



The Separationist

Celebrating 20 Godless Years in the Holy City

Volume 21, Issue 9

December 2014

SHL Potluck and Book Auction

Sunday, December 21, 2014, 5:00 PM
611 North Shore Drive, Charleston, 29412

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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.

SHL'S annual December Potluck will be held on Sunday, December 21, 2014, at 5 pm at the home of Libby Smith. Please bring an appetizer, salad, main dish, side dish, or dessert

to share. If you don't like to cook, wine, beer, and soft drinks are always welcome.

Also, bring your used books, CDs, and DVDs related to secular humanism, religion, and science for our annual book auction. Proceeds will be used to offset the costs of bringing in outside speakers and other

programs and activities that SHL will offer throughout the upcoming year. Herb Silver-



man will be our auctioneer. (To keep the auction from lasting an eternity, please only bring items related directly to humanism, religion, and science.)

We hope to see you there, and we would like to extend a special invitation to people on our mailing list who rarely come to meetings, as well as past

speakers who are not members.

Note to parents:

though children are welcome, this potluck party is not especially child-friendly as there will be no children's activities.

Directions:

North Shore Drive is off of Harborview Road on James Island. A map can be found [here](#).

There will not be a meeting at Gage Hall this month — we will return to our regular meeting format in January.

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.

SHL International Dinner

Monday, December 1, 2014, 6:30pm

Basil Thai Restaurant, 1465 Long Grove Rd, Mt Pleasant

Join us for dinner at Basil restaurant in MOUNT PLEASANT (not the downtown location).

Although Charleston has many wonderful restaurants, there aren't as many options when it comes to good ethnic cuisine. This is our fourth international dinner, and we hope to continue to make this a regular event, enjoying a different ethnic cuisine every couple of months or so. Suggestions for future locations welcomed!



This dinner is open to anyone – men, women, brave children. We will make reservations four days before (Fri, 11/28), so please get your RSVP in (via facebook, meetup, or email president@lowcountryhumanists.org) and finalize any maybes by then.

SHL Movie Club

Saturday, December 6, 2014, 7:00pm

Park Circle Film Society, 4820 Jenkins Ave, North Charleston



Please join us for our December movie! We will see the satirical film **Miss Meadows** on Saturday, December 6, 7:00pm, at the Park Circle Film Society. Following the film we will enjoy drinks or a snack at a nearby restaurant.



Miss Meadows is a school teacher that arrives in a new town every year. She may have impeccable manners and grace, but she is not entirely what she appears to be. Underneath the candy-sweet exterior hides a gun-toting vigilante. Her mission is to right the wrongs in this cruel world, by whatever means necessary.

SHL will not have a Girls Night Out or book club this month.

Upcoming SHL Events cont.

Holiday Cookie Family Party

Sunday, December 7, 2014, 11:00.am

Doty Park, 320 N Laurel St, Summerville, South Carolina 29483

This event is especially **FOR FAMILIES**, though everyone is welcome.

Okay! So what is this holiday cookie party? Besides being a time to have fun and enjoy each other's company, we share a potluck-style lunch (so be thinking 'bout what you want to bring!) and we have a cookie exchange/competition.

The cookie exchange and competition is optional but lots of fun. Here's how it works. Each participating family makes a batch of their very bestest cookies and brings them to the party. Each batch of cookies will then be divided among the other participating families. So, you come with a batch of cookies and leave with the equivalent of a batch of cookies, but instead of one kind, you have



lots of different delicious cookies. Make sense? If not, please ask. The rules for the cookie exchange are at the bottom of this message. So that's the exchange part. The competition part is straightforward. We will choose impartial judges who will choose the best tasting cookie as well as the best looking cookie. Prizes will be awarded, not the least of which is the glory associated with being Prized Cookiemaker. :)

If you're interested in coming (and I know you are!), please RSVP (via facebook, meetup, or email president@lowcountryhumanists.org) with the number of

people, including children, who will be attending. Drinks and paperware will be provided so a fairly accurate headcount is helpful.

Finally, there is a possibility that we will have some holiday crafts for the kids to make, but this hasn't been ironed out, so no guarantees here.

Okay, here are the rules for the cookie exchange. If you're not interested in participating, you don't need to read any further. You're free! :)



1. All cookies must be home-made. This means from scratch, not just home baked. :)
2. What is a cookie? Great question! For the cookie exchange, any cookie-ish delectable is okay. So fudge, brittle, brownies – they're all fine. The competition will be divided into cookies and non-cookies.
3. What is a batch? Use your judgement here. Yields will vary from batch to batch, so aim for at least 3 cookies per other participating family. I think probably 3 dozen cookies will be sufficient.
4. *puts on Scrooge hat* The cookies for the exchange are for participants only. If you'd like to share your cookies during the potluck meal with non-participants, you might want to make a few extra. lol!
5. There will be 3 prizes awarded this year. In addition to Best Tasting Cookie and Best Looking Cookie (both of which are for real "cookies" only), we will have Best Non-Cookie (fudge, brittle, brownies, etc.). Judges will be selected at random from men, women, and kids.

The location will be Doty Park in Summerville. For those unfamiliar with this location, there is an enclosed playground, lots of tennis courts, some green space, but most importantly we'll have access to and exclusive use of the climate-controlled building. And there are of course real bathrooms.

Upcoming SHL Events cont.

SHL Happy Hour

Monday, December 8, 2014, 6:00pm

Taco Boy, 217 Huger Street, Charleston

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 among the splendid kitchiness that is Taco Boy! Everyone is welcome. Don't be shy—come join us!



Happy Hour is the second Monday this month—we'll return the second Tuesdays in January.

Youth Volunteer Activity: Lowcountry Food Bank

Thursday, December 11, 2014, 5:00pm—7:00pm

Lowcountry Food Bank, 2864 Azalea Drive, North Charleston



**LOWCOUNTRY
FOOD BANK**

We will be packing boxes for seniors in our community. Please wear closed toe shoes. This event is open to kids first grade and up, and parents are encouraged to take part in the event as well.

SHL Volunteer Activity: Community Potluck

Sunday, December 14, 2014, 12:40pm

Mall Park, corner of Columbus and America Streets, Charleston

The Community Potluck began in 2011 by Occupy Charleston and other volunteers as a way to help those who are disadvantaged. It grew into a weekly event, often feeding up to 60 community members—in some cases this is their only meal of the day.

SHL will provide the December 14 community potluck. Volunteers are needed for donating food, preparing the items, and serving the meals. Food can be prepared in advanced. Setup begins at 12:40pm and serving begins at 1:00pm on the day of the potluck. The potluck is held at Mall Park, on the corner of Columbus and America Streets (near the Trident Palmer Campus), rain or shine. Contact Stephanie Green at 843-708-7796 or volunteers@lowcountryhumanists.org to coordinate needed items and volunteers.



Upcoming SHL Events cont.

Team Trivia



Wednesday, December 17, 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 [presi-](#)



Holiday Festival of Lights

Nightly, now thru January 1

James Island County Park

SHL has tickets for sale to the Holiday Festival of Lights. Prices are \$10 for dues-paying members and \$15 for non-members (tickets are \$15 at the gate). Tickets admit your entire carload so pack up your family and friends! Tickets can be purchased in person at the December 21 potluck, [on our website](#), or by mailing a check to SHL, PO Box 32256, Charleston, SC 29417 (write "Festival of Lights" in the memo).



SHL is once again a sponsor of the 'Solar System' light display — look for our sign!

SHL has a new billboard! Check out the electronic board on I-26 West near the Montague exit!

**Good works in
non-mysterious ways.**

LOWCOUNTRYHUMANISTS.ORG

Debate Debriefing

By Alex Kasman

On November 20th, a debate called "Is the Foundation of Morality Natural or Supernatural?" was held at the College of Charleston. Although it was not an official SHL event, quite a few SHL members were present in the audience and an SHL board member, namely me, served as the moderator.

The debaters were Wallace Marshall, who is director of the Charleston chapter of the Christian apologetics organization Reasonable Faith, and Scott James, a professor of philosophy at the University of North Carolina in Wilmington and the author of a textbook on "evolutionary ethics". Each of them believes that morality has an objective foundation, but they disagree on its source. Those who have heard Dr. Marshall in his previous debates with SHL members know that he believes that objective morality is only possible if its source is a perfect, loving and all-powerful supernatural being. Prof. James, on the other hand, argued that the idea that God is the source of ethics is obviously flawed and easily rejected, and that the source of objective ethics is nothing other than the obvious and natural desire to avoid pain.

I hope neither of them think that it is objectively wrong for the moderator of a debate to critique and offer alternative viewpoints from the debaters. However, since they both seemed to agree that the purpose of a debate is the airing and analysis of differing viewpoints, then they ought to also agree that offering one more view-

point for consideration, which is what I intend to do in this article, is even better.



From my perspective, each of them succeeded in destroying their opponent's "positive position". In terms of presentation style, they were very different. (James' PowerPoint presentation was much more entertaining than Marshall's oration; his students must really love his classes.) In terms of content, however, they were quite similar. Each pointed out that the other's concept failed to provide an adequate foundation. In each case, seeking to find the actual foundation of the supposedly objective ethics, one was left in an endless loop asking the question "Why?"

Of course, there are many different perspectives on this question. Each of the debaters, and clearly some of the audience members, were satisfied with the one of the two views presented at the debate. I would like to take this opportunity to offer one alternative viewpoint. That viewpoint, which some people apparently find frightening, is this: I do not believe

that there is an objective basis for morality.

Yes, call me a "moral relativist" if you must, but I do not think this position is as horrible as the quotes offered by Marshall would have you believe. In particular, contrary to what he suggests, the fact that I think my concept of ethics is not a universal truth does not make it impossible for me to act in the ways I see necessary to make the world a better place.

In fact, my method for determining what is or is not ethical is very similar to the supposedly "objective" basis for ethics that Scott James discussed. That is, I believe that the determination of whether an action is ethical is whether the results of that action hurt or help others. My disagreement with James is not on what we consider ethical, but whether such a statement has to be qualified with a statement like "according to my ethics".

For instance, James and I would agree that there is nothing in inherently unethical about homosexuality as nobody is harmed by sex between two consenting adults regardless of whether they have the same gender. Of course, there are many people in the world who consider homosexuality to be unethical. James would say that they are simply wrong, and I would say that their concept of ethics is different from my own. To reach their answer which is different from my own, they may not be making a logical error but rather are simply asking different questions than the

Debate Debriefing cont.

one I asked. Rather than looking at merely the question of what harm may be caused to individuals, they are looking at such things as commands from authority or the preservation of a societal tradition.

Marshall has suggested that those who do not believe in universal objective ethics would be unable to punish those who behave unethically. I think I may be a bit more thoughtful about imposing punishments for what I consider to be unethical behavior, but I certainly am not entirely prevented from doing so. For many people who believe in objective ethics, locking up people who have committed murder does not require much thought; they have done something wrong and they deserve punishment. For me, it is a bit more complicated. I have to justify for myself why putting the person in jail (which is arguably harmful to that individual)

serves a greater good of preventing other harm in the future (either by preventing this individual from repeating his actions or by deterring others.) As I said, despite the scary suggestions that in a world without objective ethics we would simply allow everyone to just do whatever they want, I have no problem acting on my ethics and doing things necessary to make the world better according to my concept of what a better world would be.

In conclusion, let me pose a thought experiment to anyone who believes that it is important and necessary for ethics to be objective. Consider two different worlds that have many things in common. In each world, people disagree greatly about ethical questions. In each world, some people believe abortion is ethically wrong and others think that denying it is, some people believe that torturing

prisoners for information is wrong and others think that not torturing them to prevent terrorist acts would be wrong, some people believe homosexuality is objectively wrong and others think there is absolutely nothing wrong about it, and so on. Another thing that is common between the worlds is that no amount of debate and no evidence seems to convince the people on one side of these disagreements that they should change their minds. The one difference is that in one of those worlds some of those people are objectively right and the others are objectively wrong, while in the other world they are just two differing viewpoints. My question for you is this: what difference does it actually make which of those worlds we live in? Since people will behave exactly the same in either of them, why should it be so scary or horrible to think that we are in a world where ethics is subjective?

Charity of the Quarter

SHL's charity for November and December is Share Our Suzy (SOS). SOS's goal is to allow breast cancer patients to focus solely on recovery and not the financial stress brought on during this very difficult battle.

The foundation aids those with bridging the financial gap from diagnosis to remission. Funds raised are used to provide assistance to those with every day needs such as wigs, prosthetics, childcare, gas cards, utility bill assistance, medication assistance and more. SOS helps cover the critical areas that insurance companies do not. The people SOS serves are more than just patients: they are

mothers, grandmothers, sisters and daughters. They have children, spouses and responsibilities.

Fighting cancer is about more than having chemo and radiation treatments. It affects all aspects of life. It is amazing what a wig can do for a patient's self esteem. A prosthetic bra can make all the difference to a recovering breast cancer patient. Having family there to hold a hand during treatment makes the battle bearable. Knowing that the electricity bill will be paid is a big relief. SOS, a 501(c)(3) provides these types of assistance to people who would otherwise have to do without.

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.

Our Officers

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SECULAR HUMANISTS



OF THE LOWCOUNTRY

Contact us!

SHL
Post Office Box 32256
Charleston, SC 29417-2256
843-670-0290
president@lowcountryhumanists.org

*SHL is a non-prophet
organization!*

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



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The Separationist

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