

BESpeak

OCTOBER 2014

NEWSLETTER OF THE BALTIMORE ETHICAL SOCIETY

Musical Musings

by Hugh Taft-Morales, BES Leader

Last month I shared some thoughts about my experience at AEU Lay Leadership Summer School in July, but I left out one important aspect. Music! I loved it then, and I want more of it at BES in the future. At summer school we had music from dawn to dusk – from our optional 8:45 a.m. sing-alongs to start the day to music woven into our Day's End celebrations. While every individual has their own unique relationship to music, it is amazing how well it provides opportunity for group experiences that both create a sense of unity while also allowing for deep introspection.

For me, personally, it is this connection between my inner experience and the outer world that makes music so special. There is little that I do that so naturally connects what I feel inside with whoever is within earshot. It's a cathartic experience, especially when I get to sing songs that help process emotions we often run away from – such as angst, loss, and despair. This explains my love of the genres of music that I call "alt-country" and "crossover," which often relates stories of broken lives – like many old cowboy songs and blues ballads. Oddly, I don't find them depressing, but some others do, especially when I play one after the other after the other. When I play for others I try to mix in more obviously optimistic songs because I know they find some of my favorites a bit, oh...on the dark side, perhaps? Playing the music I love, despite sad lyrics, enlivens me.

I did my first open mic performance in years a few weeks ago at a bar near my home. My initial nervousness melted away as the song I chose for starters, Ryan Adam's "Winding Wheel," flowed through me. It opened up avenues to connect with the world while connecting deep within myself. Such experiences help me be more honest with myself, and more engaged with others. Those are some of the big reasons why I would like to have more music every Sunday at 306 W. Franklin Street.

The great religions of the world used music to connect their followers to deep values and commitment. Can't we do the same without the dogma and superstition? Can't Ethical Culture effectively use music to promote our dedication to the worth of each person, the importance of justice for all, and the relationships that honor both?



(continued on page 7)

SUNDAY PLATFORMS 10:30 a.m.

(details on pages 4–5)

OCTOBER 5

"The Long Shadow"

Prof. Karl Alexander
The Johns Hopkins University

OCTOBER 12

"Humanist Spirituality"

Hugh Taft-Morales
Leader, Baltimore Ethical Society

OCTOBER 19

"Legalizing Aid in Dying in Maryland"

Catherine Weber & Ellen Dinerman
Compassion and Choices

OCTOBER 26

"Meet Olive Wetzel Dennis, The Lady Engineer"

Sharon Harwood
Historian

ETHICAL HUMANIST SUNDAY SCHOOL

WITH LINDA JOY BURKE

Every Sunday
10:30 a.m. – Noon

Children of all ages are welcomed.

TODDLER CARE

*Separate supervision provided
for preschoolers between the
ages of one and four.*

BESpeak

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Fritz Williams *Leader Emeritus*

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by @bmoreethical.org. For general
questions: ask@bmoreethical.org.

On the web at bmoreethical.org

Death With Dignity In Maryland

by Emil Volcheck, BES President

“Death with Dignity” refers to laws that give individuals certain rights to determine how they may end their lives.

For example, in Oregon, Vermont, and Washington, a terminally-ill patient may request medication from a physician that will hasten the end of their life (so-called physician-assisted suicide). The Maryland Legislature may consider Death with Dignity legislation in the 2015 session. This issue is critical to respecting inherent worth at the end of life, so this month our society has planned a platform address and film screening to educate our members on this issue.

The Ethical Culture Movement supports the cause of Death with Dignity. In 1993, the American Ethical Union passed a resolution stating that the AEU “supports the right of each individual to make the critical decisions about his/her own life, including the right to terminate it when it is no longer bearable” and “further urges that legislation be adopted to permit assisted suicide under appropriate conditions.” BES member Em Sabatiuk is an advocate for Death with Dignity and a volunteer guide with the Final Exit Network (finalexitnetwork.org). The Final Exit Network is a non-profit that advocates for the right of mentally competent adults to end their lives if they suffer from irreversible illness or intractable pain that causes unacceptable quality of life. Final Exit provides information and counseling about assisted suicide but avoids any material assistance. Em’s commitment inspired BES to nominate Dr. Larry Egbert, a former medical director of Final Exit, for the AEU’s Elliott-Black Award. Egbert was charged with crimes of assisting suicide in Arizona, Georgia, and Minnesota. He was acquitted in Arizona and Georgia. He recently received a favorable ruling from Minnesota’s highest court, which led to dismissal of some of the charges. Ruth Goldstein, a friend of our society, is active with Compassion & Choices (compassionandchoices.org), a nonprofit that focuses on legislative and public advocacy of Death with Dignity. She helped organize our screening of the PBS documentary “The Suicide Plan” in September 2013.

This year, two candidates for governor, Lt. Gov. Anthony Brown and Delegate Heather Mizeur, announced their support for Death with Dignity legislation. Brown stated he would support such legislation if elected. This month, BES members have two opportunities to learn about this issue as it rises in importance. On Sunday morning, October 19, our talk will be from two activists with Compassion & Choices. Catherine Weber will speak from her perspective of losing her husband and facing her own advanced-stage cancer. Ellen Dinerman of the Northern Virginia Ethical Society will join Weber. On Wednesday evening, October 22, our monthly film club will screen *How to Die in Oregon*, which won a grand jury prize at the Sundance Film Festival. Please join us for one or both of these events. If you want your views to be heard, please speak to Kate LaClair, the Ethical Action Committee Chair, and tell her you want to volunteer.



Celebrating Helena Wright

On Sunday, September 7, the Baltimore Ethical Society honored the August 18 death of longtime member Helena Wright with “A Celebration of Her Life.”

Fritz Williams, BES leader emeritus, opened the service by sharing memories, many from the various occasions when he and his wife Belva spent time with Helena, especially in her later years. Helena loved the music that Fritz and Belva enlivened their visits with, and as part of the celebration Fritz offered a fine rendering of “The Rose” in her memory.

Many spoke of how Helena was brought into the Society by the redoubtable Marian Banfield, a founding BES member, remembered also for guidance in shaping its Sunday school. Educating ran in Helena’s blood. In the early 1950s, she brought her experience as a Baltimore principal and elementary school to the children of BES. Kirk Mullen and Karen Elliott, both active in teaching for and coordinating our Sunday school praised Helena as “an educator extraordinaire,” a woman who “was always a teacher by nature” as well as professionally. Nancy Isaacs, a member of BES in its early decades, recalled having Helena as her Sunday school teacher: she was “a pillar, a kind and stable force.”

Long-time member Ron Solomon remembered Helena as “always very forthcoming about her Ethical Society

membership and how she believed that the values by which she lived her life...were formed and enhanced by the Ethical Society’s principles.” Helena, in later years, also attended a bible study group at the Heritage United Church of Christ. Solomon recollected the importance to Helena of attending BES Sunday platforms and how in the talkback sessions afterward she often revealed “how much she enjoyed questioning things in quite provocative ways” and spoke of the minister who oversaw the study group privately praising her contributions

and wishing that his position didn’t limit what he said. Emphatically, Solomon recalled that “Helena was very clear throughout her adult life both at the church and everywhere else that the Baltimore Ethical Society was her ‘church.’”

His sense of Helena’s allegiance was echoed

by Helena’s daughter Vonita, who herself attended BES Sunday school. Many remember Vonita at BES events helping her mother along in her waning days. Both mother and daughter joined other early BES Sunday schoolers – teachers and students – to share experiences at our 60th anniversary event two years ago.

Helena’s adherence to Felix Adler’s principle of bringing out the best in the individual was much admired. Elliott mused that Helena “saw the beauty within us,” and long-time member Ron

(continued on page 7)



OTHER ACTIVITIES

Humanist Discussion Group
Wednesday, October 1, 7:00 p.m.

Poetry Group
Sunday, October 5, 9:30 a.m.

**Baking Night
at Moveable Feast**
Thursday, October 9, 5:45 p.m.

Mindfulness Meditation
Sunday, October 12, 9:30 a.m.

Board Meeting
Sunday, October 12, 12:30 p.m.

**Relationship Building
Discussion Group**
Sunday, October 12, 1:30 p.m.

Ethical Action Meeting
Sunday, October 19, 9:15 a.m.

BES Eatery Social (B.E.S.)
Sunday, October 19, 1:00 p.m.

**Family Board and
Card Games Party**
Sunday, October 19, 3:00 p.m.

BES Film Club
Wednesday, October 22, 7:30 p.m.

Newcomers Meeting
Sunday, October 26, 12:30 p.m.

SUNDAY SNACK SCHEDULE

All are invited to bring snacks for our coffee hour following platform. Snacks are especially welcome from those whose last names start with:

A to F	October 5
G to L	October 12
M to R	October 19
S to Z	October 26



OCTOBER 5

"The Long Shadow"

Prof. Karl Alexander

The Johns Hopkins University

West Baltimore stands out in the popular imagination as the quintessential "inner city" – gritty, run-down, and marred by drugs and gang violence. With the collapse of manufacturing jobs in the 1970s, the area experienced a rapid onset of poverty and high unemployment, with few public resources available to alleviate economic distress. Prof. Alexander's research focuses on children who grew up in west Baltimore neighborhoods and others like them throughout the city, tracing how their early lives in the inner city have affected their long-term well-being. The experience of Baltimore's children who came of age during this era is mirrored in the experiences of urban children across the nation.

Karl Alexander is the John Dewey Professor of Sociology at The Johns Hopkins University. He writes the following: "My research tries to understand why some children, and some kinds of children, are more successful in school than others and how this affects them later in life. I am particularly interested in the role schools play in society's system of stratification, and how youngsters perform in school is an important part of the picture. Patterns of social inequality from generation to generation in large measure are maintained through the educational system. ... Through survey studies of school age-youngsters, I try to identify features of the home, of the school, and of the individual that seem to promote or impede positive school adjustment." Visit his webpage at <http://soc.jhu.edu/directory/karl-l-alexander/>.

OCTOBER 12

"Humanist Spirituality"

Hugh Taft-Morales

Leader, Baltimore Ethical Society

A growing number of people today describe themselves as "spiritual but not religious." They yearn for *something more* than the mundane experiences of every day life, but without the trappings of dogma and bureaucracy. Hugh Taft-Morales explores ways humanists could best approach the word "spiritual?" Does it threaten rationalism? The founder of Ethical

Culture, Felix Adler, said that spirituality is often "a synonym of muddy thought and misty emotionalism." Or, is it a term we should embrace? Can naturalistic forms of spirituality found in Spinoza, John Dewey, and Carl Sagan enliven humanism today?

Hugh Taft-Morales joined the Baltimore Ethical Society as its professional leader in 2010, the same year he was certified by the American Ethical Union as an Ethical Culture Leader. He also serves as Leader of the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia. His presence in Ethical Culture has been termed "invigorating." Taft-Morales lives in Takoma Park, Maryland, with his wife Maureen, a Latin American Analyst with the Congressional Research Service, with whom he has three beloved children, Sean, Maya, and Justin.

OCTOBER 19

"Legalizing Aid in Dying in Maryland"

Catherine Weber and Ellen Dinerman

Compassion and Choices

Four states in the US have legalized Death with Dignity, also known as Aid in Dying. Many other states in the US and other countries are debating this matter in their legislatures. Through the advocacy of a small group of volunteers and the national office of Compassion and Choices, Dwd/AID is slowly moving towards an active campaign to bring the law to Maryland. Such a law would allow qualified health professionals to prescribe life-ending medications to terminally ill, mentally competent persons who have requested this option from their medical provider.

Catherine Weber is a retired Clinical Social Worker and until recently the Coordinator of the Maryland Action Team for Compassion and Choices. As with most who become advocates for this issue, she came to this work through personal experiences. Her story was recently published as an Op-Ed in the *Washington Post*. (See <http://ur1.ca/i7tw6> on 7/4/14.)

Ellen Dinerman is a retired Licensed Professional Counselor and a long time member of the Northern Virginia Ethical Society. She has resided in Deale, Md. since 1997. She strongly supports the rights of individuals to have choice in end-of-life decisions and has recently become active in the Maryland Action Team for Compassion and Choices.

OCTOBER 26

“Meet Olive Wetzel Dennis, The Lady Engineer”

Sharon Harwood
Historian

Olive W. Dennis was the first woman civil engineer on the B&O Railroad and in American railroading. Her contributions to the improvement of passenger service won her the unofficial title of “the woman who took the pain out of the train.” At a time and in an industry that could barely conceive of a woman doing a man’s work, this remarkable woman prevailed and left an indelible mark. In our presentation, we will meet Olive Dennis and remember her railroad legacy through the inventions, creative designs, work ethic, and the talent that made her ‘The Lady Engineer’ of the B&O Railroad.

Sharon Beischer Harwood is a graduate of Goucher College and a retired principal/administrator from the Montgomery County Public School System. The daughter and grand-daughter of railroaders, Mrs. Harwood lectures locally on topics related to the B&ORR – with special consideration of the lesser-known contributions of women to railroading. She is the wife of Herbert H. Harwood, noted rail historian and author.

ETHICAL EDUCATION CONFERENCE AND FAMILY WEEKEND

**Friday, November 7, 2014 at 4:30 p.m.
to Sunday, November 9, 2014 at 12:00 p.m.**

The annual AEU Fall Conference and Family Weekend is being held at Stony Point Conference Center in New York. This year’s theme is “You Can’t Spell DEED Without EE! Creating a Dynamic Ethical Education Program.”

Directors of Ethical Education (DEEs), Sunday School teachers, parents, families, and others interested in learning more about Ethical Education are invited to attend. Scholarship opportunities are available.

Questions? Contact Dale McGowan, ethicaleducation@aeu.org, or L Miller, lmiller.aeu@gmail.com.

FALL FLOWER SALE!

Want a beautiful garden next spring? Want to help BES? Pick up a catalogue at BES or go to bmorethical.org and click the link to Flower Power and BES will get 50% of the proceeds from every sale. Ordering online is fast and easy!

BES EATERY SOCIAL

Sunday, October 19, 1:00 p.m.

Members and friends are invited to go out together for lunch. We’ll gather in the lobby at about 12:45 p.m. following post-platform snacks to decide what restaurant to visit. Everyone is encouraged to wear their BES shirts or other items to help promote the society. BES Eatery Social is held on a different Sunday each month to better provide members with the opportunity to attend. If you have any questions, please contact Adam at synxr0nic@yahoo.com.

COLLOQUY: HUMANIST SPIRITUAL DISCUSSION GROUP

Wednesday, October 1, 7:00 p.m.

Join us in a free-form discussion group for an interesting exploration of spirituality from the perspective of humanism. While BES has done exceptional work addressing and educating on issues of science, religion, cultural and social justice, this discussion group is intended to emphasize the issues more toward the emotional and the uncertainties within our lives. Whether you believe or disbelieve, identify as atheist or agnostic or questioning, or even accept the concept of spirituality or not or skeptical, we welcome everyone to participate who is interested to express their thoughts and ideas in a safe and welcoming gathering. Please join us on this experimental journey.

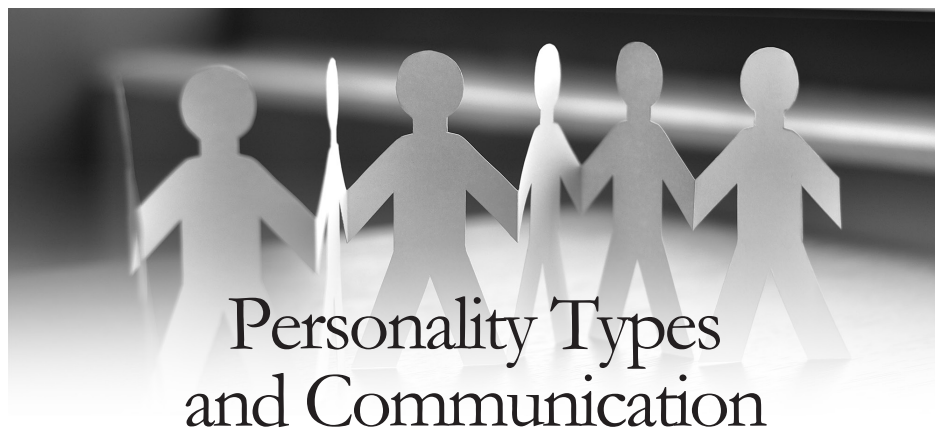
We meet on the first Wednesdays of the month at 7:00 p.m. For additional information, feel free to contact Paul at PDQBlues@aol.com or Mary Beth at marybethsodus@gmail.com.

BES
film
CLUB

Wednesday, October 22,
7:30 p.m.

Join us for a screening of *How to Die in Oregon*, winner of the 2011 Sundance Film Festival U.S. Documentary Grand Jury Award. In 1994, Oregon became the first state to legalize physician-assisted suicide. As a result, any individual whom two physicians diagnose as having less than six months to live can lawfully request a fatal dose of barbiturate to end his or her life. Since 1994, more than 500 Oregonians have taken their mortality into their own hands. In *How to Die in Oregon*, filmmaker Peter Richardson gently enters the lives of the terminally ill as they consider whether – and when – to end their lives by lethal overdose. Richardson examines both sides of this complex, emotionally charged issue. What emerges is a life-affirming, staggeringly powerful portrait of what it means to die with dignity. Watch the trailer at <http://www.howtodieinoregon.com/trailer.html>.

The BES Film Club meets every 4th Wednesday. Would you like to help select films? Please ask Emil.



Personality Types and Communication

A RELATIONSHIP BUILDING DISCUSSION GROUP

Sunday, October 12, 1:30–3:00 pm

At the heart of Ethical Humanism is our emphasis on nurturing healthy ethical relationships. Yet, like all people, we don't always find it easy to do. Differences in background, personality and communication styles can challenge the best-intentioned person. Come join Hugh Taft-Morales for an exploration of who we are and how we can strengthen our social bonds in a way consistent with Ethical Culture.

We will use the Myers-Briggs Personality Type Indicator as a starting point. To help our discussions, participants are encouraged to have taken some form of official Myers-Briggs assessment, either in the past or in preparation for the second meeting. There is an on-line version available at www.mbticomplete.com. It takes about an hour to do the on-line assessment.

The group is intended to serve members of the Baltimore Ethical Society, though non-members can ask to be put on a waiting list and if there is room they will be informed a week prior to the first meeting. We are limiting the group to 16 participants. We will meet six times, with the last five dates to be determined by the group after our initial exploratory meeting on Sunday, October 12, from 1:30–3:00 p.m. To register or for more information, contact Hugh at leader@bmoreethical.org. Registration deadline is October 8.

FAMILY BOARD & CARD GAMES PARTY

Sunday, October 19, 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 Meetup at <http://meetu.ps/22y8h2>.

BAKING NIGHT AT MOVEABLE FEAST

Thursday, October 9, 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 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.

Celebrating Helena Wright

(continued from page 3)

Solomon emphasized that “She fully believed in the inherent worth of every human being.” When BES leader Hugh Taft-Morales officiated at a Saturday September 6 service for Helena at The Forum on Primrose Avenue, he noted that Helena “appreciated that human beings are of inherent worth, each and every person filled with the potential to do good. If guided well, almost all of us could do the right thing.”

The particulars of Helena's life may be found in a fine obituary published in *The Baltimore Sun* and reprinted in *The Orlando Sentinel*. Those of us at BES will miss her presence at our platforms, in our groups, during the

change of seasons (particularly the pancake breakfast), will miss her – as Kirk remembers – being appreciated by our Sunday school children with handmade gifts.

Helena was 93 this year, but her milestone birthday on July 18 might have occurred last year. BES president Emil Volcheck wrote to the BES Dialogue that he had spoken to Helena and her son Craig. Helena was weak though without pain and laughingly reported “hanging in there.” Craig had taken her for her birthday to a Carroll County park for some fishing. She said she didn't catch many fish but the weather was nice.



Pictured following the celebration, from left to right, are Leader Emeritus Fritz Williams, Lorraine and Gordon Stills, and Belva Williams.

Musical Musings

(continued from page 1)

It's my great hope that we will expand our musical moments at the Baltimore Ethical Society in the coming years. I loved when Jan Seiden shared the haunting and beautiful sounds of Native American flutes last year. Do you have an interest in expanding our musical life? Want some more humanist harmony in yours? Let me know how you would like to support such initiatives. Together we can fill our community home with sounds that bring out our best!

thank
YOU

On August 23 at BES, a group of dedicated members gathered to make your Society a better place. These members gave their time and energy to clean our facilities at the Annual Summer Clean-Up Day. They deserve our thanks. They are: Ray Noemer, Janey Solwold, Alan Shapiro, Mary Beth Sodus, Thomas Higdon, Mav Vaughan and her daughter Vera, and Dedrick Samuels.

SOMEONE GETTING MARRIED?

For information about our ceremonies or to make arrangements, please contact Kathryn Sloboda at weddings@bmorethical.org.



BALTIMORE ETHICAL SOCIETY

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

NEWSLETTER

Please do not delay!

TIME VALUE

ETHICAL ACTION MEETING

Sunday, October 19, 9:15–10:15 a.m.

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

NEWCOMERS MEETING

Sunday, October 26, 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, October 12, 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.

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Visit bmorethical.org and look for us on Facebook, Twitter, and MeetUp.com @bmorethical

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