



The Separationist

Volume 22, Issue 8

August 2015

Summer in Charleston

Even though some of our events are on break for the summer (Sunday Funday in the Park, Monthly Speaker Meeting, and Book Club will resume in September), we still have plenty of activities to keep you busy! Come join us!

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August 2015

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.

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1 Pride Parade
2 No Sunday Funday	3	4	5	6	7	8 Movie Club
9	10	11 Happy Hour	12	13	14	15
16 No meeting	17 Girls Night Out	18	19	20	21 Night at The Joe	22
23 No book club	24	25	26 Trivia—Mt P	27 Trivia—WA	28	29
30	31					

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.

Charleston Pride Parade

Saturday, August 1, 2015, 8:00am

Wragg Mall, corner of Meeting and Ann Streets

The 6th Annual Charleston Pride Parade will be happening in downtown Charleston on Saturday, August 1. You are invited to join fellow members of SHL to march in



support of our LGBT brothers and sisters.

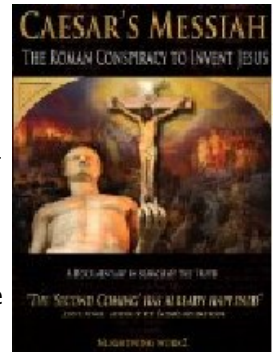
- At 8:00 AM we'll gather at Wragg Mall, at the corner of Meeting and Ann Streets, rain or shine. Look for people wearing SHL shirts.
- The closest parking garage is across Meeting Street at the Visitors Center. This garage is recommended, but there are others, on-street parking, and CAR-TA.
- At 9:00 AM the parade heads from Ann Street down King Street to Broad Street, then to Colonial Lake to disband around 11:00 AM.
- Shuttles and the CARTA trolley to Visitors Center parking and to the rally at Brittlebank Park will be available at parade's end.
- For those interested there will be a Pride Rally at Brittlebank Park, featuring vendors, food trucks, entertainment, and speakers.

SHL Movie Club

Saturday, August 8, 2015 4:00pm

Home of Rob and Deb Britt, 1236 Downer Drive, Charleston 29412 (James Island)

Join us for a viewing of **Caesar's Messiah: The Roman Conspiracy to Invent Jesus**. Based on the best-selling religious studies book by Joseph Atwill, this documentary shows that Jesus is not a historical figure, the events of Jesus' life were based on a Roman military campaign, his supposed second coming refers to an event that already occurred, and the Gospels were written by a family of Caesars who left us documents to prove it.



Bring your own snacks and beverages. Following the film we will enjoy dinner at a nearby restaurant.



Upcoming SHL Events cont.

SHL Happy Hour

Tuesday, August 11, 2015, 6:00pm

Big Billy's Burger Joint, 5070 International Blvd, North Charleston 29418 (near Tanger in the same shopping center as Panera and La Hacienda)



Join us for a fun and relaxing evening of stimulating conversation over drinks (alcohol is optional) and yummy food with old and new friends! Every-

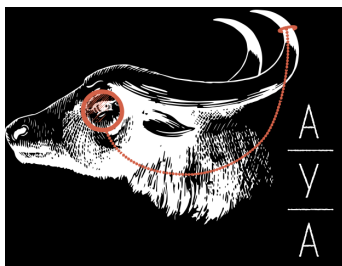
one is welcome. Don't be shy - come join us!

Girls Night Out

Monday, August 17, 2015, 6:30pm

Aya Cookhouse, 915 Houston Northcutt Blvd, Mt Pleasant (next to Whole Foods)

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



SHL Night at The Joe

Friday, August 21, 2015, 7:00pm

Joseph P. Riley, Jr. Park, 360 Fishburne St, Charleston

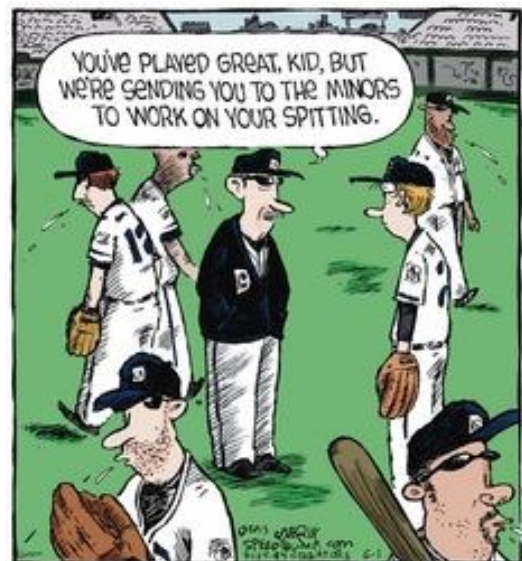


Join your SHL friends at the Joe Riley Stadium for a night of RiverDogs baseball, fun, and fireworks. Game time is 7:05 PM on Friday, August 21. We have a block of seats set aside in the

covered Upper Reserved section. Please order your discounted tickets by Wednesday, August 19; get 'em right here:

lowcountryhumanists.org/eventview.php?idno=520

So let's root, root, root for the home team... and ourselves (they will announce the SHL over the PA). We're aiming for a group of 25 (at least!), so bring your family and invite your friends.



Upcoming SHL Events cont.

Team Trivia

Wednesday, August 26, 2015, 7:00pm
Steel City Pizza, 1440 Ben Sawyer Blvd, Mt Pleasant

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Thursday, August 27, 2015, 8:00pm  
Manny's Neighborhood Grill, 1680 Old Towne Rd,  
Charleston (West Ashley)

SHL trivia has been so popular, that we added a second trivia night!



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 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. Contact [president@lowcountryhumanists.org](mailto:president@lowcountryhumanists.org) for more info.



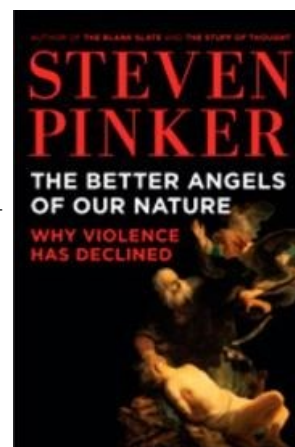
**Interested in an activity but don't see it listed? Let us know! Volunteers are always welcomed to lead events such as bridge walks, bowling, billiards, biking, bocce, board games, etc.**

**Contact [president@lowcountryhumanists.org](mailto:president@lowcountryhumanists.org) with your ideas!**

## SHL Book Club

SHL book club will be taking a break until September. But that doesn't mean we don't have a book. A big book. Somewhere over 800 pages. Well, we'll have all summer to read it and it reads very smoothly. This summer's offering is one we have put off for a couple years because of its length, [The Better Angels of Our Nature](#) by Steven Pinker. Following is a brief description from the Amazon purchase site. Keep in mind that if you buy from Amazon at our SHL website link SHL gets a monetary kickback from Amazon at the end of the year.

"We've all asked, "What is the world coming to?" But we seldom ask, "How bad was the world in the past?" In this startling new book, the best-selling cognitive scientist Steven Pinker shows that the world of the past was much worse. In fact, we may be living in the most peaceable era yet.



Evidence of a bloody history has always been around us: the genocides in the Old Testament and crucifixions in the New; the gory mutilations in Shakespeare and Grimm; the British monarchs who beheaded their relatives and the American founders who duelled with their rivals.

Now the decline in these brutal practices can be quantified. Tribal warfare was nine times as deadly as war and genocide in the 20th century. The murder rate in medieval Europe was more than thirty times what it is today. Slavery, sadistic punishments, and frivolous executions were unexceptionable features of life for millennia, then were suddenly abolished. Wars between developed countries have vanished, and even in the developing world, wars kill a fraction of the numbers they did a few

# Upcoming SHL Events cont.

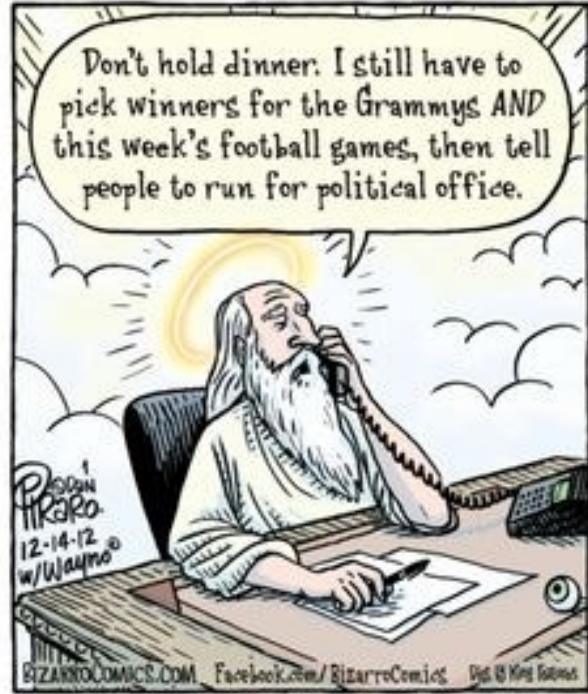
decades ago. Rape, hate crimes, deadly riots, child abuse—all substantially down.

We look forward to seeing everyone this coming September to discuss the book. Even though we have chosen the book for the summer Yvonne will be posting details about the meeting sometime later this summer closer to our first meeting.

Again thanks for all the great discussions we've been privileged to participate in and have a great summer break.

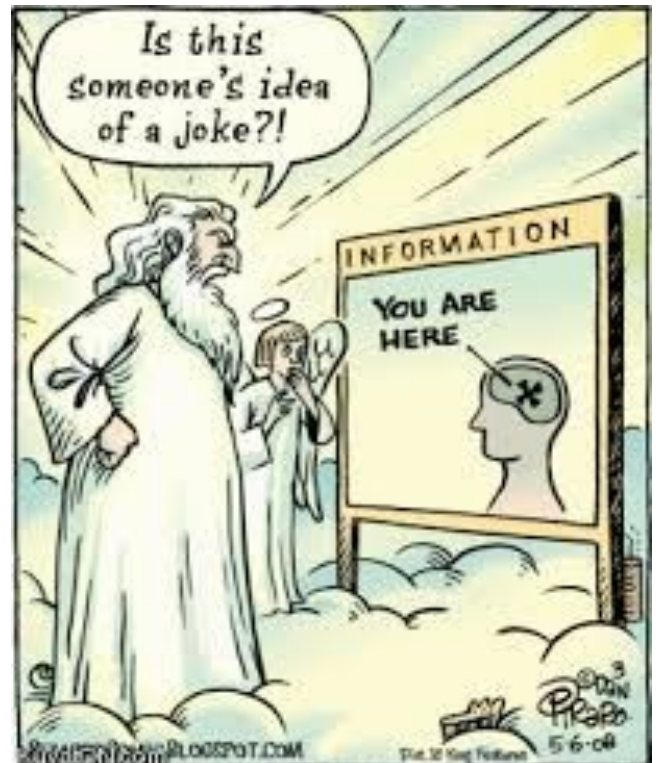
John and Barbara Childs

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>



by Dan Piraro

CLOSE X



# Herb Silverman

## 10 Questions About Hell From an Atheist

**When it comes to discussions about heaven and hell, I prefer Mark Twain's quip: "Go to heaven for the climate, hell for the company."**

Since OnFaith has published a few pieces lately from evangelicals on their theologies of hell (see [here](#) and [here](#)), I figured I'd throw my 10 cents into the ring and ask: What the hell is going on? There are probably as many ways to think about hell as there are believers in hell. And as an atheist, I think the right way to think about hell is also the right way to think about heaven — both are non-existent. All this afterlife theology raises a lot of questions. Here are just 10 of them I've wondered about:

### 1. Why is faith not only important, but perhaps the deciding factor about who winds up in heaven or hell?

Whenever I'm asked what I'd do if I meet Jesus when I die, I say I would then have enough evidence to become a believer. Apparently, though, that would be too late. If a creator god exists, why would she create so many evidence-based humans if she wants us to make faith-based decisions?

### 2. Why do the last 30 seconds of life matter so much?

If an Adolph Hitler repented on his deathbed for his role in the Holo-

caust and accepted Jesus, some say he would go to heaven. I think it would be more reasonable (though what's reason got to do with it?) for a person to be judged on his or her lifetime actions rather than on an end-of-life belief.



**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

few answers.

### 4. What moral purpose does eternal torture serve?

We want to rehabilitate evildoers with the hope that they will learn from past mistakes. Even in capital punishment cases we try to execute as painlessly as possible. Why would a purportedly all good and compassionate God burn people for eternity?

### 5. What happens to people who died before Jesus was born — or didn't hear of Jesus?

If they can still go to heaven, how does Jesus matter? If they are all condemned to hell, how is God merciful?

### 3. If we have free will on earth, will we have free will in heaven?

If so, might we sin and go from heaven to hell? If not, will we be heavenly robots? If God can make us sinless in heaven, why didn't he create us sinless on earth? So many ifs, so

### 6. If we want people to go to heaven, shouldn't we be committing infanticide?

Wouldn't it be a blessing to baptize newborn babies and then kill them? Or perhaps encourage abortions, since presumably all fetuses go to heaven?

### 7. How much more deserving is the worst person in heaven than the best person in hell?

Our earthly binary divisions are usually quite arbitrary. People may vote when they are 18 and buy alcohol when they are 21, but they are not permitted to do so the day before. We recognize such rules for what they are — distinctions without a real difference. Not so when it comes to the cutoff between an eternity of bliss and an eternity of torture.

### 8. How could heaven be a happy place?

Can you be blissfully happy in heaven knowing that some of your loved ones are being tortured in hell? And what do you do for an eternity in heaven without getting bored?

### 9. Why did God torture his son?

Couldn't He come up with a less bloodthirsty way to allow us into heaven than by torturing and killing his innocent son to make up for an alleged Original Sin of an alleged first couple? We praise God for an action that we would incarcerate any human for perpetrating. God seems inhumane, but I suppose that's because God isn't human.

## Herb Silverman cont.

### 10. Wouldn't a loving God who wants us all to go to heaven make it unambiguously clear how to get there?

Christians, let alone those of other faiths and none, disagree about what to believe or do. Faith? Good works? Some believe we were predestined for heaven or hell before birth, and there's absolutely nothing we can do to change it. Others say we are all given the gift of faith to accept Jesus as savior and thus go to heaven, but that some people refuse the gift. I didn't refuse a gift

I was never given. A gift is different from a belief in a gift.

\* \* \*

I think these questions can best be answered by applying Occam's Razor: in trying to understand something or search for truth, it's best to get unnecessary information out of the way. This is why I don't believe the wishful thinking about eternal life found in ancient holy books. My wish is for believers and nonbelievers to focus on helping their

fellow human beings and treating them with respect and compassion.

I believe that my afterlife will consist of the repercussions of any good works I have done that survive after my death. I expect my body parts will go neither to heaven nor hell, but to medical school. I will then feel much like I did before I was born, which was not the least unpleasant.

This article originally appeared in [faithstreet.com](http://faithstreet.com) 7/8/2015

## 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 Q3, 2015 is the Charleston Chapter of National Association of Colored People (NAACP).

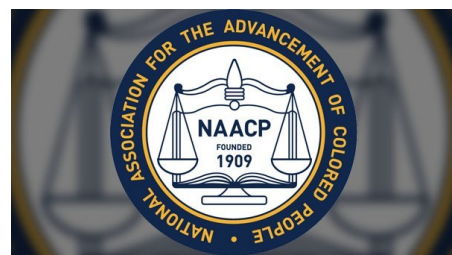
Founded February 12, 1909, the NAACP is the nation's oldest, largest and most widely recognized grassroots-based civil rights organization. Its more than half-million members and supporters throughout the United States and the world are the premier advocates for civil rights in their communities, campaigning for equal opportunity and conducting

voter mobilization.

The mission of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People is to ensure the political, educational, social, and economic equality of rights of all persons and to eliminate race-based discrimination.

Founded in 1917, the Charleston Branch of the NAACP is a local unit of the NAACP, the nation's oldest and largest civil rights organization.

From the ballot box to the classrooms, the dedicated workers, organizers, leaders, and members who make up the Charleston Branch of the NAACP continue to fight for social justice for all people in and around the Charleston area!



*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.*

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

## Our Officers

President: Sharon Strong  
Vice President: Herb Silverman  
Treasurer: Garrett Gehlhausen  
Secretary: Laura Kasman  
Newsletter Editor: Sue Edward

## Contact us!

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*SHL is a non-prophet  
organization!*

# SECULAR HUMANISTS



## OF THE LOWCOUNTRY

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## The Separationist

**The Newsletter of the Secular Humanists of the Lowcountry**

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