



The Separationist

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April 2015

William Janssen Religious Refusals and American Religious Liberty: How Did We Get Here?

Sunday, April 19, 2015, 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.

Please join us for the April monthly meeting of the Secular Humanists of the Lowcountry for a talk entitled "Religious Refusals and American Religious Liberty: How Did We Get Here?" by William Janssen, Charleston School of Law.

To many, the Supreme Court's decisions in Hobby Lobby and Hosanna-Tabor seem quite out of step with our Nation's commitment to equal treatment for all citizens. But neither decision, nor indeed the whole history of Free Exercise Clause constitutional case law, can be fully understood without context. This program endeavors to supply just that – a whirlwind tour of the U.S. Constitution's Free Exercise Clause and a background to that constitutional guarantee and the strange and crooked path the high court

has taken to reach where we are today.



Professor William M. Janssen is a professor of law at the Charleston School of Law, in Charleston, South Carolina, where he teaches first amendment (church/state) law, civil procedure, and products liability litigation. He has published and spoken on constitutional religious liberty, collaborated on a national symposium analyzing Justice Sandra Day O'Connor's "Endorsement Test" as its thirtieth anniversary approached, and litigated the contours of

the Establishment Clause in the context of religious symbolism in the public square. Before his appointment to the full-time faculty in Charleston, Professor Janssen was a litigation partner in a midAtlantic AmLaw 200 law firm. He served as Chair of his firm's Life Sciences Practices, a developer of the firm's innovative "We're-All-In" 100%, firm-wide pro bono initiative, and a member of the firm's seven-member governing Executive Committee. He is a member of both the International Association of Defense Counsel and the Food & Drug Law Institute.

When: Sunday, 4/19/15 at 4pm
Where: Gage Hall, 4 Archdale Street
Cost: Free and open to the public!

After the meeting, join us for dinner at Leaf Restaurant.

Sunday Quest

Sunday, April 19, 2015, 4 PM

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.



Upcoming SHL Events

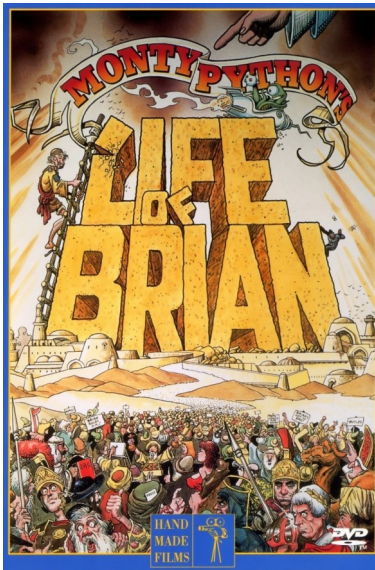
Events sometimes get added after The Separationist is posted. Keep up to date with SHL events by signing up for our [email lists](#) or [meetup](#), or check postings on our [website](#) and [facebook](#) group.

SHL Movie Club

Saturday, April 4 2015, 2:00pm

Home of Sue Edward, [20 Wespanee Dr, West Ashley](#)

This month we resurrect an oldie but goodie that's appropriate for the season! Join us for a viewing of Monty Python's [Life of Brian](#).



Often ranked as the greatest comedy of all time, the film contains religious satire that was very controversial at the time of its 1979 release. Thirty-nine British authorities refused to allow the film to be screened for fear of contravening then-active blasphemy laws. It was banned in several countries including Ireland and

Norway. In the US, the film was condemned by Catholics and Jews alike and drew protesters at every showing. In other words, it's a must-see!



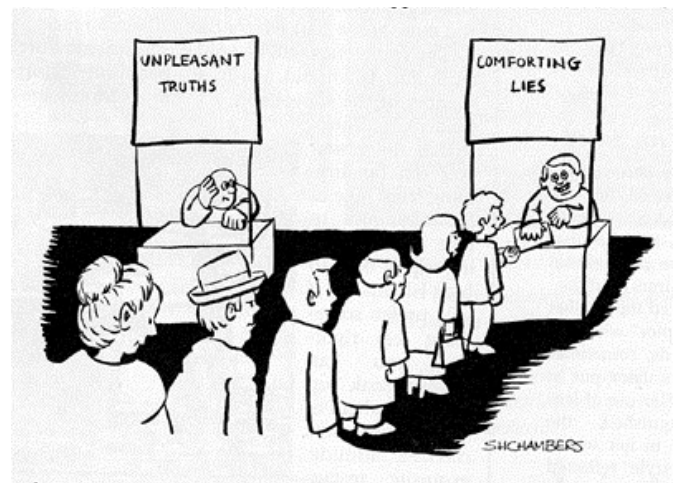
Bring your own snacks and beverages. Following the film we will enjoy dinner at [Manny's Neighborhood Grille](#).

Sunday Funday in the Park

Sunday, April 12, 2015, 11:00am

Mount Pleasant Waterfront Park, 99 Harry M. Hallman Jr. Blvd, Mt Pleasant

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 fundays for everyone. Please call 843.209.4263 if you need help.



Upcoming SHL Events, cont.

International Dinner

Thursday, April 9, 2015, 6:30pm

Jamaican Me Hungry, 73 State Street, Charleston

Join us for dinner at Jamaican Me Hungry for our next international dinner!



This dinner is open to anyone – men, women, brave children.

*******IMPORTANT*******

Reservations with Amy with an accurate headcount of your party are REQUIRED by NOON Tuesday, 4/7. The capacity of the entire restaurant is only 25, and we have made a tentative reservation for 20 people (our standard) for that night, which means they are essentially shutting down the restaurant for us. We must call back on Tuesday afternoon to give them an accurate headcount and they require a credit card to hold reservations for a large group. That means we will be held liable if someone RSVPs but is a no-show which would be really uncool. If you want to come and can COMMIT to coming, [please RSVP yes on facebook](#) and put how ever many people you will be bringing in the comment section or send an email to president@lowcountryhumanists.org. After Amy turns in the headcount on Tuesday afternoon, we will probably not be able to adjust it.

When: Thursday, 4/9 at 6:30pm

Where: Jamaican Me Hungry, 73 State St., Charleston

Although Charleston has many wonderful restaurants, there aren't as many options when it comes to good ethnic cuisine. This is our fifth 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!

SHL Happy Hour

Tuesday April 14, 2015, 6:00pm

Liberty Tap Room, 1028 Johnnie Dodds Blvd, Mt Pleasant

Join us for a relaxing evening of stimulating conversation over drinks (as always, alcohol is optional) and yummy food among old and new friends! No agenda, just fun. Come join us!



Girls Night Out

Monday, April 20, 2015, 6:30pm

Fratellos Italian Tavern, 1050 E Montague Ave, North Charleston (Park Circle)

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

Fratellos
ITALIAN TAVERN

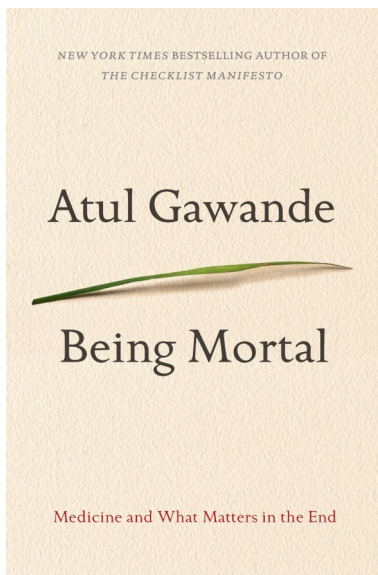
Upcoming SHL Events, cont.

SHL Book Club

Sunday, April 26 2015, 4:00pm

Barnes & Noble, 1812 Sam Rittenberg Blvd, West Ashley

March bookclub attendees voted for [Being Mortal](#) by Atul Gawande as our April selection.



Bestselling author Atul Gawande tackles the hardest challenge of his profession: how medicine can not only improve life but also the process of its ending.

Medicine has triumphed in modern times, transforming birth, injury, and infectious disease from harrowing to manageable. But in the inevitable condition of aging and death, the goals of medicine seem too frequently to run counter to the interest of the human spirit.

Nursing homes, preoccupied with safety, pin patients into railed beds and wheelchairs. Hospitals isolate the dying, checking for vital signs long after the goals of cure have become moot. Doctors, committed to extending life, continue to carry out devastating procedures that in the end extend suffering.

Gawande, a practicing surgeon, addresses his profession's ultimate limitation, arguing that quality of life is the desired goal for patients and families. Gawande offers examples of freer, more socially fulfilling models for assisting the infirm and dependent elderly, and he explores the varieties of hospice care to demonstrate that a person's last weeks or months may be

rich and dignified.

Full of eye-opening research and riveting storytelling, *Being Mortal* asserts that medicine can comfort and enhance our experience even to the end, providing not only a good life but also a good end.

Following the book discussion we will go out to eat at a nearby establishment so bring your restaurant preferences with you. Keep in mind it should be a restaurant that can seat a group of from 12 to 18 people.

SHL is affiliated with the Amazon Associates program! Our organization earns up to a 15% commission on items purchased at Amazon.com through the links on our Website. So, if you are buying the book club book (or anything else from Amazon), this is a super-easy way to contribute to SHL! Simply use the link at <http://lowcountryhumanists.org/default.php>



Upcoming SHL Events, cont.

Team Trivia

Wednesday, April 29, 2015, 7:00pm

Steel City Pizza, 1440 Ben Sawyer Blvd, Mt Pleasant



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.

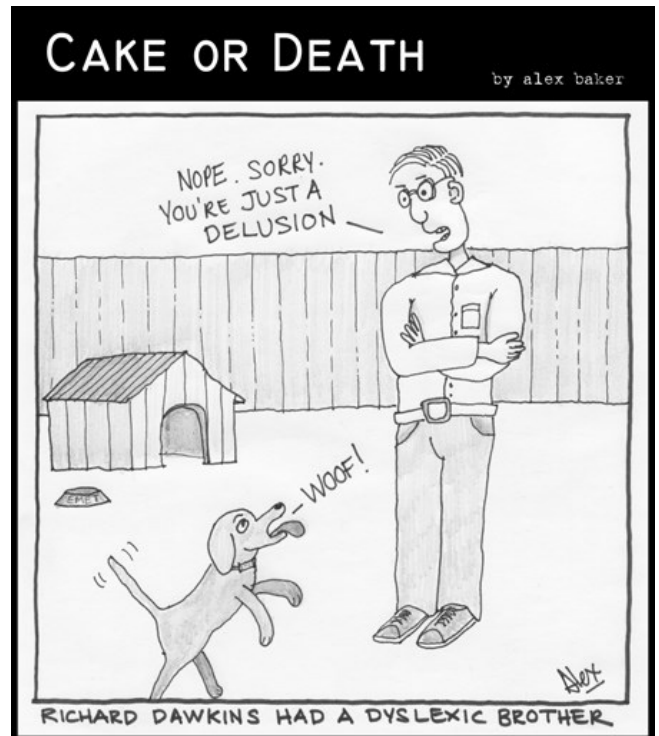


Interested in an activity but don't see it listed? Let us know! Volunteers are always welcomed to lead events such as bridge walks, bowling, billiards, biking, bocce, board games, etc.

Contact
president@lowcountryhumanists.org
with your ideas!

Hold the Date!

Thursday, May 7 is the National Day of Reason and SHL is planning a local event! Keep your calendar open!



Herb Silverman

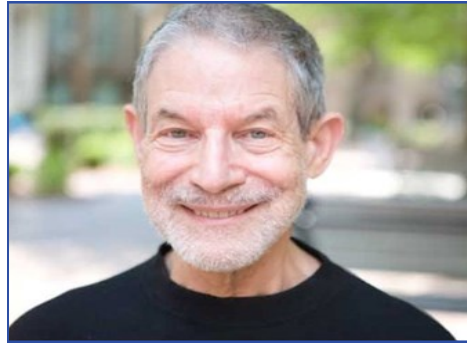
Patriotism, Religion, Obama

Periodically we hear Republicans skeptically ask if President Obama is a [patriot who loves his country](#), and is he a Christian? I'm more interested in why people ask these questions, and how their answers of "No" or "I don't know" reveal more about the questioners than about Obama. I'm also interested in how such people respond to these two questions: What is a patriot? What is a Christian?

I could not have had a more patriotic beginning, or so I was taught to believe. I was born on Flag Day (June 14) in 1942, during World War II, at Liberty Hospital in Philadelphia, birthplace of the nation and the flag purportedly designed by Betsy Ross. But my views on patriotism in general and Flag Day in particular have changed considerably over the years.

On my 12th birthday, President Eisenhower signed into law the addition of "[under God](#)" to the Pledge of Allegiance, saying, "From this day forward, the millions of our schoolchildren will daily proclaim in every city and town, every village and rural schoolhouse, the dedication of our nation and our people to the Almighty." President Eisenhower made no mention of the Constitution during this Flag Day ceremony in 1954, perhaps because the Constitution prohibits religious tests for public office and says nothing about any almighties.

"Under God" was inserted at the height of the McCarthy era to distinguish patriotic Americans from those "godless Communists." This melding of God and country turned



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.

a secular pledge into a religious one, and caused me to feel less, rather than more, patriotic when I no longer believed in any gods.

Although we tend to deify our nation's founders and hold them up as role models, we act more like them when we question the old order and try to improve it. Criticizing our country and working to eliminate its faults is definitely patriotic -- a lot more so than merely reciting pledges and prayers or waving flags.

One of the many differences between Evangelical Christians and atheists in this country is that the majority of evangelicals believe [America is the greatest country in the world](#), compared to 20 percent of those without religion.

I'm reminded of the movie *Head of State*, in which Chris Rock is running for President against a candidate who ends all his speeches with, "[God bless America, and no-](#)

[where else!](#)" I can no longer hear "God bless America" from a politician without thinking of that three-word ending. I suppose many religious Americans believe it's unpatriotic to say that God plays no favorites with the human race and blesses people of all countries.

Along with the notion that God blesses America (and nowhere else) comes "American Exceptionalism," as in the [biblical city on a hill](#). Why do some Americans want all countries to emulate America, but create so many barriers for those desperately seeking a better life here?

That President Obama is viewed as soft on immigration is yet another reason some think he is unpatriotic and doesn't love America. Perhaps they would like to see the phrase on the Statue of Liberty change to: *Keep your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free.*

I recognize how fortunate I am to have been born in a country and family where I have had ample opportunities to attain a decent education and standard of living. What should we do about those to whom much is not given, whether born in this or another country? Though there are no easy answers, I wish Americans would be more charitable in understanding the plight of illegal immigrants and our least fortunate citizens. It is through pure chance of birth that many of us, myself included, are not sneaking into other countries to find jobs because our own country can't provide the work we are

Herb Silverman cont.

eager to do to feed our families.

I'm willing to take President Obama at his word when he says he is a Christian, but I also think that many politicians (and perhaps

Obama) make a political decision to publicly embrace a religious belief. Most of all, in a country that prides itself in having freedom of religion and conscience, I wish we would judge our candidates on

their political positions and not on their professed religious beliefs.

This piece was originally posted March 5, 2015 on huffingtonpost.com

Charity of the Quarter

Reading is Fundamental was a very important cause for Richard "Dick" Côté and upon his death his family requested that donations be made to RIF in lieu of flowers. It is this wish that inspired us to select RIF as our next Charity of the Quarter.

SHL collects donations for a worthy charity each quarter, and donates the full amount under the name *Secular Humanists of the Lowcountry*. Our Charity of the Quarter for spring, 2015 is **Reading is Fundamental**.



Reading Is
Fundamental

Reading Is Fundamental (RIF) is the largest children's literacy nonprofit in the United States. RIF prepares and motivates children to read by delivering free books and literacy resources to those children and families who need them most. RIF inspires children to be lifelong readers through the power of choice. RIF provides new, free books for children to choose from and make their own. The seeds of inspiration in these books have

Nearly two-thirds of low-income families in the U.S. own no books.

motivated children to follow their dreams and achieve their potential. Yes, it seems incredible for a book to launch a life, but it happens every day as hungry, inquisitive young minds reach out and grab hold of the new people, places, and ideas that books bring them.

Planting seeds of inspiration in our nation's most vulnerable children is what RIF and a network of more than 400,000 volunteers do. Whether in schools, homeless shelters, or communi-



ty centers—wherever you find children—RIF volunteers spend countless hours distributing books, staging reading motivation activities, and promoting the importance of literacy in their communities.

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
PO Box 32256
Charleston SC 29417-2256

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

Easter Comix



completelyseriouscomics.com



Cyanide and Happiness © Explosm.net

Become a dues-paying member of SHL! Membership is open to all who support the purposes for which this organization is founded. The available membership levels and corresponding dues (new members and renewals) are:

- Individual \$35.00
- Family \$50.00
- Sustaining \$100.00
- Benefactor \$150.00
- 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!)

There are 3 easy ways you can join/renew:

- You can pay by cash, credit card, or check at our monthly meeting.
- You can also mail a check to:

SHL
PO Box 32256
Charleston SC 29417-

Make checks payable to SHL and note "Membership" and level in the memo line. Please include your name, address, phone number, and email address.

- Or securely [pay online](#) and select your membership level in the dropdown box.

Our Officers

President: Amy Monsky
Vice President: Herb Silverman
Treasurer: Garrett Gehlhausen
Secretary: Laura Kasman
Newsletter Editor: Sue Edward

Contact us!

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The Separationist

The Newsletter of the Secular Humanists of the Lowcountry

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