our right to disagree with you and fight back against desecrating our classrooms and stealing the innocence of our children.

Is the mental healthcare system an integral part of this conversation? Absolutely! But where to do we start? We already know that healthcare of any kind is a nonstarter with conservatives. We already know that any increased funding or government involvement in healthcare of any kind is socialism and is part of what is wrong with our country. Don't act like you are interested all of a sudden in reform on healthcare of any kind, including mental healthcare, when we are all well aware that anything that involves more funding and more responsibility and more

GUN RIGHTS (IL)LOGIC (CONT'D)

government supervision and involvement is “entitlement” and “hand outs.”

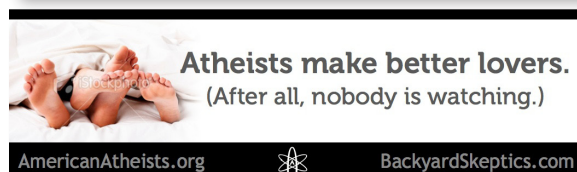
One last comment, if you ever (and I do mean *ever*) voted to not raise teachers pay, ever voted to cut the educational budget, or ever referred to teacher as “union thugs,” then do not waste your time talking about teachers being armed to defend your children. Those “thugs” have enough on their shoulders trying to educate our children without having to take on the responsibility of defending them to the death as well.

We talk about mental health, we talk about teachers being armed and yet, if you were to go to a career counselor two of the lowest paying jobs in our country are teachers and mental health care professionals. When I chose to go into a degree to be a counselor/therapist one of the first things I was warned by people in the field was that if I was interested in making a lot of money than this was not the job for me. How can we expect to ever change the mental health status of our country when the very people in the field are warning about how low the pay is? How can we have the audacity to expect our teachers to give their lives for our children when they can barely live on what educating our children pays? I would say that our priorities in this country are quite askew!

So what is the answer? As usual, it lies somewhere in between. The NRA would have us believe that the answer is more guns. A gun in every back pocket will not fix this problem. A complete ban on guns is not the answer either. There is a lot of middle ground between the two extremes. If our nation of children led by children can grow up, we might be able to find that happy medium.

But rest at ease. What you are seeing is a phase. In a couple of weeks America will be back to *Vampire Diaries* and we will no longer be discussing gun laws or mental health. There will not be any new serious gun laws; Democrats don't have the nerve to stand up to what is a very vocal minority on either mental healthcare reform or gun law reform. This conversation will go back on the shelf, to be forgotten till the next massacre.

BEST BILLBOARDS OF 2012



These billboards were chosen by readers of *The Friendly Atheist*. For the full list of finalists, visit <http://bit.ly/fa2012billboards>

**CONCEDING U.S. SENATE RACE
HERB SILVERMAN**

It is with a heavy (10.5-ounce) heart that I tell my millions of supporters I am ending my campaign to become the first acknowledged atheist to serve as a U.S. senator from South Carolina. While I didn't hear from each of the 60 million people in this country without any god beliefs, I've heard from enough of them (and even some religious believers) to know how proud and surprised they would have been to see South Carolina take a leadership role in such political diversity. Their support helps justify my eight-year legal challenge that ended with a 1997 South Carolina Supreme Court victory nullifying the anti-atheist clause in our Constitution. This battle forms the centerpiece of my recent book, *Candidate Without a Prayer: An Autobiography of a Jewish Atheist in the Bible Belt*.

Special thanks go to the over 3,700 people who voted for me in the straw poll conducted by the Charleston City Paper. That's a whopping 85 percent of the votes cast, which shows an increasing awareness and political engagement by secular Americans. Charleston native Stephen Colbert, who announced his candidacy on national television, finished second in this poll. As a huge fan of Colbert, I took great pleasure in highlighting his appearance at the College of Charleston and by voting for Herman Cain in the Republican primary because Colbert had endorsed him.

Before Gov. Nikki Haley made her disappointing choice, there was a plan for the top two vote getters in the Charleston City Paper straw poll (Colbert and me) to engage in a senatorial debate on Colbert's TV show. Regrettably, I was the only one with such a plan. Colbert didn't come right out and admit it, but he apparently chose to duck the debate because he knew he would have had little chance of winning. Here is how I would have framed my senatorial case on his show:

Al Franken and Stephen Colbert are among my favorite comedians. Franken, however, mysteriously lost his sense of humor after becoming a U.S. Senator, and he hasn't been heard from since. Our country cannot afford to take such a risk with a national treasure like Stephen Colbert, so he needs to stay where

he is. As Senator, I promise not to fall off the humor cliff—as most politicians do. I will report to my constituents every week on C-SPAN television about the many weird things I see and hear from members of Congress. I might not be as funny as Stephen Colbert, but the C-SPAN humor bar is set so low that even a mathematician like me can clear it with ease. Finally, I hope to start a much-needed trend toward shorter political speeches by dropping the standard cliché ending, “God bless you and God bless the United States of America.”

During my campaign, I was thrilled to receive the endorsement of Richard Dawkins, renowned evolutionary biologist and author of *The God Delusion*. Haley, however, was more impressed by an endorsement from Jim DeMint, so she appointed Tim Scott to the position. DeMint, as senator, wanted public school students to be taught that God created this earth and that He put Christians in charge of America. Unfortunately, Tim Scott in many ways is a “spiritual” heir to DeMint. This fiscal conservative once insisted on posting a Ten Commandments plaque in the Charleston County Council chambers despite being told he would lose any legal challenge. Scott argued that the display was needed to remind residents of moral absolutes. But when asked to name all Ten Commandments, Scott couldn't. The court, as expected, declared the display unconstitutional, handing taxpayers a substantial legal bill. Unbowed and no wiser, Scott said, “Whatever it costs in the pursuit of this goal is worth it.”

Scott barely edged out Ricardo Montalban, who died in 2009, for third place in the *Charleston City Paper* straw poll. Had Gov. Haley appointed Montalban to the Senate, South Carolina would have made history by having the first officially dead senator in office. I'll not comment about our late Strom Thurmond, the only senator to reach 100 while in office.

Despite losing by only one vote (Haley's), I'll be a good sport and not demand a recount. And I won't mount a campaign to see either Haley's or Scott's birth certificate.

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

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.

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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>