

BESpeak

NOVEMBER 2011

NEWSLETTER OF THE BALTIMORE ETHICAL SOCIETY

Ethical Inspiration

by Hugh Taft-Morales, BES Leader

Perhaps the first real sunshine after a month of rain helped, but Thursday, October 6, inspired me with peace in three flavors. As I prepared for my talk “Peace from the Inside Out,” my day began by rehearsing “Blowing in the



Carolyn Brown and Hugh Taft-Morales leading BES in song.

Wind” and “Down By the Riverside” with Carolyn Brown. If you know Carolyn already, you will understand when I tell you how uplifting is her infectious optimism and good nature. And those of you who heard her voice on October 9th will understand that I was inspired further. Practicing the Bob Dylan number was a great start, and when we got into the gospel tune about “laying down my sword and shield,” I had to just lay down my guitar and sing! The power of that song and Carolyn’s spirit just begged to be freed from the constraints of my finger picking. It reminded me that peace, like music, is not an absence, but is full and flourishing!

The second flavor of peace I tasted was a bitter one. As I walked up to the Baltimore City jail, I found the medieval building ringed with barbed wire cold and intimidating. In contrast, peace presented itself in the form of two smiling yoga practitioners fresh from their class with some female inmates. Lea, Greg and I shared

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BES MEMBERS

Our BES Fall Pledge Drive letter will soon be arriving in e-mail and hard copy versions – so please be on the lookout. Your swift and generous reply will help us keep growing, and sharing our ethical humanism, during our 60th anniversary year and beyond!

CELEBRATING

60

YEARS

SUNDAY PLATFORMS

10:30 a.m.

(details on pages 4–5)

NOVEMBER 6

“African Migration to the U.S. in Recent Times”

Lateef Olapade Badru, PhD
Professor and Acting Chair of Africana Studies, UMBC

NOVEMBER 13

“The Ache for Home”

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Leader, Baltimore Ethical Society

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“Spiritual Nakedness”

Catherine Bordeau
Leader-in-Training at the Brooklyn Society for Ethical Culture

NOVEMBER 27

“Hastening Death: An Argument with Society”

Lawrence Egbert
Former Medical Director, Final Exit Network

ETHICAL HUMANIST SUNDAY SCHOOL

WITH LINDA JOY BURKE

Every Sunday, 10:30 a.m. – Noon

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www.bmorethical.org

The Rainbow Root of Ethical Piety

by Rosemary Klein, BES President

Physicist and theologian Theodoric of Freiburg is credited as the first to use scientific method in experimentation properly in western Europe. His fourteenth century achievement, in part drawing on geometry, contributed to knowledge of reflection and refraction in the formation of rainbows.

Freiburg's achievement was highlighted in our October installment on faith, reason, and the medieval conflict—the second in a monthly, year-long exploration led by Hugh Taft-Morales of James Burke's *The Day the Universe Changed*. Burke immortalizes Freiburg's experiment as the capstone event heralding a new way of thinking, one in which faith and reason would forever be challenged by study of the natural world from which general principles or laws could be formulated.

In the discussion that ensued after watching the video, Freiburg's colorful scientific discovery surprisingly landed us in the very different subject matter of poetry. What came to mind was William Wordsworth's classic poetic nugget:

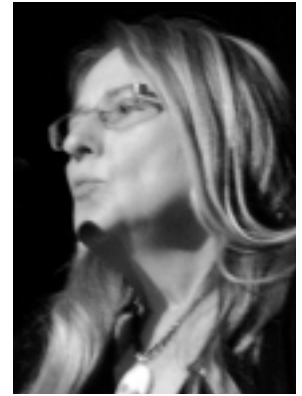
*My heart leaps up when I behold
A rainbow in the sky.
So was it when my life began;
So is it now I am a man;
So be it when I grow old,
Or let me die!
The Child is father of the Man;
And I could wish my days to be
Bound each to each by natural piety.*

The “natural piety” with which Wordsworth wishes to guide his days references his strong belief that personal experience and self-exploration more than books or reductionist science are key to shaping an individual's knowledge. Wordsworth – though a staunch admirer of science – once wrote that the truth sought by the scientist was “remote[,] unknown” and embraced “in solitude.” On the other hand, said Wordsworth, “the Poet...rejoices in the presence of truth as our visible friend and hourly companion.”

“Ethical piety” as defined by Felix Adler is resonant of Wordsworth's “natural piety.” Adler notes that with ethical piety “the touch of grace is not expected from without.” Adler elaborates saying, “The fountain of divine power is unsealed by means of effort in the sense that the fundamental pressure toward ideal world relations exists within man...He knows that he errs and must err, and he knows, at the same time, that there is in him the tendency toward the infiniteness, and that this will lift him...This kind of humility is incompatible with arrogant disrespect toward secular knowledge, erudition, scientific power, and the like...”

The individual pursuit of knowledge through experience esteemed by

(continued on next page)



MONDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 7:30–9:30 P.M.

The Day the Universe Changed

A philosophically fun video and discussion series!

In *The Day the Universe Changed*, James Burke explores links between knowledge and reality through stories about the history of western civilization. Join Ethical Culture Leader Hugh Taft-Morales every month, September through May, for stimulating discussions of these videos. The third in-

stallment is on Monday, November 14, from 7:30–9:30 p.m.: *Point of View: Scientific Imagination in the Renaissance*. Free and open to the public.



OTHER ACTIVITIES

Poetry Group

Sunday, November 6, 9:30 a.m.

Ethical Action at Moveable Feast

Thursday, November 10, 5:45 p.m.

Moveable Treats

Sunday, November 13

Board Meeting

Sunday, November 13, 12:30 p.m.

Video and Discussion Series

Monday, November 14, 7:30 p.m.

Potluck Dinner

Saturday, November 19, 5:30 p.m.

Mindfulness Meditation

Sunday, November 20, 9:30 a.m.

Newcomers' Meeting

Sunday, November 27, 12:30 p.m.

BES Ironweed Film Club

Wednesday, November 30, 7:30 p.m.

Peace Path Baltimore



Several members of the Baltimore Ethical Society participated in this year's Peace Path, organized throughout downtown Baltimore by Women in Black, on Sunday, September 11. From left to right: Karen Elliott, Kathleen Wilsbach, Emil Volcheck, Hugh Taft-Morales, Rosemary Klein, and Bernie Brown.

The Rainbow Root of Ethical Piety

(continued from previous page)

Wordsworth resounds in Adler's "ethical piety." And Adler's sentiments contain a poetry and like the "rainbow in the sky" have the power to make the heart leap up. His words regarding ethical piety illuminate

Ethical Culture's guiding belief of "deed before creed" and in doing so remind us that our intention to act thoughtfully and reflectively regarding what we do must be an "hourly companion."

SUNDAY SNACK SCHEDULE

Last names starting with:

A to F	Nov. 6
G to L	Nov. 13
M to R	Nov. 20
S to Z	Nov. 27

POTLUCK DINNER

Saturday, Nov. 19, 5:30 p.m.

Leader-in-Training Catherine Bordeau is speaking at BES on Nov. 20. She will be traveling from Brooklyn and in honor of her visit we will have a potluck dinner at the home of John Reuter on Saturday, Nov. 19 starting at 5:30 p.m. More details will be announced.

SUNDAY PLATFORM PROGRAMS

NOVEMBER 6

“African Migration to the U.S. in Recent Times”

Lateef Olapade Badru, PhD

Professor and Acting Chair of Africana Studies, UMBC

The recent influx of African immigrants that began in the latter part of the 20th century is often referred to as the “fourth great migration.” This trend, which has intensified steadily over time, began after decolonization when many Africans, including Barack Obama Senior, came to the United States seeking an education. These immigrants originally came with the sole purpose of advancing themselves before returning to their respective countries. An increase in the number of African immigrants interested in gaining permanent residence in the United States, however, has occurred in recent years. Dr. Badru will describe this migration and its effects on both the U.S. and Africa.

Dr. Lateef Olapade Badru received a PhD in sociology with specializations in international economic development as well as economic sociology from the State University of New York at Stony Brook, following his undergraduate work at the City University of London and his earning of a Masters from the London School of Economics. Before coming to UMBC, he taught in Nigeria and in the U.S. – at Albion College, Rowan University, and the University of Louisville. He has published four books, with a fifth in the works, and many scholarly articles. He has served as an expert witness in immigration cases involving deportation and asylum in federal courts, is involved with a program to help capable students pay high school fees in West Africa, and is Chair of the Board of Trustees for the International Agency for Refugee Movement.

NOVEMBER 13

“The Ache for Home”

Hugh Taft-Morales

Leader, Baltimore Ethical Society

Every person deserves that sacred place we call “home.” Respect for human worth demands it. From its inception, Ethical Culture has worked to assure decent housing for all. Founder Felix Adler did so when serving on the New York State Tenement House Commission, and Leader John Lovejoy Elliott demanded homes for the poor of New York’s Chelsea neigh-

borhood. This talk interweaves Ethical Culture history with reflections about the specialness of “home.” It complements Adam Schneider’s presentation earlier this fall and honors this year’s National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week, November 12-20.

Hugh Taft-Morales serves as Leader for both the Baltimore Ethical Society and the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia and also works with the Ethical Society Without Walls (ESWoW). He taught philosophy and history in high school for twenty-five years, graduated from Yale College in 1979, and earned a Masters in Philosophy in 1986 from University of Kent in England. Taft-Morales, who lives in Takoma Park, Maryland, received a certificate in Humanist Leadership from the Humanist Institute in 2009.

NOVEMBER 20

“Spiritual Nakedness”

Catherine Bordeau

Leader-in-Training at the Brooklyn Society for Ethical Culture

Ethical Culture seeks to create a space where every person can venture on their own journey but also grow and learn from each other in community. Navigating our growth as ethical beings in everyday Ethical Culture communities as we seek better relationships and a just world brings challenges as well as beauty. Reflecting on her own spiritual journey, Bordeau explores the personal nature of our encounter with community and how it is shaped by both our individuality and our capacity to reflect and bring possibilities to consciousness.

Catherine Bordeau, a native of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, came to New York to work with non-profit organizations doing advocacy at the United Nations, where she acquired five years of experience challenging structures of injustice at the international level. Seminary was her next step, with Bordeau, who also holds a B.A. from Cardinal Stritch University in history and women’s studies, receiving a Master of Divinity from Union Theological Seminary made possible by a full tuition Howard Moody scholarship. Now an Ethical Culture clergy leader candidate residing in Brooklyn with her partner Alexandra and a bilingual puppy named Maya, she is passionate about racial justice, gender justice, the slow food movement, sustainable development and gardening.

60th
ANNIVERSARY
EVENT

PLATFORMS (continued)

NOVEMBER 27

“Hastening Death: An Argument with Society”

Lawrence Egbert

Former Medical Director, Final Exit Network

A review of the history of the Hemlock Society and how it became Compassion and Choices plus Final Exit Network sets the stage for an exploration of the often challenged issue regarding the morality of guiding persons who wish to die so that they are able to do it quickly, painlessly, and with a minimum loss of dignity. In his review of the moral issues and discussion of the response of many people to the challenge, Egbert will draw on his experience as the medical director for Final Exit Network, for which he was arrested by the states of Arizona and Georgia. In Arizona, an April trial settled the matter. In Georgia, the state has been challenged concerning the right to speak – a matter that may have found resolve earlier this month when the Supreme Court of Georgia was due to hear evidence.

Dr. Lawrence Egbert is a physician currently appointed to the Anesthesiology and Critical Care Department at Hopkins. He notes, however, that he is really is retired though he likes to say that he is “not yet retiring.” A Unitarian who attends Quaker Homewood Meeting, Egbert has been the Unitarian campus minister at Hopkins for a decade. He has taught at Harvard, Hopkins, the American University of Beirut, and Pahlavi University in Iran and has worked with the Hemlock Society and its offspring for 20 years. For the past two years, the Baltimore Ethical Society has nominated Egbert for the American Ethical Union’s Elliott-Black Award, honoring an individual in the larger community who has made a significant ethical contribution to society at personal risk and hardship.

SOMEONE GETTING MARRIED?

The Baltimore Ethical Society has a Leader and a team of assistants who are trained and licensed to conduct weddings, same-sex commitments, memorials, and other life passage ceremonies. For more information about our ceremonies or to make arrangements, please contact our Officiant Team Coordinator, Kathryn Sloboda, at weddings@bmorethical.org.

WELCOME RICHARD LEWIS



Membership Committee chair John Reuter welcomes Richard Lewis as the newest member of BES.

BAKING NIGHT AT MOVEABLE FEAST

Thursday, November 10, 5:45–8:00 p.m.

Join BES members and others for this enjoyable outing at a great organization – check out their website at www.mfeast.org. Let Lisa Alderson know you are coming (lialderson@gmail.com) and show up at Moveable Feast, 901 N. Milton Ave. Baltimore, MD, at 5:45 p.m. Park on the street parking in front of building. Enter through the door closest to Ashland Street. Let Lisa know if you’d like to carpool and she’ll try to match you up with another BES participant.



bmorethical t-shirts

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blue and white

ONLY \$15



IRONWEED

Film

CLUB

Wednesday, November 30,
7:30 p.m.

Join us this month at the BES Ironweed Film Club when we screen *Chemical*.

Chemical explores the life cycle of everyday household cleaners and hygiene products to prove that, thanks to our obsession with cleanliness, we are drowning in a sea of toxicity. The film is at once humorous, as we watch the Goode family try to turn a new leaf by creating and living in a toxic-free home, and informative, as director Andrew Nisker works with many experts to give audiences the tools and inspiration to live toxic free. *Chemical* tackles "the toxic debate" in a truly revelatory and entertaining way, not only by raising awareness, but by providing simple solutions.

Screenings are open to members of BES and the BES Ironweed Film Club. Contact Emil at volcheck@acm.org about free membership. *Donations are requested for refreshments.*

Note: The Film Club usually meets on the 4th Wednesday, but this month we are meeting on the last Wednesday due to the Thanksgiving holiday.

Ethical Action Report

Maintain Funding for the U.S. Institute of Peace

A faction within the House of Representatives is advocating total cessation of all federal funding for the United States Institute of Peace (www.usip.org). For the fiscal year ending on September 30, 2011, federal funds for the Institute were cut by 20% from the previous year. For the coming fiscal year running from October 1, 2011 to September 30, 2012, proposals are still being considered that totally eliminate federal funds for this important institu-

tion. Given the billions of dollars poured into solving international conflicts through force, citizens should demand funding for the Institute.

We urge you to contact your representatives and encourage them to support federal funding of this important peace building institution.

(Excerpted from the American Ethical Union October 2011 Ethical Action Report. For the full report, which includes several other action items, visit www.aeu.org.)

MINDFULNESS

meditation

Sunday, November 20, 9:30 a.m.

The Mindfulness Meditation Group will meet the third Sunday in November. Come and breathe with us to guided meditation from Thich Nhat Hanh. No meditation experience necessary. Want to know more? Contact Karen Elliott at KarenSElliott@aol.com.

Ethical Inspiration

(continued from page 1)

lunch at Red Emma's while they told me about how surprised they were at the receptivity of the inmates to the yoga practice. Even those who chose not to participate in the poses seemed to enjoy just relaxing and watching the others. It seemed to help them, if just for a few moments, forget about the cycle of violence that landed them behind bars.

To finish my day I visited the Occupy Baltimore site at the Inner Har-

bor for a third taste of peace. Sure, there were angry people there, but there was also energy and hope and cooperation – all ingredients important in peace building. Activists young and old painted signs, planned workshop agendas, and circulated petitions. For a few moments I joined some on the street corner, signs in hands. The smiles, honks and peace signs from many commuters warmed me. I made a mental note to add a verse to Carolyn's and my gospel number: "I'm gonna sing out for 'Bmore peace' / Down by the harborside!"



Abell Community Street Fair: Bernie Brown, Em Sabatiuk, and Karen Elliott man the BES table.



Baltimore Book Festival: Richard Lewis, Karen Elliott, John Reuter, and Don Helm were among the members who helped.

Festivals Provide Outreach Opportunities

The Baltimore Ethical Society has wrapped up a busy festival season, having participated in the Hamilton Street Fair on July 30, the Abell Community Street Fair on September 18, the Baltimore Book Festival on September 23-25, and the Bolton Hill Festival on the Hill on October 8.

This was the first year that BES participated in the Hamilton Street Fair. Our thanks go to Hamilton residents John Reuter and Karen Elliott for bringing our ethical message to their neighborhood.

The Abell Community Street Fair marked the centenary of their neighborhood with a parade down Abell Avenue, bringing many people past the BES table.

The Baltimore Book Festival began

on a rainy Friday, and at times a river three feet wide flowed through the booth, but good weather on Saturday brought people out. Dale McGowan, *Parenting Beyond Belief* editor and *Raising Freethinkers* co-author, joined us for booksigning that afternoon. Sunday, Laura Lippman, author of the “Tess Monaghan” series of mystery novels set in Baltimore, spoke about her latest novel *The Most Dangerous Thing* to a packed audience. Some friends from First Unitarian tipped us off that Ms. Lippman expressed humanist views in her talk. This prompted Karen Elliott to present Ms. Lippman with a “bmorethical” t-shirt, which clearly delighted her.

The Bolton Hill Festival enjoyed perfect weather and was full of music, food and activities for the kids. One

young member of the BES Sunday school loved the face painting!

Thanks to everyone who had a hand in making these events a great success! Nearly 70 people signed up to get information about BES at the four festivals.



Karen Elliott presents a “bmorethical” t-shirt to author Laura Lippman at the Baltimore Book Festival.



Bolton Hill Festival on the Hill: Ken Brenneeman worked along with a couple of BES young people.



Bolton Hill Festival on the Hill: Emil Volcheck and Kathleen Wilsbach along with a BES Sunday school attendee are all smiles.



BALTIMORE ETHICAL SOCIETY

306 W. Franklin Street, Suite 102, Baltimore, MD 21201-4661

NEWSLETTER

Please do not delay!

TIME VALUE

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

Celebrate HumanLight, December 23, 7:30 p.m.

A humanist celebration of the season, with music and a potluck dinner. For more information about this winter holiday, visit www.humanlight.org.

MOVEABLE TREATS

Baked Goods – Sunday, November 13

Other Items – Every Sunday

Support Moveable Feast in their work to feed people with AIDS, blood cancer, or breast cancer and their families. Guidelines for donations are posted at the Society. For more information about Moveable Feast and their many additional programs, visit them on the web at www.mfeast.org.

NEWCOMERS' MEETING

Sunday, November 27, 12:30 p.m.

New to the Society and interested in learning more? Attended a meeting or two? Thinking about joining? Come to the Newcomers' Meeting, held following the last platform of every month, and learn more about Ethical Culture and about our Society – its history, its philosophy, and its organization. Meetings last about one hour and attendance is recommended before becoming a member. See John Reuter or Hugh Taft-Morales for more information.

bmorethical

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Facebook, Twitter, and MeetUp.com @bmorethical**

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