



# The Separationist

## Meet the SHL Board For 2016-17

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At our ice cream social and general meeting held on May 15, the SHL membership unanimously elected a new slate of board members to help guide the organization through the coming year. Please meet:

#### Sharon Strong (President):

The first important thing Sharon did when moving to



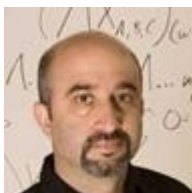
Charleston in 2000 was to attend a meeting of the SHL book group (a discussion of her hero Carl Sagan's "A Demon-

Haunted World"); she knew she had found an incredible resource in a most unlikely place. A lapsed Lutheran, Sharon became self-identified as an atheist a few months later.

Sharon has served on the SHL board in various capacities since that first meeting, and now begins her second term as SHL President.

#### Alex Kasman (Vice President):

Alex Kasman is a math professor at the College of Charleston.



Alex has served on the SHL board for 16 years. During that time he has been held various roles including Volunteer Coordinator, Newsletter Editor, and Webmaster. He has represented SHL in two debates at the College of Charleston (and moderated another debate). He gave two talks at SHL monthly meetings, one talk to a group at the Unitarian Church, and regularly gives presentations on atheism to comparative religion classes at the College.

#### Bonnie Cleaveland (Secretary):

Bonnie Cleaveland grew up with a quietly Christian mom in Georgia and Virginia.

When Bonnie was a toddler, her mom fired a caregiver who told Bonnie that god was "everywhere," because Bonnie was searching under beds and in closets! She was a skeptic from a young age and always wanted to discuss



her ideas about religion, even attending Stetson University, which was affiliated with the Baptist Church. She is a psychologist in private practice in Charleston and adjunct faculty teaching psychology graduate students at the Citadel. She lives with her husband, 10 year-old daughter, and 2 cats and loves to spend her free time advocating for children's rights and growing vegetables and flowers in the front yard.

#### Garrett Gehlhausen (Treasurer):

Garrett joined the board in February 2015 as treasurer.

We are excited to have Garrett return as treasurer for 2016-17!



### About SHL

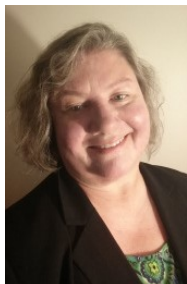
The *Secular Humanists of the Lowcountry* was founded in 1994 by a group of local non-theists in Charleston, South Carolina.

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.

## Meet the 2016-17 Board cont.

**Sue Edward (Newsletter Editor):** Sue began to doubt the existence of a god around the age of 10 and shortly after graduating college admitted to herself that she was a non-believer. Sue became a member of SHL in 2004 after moving here from Madison WI and joined the board in 2007. In addition to Newsletter Editor, Sue runs the movie club and is also actively involved in politics and many social justice groups.



**Ed Stephens:** Long time SHL member and returning board member Ed Stephens first joined the board three years ago.



**Tom Amon:** Tom is a first time Board member—welcome Tom!

**We wish to extend our thanks to all of our board members, both past and present, who have helped make SHL what it is today.**

The board will be planning SHL meetings and activities for 2016-17.



Do you have a question about SHL or a suggestion for future activities? Would you like to contribute your talents and interests toward promoting a vibrant secular community in the Lowcountry? We would love to hear from you! Feel free to contact us at:


- ◆ [president@lowcountryhumanists.org](mailto:president@lowcountryhumanists.org) (Sharon) with general comments and suggestions for future programming
- ◆ [treasurer@lowcountryhumanists.org](mailto:treasurer@lowcountryhumanists.org) (Garrett) with questions about new or existing memberships
- ◆ [newsletter@lowcountryhumanists.org](mailto:newsletter@lowcountryhumanists.org) (Sue) with ideas and contributions for the newsletter
- ◆ [webmaster@lowcountryhumanists.org](mailto:webmaster@lowcountryhumanists.org) (Alex) with questions or comments about our Web site

# 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.

## June 2016

Sun      Mon      Tue      Wed      Thu      Fri      Sat

			1	2	3	4 <a href="#">Movie Club</a>
5	6	7	8 <a href="#">Happy Hour</a>	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19 <a href="#">Volunteer Activity</a>	20  Summer Solstice	21	22	23	24 <a href="#">Girls Night Out</a>	25
26 <a href="#">Book Club</a>	27	28 <a href="#">Team Trivia</a>	29	30		

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## SHL Movie Club

Saturday, June 4 2016, 3:15pm

Citadel Mall Stadium 16 Cinemas, 2072 Sam Rittenberg Blvd.



Please join us for a viewing of [Love & Friendship](#), Whit Stillman's adaptation of Jane Austen's *Lady Susan*, on Saturday, June 4, 3:15pm at Citadel Mall theaters. Meet us in the lobby at 3:00.

Following the movie please wait for everyone in the lobby (some of us stay for all of the credits). We'll then discuss the film over dinner at Sesame Burgers & Beer.

*"The funniest, most deliciously venomous Jane Austen movie ever made, and conclusive proof that, a) Kate Beckinsale has been seriously undervalued by the movies and, b) Whit Stillman is a major, distinctive talent."*

## SHL Happy Hour

Wednesday, June 8, 2016, 6:00pm

Dog & Duck Belle Hall, 624 Long Point Rd, Mt Pleasant

Happy Hour is always a fun and relaxing evening of stimulating conversation over drinks (alcohol is optional) and yummy food among old and new friends! This month we will be meeting at Dog and Duck at Belle Hall in Mount Pleasant. We hope to see you there!



Check out their menu at [www.dogandduckfamilypubs.com](http://www.dogandduckfamilypubs.com)

**RSVP requested via [Meetup](#) or [Facebook](#).**

### Did you know?

You can order *In Reason We Trust* South Carolina License Plates! See <http://www.lowcountryhumanists.org/IRWT.php> for info!



# Upcoming SHL Events cont.

## SHL Volunteer Activity: Community Potluck

Sunday, February 21, 2016, 12:40pm

Mall Park, corner of Columbus & America Streets,  
Charleston

The Community Potluck began in 2011 by *Occupy Charleston* and other volunteers as a way to help those who are disadvantaged. The potluck is held at Mall Park, on the corner of Columbus and America Streets (near the Trident Palmer Campus), rain or shine. 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 June 19th community potluck. [Volunteers](#) are needed for donating food, preparing the items, and serving the meals. Food can be prepared in advance. Setup begins at 12:40pm and serving begins at 1:00pm on the day of the potluck.

Want to help? Volunteer by [clicking here \(http://vols.pt/5JK7mM\)](http://vols.pt/5JK7mM) to sign up for specific needs. Write to Steffi Green, our contact person for this volunteer activity, at [steffigreen@gmail.com](mailto:steffigreen@gmail.com) with any questions.



An anecdote: Kathi Regalbutto, one of the people behind the *Potluck in the Park*, hangs a sign with the name of whatever group is providing the food and volunteers that week. One of the gentlemen who was there to get food looked at the sign and asked "Oh, is it the Secular Humanists of the Lowcountry again this week?"

We were worried that this might mean that he was going to object to our non-religious worldview, but then he continued: "That's great, because they always bring really *good food!*"



**"The hands that help are better far than lips that pray."**

— Robert G. Ingersoll, *The Works of Robert G. Ingersoll, Vol. IV*

# Upcoming SHL Events cont.

## Girls Night Out

Friday, June 24, 2016, 7:30pm

843 Korean BBQ & Sushi House, 6601 Rivers Ave,  
North Charleston

A fun night for secular girls to socialize! This month we will be trying something new, just for June. We will be meeting for a later dinner, and for those who want to stay, some karaoke after. Nursing infants okay, but otherwise adults only please.



**RSVP requested via [Meetup](#) or [Facebook](#).**

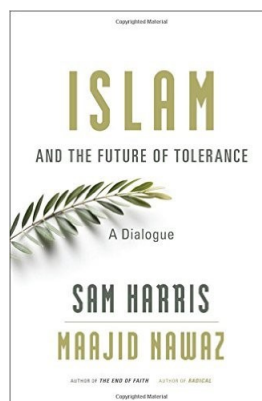
SHL is affiliated with the Amazon Associates program! Our organization earns up to a 15% commission on items purchased at Amazon.com through the links on our Website. So, if you are buying the book club book (or anything else from Amazon), this is a super-easy way to contribute to SHL! Simply use the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

## SHL Book Club

Sunday, June 26, 2016, 4:00pm

Barnes & Noble, 1812 Sam Rittenberg Blvd, Charleston

In June we are reading [Islam and the Future of Tolerance: A Dialogue by Sam Harris](#) (10/6/2015). This is a transcribed dialogue between Harris, a famous atheist, and Maajid Nawaz, a former radical.



In this short book, Sam Harris and Maajid Nawaz invite you to join an urgently needed conversation: Is Islam a religion of peace or war? Is it amenable to reform? Why do so many Muslims seem drawn to extremism? What do words like *Islamism*, *jihadism*, and *fundamentalism* mean in today's world?

Remarkable for the breadth and depth of its analysis, this dialogue between a famous atheist and a former radical is all the more startling for its decorum. Harris and Nawaz have produced something genuinely new: they engage one of the most polarizing issues of our time—fearlessly and fully—and actually make *progress*.

*Islam and the Future of Tolerance* has been published with the explicit goal of inspiring a wider public discussion by way of example. In a world riven by misunderstanding and violence, Harris and Nawaz demonstrate how two people with very different views can find common ground.

# Upcoming SHL Events cont.

## Team Trivia

Tuesday, June 28, 2016, 7:30pm

The Pub on 61, 2366 Ashley River Rd, West Ashley



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.



*RSVP requested via [Meetup](#) or [Facebook](#).*

**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!**

## Mark Your Calendars!

The Holy City will be the host of two, count 'em, TWO major secular conferences/conventions in 2017!

### [American Humanist Association](#)

[Annual Conference: June 8-11, 2017](#)

The American Humanist Association, the oldest and largest humanist organization in the United States, has held an annual conference since its founding in 1941 so that humanists, atheists,



and freethinkers can gather together for a weekend of informative lectures, networking, and fun activities.

### [American Atheists](#)

[Solar Eclipse Convention: August 19-21, 2017](#)

We will present a conference focused on science, space, technology, and (of course) atheism featuring prominent academics, scientists, and community leaders during the weekend and, on Monday, will host an eclipse watch-party (narrated by a surprise special guest!) in Charleston.

Charleston is the last major city in the path of the eclipse's path. This is the first total solar eclipse to cross the continental United States since the 1970s!



**AMERICAN ATHEISTS**

## 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 Q2 2016 is [Student Action with Farmworkers](#).

**SAF works** with farmworkers, students, and advocates in the Southeast and nationwide to create a more just agricultural system. Since 1992, SAF has engaged thousands of students, farmworker youth, and community members in the farmworker movement.

**SAF changes** the lives of middle, high school, and out of school migrant youth through the [Levante Leadership Institute](#).

**SAF trains, mentors, and supports** NC college students to develop organizing skills and become leaders in the farmworker movement through the [Student Organizing School](#).

**SAF mobilizes** hundreds of college students through its [Into the Fields internship](#) and [Sowing Seeds for Change fellowship](#). SAF interns & fellows provide much-needed skills, energy, and time to farmworker organizations and receive a life-changing, educational experience in return.

**SAF reaches out** to thousands of community members by raising awareness of injustices in the agricultural industry through its From the Ground Up program. SAF uses actions, presentations, publications and email alerts, to inform and mobilize students and community members around current legislation, consumer boycotts, and other justice efforts initiated by farmworkers. SAF coordinates an annual national week of action, [Farmworker Awareness Week](#), to raise awareness about farmworker issues on campuses and in communities.



Each summer, during the prime of South Carolina's growing season, an estimated 15-30 thousand migrant farmworkers flow through fields from the Upstate to the Lowcountry, often working dawn to dusk to cultivate, harvest and pack crops.

Locally, SAF places interns in the camps and fields of Johns Island. The students' work includes translating for the workers and helping them gain access to health care, education, and legal and other support services.

*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*

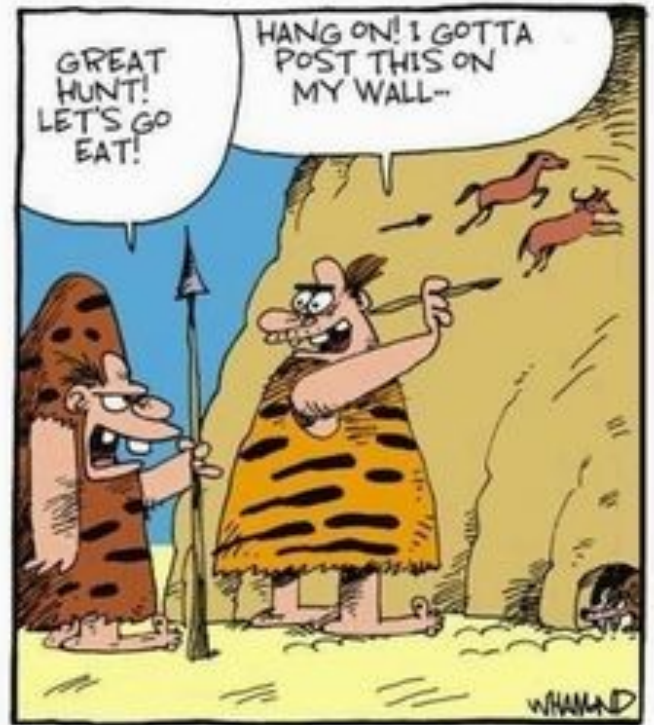
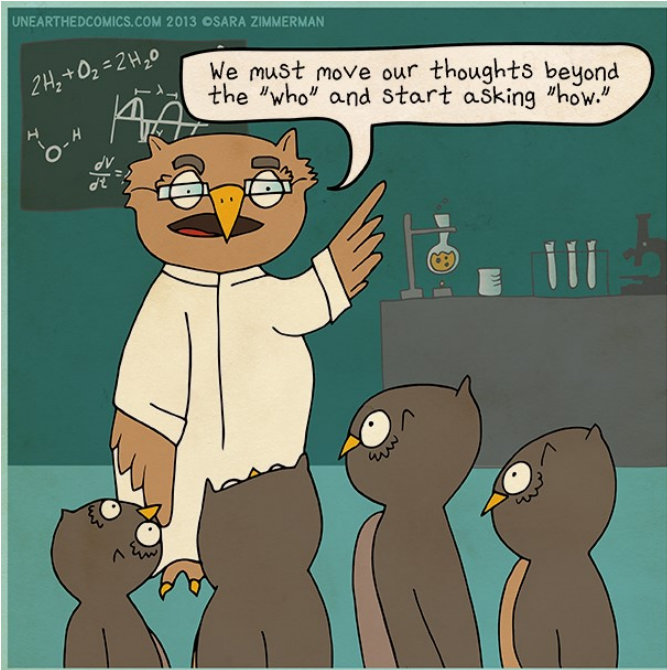
*SHL  
PO Box 32256  
Charleston SC 29417-2256*

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

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



# Just for Fun



Early Facebook



# Herb Silverman

## Political Atheism: The Last Taboo

In "[The Last Taboo: Why America Needs Atheism](#)," published in the *New Republic* in 1996, Wendy Kaminer wrote, "Atheists generate about as much sympathy as pedophiles. But, while pedophilia may at least be characterized as a disease, atheism is a choice, a willful rejection of beliefs to which vast majorities of people cling." I have one small quibble: Atheism is not a "choice." For me, the only choice is whether to be open about my atheism or pretend to believe in a deity for which there is not a scintilla of evidence.

The situation has improved significantly since Kaminer's piece twenty years ago. Much has been written about atheism, including best-selling books by Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, and others. A number of popular blogs now promote atheism and secularism. In the Internet age, people hear about many worldviews, not just the one in which they were raised. Every new national survey shows a [rapid increase](#) of atheists, agnostics, and those who claim no religious affiliation.

However, atheists continue to be the group people are [least likely](#) to vote for. In 1990, I ran an unsuccessful, successful political campaign for governor of South Carolina as the [Candidate Without a Prayer](#). I was unsuccessful in winning the election, of course, but successful in a state Supreme Court victory that overturned

the provision in the state Constitution that prohibited atheists from holding public office.



**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 similar provision is in the North Carolina Constitution, and some folks in Asheville tried unsuccessfully in 2009 to remove open [atheist Cecil Bothwell](#) from its City Council.

In 2010, Wynne LeGrow was the Democratic candidate for the House of Representatives, running as an open atheist in southern Virginia against Randy Forbes, founder of the Congressional Prayer Caucus. LeGrow received 37.5 percent of the vote, the highest percentage for a Democrat running that year against an incumbent Virginia Republican. He details his experience in his book, [Last Leper in the Colony](#).

The complete history of open

atheists in Congress is very short: former Rep. Pete Stark (D-Calif.). He [acknowledged being an atheist](#) after the Secular Coalition for America, of which I'm president, sponsored a contest to find the highest-ranking politician who so identified. Stark left Congress in 2012, reducing the number of open atheists in Congress from one to zero.

This brings me to three politicians I assume are atheists, though it must be noted that they don't so identify.

Barney Frank, an openly gay member of Congress for many years, came out as an atheist on the TV show *Real Time with Bill Maher*, but not until he had left office. Unfortunately, he later had a do-over saying his theological views are complicated by his Jewishness and he [doesn't know enough](#) to have a firm view on the subject of atheism. Frank also advised politicians not to be frank about their atheism.

Bernie Sanders is an open socialist in the Senate and a presidential candidate. He identifies as a secular Jew. When asked on *Jimmy Kimmel Live* whether he believes in God, Sanders replied, "What my spirituality is about is that [we're all in this together](#) and it's not a good thing to believe that as human beings we can turn our backs on the suffering of other people." I have to wonder what God has to do

## Herb Silverman, cont.

with that. When I asked Sanders at a South Carolina town hall meeting if he is an atheist, he didn't answer the question but said he was a Jew.

Jamie Raskin recently won the Democratic Party primary in the Eighth Congressional District of Maryland, virtually assuring him of victory in November. He is best known in the secular community for his response to a Bible-quoting state senator:

*Senator, when you took your oath of office, you placed your hand on the Bible and swore to uphold the Constitution. You did not place your hand on the Constitution and swear to uphold the Bible.*

Raskin received an endorsement and contribution from the Freethought Equality Fund PAC, a political action group founded by the American Hu-

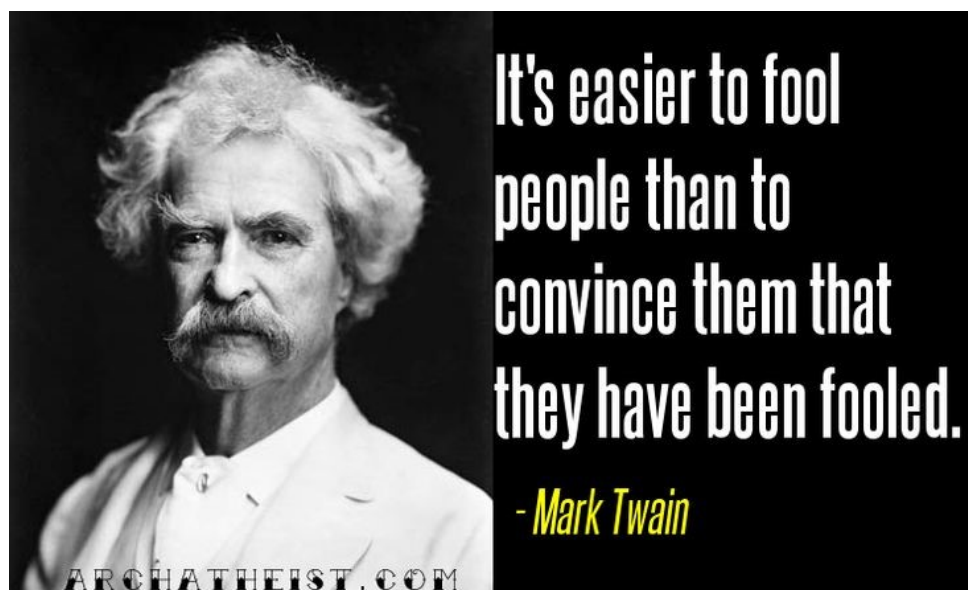
manist Association (AHA). After being [described as an atheist](#), Raskin said he is 100 percent Jewish and doesn't use the "atheist" label. Raskin, a member of the AHA, said his views are consistent with the AHA definition: "Humanism is a progressive philosophy of life that, without theism and other supernatural beliefs, affirms our ability and responsibility to lead ethical lives of personal fulfillment that aspire to the greater good of humanity." If you are "without theism and other supernatural beliefs," it seems clear to me that you are an atheist, whatever your preferred label.

Barney, Bernie, and Jamie have lots in common. They are secular Jews who don't like to talk about religion or call themselves atheists,

and they act as if you need to choose between being a Jew and being an atheist. On the contrary, a recent [Harris survey](#) shows that the majority (52 percent) of American Jews do not believe in God.

I admire all three politicians for how they have championed minority rights and separation of religion and government. People are free to use their preferred label or labels, but I'm disappointed when otherwise courageous politicians (and there seem to be precious few) do not have the courage to embrace the A-word, which is perhaps the last political taboo.

This article originally appeared in [The Huffington Post](#), 5/11/2016



## Letters to the Editor

### Unitarian Universalist Association Renews Ties with Boys Scouts of America

On March 24, 2016 the [Unitarian Universalist Association \(UUA\) and the Boy Scouts of America \(BSA\) signed a Memorandum of Understanding](#) designed to provide guidance to Unitarian Universalist congregations who wish to charter scouting units. This move towards re-establishing organizational ties is due to the BSA's recent policy changes making scouting more inclusive of gay scouts and gay scout leaders.

However, the BSA has not changed its stance on non-theist scouts and non-theist scout leaders. SHL member **Sharon Fratepietro** wrote the following letter to the Unitarian Universalist Association's magazine, *UU World Magazine* and to the American Humanist Association's magazine, *The Humanist*.

May 15, 2016

To the Editor:

We were very disappointed to learn that the Unitarian Universalist Association has recently renewed its association with the Boy Scouts of America.

The BSA bans atheist, agnostic and humanist scouts and leaders. That the BSA has made a provision for Unitarian Churches to allow troops of boys and leaders who are not God believers does not compensate for the BSA's general policy of discrimination. If the BSA excluded other major groups like African Americans, or Jews, or Muslims, we hope and expect the UUA would decline to associate with the BSA.

We are atheists and secular humanists. Many years ago we joined our local Unitarian Church as token members in appreciation for the many positive contributions the church makes in our community. Since we believe in putting our money where our mouth is, we have donated to the church each year.

In light of the UUA's decision to associate with the intolerant BSA, we are now disinclined to send more money to our local Unitarian Church, once again putting our money where our mouth is. Over a month ago, we sent a polite and temperate letter mentioning our concern and decision to our local UU minister, with a copy to UUA President Peter Morales. Neither has bothered to reply.

Sharon Fratepietro and Herb Silverman  
21 George St., Apt. 303  
Charleston, SC 29401  
843-670-3077

## Letters to the Editor, cont.

### Opting Out is a Form of Freedom

SHL member **Amy Monsky** responded to a letter to the editor criticizing students who don't recite the Pledge of Allegiance. Amy's letter was [published in the \*Post & Courier\* on May 30, 2016](#).

### Opting Out is a Form of Freedom

There seems to be a general misunderstanding about what it means when a student — or citizen — opts out of saying the Pledge of Allegiance. These Americans are met with scornful accusations of being unpatriotic.

Regarding the South Carolina law that allows students to opt out of the pledge, a reader lamented in a May 11 letter to the editor, "My, oh my, what is our country coming to?"

Exercising one's constitutional right to freedom of conscience is very much American. What is unAmerican is requiring citizens to pledge allegiance to a country founded on freedom of conscience and "liberty for all."

For those who think opting out of the pledge is somehow disrespectful to the sacrifice of service members, I have this to say:

Exercising the constitutional rights that service members fight to defend is the highest form of honor and appreciation that can be given to those service members.

It is each person's individual right to decide whether to say the pledge. The reasons may be as varied as the citizens themselves, but each person's is likely well-thought out and personally meaningful.

You may not agree with someone's decision not to recite the Pledge of Allegiance, and that's fine.

But people who do not participate in the pledge are no less American than you. Having the ability to decide shows that our country is very much where it needs to be.

Amy Monsky  
Delafield Drive  
Summerville

Have you sent a Letter to the Editor that you would like to share with fellow SHL members? If so, send a copy to [newsletter@lowcountryhumanists.org](mailto:newsletter@lowcountryhumanists.org) for inclusion in ***The Separationist***.

## Our Officers

President: Sharon Strong  
Vice President: Alex Kasman  
Treasurer: Garrett Gehlhausen  
Secretary: Bonnie Cleveland  
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**

*Opinions expressed in The Separationist are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of SHL.*