

BESpeak

OCTOBER 2012

NEWSLETTER OF THE BALTIMORE ETHICAL SOCIETY

Treats & Talks for Marriage Equality

by Hugh Taft-Morales, BES Leader

This past September 6, I attended a fundraiser for Equality Maryland at the Washington Ethical Society (WES).

Lucas McCahill, Paul Furth, Emil Volcheck, Kathleen Wilsbach, and I shared delicious dessert and conversation with WES members. Since we were “speaking to the choir,” as they say, most attending traded effective verbal strategies for convincing skeptics that gays and lesbian couples should have the right to marry.

Here’s what I wrote in preparing to speak that evening, though (must have been the sugar!) I went off script a bit that night. I hope that some of the following words help you too to convince opponents of same-sex marriage to reconsider their position.

The world is full of injustice and suffering. Every day, rights are violated, environments are ruined, and children starve. Given that, people sometimes ask me, “Why pour time and energy into the cause of marriage equality?”

First and foremost, it’s simply the right thing to do – it’s a matter of basic fairness. Love is love.

Second, of all social justice campaigns, marriage equality seems like a real “no brainer.” There are great rewards at virtually no cost. The marriage system is in place. No new taxes are needed. No new bureaucracy is required.

I want to spend some time explaining the third reason why – given all the grave issues confronting us – I work for marriage equality. This reason is related to a personal landmark in my life: Maureen and I celebrated 30 years of marriage last week, August 28th. My marriage supports me, refuels me. It nurtures my courage, wisdom and hope for a better future. And it is not just thanks to my wife – but also thanks to a whole culture that celebrates and supports our union as a marriage – and that has power!

Thirty years ago in a public ceremony with friends and family, Maureen and I began our journey – not only cheered by those who attended but with our union also



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SUNDAY PLATFORMS

10:30 a.m.

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“Democracy in Action: A Brief History of Red Emma’s”

John Duda and Kate Khatib
Founding Collective Members,
Red Emma’s

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“Blessed Are the Fact Checkers”

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“Tuerk House – A Retrospective”

Rafael Alvarez
Journalist, Television
Producer/Writer, Author

OCTOBER 28

“BES Fall Festival and Stone Soup”

Hugh Taft-Morales
Leader, Baltimore Ethical Society

ETHICAL HUMANIST SUNDAY SCHOOL

WITH LINDA JOY BURKE

10:30 a.m. – Noon

Programming Note:

There will be no Sunday school on October 28. The BES Fall Festival is an all-inclusive family event.

We hope that all our members and friends with children will participate.

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Hugh Taft-Morales *Leader*
Fritz Williams *Leader Emeritus*

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On the web at bmoreethical.org

Ethical Action Rising at BES

by *Emil Volcheck, BES President*

The Baltimore Ethical Society is increasing its ethical action on matters of public policy. This is raising our members' energy level and commitment for the work of the Society. Last month, I reported on two new initiatives to fight for civil marriage equality and juvenile justice reform.

In support of marriage equality, members and friends have participated in phone banks, door-to-door canvassing, an ACLU-sponsored fundraiser in Federal Hill, a dessert party fundraiser with the Washington Ethical Society, and a square dance fundraiser with First Unitarian Church of Baltimore.

To help organize opposition to the proposed youth jail, Karen Helm has single-handedly contacted about 20 leaders of predominantly white churches to enlist their support for the campaign and to solicit membership in the coalition Organizations for Youth Opportunities (OYO).

To better communicate our ethical action work and to increase awareness of opportunities to take part, we have begun to regularly brief the membership on our ethical action projects during the announcements following platform addresses. We experimented with this during Summer Sundays, and decided to continue the experiment based on positive responses. We welcome your feedback on these updates.

These new initiatives add to our ongoing participation in baking nights at Moveable Feast and baking for Moveable Treats. We appreciate the work by Lisa Alderson and Em Sabatiuk in leading and organizing these ethical actions.

A few years ago I was asked what does BES do? Why does it seem that BES has no visible, common service projects? The answer I used to give was to point out that many members are very active in their personal work for nonprofits.

In 2011, the Communications Deliverables Committee and Ethical Action Committee collaborated to produce the brochure (available on the BES website under Ethical Action) titled "Making a Difference: Some individual service commitments of BES members!" This brochure profiled several members and their service for diverse causes. It drew favorable comments from other ethical societies and humanistic Jewish congregations.

Today, we can point not only to the individual service commitments of our members, but to Moveable Feast, marriage equality, and juvenile justice reform. I sense that ethical action is rising here at BES, and I can't wait to see how it evolves.

Action thrives with organization and leadership. On behalf of the society, I would like to congratulate and express our appreciation to Ben Busby for stepping up to chair the Ethical Action Committee. During his previous term as chair a few years ago, he helped reinvigorate the committee, and I look forward to his continued energy. I would like to thank our leader Hugh Taft-Morales for successfully leading the committee as acting chair.



Mays' *Mystical Poems*

by Karen Elliott, BES Board Member

Are you aware of how many authors belong to the Baltimore Ethical Society? Off-hand I can think of seven, and I may have missed a few. One who has earned a reputation for uplifting, image-rich writing is our long-distance member Carol Mays. Mays has read her poems at the Society many times. In 2004 she and husband Gary Blanchard, a poet also, presented a multimedia performance piece that blended poetry, music, and 255 images designed to open those attending “to the senses, to a larger sense of time, to the imagination, to play, and to each other.”

Mays, who has published several books, has just come out with *Mystical Poems: by Three Contemporary New England Writers*. She is both the first of the aforementioned three writers and the primary person who brought the book into existence, although not officially credited as editor.

A quote from one of my favorite scientists, Albert Einstein, appears in the front of the book: “The most beautiful and profound emotion we can experience is the sensation of the mystical.” Einstein recognized that mysticism and science can stand together, as can mysticism and an appreciation for all that is concrete and provable. They are complementary. This was clear to me personally as I took time to read through *Mystical*

Poems while simultaneously reading a book about a relatively new software development methodology.

Now, what does software methodology have in common with a poem that begins “Somewhere in an old growth forest, / a woman smoothly moves amidst / shadows of the pines and hardwoods.”? The Agile method of software development uses many short summaries called “stories” to map the process — or story — resulting in a new or improved software

system. In the poem

“The Archetype,”

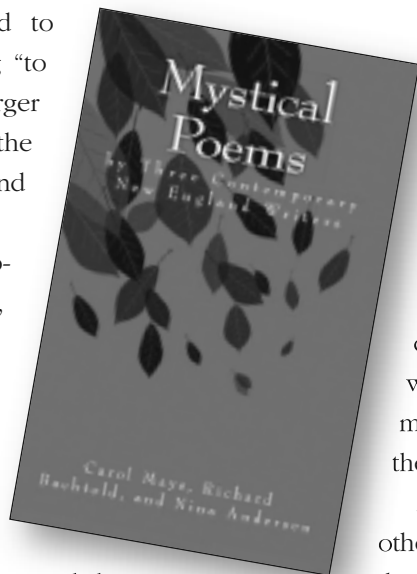
Mays strings together short images

— one at a time — to tell a story that takes us into the right sides of our minds — into the creative places where we sometimes find the mystical peeking around the corner at us.

May’s poems, and the others in this book, give us glimpses into a world of beauty and connectedness,

where nature plays a major role and we gaze awestruck at her beauty and strength.

If you have enjoyed May’s poems in the past, you are certain to enjoy this book. For a sampling, you can visit the book’s website www.MysticalPoems.net. When you order *Mystical Poems* by using the BES portal to amazon.com — which can be accessed on the sidebar of our website bmorethical.org — BES benefits by receiving a portion of your purchase at no additional cost to you.



OTHER ACTIVITIES

Poetry Group

Sunday, Oct. 7, 9:30 a.m.

Baking Night at Moveable Feast

Thursday, Oct. 11, 5:45 p.m.

Mindfulness Meditation

Sunday, Oct. 14, 9:30 a.m.

Moveable Treats

Sunday, Oct. 14

Board Meeting

Sunday, Oct. 14, 12:30 p.m.

BES Ironweed Film Club
Wednesday, Oct. 24, 7:30 p.m.

Newcomers Meeting

Sunday, Oct. 28, 12:30 p.m.

Constitution and Ethics Series

Sunday, Oct. 28, 12:45 p.m.

SUNDAY SNACK SCHEDULE

Last names starting with:

A to F	Oct. 7
G to L	Oct. 14
M to R	Oct. 21
S to Z	Oct. 28

BAKING NIGHT

Thursday, October 11,
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. Park on the street and enter through the door closest to Ashland Street.

OCTOBER 7

“Democracy in Action: A Brief History of Red Emma’s”

John Duda and Kate Khatib

Founding Collective Members, Red Emma’s

Red Emma’s Bookstore Coffeeshouse, now in its ninth year of operation, has become a vital cultural institution in Baltimore, with an influence that now reaches far beyond its original, small Saint Paul Street storefront. At the root of Red Emma’s and its associated projects that include the 2640 space in Charles Village, the Baltimore Free School in Seton Hill, conferences like 2009’s “City from Below” and 2012’s “Mobilizing and Organizing from Below” is a commitment to put radical ideas to work in practical ways, building essential infrastructure for social movements in Baltimore city while demonstrating directly democratic and egalitarian forms of organization. Kate Khatib and John Duda will present the Red Emma’s model, the history of the project, and its plans for the future.

John Duda – a Red Emma’s founding collective member – also has been involved in starting the 2640 space and the Baltimore Free School. The editor of *Wanted: Men to Fill the Jails of Spokane! Fighting for Free Speech with the Hobo Agitators of the I.W.W.* (Charles H. Kerr, 2009), he is currently in the concluding stages of earning a PhD in intellectual history at Johns Hopkins University, where he has been investigating the idea of self-organization in scientific and political life. He is currently the communications coordinator for the Democracy Collaborative at the University of Maryland, College Park – a research institute developing democratic solutions to the crisis of economic inequality.

Kate Khatib is an editor at AK Press, a collectively-owned and operated publishing house specializing in radical and anarchist politics and history. A founding member of Red Emma’s and its associated projects, she is also a PhD candidate in intellectual history at Johns Hopkins and an adjunct professor in Humanistic Studies at MICA. She is a co-editor of a book on social movements and strategy – *We Are Many: Critical Reflections on Movement Strategy from Occupation to Liberation* – published just last month by AK Press and is in the process of completing a new book on surrealism and the politics of history.

OCTOBER 14

“Blessed Are the Fact Checkers”

Hugh Taft-Morales

Leader, Baltimore Ethical Society

Truth has always been evasive – from George Orwell’s propaganda ministry (in the classic *Nineteen Eighty-Four*) that uses newspeak to turn truth upside down to Karl Rove declaring that he “makes reality” to Steven Colbert’s embrace of “truthiness.” Even as campaign spinners make our heads *spin*, can the media hold our politicians to a higher standard? Is real investigative journalism just a quaint relic of the past? Hugh Taft-Morales, Leader of the Baltimore Ethical Society, explores the importance of an endangered species: truth in the media.

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.

OCTOBER 21

“Tuerk House – A Retrospective”

Rafael Alvarez

Journalist, Television Producer/Writer, Author

The Tuerk House, a just published essay and photo history of Baltimore’s groundbreaking and oldest non-profit alcohol and drug recovery and rehabilitation center, is the focus of today’s talk. Tuerk House opened in 1970 after Maryland reclassified alcoholism from a criminal offense to a disease. Operating in west Baltimore since the 1990s, Tuerk House treats as many as 1,200 addicts a year at little or no cost. Author of

SUNDAY PLATFORM PROGRAMS (continued)

The Tuerk House, Rafael Alvarez covers the institution's founding as well as changes in its philosophy of treatment over the years. He points out that "What the Tuerk House accomplished with a coffee pot, clean sheets, and fundamental steps to recovery – way before drug and alcohol treatment was a billion-dollar-a-year industry – is seldom achieved today...The best part of doing this book was going back and finding those ancient do-gooders who set out like Lewis and Clark, not knowing where it would lead but determined to get there."

Rafael Alvarez landed his first story – an interview with the Studs Terkel in Chicago in the *Baltimore Sun* – while still a Loyola College student. The *Baltimore Sun*, for which Alvarez long reported, published two volumes of his articles. Recent publications may be found in *Urbanite*, *Baltimore Magazine*, *Maryland Life*, and *Chesapeake Life* among others. For the HBO drama series *The Wire*, he was both a writer and story editor. David Simon credited Alvarez with bringing a wealth of experience to *The Wire*'s depiction of the Baltimore port in the show's second season. Alvarez also authored a book on the series titled *The Wire: Truth be Told*, which was nominated for a 2011 Edgar Award. First hired in television as a freelance screenwriter for *Homicide: Life on the Street*, he also worked as a writer and producer on the NBC crime dramas *Life* and *The Black Donnellys*. In addition to a non-fiction guide to the archdiocese in Baltimore, he has two collections of short fiction published – *The Fountain of Highlandtown* and *Orlo and Leini*. The former includes the autobiographical short story "The Fountain of Highlandtown," winner of a Baltimore City Artscape Award for short story. Most recently, he was termed "Baltimore's Boswell," his work placed in the Katherine Anne Porter Prize in Short Fiction competition and will be forthcoming in *Nimrod International Journal of Poetry and Prose*.

OCTOBER 28

"BES Fall Festival and Stone Soup"

Hugh Taft-Morales

Leader, Baltimore Ethical Society

Hugh Taft-Morales leads a celebration of autumn with stories, music, and poems! Fall is a time when everyone "lends a hand in the fields," and we all express gratitude for our harvest. As Yoko Ono reminds, "Autumn passes and one remembers one's reverence." We try to bring out the best – whether that is the best from nature, from our community, from

friends and family, or from ourselves. Those attending may bring food items for us to share (instructions will be available prior to this festival) as we participate in our tradition-based rendition of Stone Salad!

DECEMBER BRINGS PSYCHOLOGY FORUM

The name of the man regarded as the founder of modern social psychology would not be on the tip of most people's tongues. That man is physicist and social scientist Kurt Lewin, whose dedication to applying psychology to societal and organizational problems resulted in M.I.T.'s Research Center for Group Dynamics.

New – though returning – BES member Dr. Argentine Craig, an adjunct professorial lecturer with American University's Department of Public Administration and Policy and an independent, international consultant in NTL-based organizational development, has brought to our attention that the 2012 Lewin Forum will be held on December 1 from 9:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. in Washington D.C. Attendance at this workshop titled "Contemporary Potential for Kurt Lewin's Theory & Method" will be limited. Information is available for anyone interested in learning more about registration and fees for this workshop.

PENNIES FOR FRISKY

Our Sunday school – under the direction of its teacher Linda Joy Burke – has embarked on a fundraising drive to benefit Frisky's Wildlife and Primate Sanctuary. The "Pennies for Frisky" drive will benefit the private, non-profit sanctuary in Woodstock, Maryland that cares for injured and displaced wildlife, sheltering on a daily basis approximately 500 animals, including bunnies, hamsters, small birds, raccoons, guinea pigs, fawns, hummingbirds, alligators and monkeys.



IRONWEED

film

CLUB

Wednesday, October 24,
7:30 p.m.

Join us this month when we screen ***Murder, Spies, and Voting Lies***.

Clint Curtis was an everyday computer programmer until he was asked to create vote-rigging software for electronic voting machines. What happens to a guy at the wrong end of a smoking gun? ***Murder, Spies, and Voting Lies***, directed by Patty Sharaf, traces Curtis's story starting with his being asked by Florida Congressman Tom Feeney (R) to manipulate voting machine software. Ultimately – although Curtis detailed these charges in a sworn affidavit and in sworn testimony to a congressional committee – mainstream media gave scant attention to his story.

The documentary features commentary by L.A.-based journalist/blogger Brad Friedman. (Earthwork Films, 2008, 68 min.)

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

Treats & Talks for Marriage Equality

(continued from page 1)

enshrined by public record, sanctified by law, recognized by doctors and nurses. And that is just part of the deal. In addition, our relationship draws sustenance from nearly infinite cultural archetypes of heterosexual romance in stories, poems, movies, paintings, from Romeo and Juliette to Norman Rockwell. From law to culture, support is offered me and nurtures my most intimate relationship. It feeds my very core. And that frees me to be more effective in confronting much injustice and suffering all around me.

It is easy for a heterosexual not to realize this. Celebration of "traditional marriage" is almost like the water we swim in – it is "the norm;" it is the "given." But the hetero-normative assumptions that dominate the cultural and legal paradigms surrounding love make it harder for gays and lesbians to access this wealth of cultural support. This must end.

Married couples need all the help they can get. It's hard enough to make a relationship work in this complicated world, let alone while trying to raise a loving family. It is even harder when trying to build the movement of social justice. Let's help liberate all the positive energy in the world by supporting all loving couples and families. I want a world where everyone has access to these resources. I want a world where no one is treated as second class due to sexual identity or orientation. I want a world where love trumps bigotry.

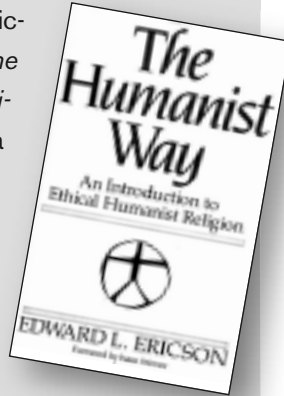
This is a "no brainer." It's easy, and it's the right thing to do. I want marriage equality in Maryland now, and I'm glad you do too!

Despite the small crowd at the fundraiser, the evening made me feel more optimistic that marriage equality will soon be a part of the water we swim in. But – the very next morning after the fundraiser – I was reminded how far we have to go. Those who fear marriage for gays and lesbians are deeply resistant to change as was evident in the account of a letter I read about over my morning coffee. In this now notorious letter to Ravens' owner Steve Bisciotti, Baltimore County Maryland Delegate Emmett C. Burns fumed that one Raven linebacker publically would dare to endorse same-sex marriage. Burns pompously demanded that the owner "take the necessary action...to inhibit such expressions from your employees and that [the linebacker] be ordered to cease and desist such injurious actions."

Thankfully, Brendon Ayanbadejo, the brave linebacker, has had the Raven ownership respect his first amendment rights. Ayanbadejo has long seen no reason to marginalize gays by denying people such as his brother-in-law the right to get married. Those who oppose marriage equality do so for many different reasons – some obvious, and some hidden. I urge you to engage opponents of marriage equality in respectful conversations. Share your reasons for supporting same-sex marriage. Share mine. Share some desserts if you wish! Get engaged to ensure that everyone can have access to the legal and cultural supports for marriage so that we may then work more effectively together on so many other urgent issues.

ETHICAL CULTURE BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP

Sign up to 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 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. We will finalize dates, times and locations based on the preference of those who sign up – we might hold it at BES or at member's homes. The goal is to have fun, socialize, and learn more about Ethical Culture.



MINDFULNESS

meditation

Sunday, October 14, 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

insure domestic Tranquility provide for the common defence and our Posterity All under and established the Constitution

THE CONSTITUTION & ETHICS SERIES

October 28, 12:45–2:15 p.m.

Leader Hugh Taft-Morales will offer a Constitution and Ethics Series examining important issues in relation to the Constitution, legal rulings, and ethics. He will offer an overview of some of the main legal and ethical issues involved and open it up for a lively discussion. The second in the series will occur on Sunday, October 28, from 12:45–2:15 p.m. and will focus on **Gun Rights and Gun Control**. Two of the questions we will address are: 1) What are the major rulings regarding the second amendment? 2) What does the future hold for gun rights and public safety?

POETS FOR PEACE

On Sunday, Oct. 14, from 1–3 p.m., the 14th annual *Margaret Diorio Poetry for Peace* program will take place at the Stony Run Friends Meeting, 5116 N. Charles St., one block south of Northern Parkway.

Some of Maryland's finest poets will read their poetry and discuss peace and war issues. Conversation with the writers will follow in the dining room over refreshments.

While the program is free, contributions will be accepted for Advocates for Survivors of Torture and Trauma (ASTT), a Baltimore-based organization offering counseling, evaluation, and treatment for torture and trauma survivors.

David Diorio coordinates and hosts the event for the Baltimore Quaker Peace and Justice Committee. Poets and writers such as MiMi Zannino, Dennis Barnes, Dan Cuddy, Tom Dorsett, Rosemary Klein, and two upper class Friends School students are among those expected to offer work for thought. Our BES Sunday school teacher Linda Joy Burke has also traditionally participated.

If you think contemporary poetry is not your cup of tea, you will be surprised. Come to experience for yourself the power of the spoken word on peace and justice issues.

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BALTIMORE ETHICAL SOCIETY

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

NEWSLETTER

Please do not delay!

TIME VALUE

“LOVE, LOGIC, AND ETHICS”

The AEU Religious Education Fall Conference and Family Weekend is being held November 2–4, 2012 in Stony Point, N.Y. Get more information at www.aeu.org.

NEWCOMERS MEETING

Sunday, October 28, 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, October 14

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.



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