



# The Separationist

Celebrating 20 Godless Years in the Holy City

Volume 21, Issue 7

October 2014

## Rob Boston: Religious Freedom

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

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### 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.

Religious freedom has traditionally been construed as an individual right to pray and worship as one sees fit. But Religious Right activists are working to change religious liberty into something else – a device to be used to control others and a vehicle to enlist government support to further fundamentalist dogma. In this talk, Rob Boston will discuss why the Religious Right’s view of religious freedom isn’t really religious freedom at all. He’ll also discuss how fear over evolving social trends motivates Religious Right groups to push a theocratic agenda.



Rob Boston is the Director of Communications at Americans United for Separation of Church and State. Rob, who has

worked at Americans United since 1987, also serves as editor of AU's Church & State magazine. Rob is the author of four books: *Close Encounters with the Religious Right: Journeys into the Twilight Zone of Religion and Politics* (Prometheus Books, 2000); *The Most Dangerous Man in America?*

Pat Robertson and the *Rise of the Christian Coalition* (Prometheus Books, 1996); *Why the Religious Right Is Wrong About Separation of Church and State* (Prometheus Books, 1993; second edition, 2003) and, most recently, *Taking Liberties: Why Religious Freedom Doesn't Give You The Right To Tell Other People What To Do* (Prometheus Books, 2014).

Copies of Rob's book,

"Taking Liberties: Why Religious Freedom Doesn't Give You The Right To Tell Other People What To Do" will be available for purchase at the meeting.

**When:** Sunday, 10/19/2014 at 4pm

**Where:** Gage Hall, 4 Archdale Street

**Cost:** Free!

Refreshment and dinner details have not been finalized as of publication of *The Separationist*. Check [email lists](#) or [meetup](#), or check postings on our [website](#) and [facebook](#) group for updates.

## Sunday Quest

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

Sunday Quest, our 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 stay and 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.



## Upcoming SHL Events

Events sometimes get added after The Separationist is posted. Keep up to date with SHL events by signing up for our [email lists](#) or [meetup](#), or check postings on our [website](#) and [facebook group](#).

### Volunteer Activity: Lowcountry Orphan Relief

Saturday, October 4, 2014, 10:00am — 1:00pm

1850 Truxtun Avenue, North Charleston



On October 4th, 2014, SHL will be volunteering at Lowcountry Orphan Relief! Lowcountry Orphan Relief (LOR)

is a non-profit organization that works with other non-profits, schools, foster parents, and government agencies to provide goods and services to children who have been abused or neglected. Volunteers will be sorting clothes, organizing rooms, and working on other various projects to help children in need.

Volunteers can come and meet up at Lowcountry Orphan Relief (1850 Truxtun Avenue, North Charleston) at 10:00 AM on Saturday, October 4th. Children 12 or older are welcome to come and help out as long as they are supervised by an adult. There are available parking spots in front of the building; if parking fills up, volunteers are also allowed to park on the grass on the opposite side of the street.

# Upcoming SHL Events cont.

## SHL Movie Club

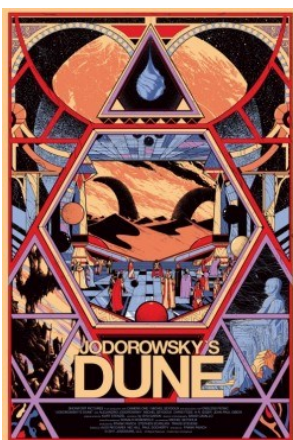
Saturday, October 6, 2014, 7:00pm

Park Circle Film Society, 4820 Jenkins Ave, North Charleston

Please join us for a viewing of **JODOROWSKY'S DUNE**.

This fascinating documentary explores the genesis of one of cinema's greatest epics that never was: cult filmmaker

Alejandro Jodorowsky's (EL TOPO) adaptation of Frank Herbert's sci-fi classic *Dune*, whose cast would have included such icons as Salvador Dali, Orson Welles and Mick Jagger. In 1975, following the runaway success of his art-house freak-outs *EL TOPO* and *HOLY MOUNTAIN*, Alejandro Jodorowsky secured the rights to Frank Herbert's *Dune* – and began work on what was gearing up to be a cinematic game-changer, a sci-fi epic unlike anything the world had ever seen. Unfortunately, the film was never made.



*"A funny, fascinating rumination on art, ambition and the fickleness of fate. It's also unique in the history of film: a documentary that goes behind the scenes of a movie for which not a single scene was ever shot."* – Film Threat

Following the movie we will enjoy a late snack/drinks at a local Park Circle establishment.

## SHL Happy Hour

Tuesday, October 7, 2014, 6:00pm



Manny's Neighborhood Grille, 1680 Old Towne Rd (West Ashley, near the North Bridge)

Join us for a fun and relaxing evening of stimulating conversation over drinks and food (alcohol is optional and no topic of conversation is ever taboo!) with old and new friends! Everyone is welcome. Don't be shy—come join us!

## Girls Night Out: Wine Down Wednesday

Wednesday, October 15, 2014, 5:00pm—7:00pm

Old Towne Creek County Park, 1400 Old Towne Rd, Charleston (West Ashley)

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



In October, Wine Down Wednesday returns to beautiful Old Towne Creek County Park! Charleston

County residents can register in advance for \$15. Non-Charleston County residents and day-of admission is \$20 per person. Admission fees cover wine, hors d'oeuvres, commemorative wine glass, and musical entertainment by Dave Landeo.

# Upcoming SHL Events cont.

## Girls Night Out 2

**Monday, October 20, 2014, 6:30pm—9:00pm**

**Ethiopian Taste Food and Coffee, 5060 Dorchester Rd Suite 280, North Charleston**

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



Ethiopian Taste Food & coffee is the only authentic Ethiopian restaurant

in the Charleston area. Food is prepared with fresh ingredients and offer a wide selection of vegetable options. Ethiopian Taste is a family owned restaurant that offers a unique experience for individuals and families alike. Coffee was discovered in Ethiopia so you must try the great coffee and take part in one of the traditional Ethiopian coffee ceremonies.

## Fall Picnic at the Corn Maze

**Saturday, October 25, 2014, 4:30pm**

**West Farm Corn Maze, 2641 Cooper Store Rd, Moncks Corner**

*We'll be in the party shed behind the concession stand!*

Our annual Fall Picnic is Saturday, 10/25, at the West Farm Corn Maze in Moncks Corner. The 6-acre corn maze features 3 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 chil-

dren's play area, small petting zoo, and hay rides. There is something for everyone, so come on out and join us!

Especially for children: a pint-sized corn maze, hay-bale maze, play area, covered corn kernel box, tire climb activity, and a farm zoo with cows, goats, pigs, sheep and chickens. Pumpkins are available for purchase.



We will have a potluck dinner in the party shed, so please bring a main dish, side dish, and/or dessert to share, along with non-alcoholic beverages to share. You may also wish to bring your lawn chairs, flashlights, and mosquito spray (the corn mazes are even more fun when the sun goes down).

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 at: [www.westfarmcornmaze.com](http://www.westfarmcornmaze.com). RSVPs are not

# Upcoming SHL Events cont.

necessary, but are helpful. To RSVP or if you have any questions, please contact event host Patricia Rice-Johnson.

For more info on West Farm: <http://www.westfarmcornmaze.com/>

Directions: [http://www.westfarmcornmaze.com/west\\_farm\\_corn\\_maze\\_006.htm](http://www.westfarmcornmaze.com/west_farm_corn_maze_006.htm)

## SHL Book Club

Sunday, October 26, 2014, 4:00pm

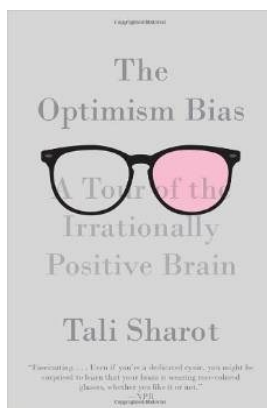
Barnes & Noble, 1812 Sam Rittenberg Blvd, West Ashley

Our October book is The Optimist Bias by Tali Sharot. Remember if you order from the amazon purchase site using the link [available at the SHL web site](#) Secular Humanist of the Low-country receives a 15% credit at the end of the year.

“Psychologists have long been aware that most people maintain an irrationally positive outlook on life. Tali Sharot—one of the most innovative neuroscientists at work today—takes this a step further.

Optimism, she shows, may in fact be crucial to our existence. In this absorbing exploration, Sharot takes an in-depth, clarifying look at:

- \* *how the brain generates hope and what happens when it fails*
- \* *how the brains of optimists and pessimists differ*



*why we are terrible at predicting what will make us happy*

- \* *how emotions strengthen our ability to recollect*
- \* *how anticipation and dread affect us*
- \* *how our optimistic illusions affect our financial, professional, and emotional decisions*

With its cutting-edge science and its wide-ranging narrative, *The Optimism Bias* provides us with startling new insight into the workings of the brain and the major role that optimism plays in determining how we live our lives.”

As always please remember to bring your dining preferences with you to offer to the group as well as your book suggestions.

If you want to suggest a book before the meeting please email Barbara at [gardeniabarb1940@gmail.com](mailto:gardeniabarb1940@gmail.com) or myself at [johnmchilds6909@gmail.com](mailto:johnmchilds6909@gmail.com) with the author and title.

We look forward to seeing you there!

## Secular Parenting Discussion

Monday, October 27, 2014, 7:00pm

Homegrown Brewhouse, 117 S Main St, Summerville

Most of us are first-general secular parents, and many are even new to humanism/atheism/non-belief/whatever. Parenting can be hard by itself, but navigating the sometimes-overbearing and -unforgiving religious culture of our community while trying to raise ethical and responsible free-thinking children can add extra layers of difficulty. Without the benefit of being raised in a secular fam-

## Upcoming SHL Events cont.

ily, we must find our way on our own. Or we can learn from each other.

Please join us for our secular parenting discussion on Monday, October 27 at 7pm. The idea behind this will

be to discuss topics that are the most prevalent/difficult for secular parents,

to share ideas, and build a supportive community. As this is our first, we will determine what are needs are, discuss the format for future meetups, and go from there. What I had envisioned was to have monthly discussion groups with a pre-set topic (eg church-state issues in school, managing relationships with religious family members, talking about death, helping our children to navigate peer shunning and loss of friendships due to religious differences, etc.), but we will go with the needs of the group. We will also discuss the social needs of our secular families in order to create the best events and programs for a supportive community.

**Topic for 10/27:** What challenges do you face as a secular parent/family? What would you like to see in a secular community?

This event is designed to be for adults only. Babies in arms are okay, but please leave other children at home so that we can focus on the topic at hand with minimal distraction.

This is especially for both moms and dads, but



grandparents and parents-to-be are also welcome. We are meeting at Homegrown Brewhouse. They are a small, locally-owned pub who is allowing us to use their space. Please buy a drink or two if you can, and please no outside food or drink. They have non-alcoholic beverages as well as some food.

### Team Trivia



Wed, October 29, 2014, 7:00pm  
Steel City Pizza, 1440 Ben Sawyer Blvd, Mt Pleasant

Come out for a night of trivia and socializing! This is a team event and is free.

Our team **Happy Humanists** is officially registered, so our points are cumulative and 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. And if you would like to organize an SHL trivia night in your part of town (hello, West Ashley!) let us know. Organizers are responsible for checking in using our team name, welcoming players, and using any winnings from the previous week to purchase appetizers for the team. Please contact [president@lowcountryhumanists.org](mailto:president@lowcountryhumanists.org) for more info.



## A Ghost Story Even I Can Believe

*I thought ghosts were created for laughs—then I found out most who take*

Many stories describe supernatural events that turn skeptics into believers. This is not one of those stories. I have not had a “road to Damascus” experience, though my worldview did change a little after hearing about ghosts from Will Moredock, a professional tour guide in my hometown of Charleston, South Carolina.

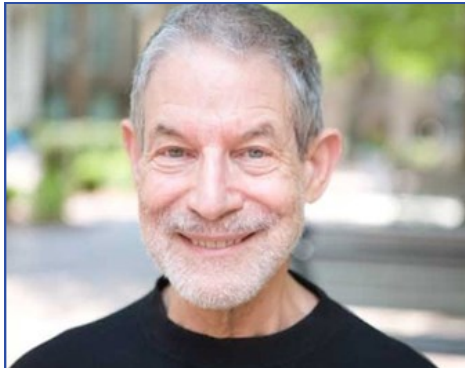
Full disclosure: I interviewed Will for this article shortly after Will interviewed me for a piece in the *Charleston City Paper* about our local secular humanist group and our billboard, 20 Godless Years in the Holy City!

Will is a member of the Unitarian Church, a secular humanist, and a Charleston guide for Ghost and Graveyard Walking Tours. Ghosts, like fine restaurants and antebellum houses, are among the many attractions in this historic city, but I thought that Charleston ghosts, as in the film *Ghostbusters*, were only created for laughs and commercial success. (Coincidentally, *Ghostbusters* star Bill Murray lives near Charleston.)

I was surprised to hear that almost all who take ghost tours believe in ghosts. Many claim to have seen, or at least experienced, ghosts. An



even more shocking report from Will is that lots of his fellow tour guides, perhaps even most, be-



**Herb Silverman** is founder and President Emeritus of the [Secular Coalition for America](#), author of [Candidate Without a Prayer: An Autobiography of a Jewish Atheist in the Bible Belt](#), and Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Mathematics at the College of Charleston.

lieve in such spirits.

So in at least one sense, my worldview has changed from skeptic to believer — I now believe that countless adults actually believe in ghosts.

Tour guides encourage this belief because it’s good for business. Will studied the history of local ghost beliefs and then embellished his stories. He considers himself an entertainer whose role is to make outrageous claims and tell outrageous lies to willing believers. (Perhaps Murray can find a role for Will in the next *Ghostbusters* sequel.)

The many ghost books and pamphlets in Charleston affirm unfalsifiable beliefs with statements like “Not everyone is capable of or allowed to see ghosts.” Another

claim is that Charleston has more ghosts than any other city in America. (I’m confident that Charleston, like every other place in the world, has zero ghosts.)

My faith in rationality suffered another blow when I learned that ghosts dominated the best sellers for the University of South Carolina Press, the state’s only academic press. Perhaps it promotes books like *Charleston Ghosts*, *South Carolina Ghosts*, *Civil War Ghost Stories & Legends*, and *Ghosts of the Carolinas* to afford publishing high-quality books that are not commercially successful.

Charleston ghost stories are usually associated with people who suffered violent deaths and then “return” to fulfill a mission or take revenge. I asked Will how many ghosts are of black people, since revenge for enslavement and lynching might be in order. Will shook his head and said most South Carolina ghosts were once wealthy plantation owners, undoubtedly with large slaveholdings. Just as slaves had been invisible in life, their ghosts are invisible in tales.

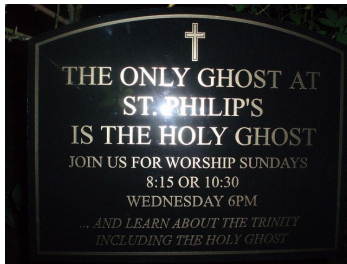
If Jesus can be resurrected through stories, I think it’s long overdue for African-American ghosts to rise from their graves.

Many graveyards, where ghosts supposedly like to hang out at night, are next to old Charleston churches. I playfully asked why

ghosts don't travel more, but Will just smiled and answered, "It's a mystery." He says people lose faith in tour guides who say "I don't know." Preachers understand this way of framing responses to unanswerable questions.

If children are on a tour, Will mentions that ghosts don't hurt people. Nobody questioned how ghosts could take revenge without hurting anyone. Since most people on the ghost tours are Christian, I asked Will how belief in ghosts fits with their religious beliefs. He said that theological inconsistencies don't seem to be a problem for tourists. They want to believe in an afterlife, and the more kinds of affirmation the better.

The sign by the cemetery at St. Phillip's Church in Charleston. Courtesy of Oliver Delacruz.

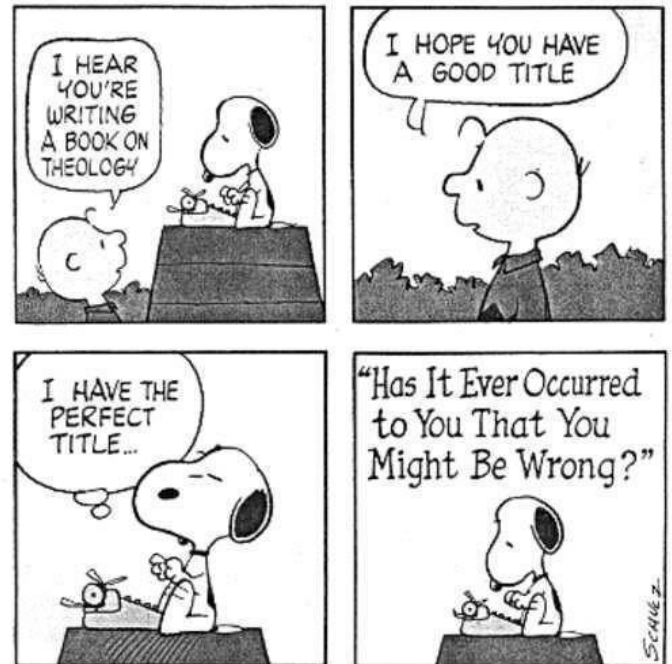


I especially wondered if belief in local ghosts doesn't upset those who believe in only one ghost, the third part of the Trinity. That actually is a problem for St. Philip's Church. Established in 1681, it's the city's oldest religious congregation, and its cemetery is a popular stop for all ghost tour guides. Will showed me a plaque on the cemetery fence that advises, "The only Ghost at St Philip's is the Holy Ghost. Join us and learn about the Trinity including the Holy Ghost." I wondered how Will might respond if asked about the 3 = 1 God, and, predictably, Will replied, "It's a mystery." And so it is.

Incidentally, St. Philip's Church is appropriately located on Church Street, which runs parallel to State Street. This is one example in South Carolina where we truly have a separation of Church and State.

Tourists often take pictures of our churches and graveyards. If you can see this resident ghost at St. Philips, then your eyes must be more supernatural than mine.

There are many reasons to visit Charleston, recently voted #1 tourist destination in the world. However, don't expect to see any ghosts — unless you believe in them. That's always the case with faith.



**Have an announcement, essay, or original artwork that you would like to have considered for inclusion in The Separationist?**

Send an email to [newsletter@lowcountryhumanists.org](mailto:newsletter@lowcountryhumanists.org).



## Charity of the Quarter

Our September-October Charity of the Quarter is the The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society's Light the Night Walk, which funds research to advance therapies and treatments that are saving lives every day. In 2013, SHL was named a top corporate fundraiser for LTN. Let's see if we can't repeat or even top that achievement now.

The mission of The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society (LLS) is: Cure leukemia, lymphoma, Hodgkin's disease and myeloma,

and improve the quality of life of patients and their families.

LLS is the world's largest voluntary health agency dedicated to blood cancer. LLS funds lifesaving blood cancer research around the world and provides free information and support services.

Key Priorities will ensure that: *The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society helps blood cancer patients live better, longer lives.*

*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*

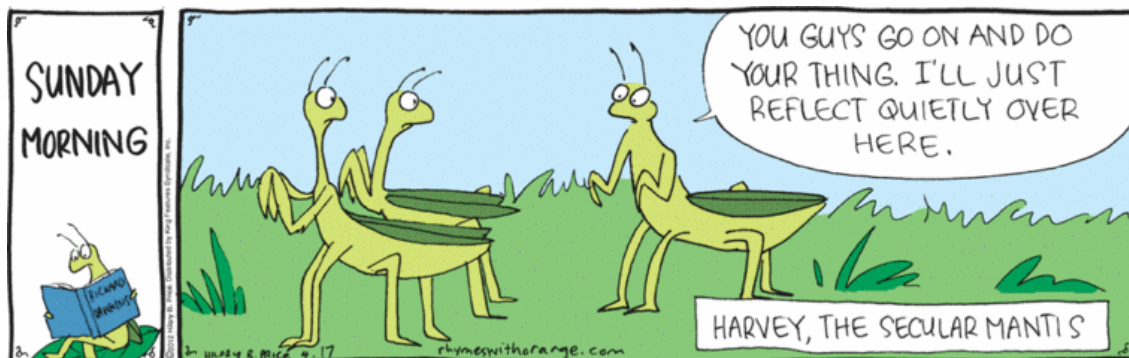
SHL  
PO Box 32256  
Charleston SC 29417-2256

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

*Or securely [donate online!](#)*



**someday is today**



## Our Officers

President: Amy Monsky  
Vice President: Herb Silverman  
Treasurer: Jason Gregory  
Secretary: Laura Kasman  
Newsletter Editor: Sue Edward

## Contact us!

SHL  
Post Office Box 32256  
Charleston, SC 29417-2256  
843-670-0290  
[president@lowcountryhumanists.org](mailto:president@lowcountryhumanists.org)

*SHL is a non-prophet  
organization!*

# SECULAR HUMANISTS



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## 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.*