

BESpeak

SEPTEMBER 2012

NEWSLETTER OF THE BALTIMORE ETHICAL SOCIETY

Task and Process at Lay Leadership Summer School and Beyond!

by Hugh Taft-Morales, BES Leader



Most people in Ethical Culture are pretty good at getting tasks done – at checking things off our “to do” list. Despite our dedication to a “religion of relationships,” however, some of us are less adept at managing our tasks *while also* nurturing ethical relationships. I suppose we are only human – we are humanists, after all – and this became clearer to me back in 2006 when I attended American Ethical Union (AEU) Lay Leadership Summer School.

I always knew I was good at doing tasks, *and I thought* I was pretty good at the process of relationship building. Nevertheless, in 2006 when the participants got involved in summer school exercises encouraging us to do both, often task ran roughshod over process. I found the experience challenging and transformative.

I was challenged by the “messiness” of human relationships – the assumptions, the poor communication, the hurt feelings. “Why can’t we all just get along?” I found myself thinking. (Just ask Stephen Meskin with whom I shared many interesting group experiences!) I was surprised at how the friction made me feel uncomfortable – and how I wanted to retreat and hide from it.

The internal transformation began as I learned better how to acknowledge this feeling and take ownership of it. Without beating myself up over the semi-paralysis that seized me, I began to appreciate how my feelings were a result of my own needs. I learned how to fulfill my needs so that I could choose how best to address the conflicts and confusions of human relationships. I thank the AEU for this little bit of therapeutic training!

It was of great use to me this past summer when I joined the staff of the 2012 AEU Lay Leadership Summer School. Our week unfolded with wonderful joys and creativity, though it held a traditional share of interpersonal bumps and bruises. Put thirty creative, passionate free thinkers on a mountaintop for a week and what

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SUNDAY PLATFORMS

10:30 a.m.

(details on pages 4–5)

SEPTEMBER 2

Annual Labor Day Picnic

Dianne and Stuart Hirsch
BES Members

SEPTEMBER 9

“STEM Stories That Few Cover”

Frank McCoy
Editor, Writer, Web Producer

SEPTEMBER 16

“Ethical Labor Day – Honoring the Workers”

Hugh Taft-Morales
BES Leader

SEPTEMBER 23

“A Community School Grows in Brooklyn”

Dante de Tablan
Community Schools Coordinator

SEPTEMBER 30

“Committed to Social Justice”

Sylvia Gillett
Professor, Author, Activist

ETHICAL HUMANIST SUNDAY SCHOOL

WITH LINDA JOY BURKE

10:30 a.m. – Noon

We welcome all school-aged
children for the 2012–2013 season
beginning September 9.

Please join us!

BESpeak

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On the web at bmorethical.org

Activity Builds Community

by *Emil Volcheck, BES President*



It's an honor and a privilege to serve as president of our society. I appreciate the opportunity and will do my best to help our community to thrive.

This summer, BES has launched new initiatives and expanded the kinds of events we host. The Ethical Action Committee garnered member support for two social justice initiatives: supporting marriage equality and promoting juvenile justice reform. In June, BES-Youth Action (BES-YA) joined Blue Water Baltimore for a river cleaning service project. That same weekend, inspired by our "Drinking Sceptically" partners in the Baltimore Coalition of Reason (CoR), BES-YA organized the first "Drinking Ethically" evening at One World Cafe. We have Katherine LaClair to thank for her leadership in starting BES-YA and organizing both events.

The Ethical Culture movement has earned respect for helping to form organizations like the ACLU and NAACP. At a local level, BES is carrying this spirit forward by helping to incubate new groups that align with our values. In March, the LGBTQ Humanist Council of Baltimore was formed as a chapter of the American Humanist Association (AHA), with a mission to build community among LGBTQ individuals who believe that one can be "Good Without God." BES has given administrative support for the Council by providing them the use of our space and hosting their Meetup site. In June, the Council held a potluck dinner at BES that helped members get to know each other. Lucas McCahill stepped up as lead organizer, demonstrating great energy in building community and fighting for marriage equality. McCahill was instrumental in helping BES connect with the new coalition *Marylanders for Marriage Equality*. In July, BES launched a new Meetup "Baltimore Parenting Beyond Belief" inspired by Dale McGowan's books. The group held a family game night and potluck dinner at BES, which was enjoyed by all. Marjeta Cedilnic, a co-organizer of the Baltimore Atheists Meetup, volunteered to host the next gaming event at her home in Howard County.

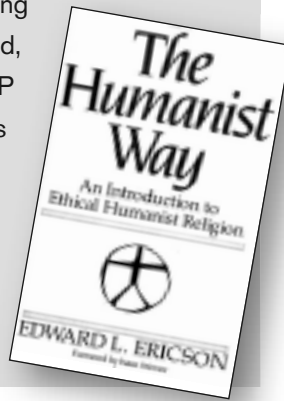
In June, Kathleen and I attended the annual AHA conference. We had a great time and found the event quite inspiring. At a meeting for leaders of AHA chapters and affiliates, I picked up some practical suggestions for building our communities. One piece of advice came through loud and clear: hold more and different kinds of events! AHA chapters are holding events like cocktail parties, yoga classes, movie nights, and potluck dinners – with childcare provided at all. They're working with Camp Quest, meeting in bars, holding blood drives, watching TED talks, working for marriage equality, and organizing support for the Equal Rights Amendment. The Humanists of Minnesota even hired a "Humanist Community Organizer" to help provide more opportunities for members to interact outside formal meetings.

The new initiatives and events of this summer show that BES is moving on a path of more events and greater involvement in diverse activities. If you would like to see

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ETHICAL CULTURE BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP STARTING!

Be part of a discussion group reading Ed Ericson's great book about the Ethical Culture movement, *The Humanist Way: An Introduction to Ethical Humanist Religion*. One time monthly for four months running we will discuss a portion of this book. If you are interested, e-mail Hugh Taft-Morales at leader@bmorethical.org ASAP but no later than September 10. Tentative start date is September 16. We will finalize dates, times, and locations based on the preference of those who sign up – we might hold it at BES or at members' homes. The goal is to have fun, socialize, and learn more about Ethical Culture. All Hugh asks is a good faith commitment to read the book!



BES Joins OYO Consortium

by Karen Helm, BES Board Member

BES members voted this August to join a consortium – Organizations for Youth Opportunity (OYO) – whose aim is reallocation of roughly 70 million capital budget dollars directed at building a new youth jail. OYO proposes that funding be redirected, primarily toward programs proven to have better recidivism and public safety outcomes than incarceration and also toward benefiting recreation centers.

It is important to understand that the kids who would populate the youth jail are not like characters from *The Wire*. Eighty-seven percent have been charged with nonviolent offenses. Of those actually charged with serious or violent crimes, 70% (sometimes after being held in horrendous conditions for up to 120 days awaiting a court hearing) have had their charges dropped or transferred to juvenile court.

One juvenile justice official guessed that 50% of the kids in the youth jail

probably would be innocent of any crime. This is partly explained by race-based policies for policing, charging, and incarcerating teenagers. Kids in poor neighborhoods, like all others Americans, believe themselves to be citizens with legal rights. But encounters with police shatter that as a realistic belief. Police in such neighborhoods can with impunity and without need for legal justification slam a teenager over a squad car hood or order a juvenile to lie face down on a filthy sidewalk. Hesitation to comply or arguing can mean being arrested and charged.

In 2007 our state approved a new youth detention facility plan that allocated \$104 million capital funding and \$13 million as annual operating budget to satisfy a charge directed by the US Department of Justice that Federal law was not complied with as youth charged as adults (YCA) were held in jail alongside adults.

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OTHER ACTIVITIES

Poetry Group

Sunday, Sept. 9, 9:30 a.m.

Baking Night at Moveable Feast

Thursday, Sept. 13, 5:45 p.m.

Mindfulness Meditation

Sunday, Sept. 16, 9:30 a.m.

Moveable Treats

Sunday, Sept. 16

Board Meeting

Sunday, Sept. 16, 12:30 p.m.

BES Ironweed Film Club

Wednesday, Sept. 26, 7:30 p.m.

Ethical Action Meeting

Sunday, Sept. 30, 9:00 a.m.

Newcomers Meeting

Sunday, Sept. 30, 12:30 p.m.

Constitution and Ethics Series

Sunday, Sept. 30, 12:45 p.m.

SUNDAY SNACK SCHEDULE

Last names starting with:

| | |
|--------|----------|
| A to F | Sept. 9 |
| G to L | Sept. 16 |
| M to R | Sept. 23 |
| S to Z | Sept. 30 |

BAKING NIGHT

Thursday, September 13,
5:45–8:00 p.m.

Join BES members and others for this enjoyable outing at Moveable Feast – check out their website at mfeast.org. Contact Lisa Alderson (lialderson@gmail.com) to let her know you are coming and show up at 901 N. Milton Ave., Baltimore, MD, at 5:45 p.m.

SEPTEMBER 2

Annual Labor Day Picnic

Dianne and Stuart Hirsch
BES Members

BES members gather from noon to 3 in the large backyard (perfect for throwing the Frisbee) at the lovely home of the Hirsches in Reisterstown for the annual Labor Day picnic. Attendees are asked to bring a potluck dish. Drinks and eating utensils will be provided. This picnic marks the end of BES's summer programming. Our regular Sunday morning platforms (lectures) begin again on September 9.

SEPTEMBER 9

“STEM Stories That Few Cover”

Frank McCoy
Editor, Writer, Web Producer

Science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) knowledge and skills are vital to the success of today's students. McCoy – being one of the few journalists with experience in mainstream business publications – recently has written, edited, and produced hundreds of articles on minority leaders with STEM as well as biology, business, chemistry, computer science, and physics degrees. Doing so has convinced him that minority youth are less than adequately informed regarding intellectual, educational, and financial STEM-focused information and opportunities. His intent is to develop multimedia deliverable content showcasing the many successful STEM practitioners who rightly should serve as educational models. Today's talk provides a glimpse into the knowledge and experience acquired from his proximity and interaction with STEM students, academics, scientists, researchers, and executives of color and addresses how future generations of STEM leaders might best be prepared and assured of their place in the world.

Frank McCoy has been staff editor at *Business Week*, senior and contributing editor for *Black Enterprise*, and senior editor for *U.S. News & World Report*. With Time-Life Books, he has been employed as a writer, proofreader, and text researcher. His experience in digital publications include being executive producer for *AOL Money & Finance* and business editor for NetNoir Inc., a position from which, in addition to writing and editing, he conducted a weekly live online business chat show for the AOL community portal. Diverse freelance print and digital publications appear in venues such as *African Financing Review*, *Working Mother*, *Savoy*, *National*

Geographic, *AARP.org*, and *Africana.com*. For the MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) Knight Diversity Project, he recently authored a number of compact profiles highlighting African American leaders in science, technology, engineering, and math-related fields that are projected for use in a series of video presentations. In addition to a bachelor's from University of Massachusetts at Amherst, McCoy possesses an MA in International Relations from The Fletcher School, Tufts University and an MS in Journalism from Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism.

SEPTEMBER 16

“Ethical Labor Day – Honoring the Workers”

Hugh Taft-Morales
BES Leader

130 years ago in New York City – a time and place for many of meager wages, dangerous workplaces, and horrible tenement houses – Labor Day was first celebrated. There and then, Felix Adler, the founder of Ethical Culture, engaged in the struggle to transform the labor movement into a vanguard of broad social reform. He sought to end material oppression and spiritual stagnation by promoting the nobility of all workers, blue and white collar alike. Today, as unions are under attack, what can we learn from Ethical Culture's place in the history of American labor? How might Ethical Culture best honor the inherent worth of all who labor?

Hugh Taft-Morales is now in his third year as BES Leader and main guitarist. A Yale College graduate (1979), he also earned a Masters in Philosophy (1986) from University of Kent in England. For twenty-five years he taught high school philosophy and history. Then after his mid-1990s discovery of Ethical Culture, he served the Washington Ethical Society as a board member from 2003-2006, the last year as president. In addition to being a certified Leader in Ethical Culture, he has completed a three-year leadership certification program with the Humanist Institute. A faculty member at the 2012 AEU Lay Leadership Summer School and secretary to the AEU's National Leaders Council, Taft-Morales serves as Leader for the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia and as Consulting Leader to the Ethical Society Without Walls (ESWoW). He and his wife Maureen, a specialist in Latin American affairs for the Congressional Research Service, live in Takoma Park, Maryland; they are the enthusiastic parents of three children: Sean, Maya, and Justin.

SEPTEMBER 23

“A Community School Grows in Brooklyn”

Dante de Tablan

Community Schools Coordinator

A window is opened on the efforts and actions needed to properly support and nourish Baltimore’s schools, the oldest statewide and overwhelmingly in shoddy condition with leaking roofs, decaying infrastructures, unusable drinking water, and questionable indoor air quality. To address such issues, partnerships seeking innovative funding structures are being formed. New school and community resource partnerships that encourage an integrated commitment to academics, enrichment, health and social supports, youth and community development, and family engagement are being realized. Such partnerships build schools with programs, students, and staff who serve as resources to the community, reenergizing education while also promoting student achievement and family and community well-being.

Dante de Tablan graduated from the School of Social Welfare at the University of California, Berkeley. After serving as a Presidential Management Fellow at the U.S. Department of Labor, he worked to eradicate sweatshops, child labor violations and migrant and seasonal worker exploitation in California. He then worked to restore historic structures in Virginia and Maryland before realizing that he had contributions to make in rebuilding community trust and relationships. Now a faculty member with the Social Work Community Outreach Service (SWCOS) program of the University of Maryland School of Social Work, he engages parents and community leaders and instructs social work interns at Benjamin Franklin High School at Masonville Cove. A member of the Transform Baltimore Campaign and the Baltimore Education Coalition, De Tablan has worked with a number of organizations dedicated to community support and transformation, including the Family League of Baltimore City, Safe & Sound, the Living Classrooms Foundation, and Maryland Hunger Solutions. This summer he was invited to participate at the Grade-Level Reading Communities Network Conference and All-America City Awards Celebration 2012 in Denver and presented at the Office of University Partnerships 2012 National Conference, “Strategies for Strengthening Communities,” in New Orleans and the 2012 Community Schools National Forum in San Francisco.

SEPTEMBER 30

“Committed to Social Justice”

Sylvia Gillett

Professor, Author, Activist

It is a noble goal to dream of influencing vital societal changes through one’s jobs and character. Few achieve it, but one who did—Richard “Ric” Pfeffer—continues to serve as an exemplar a decade after his death. For ten years a political science professor at Johns Hopkins University and for twenty a member of the legal staff at the Occupational Safety and Health Office (OSHA) of the U.S. Department of Labor, Pfeffer was instrumental in establishing the Baltimore Progressive Action Center and heading its board as president for 20 years as well as in establishing the US-China People’s Friendship Association as a “people-to-people organization that fostered positive popular attitudes toward China.” Columbia University published his influential book *Working for Capitalism*. One journalist contemplating Pfeffer’s large legacy termed it “...the challenge to take up the struggle wherever we find ourselves, in whatever institutions we are located, and [to] use the leverage that that place gives us to produce some positive change.” Today his wife Sylvia Gillette addresses his life in terms of what it means to lead an ethical existence. She considers the reach and influence of his small acts of kindness and generosity, reflects on what makes a relatively privileged kid from a insular Long Island neighborhood so committed to social justice, and addresses his conviction to act with resolve when standing back would have been safer.

Sylvia Gillett taught English for over thirty years at – and is now a retired professor emeritus from – the Community College of Baltimore County. As an activist in the Baltimore left-wing political community, she was one of the original members of the Progressive Action Center and for many years served on the board of the Research Associates Foundation, which oversaw the Center’s work. Currently, she is a member of the Ric Pfeffer Memorial Lecture Fund board. During the 1970s she was part of the collective that published the highly regarded *Women: A Journal of Liberation*, founded and published in Baltimore to provide a forum for introducing thought and creativity considered as crucial to the women’s liberation movement. Author of the chapter “Camden Yards and the Strike of 1877” in *The Baltimore Book: New Views of Local History*, she has also written a number of magazine articles as well as poems that have appeared in small press magazines and anthologies.

IRONWEED

film

CLUB

**Wednesday, September 26,
7:30 p.m.**

Join us this month when we screen ***Consumed***.

Consumerism has become the cornerstone of the post-industrial age. Yet how much do we know about it and what it is doing to us? Using theories of evolutionary psychology to underpin a bold narrative of our times, this film takes a whirlwind tour through the “weird mental illness of consumerism,” showing how our insatiable appetite has driven us into “the jaws of the beast.” Manipulating our innermost impulses, capitalism has begun to not only reflect our evolutionary tendencies but also to amplify and distort them. Exploring how human psychology has molded the society that is slowly destroying the world and us, ***Consumed*** takes us inside both the apocalyptic and redemptive sides of the human condition.

Screenings are open to members of BES and the BES Ironweed Film Club. Ask Emil (volcheck@acm.org or 410-929-3399) about free membership in the film club. Donations are requested for refreshments.

BES Joins OYO

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The bleak announcement of this costly new plan came simultaneously with the new city budget keeping swimming pools from being open all summer and closing various neighborhood recreation centers. Anyone who has seen the barren parts of Baltimore could not help but compare these depleted landscapes with the eagerness to lavish money on incarcerating youth and the near total indifference to providing impoverished young people with the help and opportunities they need to build futures.

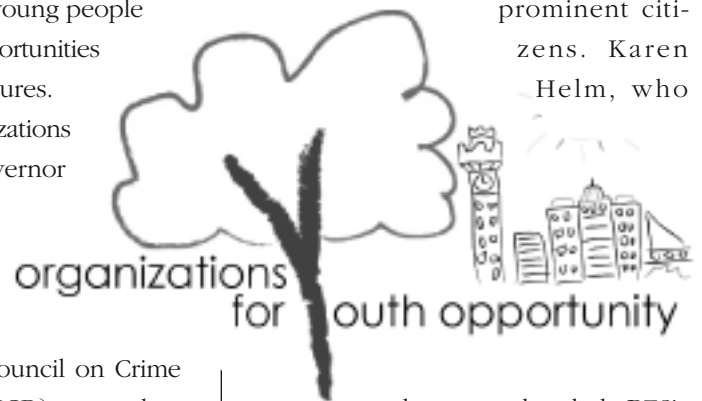
Citizens and organizations requested the Governor postpone construction of the new jail. The Governor commissioned the authoritative National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD) to conduct an inquiry. The NCCD concluded the 2007 Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services report establishing need for a new youth detention facility was severely flawed and “unreliable.” NCCD offered alternative plans for safely housing incarcerated youth and recommended that funding

be used to expand opportunities for youth in impoverished city areas.

The NCCD report has largely been ignored. The state plans to move on constructing a youth jail. The only change has been Governor O’Malley asking the legislature to modify its approval to construction of a smaller jail.

OYO believes this youth jail issue is an opportunity to ignore the historic segregation of political efforts that cripples Baltimore. Its intent is mobilizing all segments of Baltimore’s population with emphasis on faith leaders and

prominent citizens. Karen Helm, who



has spearheaded BES’s OYO involvement, will represent BES to the coalition and keep BES informed about volunteer opportunities. Contact her (karenhelm@gmail.com) if you have connections to religious, business, or other leaders who might lend OYO support. Learn more about OYO at oyobaltimore.org.

MINDFULNESS

meditation

Sunday, September 16, 9:30 a.m.

Mindfulness is a tool we can use in our daily lives to act in a more ethical way. We practice mindfulness meditation so that mindfulness comes naturally in stressful times. Join us as we sit (on chairs) and breathe (just the way it comes naturally) and listen to some words from Thich Nhat Hanh, one of the world’s best-known teachers of mindfulness.

We the People

THE CONSTITUTION & ETHICS SERIES

September 30, 12:45–2:15 p.m.

Leader Hugh Taft-Morales will offer a Constitution and Ethics Series examining legal and ethical issues important in regard to their relation to the Constitution. Each session will begin with his presentation of an overview touching on the main legal and ethical issues and then discussion (promised to be lively!) will open. Sunday September 30 from 12:45–2:15 p.m., the first session in the series will take place at BES. **Campaign Election Reform** will be its focus. Questions to be explored include: What does the Constitution say about the right to vote? How do free speech, corporate personhood, and money affect our elections? What kinds of reforms are possible and constitutionally viable?

Marriage Equality Coalition

Governor O'Malley signed into law "The Civil Marriage Protection Act of 2012," which extends to all couples the right to obtain a marriage license. This law is being challenged with a ballot initiative in November's election. BES has taken an official position in favor of marriage equality and joined the coalition "Marylanders for Marriage Equality" (MDFME). All members and friends are invited to join BES's support of this cause, at whatever amount of time – minutes or hours – you can manage. BES has already supported MDFME by working the phone bank, gathering signatures for the marriage equality pledge, and attending a fundraiser hosted by ACLU of Mary-

land. With your help, we can do more.

In just a few minutes, you can be informed by visiting www.mdme.org. In two hours, you can help make phone bank calls. In four hours, you can help with door-to-door canvassing to reach undecided voters. On Thursday, September 6, 7:00-9:00 p.m., BES members are invited to a Washington Ethical Society dessert party fundraiser benefiting marriage equality (\$50.00 suggested donation); a carpool may be arranged. RSVP to Jay Evans at 443-863-8935 or jay@mdme.org. Marriage Equality Open Houses take place Friday nights in Charles Village; all supporters are invited to attend.

More information is available on BES's web or social media sites.

The Baltimore Jewish Cultural Chavurah – our Baltimore CoR partner – announces two special September events. They are spotlighted in an article on our website. Visit bmorethical.org to learn more about both events.

Task and Process...

(continued from page 1)

do you expect! Prepared by my own 2006 experience – as well as by my Leadership training – in pastoral counseling, I was better able to guide and support the participants.

I could support them as they dove into tasks, and, more importantly, when they felt ambushed by feelings and needs that arise in complex group interaction. My new perspective was not a stoic "rise-above-it-all" reaction. I have done that before – and it may provide momentary refuge but it does not bring out my best. No, while I felt more balanced in the midst of the storm, I cared more. More assured of myself, I was able to feel *more* compassion for all my fellow summer school partners experiencing frustration.

For most participants, as for me, out of the frustration arose self-knowledge, interpersonal skills, and joyful friendships. Reconnected to the importance of balancing task and process – work and relationships – I return to BES this fall refreshed and eager for another program year. I look forward to nurturing our community so that we can bring out the best in others and thus in ourselves.

Activity Builds...

(continued from page 2)

BES continue in this direction, please suggest an event you'd like to see us do – and then help us to make it happen. We would like to name a volunteer to serve as Events Coordinator to initiate, facilitate, or plan more events. Would you like to help?

BESpeak

BALTIMORE ETHICAL SOCIETY

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

NEWSLETTER

Please do not delay!

TIME VALUE

ETHICAL ACTION MEETING

Sunday, September 30, 9:00–10:15 a.m.

Come help plan the Ethical Action strategy for the Baltimore Ethical Society!

NEWCOMERS MEETING

Sunday, September 30, 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 Karen Elliott or Hugh Taft-Morales for more information.

SUPPORT MOVEABLE FEAST AND MOVEABLE TREATS

Baked Goods – Sunday, September 16

Other Items – Every Sunday

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



bmorethical

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