

# BESpeak

JUNE–AUGUST 2014

NEWSLETTER OF THE BALTIMORE ETHICAL SOCIETY

## One for the Workers!

by Hugh Taft-Morales, BES Leader

May Day, also known as International Workers Day, is officially May 1st. This year, in Maryland, it came a few days later. But then the millions of Americans who work for low wages have always had to wait for victories. It's been over six years since the last modest increase in our minimum wage. But thanks to progressive activists and responsive representatives, on May 5th Governor O'Malley signed into law a bill raising Maryland's minimum wage to \$10.10 per hour by 2018.

I am not an economist, so I don't often get into debates about whether raising minimum wage will accelerate or dampen economic growth. Some argue that it will stimulate the economy thanks to the influx of spending power to those who are most likely to use that power - i.e. to spend the money rather than squirrel it away in investment accounts or gold coins under the mattress. Others argue that raising the minimum wage leads businesses to fire workers and slow growth due to the cost of increased wages and benefits.

One group, *Raise Maryland* (raisemd.org), points to the nonpartisan *Economic Policy Institute* claim that "hundreds of thousands of Marylanders will benefit from the increase, putting hundreds of millions more in their pockets in the next two years." This would, advocates argue, lead to 500 million dollars of new consumer spending that would create 1000+ new jobs.

One of my Takoma Park neighbors, U.S. Labor Sec. Tom Perez, attended O'Malley's bill signing, praising Maryland for being a leader in this cause. "When you put money in people's pockets, people spend it," Perez said. "When people spend it, businesses have to hire more people. When businesses hire more people, everybody benefits. That's why the minimum wage works." Other states such as Delaware, Connecticut, Vermont, and West Virginia are getting on board for similar reasons.

I take the radical position that even IF the short or moderate term affect of raising the minimum wage is that it slows the economy, the ethical benefits outweigh the economic dampening. For that reason alone I support state and national efforts to assure that wages reflect a basic consideration for the dignity of all people. As Gov-



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### SUMMER SUNDAYS 10:30–11:30 a.m.

Informal discussions on topics related to social, spiritual, and philosophical issues – or just a little bit of fun.

(details on pages 4–5)

JUNE 1

#### “Do You Haiku?”

Karen Elliott

JUNE 8

#### “Sensitizing Oneself to Critical Issues of Race”

Simran Noor

JUNE 15

#### “This I Believe”

Angad Singh

JUNE 22

#### “The Nature of Science and Myths about the Scientific Method”

Amy Trauth-Nare

JUNE 29

#### “Yoga: Body and Mind”

Hugh Taft-Morales

JULY 6

#### “Holistic Health: Overview of Practices, the Science, and Some Nonscience; You Decide”

Nancy Poznak

JULY 13

#### “AEU Assembly Report”

Karen Elliott, David Korn, Emil Volcheck, Kathleen Wilsbach

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# BESpeak



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# President's Report from the Assembly

by *Emil Volcheck, BES President*



The 99th Assembly of the American Ethical Union took place in Skokie, Illinois, just north of Chicago, from May 1 to 4. This is the annual gathering of ethical societies, where we meet to share ideas, gain energy, and advance the Ethical Culture Movement. Karen Elliott, David Korn, Hugh Taft-Morales, Kathleen Wilsbach, and I attended. Let me share some highlights from my perspective as president, which I hope will whet your appetite to hear more at our group report on July 13th.

The AEU Presidents Council reorganized to allow for a position of "Society Representative" under a plan proposed by John Daken, President of the Washington Ethical Society. In 2005, the AEU Board reduced its membership from 17 to 11. This implied that several societies would lose representation on the AEU Board. The AEU hoped that the Presidents Council would provide input to the AEU Board and thereby compensate for the loss of society representation. However, presidents are busy running their societies. AEU Executive Director Bart Worden noted "Presidents are, at the same time, the most representative and the most beleaguered of their society." To permit delegation of the duty of representing their society to the AEU, John Daken suggested that every society name a "Society Representative" as liaison to the AEU Board. This representative would provide input on agenda items before each meeting of the AEU Board, then review the minutes afterwards. This plan was approved. Now the president of each society can designate two members to join them on the Presidents Council. One could be the society's vice-president and the other could be the "Society Representative," who should be a member of the society's board. I think this plan will help BES better connect with the AEU, and I will ask our society representative to regularly report to the membership.

Executive Director Bart Worden impressed me with his leadership. Two years ago, in his first year on the job, he visited most of the ethical societies, including BES, to make personal connections across the Movement. Last year he initiated the creation of AEU membership cards for members of all societies. (If any BES member missed getting their AEU card at our annual membership meeting in April, please see Janey, Judy, or me.) This year, Bart hired Emily Newman as Communications Director and brought Laura Steele on board to chair the AEU Membership Committee. Bart and Emily were instrumental in the launch of the new AEU website. He is working to make sure that the AEU visibly serves the needs of all ethical societies. His running theme was to encourage attendees to ask "How Can I Help?" He publicized opportunities to serve on all AEU committees. Because the acronym "AEU" might sound distant or somewhat corporate, he suggested people start referring to it as the "Union" to emphasize our common purpose.

Bart's position is funded for a three-year term at \$25,000 per year, which is a

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# One for the Workers!

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ernor O'Malley put it, "Nobody who works full time should have to raise their family in poverty."

This is why I am proud that the day before O'Malley helped Maryland do what's right that the American Ethical Union passed a resolution put forward by the New York Society for Ethical Culture. This resolution demanded an "achievable minimum wage" throughout the country. It pointed out that many full-time workers were barely surviving, relying on food stamps and shelters. The resolution urged us to work for a national minimum wage of a modest \$10.10 per hour, which while perhaps still not a "living wage," was within reach of even our polarized national legislators.

Perhaps Capitol Hill can take a lesson from Annapolis. As Prince George's County Democrat and chairman of the Economic Matters Committee, Del. Dereck E. Davis, said, "The House of Delegates is trying to do what [our national] Congress should be doing." At least, for those Marylanders working hard for us and their families, there is some reason to cheer. As Davis said, "To those deciding between keeping the lights on and putting food on the table, help is on the way."

## ETHICAL ACTION COMMITTEE SEEKING VOLUNTEERS

The Ethical Action Committee is looking for volunteers to serve as Secretary and Contributions Coordinator. The secretary takes meeting notes and helps follow-up and track action items. The Contributions Coordinator will support a new initiative in which the collection every Sunday is split 50/50 with BES and a designated charity. The Contributions Coordinator will research and vet proposed charities. If interested, please see Ethical Action Chair Kate LaClair or email her at [bmorethical.action@gmail.com](mailto:bmorethical.action@gmail.com).

## OTHER ACTIVITIES

### Poetry Group

June 1, July 6, Aug. 3, 9:30 a.m.

### Mindfulness Meditation

June 8, July 13, Aug. 10, 9:30 a.m.

### Music Night

Wednesday, June 11, 6:30 p.m.

### Board Meeting

June 29, July 13, Aug. 10, 12:30 p.m.

### Baking Night at Moveable Feast

June 12, July 10, Aug. 14, 5:45 p.m.

### Ethical Action Meeting

June 15, July 20, Aug. 17, 9:15 a.m.

### Family Board and Card Games Party

June 15, July 20, Aug. 17, 3:00 p.m.

### BES Ironweed Film Club

June 25, July 23, Aug. 27, 7:30 p.m.

### Newcomers Meeting

June 29, July 27, Aug. 24, 12:30 p.m.

### Annual Summer Clean-Up Day

Saturday, Aug. 23, 10:00 a.m.

### BES EATERY SOCIAL (B.E.S.)

The Eatery Social will be on hiatus over the summer. Join us when we resume in the fall.

## SUMMER SUNDAYS

*(continued from page 1)*

### JULY 20

#### "The Revolving Door of Addiction"

Ronit Klemens

### JULY 27

#### "How Humanism Has Helped Me"

Fred Compton

### AUGUST 3

#### "What Does the Term 'Special Education' Mean?"

Jayne Smith

### AUGUST 10

#### "Understanding Economics"

Karla Wagner

### AUGUST 17

#### "Socially Responsible Software"

Stuart Hirsch

### AUGUST 24

#### "The 2014 National Young Feminist Leadership Conference"

Laura Griffin and Eilish McCahill

### AUGUST 31

#### "Climate Change"

Kate LaClair and Monique Stins

## ETHICAL HUMANIST SUNDAY SCHOOL

Religious education will be on hiatus for the months of June, July, and August. Please join us when we resume in September!

## HOLD THESE DATES!

### World Humanist Day

Saturday, June 21

Watch for an event announcement.

### Labor Day Sunday Picnic

Sunday, Aug. 31, 12:00 p.m.  
(Location TBD)

JUNE 1

**“Do You Haiku?”**

Karen Elliott

Many people know that haiku is a Japanese poetic form. Quite a few know that it has a set number of syllables (17: five plus seven plus five) and lines (three). A fair number know that it usually references nature and implies a season. Come and learn a few more things about the haiku form and its history, listen to some traditional and not-so-traditional examples of it, and spend a little time writing one or two yourself with Karen Elliott, whose poetic goal for 2014 is to write a haiku for each day.

JUNE 8

**“Sensitizing Oneself to Critical Issues of Race”**

Simran Noor

This talk will address an issue that Karen Helm brought up in her Ethical Action Report. There is a great need to sensitize ourselves to the critical issues of race. Simran's work centers on uniting policy reform strategies and grassroots advocacy to transform inequity and exclusion into fairness and inclusion. In this talk, we will discuss the meaning of structural racial inequity, understand more on how it has been created and recognize the implications for our work moving forward.

JUNE 15

**“This I Believe”**

Angad Singh

Angad Singh will lead a discussion on the subject of beliefs inspired by the NPR program “This I Believe” (<http://ur1.ca/hc49w>).

JUNE 22

**“The Nature of Science and Myths about the Scientific Method”**

Amy Trauth-Nare

Professor Amy Trauth-Nare will talk about the characteristics that make science a unique way of knowing and understanding the world. She will also discuss common misconceptions regarding the nature of scientific knowledge and scientific inquiry.

JUNE 29

**“Yoga: Body and Mind”**

Hugh Taft-Morales

After last summer's successful seated-yoga program, Hugh Taft-Morales will offer another supplemented with more personal insights into the benefits of increased harmony between the body and mind he attains through his modest yoga practice. Wear comfortable clothes if you want to participate in some gentle poses.

JULY 6

**“Holistic Health: Overview of Practices, the Science, and Some Nonscience; You Decide”**

Nancy Poznak

Nancy Poznak will present some of the more mainstream practices popular in the U.S. She will discuss the most common reasons people turn to alternative health and the various ways in which people have been helped. She will present some of the science that supports these practices and some of the ‘nonscience’ that prevails in some practices. ‘Nonscience’ refers to the established methodology of these practices, some of which have been developed over hundreds or thousands of years. Each person can decide what to believe.

JULY 13

**“AEU Assembly Report”**Karen Elliott, David Korn,  
Emil Volcheck, Kathleen Wilsbach

Karen Elliott, David Korn, Emil Volcheck, and Kathleen Wilsbach will report on the 99th Assembly of the American Ethical Union. The Assembly is the annual gathering of all ethical societies. Hear how Ethical Culture is moving forward at a national level.

JULY 20

**“The Revolving Door of Addiction”**

Ronit Klemens

Almost all recovering addicts return to addiction within one year after successfully completing any number of recovery treatment programs. This unsolved problem is a result of our inability to agree on the nature of the problem. Recovering

addicts fall between the cracks of psychology, medicine, and the law. Prisons and recovery programs take advantage of the lack of initiative of the different responsible agencies. Instead of resolving the problem, addicts are simply housed in prisons that seek addicts as customers. I will explain the problem from a psychological, medical, and legal perspective, and offer my opinion on how to start solving this problem.

**JULY 27**

### “How Humanism Has Helped Me”

Fred Compton

Fred will share his personal experiences and lead a discussion inviting others to share theirs.

**AUGUST 3**

### “What Does the Term ‘Special Education’ Mean?”

Jayme Smith

This presentation will include an overview of special education including a definition of Individual Education Plans (IEPs) (see <http://goo.gl/4dvEFO>), services, and how students can be served outside public education. One example of a non-public school, is the High Road School of Perryville. The talk will provide an overview of this school.

**AUGUST 10**

### “Understanding Economics”

Karla Wagner

Wondering why, in an age of increasing productivity, prosperity is lost, jobs disappear or move overseas, and we are competing with each other to work more hours for less? Concerned that your children have fewer opportunities than you did? Wondering how to stop the last ecologically fragile areas on the planet from being looted? Conventional Neoclassical and unconventional Marxian economics do little to explain why. A political economist named Henry George offered an alternative view in his book *Progress and Poverty*, published in 1879. He believed that people should own what they create, but that everything found in nature, most importantly the value of land, belongs equally to all humanity. This talk gives you the critical thinking tools to go out, decide for yourselves, and take ownership of public policy at every level; local, regional and state.

**AUGUST 17**

### “Socially Responsible Software”

Stuart Hirsch

Ubuntu is an open source operating system developed on a collaborative/Wiki basis which makes an ideal replacement for Windows XP. I will explain how it works, what programs are available, and hope to have disks to give out. Ubuntu and open source software are developed by professionals and amateurs to promote computer usage and literacy. Ubuntu is mainly used as the operating system for low cost and older computers distributed in third world countries to help educate children and improve the lives of the poor. Open source software is application software with the same mission. The idea is to distribute capable software for free or very low cost to everyone. Open source software is often referred to as “free” software not because of its price but because the source code is available to everyone. The “free” refers to freedom because the source code isn’t owned as intellectual property.

**AUGUST 24**

### “The 2014 National Young Feminist Leadership Conference”

Laura Griffin and Eilish McCahill

Laura Griffin and Eilish McCahill report on the 2014 National Young Feminist Leadership Conference. The conference was an empowering experience, providing connections to other feminist activists as well as greater understanding of intersectionality and feminism.

**AUGUST 31**

### “Climate Change”

Kate LaClair and Monique Stins

Climate change is drawing increasing attention around the world, no longer only from climate scientists and activists, but also more unlikely sources like the Pentagon, which recently pronounced climate change a “severe threat” to national security. Publication of new and rapidly mounting evidence has changed everything we thought we knew about climate change, and how to stop it. Kate LaClair and Monique Stins (both biologists and members of BES) will explore the science behind this new understanding of climate change, and what it means for all of us alive today.

## President's Report from the Assembly

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quarter-time position. He is now beginning the third and final year. He draws his salary from a special fundraising campaign that raised \$75,000 - nearly all of which came from six donors. I am grateful to these very generous donors and would like to see Bart continued in his position. To support his salary into 2016, I would like to encourage our membership to contribute a little more money to support the Union. BES already supports the Union by paying an allocation (tax) of about ten percent of our budget. That is enough to keep the Union of-ice running, but not enough to pay an Executive Director. When our pledge campaign starts for Fiscal Year 2016, I will propose to the Pledge Committee that we add an extra line to our pledge cards for an AEU contribution that will be in addition to their pledge for BES. Even small contributions will be a show of support that might encourage the generous six to renew their support. Look for more news about the Union in the coming year, and be sure to keep up with the AEU Dialogue and the AEU Ethical Action Reports, which give news from across the Movement.

### **BAKING NIGHT AT MOVEABLE FEAST**

**Thursday, June 12, July 10, August 14, 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](http://www.mfeast.org). Let Lisa Alderson know you are coming ([lialderson@gmail.com](mailto:lialderson@gmail.com)) and show up at Moveable Feast, 901 N. Milton Ave., Baltimore, MD, at 5:45 p.m. Park in front of building and enter through the door closest to Ashland Street. Let Lisa know if you'd like to car-pool, and she'll try to match you up with another BES participant.

### **FAMILY BOARD & CARD GAMES PARTY**

**Sunday, June 15, July 20, August 17, 3:00-6:45 p.m.**  
at the home of Marjeta Cedilnic

Join members of the Baltimore Parenting Beyond Belief Meetup for a board and card games party at the home of Marjeta Cedilnic in Howard County. Feel free to bring a game or play one of the many there. Please bring a snack or drink to share (or a small monetary contribution for the host instead). Come when you can, while the party lasts. Ms. Cedilnic is the lead organizer of the Maryland Chapter of Americans United for Separation of Church and State. Address and directions provided when you RSVP. For questions, please call her at 301-642-1065. Join the Meetups at <http://meetup.com/BaltimorePBB>.

### **YOUNG ADULT BOOK CLUB**

Join our new Young Adult (YA) book club as we begin reading Cory Doctorow's novel *For The Win*. Download the PDF for free at <http://craphound.com/ftw/>. This book is engaging for both youth and adults and deals with thought-provoking themes of labor struggles in a global Internet economy. Kathleen Wilsbach will introduce the book, and Andy Brokaw will facilitate discussion. The new meeting time will be one Saturday evening per month, TBA. Please see Argentine Craig or Emil Volcheck for any questions or to join.

# music

**NIGHT**

**Wednesday, June 11, 6:30 p.m.**

Bring instruments, voices, song-sheets, your favorite beverage and food, and plenty of good cheer for an evening of shared music at BES! Potluck dinner starts at 6:30 pm (doors open 6:15 pm). Music will start at about 7:30 pm. BES members-from-afar Carol and Ron Solomon are visiting from Wisconsin. Carol, the creator of our current BES Songbook, might even be persuaded to revive some of the special BES songs included in the songbook! Hugh will share some of his own compositions as well as some sing-along favorites. Margie will entertain us as well. Please RSVP via Meetup.

# “Savior” of the Terra Cotta Warriors

by Don Helm, BES Member

The background to this tale is that I was invited to be Keynote Speaker to the plenary session of the 2013 meeting of the International Association of Engineering Geology and the Environment, which was held in Beijing. Everyone has his price to come out of retirement and the conveners had mine as soon as they offered to pay not only all of my expenses, including international airfare, but also those of my wife, Karen.

My anecdote is:

“After the conference in Beijing, I joined one of the geologic field trips. This one ended in Xi’an, home of the ancient terra cotta warriors, to view the famous land fissures that have unfortunately destroyed parts of this historic city. Xi’an served as the Imperial Capital of 17 dynasties as well as to Chiang Kai Shek’s government before and during World War II, not to mention its being the point of origin of the famed silk route between China and the Mediterranean world that was assiduously traced in reverse by Marco Polo, who wanted to corner the market.

Most of my colleagues on this particular field trip were experts in earthquakes and landslides (from Japan and Europe). Our local Chinese faculty-guide for the afternoon in Xi’an grew slightly impatient with some of their comments, unsolicited suggestions, and self-serving offers to be a consultant. He said, “Yes, yes. Before 1992, we also thought their cause was seismically related. But in 1992, Prof. Hai Yum gave a lecture to our geological college and suggested they may be caused by groundwater flow. We have since proven that this is the case. We

can now control their occurrence.” I asked: “How do you spell Prof. Hai Yum’s name?” He said, “H-E-L-M, the great American professor.” I said, “I am that Professor Hai Yum. I mean, Helm.” Tears welled up in this mountain of a man and he embraced me. He spent the rest of the afternoon at my side, ignoring the other members of the field trip.

“It turns out, he was the graduate student/technician who in 1992 was assigned to take me, one-on-one, on this same tour of the fissures and the instruments he had built and put in place to measure earth movement and fissure occurrence and growth. He said my lecture changed his life and saved Xi’an. I recall that the Chinese Academy of Sciences had sponsored a lecture tour for me to a number of universities throughout China in 1992. After being shown the fissures, I had modified my stock lecture somewhat to address the problem faced by my local hosts in Xi’an.

“Later, I expanded on these ideas and wrote a paper called “Hydraulic forces the play a role in generating fissures at depth.” The Association of Engineering Geologists awarded it Best Paper of the Year (1994). Unknown to me, this young man translated the paper into Chinese and distributed it not only to all geology students in Xi’an for now close to 20 years but to other Earth Science university faculties throughout the country.

“The central government has decided recently to build a subway system beneath Xi’an. The main problems faced by the contractors are all related to the fissures. Our local guide has become their consultant on fissures. He

has been paid handsomely and says he still consults my paper for new ideas when unexpected problems arise.

“Talk about a seed falling on fertile soil! I did not recognize him because I remember him as being much shorter. He remembers me as being much taller. Some grow with age and some, at least at my age, shrink.”

## IRONWEED

# film

## CLUB

Wednesday, June 25, July 23,  
August 27, 7:30 p.m.

The BES Ironweed Film Club will meet during the summer months. Watch [meetup.com](http://meetup.com) and mailing lists for announcements.

## SUMMER CLEAN-UP DAY

Saturday, August 23,  
10:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.

At BES we don’t say that “cleanliness is next to godliness” but it sure is nice to see the building sparkle at the start of each season! Please volunteer for the Clean Team and help make the place shine! Cleaning supplies will be provided, along with breakfast treats and Kyro Pizza for lunch.



**BALTIMORE ETHICAL SOCIETY**

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

**NEWSLETTER**

Please do not delay!

**TIME VALUE**

**ETHICAL ACTION MEETING**

**Sunday, June 15, July 20, August 17, 9:15 a.m.**

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

**NEWCOMERS MEETING**

**Sunday, June 29, July 27, August 24, 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 Judy Katz or Emil Volcheck for more information.

**MINDFULNESS**

meditation

**Sunday, June 8, July 13, August 10, 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 it comes naturally in stressful times. Join us as we sit (on chairs) and breathe (just the way it comes naturally) and listen to the words of Thich Nhat Hanh, one of the world's best-known teachers of mindfulness.

**bmorethical**

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