



# The Separationist

Volume 23, Issue 9

September, 2016

## Phil Torres

**The Secular Movement Has Never Been So Important:  
Apocalyptic Technology and the Future of Humanity**

Sunday, Sept. 18, 2016, 4:00 PM, Gage Hall, 4 Archdale St, Charleston

### Inside this issue:

[Upcoming Events](#) **2**

[Announcements](#) **8**

[Charity of the Quarter](#) **9**

[Herb Silverman](#) **10**

[Find Us](#) **12**

### 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.

At our first monthly meeting of the fall, philosopher and author Phil Torres will present a talk entitled:

### **The Secular Movement Has Never Been So Important: Apocalyptic Technology and the Future of Humanity**

Phil Torres is an author, regular contributor at the Future of Life Institute, and founder of the [X-Risks Institute](#). He's published widely on terrorism, emerging technologies, and global catastrophic risks, with [articles appearing](#) in *Skeptic*, *Free Inquiry*, *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, *The Humanist*, *Salon*, *AlterNet*, *Truthout*,



*Common Dreams*, *Journal of Evolution and Technology*, *Metaphilosophy*, and *Journal of Future Studies*.

His most recent book is [The End: What Science and Religion Tell Us About the Apocalypse](#) (Pitchstone Publishing).

The meeting starts at 4PM and will be followed by dinner at a nearby restaurant.

rant for those who want to stay to socialize and ask the speaker more questions.

Parking is available behind Gage Hall (4 Archdale Street / Charleston) in any of the spots marked as belonging to the Unitarian Church.

**When:** Sunday, Sept. 18, 2016, 4pm

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

**Cost:** Free!

SHL will provide light snacks during the check-in and social period prior to the meeting.

After our meeting, please join us for dinner at a nearby restaurant.

# 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.

## September 2016

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
4	 <b>LABOR DAY</b>	6	7	8 <a href="#">Happy Hour</a>	9	10 <a href="#">Volunteer Activity</a> <a href="#">Kayak Adventure</a>
11	12 <a href="#">Children's Play-date</a>	13	14	15 <a href="#">Girls Night Out</a>	16	17 <a href="#">Movie Club</a>
18 <a href="#">Monthly Meeting</a>	19	20	21	22	23	24
25 <a href="#">Children's Play-date/Toy Drive</a> <a href="#">Book Club</a>	26	27	28 <a href="#">Team Trivia</a>	29	30	

# Upcoming SHL Events, cont.

## SHL Happy Hour

Thursday, September 8, 2016, 6:00pm

Tbonz Gill & Grill, 1668 Old Towne Rd, Charleston  
(West Ashley)

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 meet at Tbonz in West Ashley. Everyone is welcome. Don't be shy – come join us!

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



## Volunteer Activity: Adopt-a-Highway

Saturday, September 10, 2016, 8:45am

1011 Harborview Rd, James Island

For our September volunteer activity, we are returning to Adopt-a-Highway!

Come join us on Saturday, September 10th, at 8:45am in the parking lot of South State Bank, 1011 Harbor View Rd, James Island (next to the Harris Teeter—formerly Piggly Wiggly). We will clean our



section of Harborview Rd, which is between **Darwin Street** (coincidentally) and Fort Johnson Road.

See an event you want to attend? We'd love to have you join us! Some events ask for an RSVP which you can easily do via [Meetup](#) or [Facebook](#). This gives the event organizers a count of how many are attending which is especially important when making reservations at restaurants, providing supplies, etc.



It is often a pleasant walk in the outdoors as well as a chance to talk with fellow volunteers and find strange or funny things along the road (including money!). This is an opportunity for us to make things a little better than they were before and to let people know that Secular Humanists exist and that we care about our communities.

If you have any questions, call Aerin at 843-321-9466 or [email our volunteer coordinators](#).

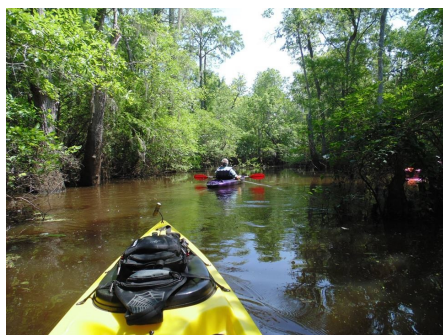
# Upcoming SHL Events, cont.

## SHL Kayak Adventure

Saturday, September 10, 2016, 12:00pm

### J. Todd Boat Landing, Conway

Join us for our annual SHL kayak outing with our friends and fellow secular humanists Jane and Chris Ochsenbein, owners of Gatorbait Adventure Tours in Myrtle Beach. We



will be spending 2–3 hours (3-mile paddle) on the beautiful Waccamaw river.

If you want to attend please RSVP as there is a limited number of kayaks (20). We will be putting in a little after noon on Saturday, September 10th, at the [J. Todd boat landing in Conway](#). Cost is \$20 per person with kayak, life vest, snacks and bottled water provided. [Reserve your spot by booking online](#).

This will be our 3rd kayak trip. It is usually well attended and is always an awesome time! Like most SHL events, we will go to dinner afterward.

A few things to help you enjoy your adventure:

- There are no restroom facilities at the landing or on the tour, this is a swamp with limited land access. Please plan accordingly.

- There is a minimart at the intersection of 544 and Jackson's Bluff Rd – a good place for a pit stop if needed.
- Wear comfortable clothes for the weather, hat, shoes or sandals that can get wet, and plenty of sunscreen.
- Bring snacks and drinks along – we always have extra if needed
- Please arrive 15 minutes before tour time for safety info and equipment fitting

Your Guides, Jane & Chris Ochsenbein

Gator Bait Adventure Tours

Myrtle Beach SC

843-503-3276

<http://gatorbaitkayadventures.com/index.html>

*RSVP required via [Gatorbait Adventure Tours](#)*



# Upcoming SHL Events, cont.

## Children's Playdate at Spray Play

**Monday, September 12, 2016, 10:00am**

**Spray Play, James Island County Park**

Our first play date this month will be at Spray Play in James Island County Park.



The play area features sprinklers and other water spray attractions for children and also offers shaded areas and plenty of seating for parents and guardians. The

Spray Play's sprinklers and attractions are set on a computer sequence to cycle water through the features at various times, making the experience fun and different each time. Smaller sprinklers are offered for younger children on one end of the structure, and larger sprinklers intended for ages 5-12 on the other end. Made of Pebbleflex, the area's multi-colored play surface is comfortable and safe for water play.

The Spray Play area is located within James Island County Park, near the park's picnic center. Access to the Spray Play is included with general admission to James Island County Park, which is just \$1 per person.

From Steffi Green, SHL Family Activities Coordinator:

I am trying to get more families involved in going to play dates and to do that I created a short survey to get a sense of how often people want play dates, where they want to do play dates, their kids ages, and where the bulk of the families live. Your feedback is appreciated and will help us plan fun activities for your family. Thanks!

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/9MDHF9W>

## Girls Night Out

**Thursday, September 15, 2016, 7:00pm**

**Myles and Jun Yakitori, 710 Bacons Bridge Road, Summerville**

A fun night for secular girls\* to socialize!

\* Nursing infants okay but otherwise adults only, please.

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



# Upcoming SHL Events, cont.

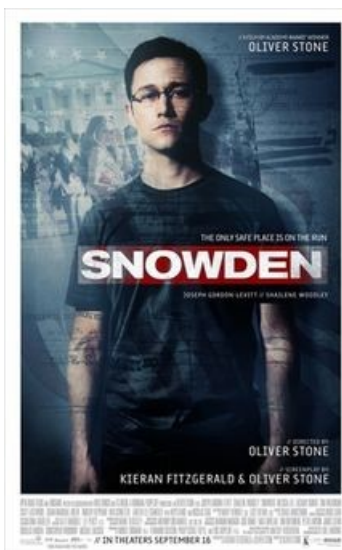
## SHL Movie Club

Saturday, April 17, 2016, time TBD

Terrace Theater, 1956 Maybank Hwy, James Island

Join us for a viewing of Oliver Stone's film [Snowden](#) on Saturday, September 17, at the Terrace Theater.

Showtimes are not posted this far in advance so please check Facebook, Meetup, our website, or subscribe to the Movie Club email for updates.



Academy Award (R)-winning director Oliver Stone, who brought Platoon, Born on the Fourth of July, Wall Street and JFK to the big screen, tackles the most important and fascinating true story of the 21st century. Snowden, the politically-charged, pulse-pounding thriller starring Joseph Gordon-Levitt and Shailene Woodley, reveals the

incredible untold personal story of Edward Snowden, the polarizing figure who exposed shocking illegal surveillance activities by the NSA and became one of the most wanted men in the world. He is considered a hero by some, and a traitor by others. No matter which you believe, the epic story of why he did it, who he left behind, and how he pulled it off makes for one of the most compelling films of the year.

Following the movie we will discuss the film over dinner at a nearby restaurant.

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

## SHL Monthly Meeting

Sunday, September 18, 2016, 4:00pm

Gage Hall, 4 Archdale St, Charleston

Join us for our monthly meeting with speaker **Phil Torres**. See [page 1](#) for details.

## Children's Playdate and Toy Drive

Sunday, September 25, 2016, 3:00pm

Charleston Fun Park, 3255 North Hwy 17, Mt. Pleasant

Our second play date this month will be at Charleston Fun Park in Mt. Pleasant (formerly Blackbeard's Cove).

Bring a new unwrapped toy and get free mini-golf, face painting and jumping on inflatables. Toys will be donated to [Birthdays For All](#), which is SHL's Charity of the Quarter for Q3.

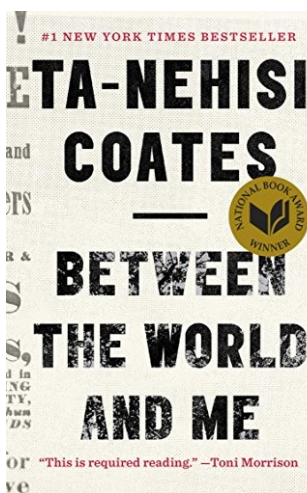


# Upcoming SHL Events, cont.

## SHL Book Club: Between the World and Me

Sunday, September 25, 2016, 4:00pm

Barnes & Noble, 1812 Sam Rittenberg Blvd, Charleston



In September, we are reading **Between the world and me** by Ta-Nehisi Coates (2015, 163vp). This work is a NYT bestseller and received high praise from a broad range of national press. In a series of essays, written as a letter to his son, Coates confronts the notion of race in America and how it has shaped American history, many times at the cost of black bodies and lives.

*\*The author will be talking at the CofC's Race and Social Justice Series on October 18 at 6:30pm in the Sottile Theatre.*

Afterward we invite you to join us for dinner at a nearby restaurant where the conversation always continues.

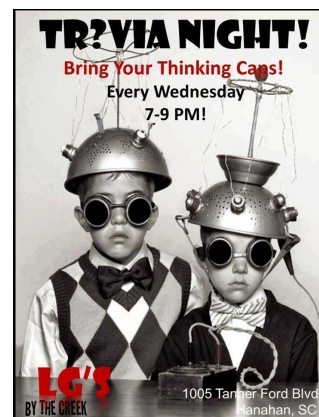
You can purchase copies of these books from Amazon on the SHL page and a portion of the purchase price will automatically be donated to SHL.

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>

## Team Trivia

Thursday, September 28, 2016, 7:00pm

LG's By the Creek, 1005 Tanner Blvd, Hanahan



Come out for a night of trivia and socializing! This is a team event and is free. It's also lots of fun! Any winnings will be used to purchase appetizers for the team at a future trivia night.

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



## 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!

There will be opportunities for SHL members to volunteer at the conference and convention. Needs are still being evaluated so stay tuned!

## SHL Store

SHL is pleased to announce that t-shirts, mugs, bags and other merchandise featuring our logos and slogans can now be purchased at our [online Zazzle store](#).

We hope you will show your pride and help support SHL by shopping at our new store: <http://www.zazzle.com/lowcountryhumanists>.



## Board Update

Sharon Strong, SHL president from 2015-16, and her husband, Tom Ivey, have recently relocated to Washington, DC.

Alex Kasman, formerly SHL Vice President, is SHL's new President. Sue Edward, longtime board member and newsletter editor, is the new Vice President.

We wish Sharon and Tom the best of luck in their new endeavors!



# 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 2016 is [Birthdays For All](#).

Birthdays For All is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization located in Charleston, South Carolina. We operate on the

belief that every child deserves to celebrate their birthday. Our mission is to brighten the lives of children in Foster Care by providing birthday presents on their special day.

We work with the South Carolina Department of Social Services (DSS) to get wish-lists from foster children so

that they can receive the gifts they really want. We are the only nonprofit providing birthday presents to foster children in the Lowcountry, including Charleston, Berkley and Dorchester counties.



*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!](#)*

## BECOME A DUES-PAYING MEMBER OF SHL!

*Membership is open to all who support the purposes for which this organization is founded. Your dues help provide a variety of programs and activities for young and old alike.*

*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

*There are 3 easy ways you can join/renew:*

- Pay by cash, credit card, or check at our monthly meeting.

- Mail a check to:

**SHL**  
**PO Box 32256**  
**Charleston SC 29417-2256**

*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.

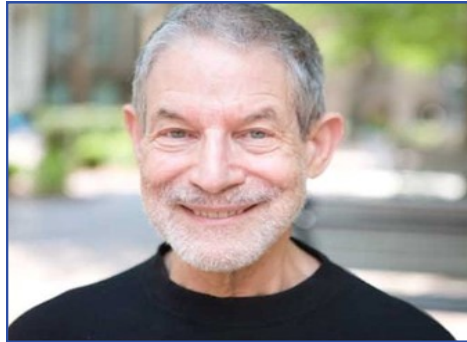
# Herb Silverman

## Last Leper in the Colony

A white doctor in the rural South is presumed to be a Republican and a Christian. Wynne LeGrow, a hard-working doctor in Emporia, Virginia, was neither, but he kept his political and religious beliefs to himself. He felt that his liberal political views would turn off most of his patients, and his atheism would shock almost everyone.

[Last Leper in the Colony](#) is the fascinating story of how LeGrow transformed himself from a small-town physician who shunned politics (except to vote), into a Democratic candidate for Congress. In 2010, without primary opposition, he secured the nomination for the U.S. House of Representatives, a role that brought with it many ups and downs as he tried to figure out how a political neophyte should conduct a campaign. In many ways, this book is a guide on how to run for public office—as an atheist. It offers an insightful assessment of what worked and what didn't, illustrated by the surprising political education LeGrow got along the way.

But first a little background on the author. He grew up as a "PK" (preacher's kid) and attended church regularly (if not faithfully) until he graduated from high school. His father, a liberal Congregational minister, never talked about God belief with his son, but noticed Wynne's skepticism. Wynne assumed that one sermon was directed at him when his father preached that those who have doubts about religion should continue to go to church. His mother, the minister's wife, was likely a skeptic. When young



**Herb Silverman** is founder and President 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.

Wynne mentioned he was having trouble with the concept of Jesus rising from the dead after three days, his mother told him that Jesus's followers probably felt his presence emotionally after he had been dead a few days, a casual and natural dismissal of that defining supernatural event for Christians.

LeGrow believes his road to atheism began at age five, when his older brother told him Santa Claus was a delusion. While some children are upset by this revelation, little Wynne was relieved because such a belief made no sense to him. (Reviewer's note: He isn't the first person to view the Christian God as Santa Claus for adults.)

As he neared retirement, LeGrow became politically engaged, and it was George W. Bush who inspired him to run for office. If Bush, with his limited intellect and insight, could become president of the United States, LeGrow thought he could certain-

ly be a congressman. He naively assumed a high correlation between intellect and electability. After a brief and unsuccessful attempt to win the Democratic primary in 2008, LeGrow tried again in 2010 and became Virginia's Fourth Congressional District nominee running against incumbent Republican Randy Forbes.

The contrast couldn't have been more stark. LeGrow was a traditional progressive, except that by now he was an open atheist. Forbes was not only a traditional Christian conservative, but also founder and chairman of the Congressional Prayer Caucus. Forbes asserted, "The concept of separation of church and state was not borne to establish freedom from religion, but to establish freedom for religion."

In addition to advice from his trusted wife Marilyn, LeGrow knew he needed to learn from political operatives how best to conduct a campaign. He was told that any day he didn't spend six to eight hours calling people for money would be wasted time he couldn't make up. LeGrow much preferred discussing issues. However, one event was even more uncomfortable for him than fundraising—a women's fashion show where he tried to make small talk. (I can identify with his discomfort.)

This story and others like it are in the book's funniest chapter, "Bumps in the Road." Some of those bumps were more like boulders. For instance, LeGrow had a good feeling he could get a major contribution from a rich, elderly man who seemed sympa-

## Herb Silverman cont.

thetic to the cause. So he phoned the gentleman, only to learn that his potential donor was dead.

It was difficult to find experienced campaign staff, partly because of his small budget and partly because he was an open atheist. He hired eighteen-year-old Gabe Butler as his campaign manager. One of Butler's top priorities was getting business cards printed with his name on them and the title "Campaign Manager." A local newspaper interviewed him as LeGrow's "teen campaign manager," and displayed a picture of Butler but not LeGrow. Overall, the campaign manager got more publicity for himself than for his candidate, so Butler, along with several other less-than-competent hires, was let go as the campaign limped on.

Eventually LeGrow assembled a fairly capable team. His staff preferred that he hide or downplay his religious views, but LeGrow wanted to be honest about who he was, exemplifying the important point that many people are good without God. At times, he couldn't convince people he was an atheist. When LeGrow told one supporter that he wasn't religious at all, the constituent said it was OK because "we all believe in God."

Especially disappointing was the reaction of the district's African-American Democrats in office. Despite agreeing with LeGrow on most issues, many refused to promote him within the larger African-American community because of his open atheism.

LeGrow's stump speech was initially awkward as he talked only about issues, but he soon learned the importance of telling personal

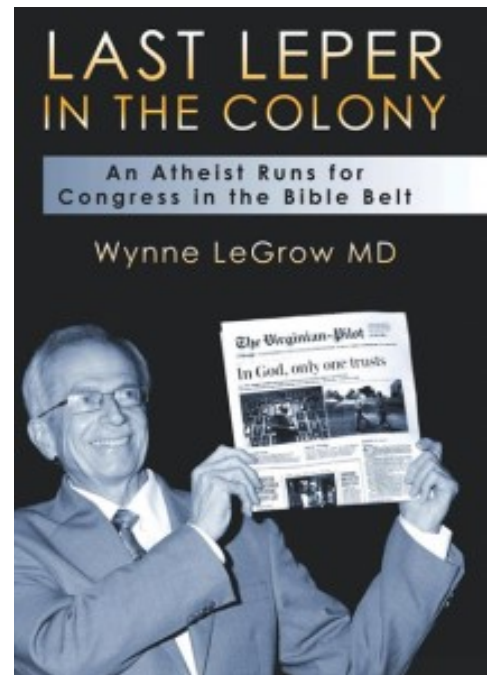
stories. He would say, "I practiced medicine in Emporia for twenty-nine years. I was a nephrologist, a kidney doctor. One of the most difficult things you have to do as a physician is give people bad news about their medical condition." He then gave examples, and pointed out that a physician also has to give people hope. This provided the segue, "If I am elected to Congress, I will be honest with my constituents. We have serious problems in this country, but we can address them rationally." He would then talk about problems like global climate change and inadequate education, and how he hoped to tackle them.

There was a cat-and-mouse game between LeGrow and Forbes, with the mouse escaping every time. Forbes gave different excuses for avoiding debates. He would repeatedly misrepresent LeGrow's position and accuse LeGrow of attacking him for being a Christian. LeGrow answered that he had no problem with Forbes promoting his religion, but not as a government official. He criticized Forbes for trying to slip in legislation that included "The holy Bible is God's Word." A debate scheduled months ahead of time by the League of Women Voters had to be cancelled because Forbes suddenly couldn't fit it in.

LeGrow hoped that his opponent would want to debate an atheist and gain national publicity as a defender of the faith, but Forbes didn't want to give him any media attention. Nate Silver, the statistician who handicaps races at ESPN's FiveThirtyEight blog, initially placed LeGrow's chances of winning at 0 percent. After stories about his atheism broke,

his chances shot all the way up to 0.1 percent on the site.

The bad news is that Dr. Wynne LeGrow lost the 2010 election. The good news is that he garnered 37.5 percent of the vote, more than any Virginia Democrat running against any incumbent Republican that year. LeGrow can be proud of the way he conducted his campaign, and proud of the honest, perceptive book he's written about it. I'm happy to recommend it as a good read written by a good man with a good cause. I hope the book will inspire more open atheists to seek public office, encouraged by words of wisdom from the Last Leper in the Colony.



This piece originally appeared 8/30/2016 in [The Humanist](#)

## SHL Board for 2016-2017

**Alex Kasman**, President  
**Sue Edward**, Vice President  
**Garrett Gehlhausen**, Treasurer  
**Bonnie Cleveland**, Secretary  
**Ed Stephens**  
**Tom Amon**  
**Steffi Green**

## Contact us!

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

# SECULAR HUMANISTS



## OF THE LOWCOUNTRY

SHL is a non-prophet  
organization!

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



[Meetup](#)



[Facebook Group](#)



[YouTube](#)



[Facebook Lounge](#)



[Web](#)



[Facebook Families Group](#)



[Email Lists](#)



[Yahoo Families Group](#)



[Facebook Page](#)

## 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.*