

BESpeak

MARCH 2015

NEWSLETTER OF THE BALTIMORE ETHICAL SOCIETY

Networking in the North

by Hugh Taft-Morales, BES Leader

This February I was lucky to have gotten in and out of Logan Airport between the Boston blizzards of 2015. It was a great trip because not only did I get to visit my daughter during her senior year at Tufts, I got to be a part of a program of *Tufts University's Experimental College*. I was their keynote speaker at an event they co-sponsored with the Boston Coalition of Reason on the theme, "Humanism in Action: What does it mean to be a Humanist, and to do chaplaincy work as a Humanist in America today?"

The talk, some of which I will present at BES in March, was greatly about why I was attracted to Ethical Culture in the first place—our emphasis on deed before creed. Comments afterwards from many of the young humanists and freethinkers in attendance indicated that this pragmatic commitment to ethical action resonated. Many of them were seeking that "something more" beyond merely leaving theism behind. They embrace an affirmative commitment to make the world a better place.

Joining me for a panel discussion after my talk was Tufts' Humanist in Residence Walker Bristol, Vanessa Zoltan, Assistant Humanist Chaplain at the Humanist Community at Harvard, and Dr. Jason Heap, National Coordinator for the United Coalition of Reason.

It was great hear more about what is going on in humanist circles of the Boston area. The Harvard community, now called "The Humanist Hub," is particularly vibrant and one of the few institutions able to garner national press due to Chaplain Greg Epstein's high profile. Tufts gets special kudos, however, because according to Walker Bristol it was the first college to directly fund a humanist chaplain, a trend I hope will continue around college campuses. Other Chaplains are funded by outside sources.

Meeting Rick Heller of the Humanist Mindfulness Group in Cambridge as well as Maria Greene of the UU Humanist Association accentuated the diversity of humanism. This underscored one of the main points of my talk: that the variety of approaches in humanism is part of our strength. Given the uniqueness of every per-



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SUNDAY PLATFORMS 10:30 a.m.

(details on page 4)

MARCH 1

Program To Be Announced

MARCH 8

"Humanism in Deed"

Hugh Taft-Morales
Leader, Baltimore Ethical Society

MARCH 15

Program To Be Announced

MARCH 22

"Humanist Anti-Racist Activism"

Hugh Taft-Morales
Leader, Baltimore Ethical Society

MARCH 29

Program To Be Announced

ETHICAL HUMANIST SUNDAY SCHOOL

WITH LINDA JOY BURKE

Every Sunday
10:30 a.m. – Noon

TODDLER CARE

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

GETTING MARRIED?

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Interactive Programs

by Emil Volcheck, BES President



The programs of our society express our ethical approach to life. The Program Committee oversees the content and format for our Sunday meetings. How we run our meetings is up to us. We're free to experiment, limited only by the imagination and energy of our members. Until recently, the Program Committee focused almost entirely on the content of programs as a way to express our values.

Recent platforms have emphasized themes like civil rights, policing, diversity, mentoring, and remembering the Holocaust. Our format has mostly been a speech followed by questions and answers between audience and speaker. While everyone in the audience hears each question and answer, the interaction is more "hub and spokes" than "peer to peer."

Ethical Culture revolves around building and strengthening interpersonal relationships. Can we choose a format for our programs that reflects our values? This year, the Program Committee started to experiment with different formats that allow for greater interaction among members. In November, we tried a structured discussion by the entire assembly on topics from Hugh's platform on innovation and thinking outside the box. In January, AEU Mossler Fellow Liz Collier led a workshop where people formed small groups to discuss their view of Ethical Culture and to practice "elevator pitch" speeches. In February following the Christopher Hedges video, we formed small groups sitting at tables to consider how our foreign policy could reflect our ethical values. People liked the small group formats, so for March we are taking this one step further. The committee is developing a program that will focus on the theme of ethical policing and "Black Lives Matter." The plan is to screen selected excerpts from recent town hall meetings on policing in Baltimore, which were broadcast by The Real News Network.

Following that, we will conduct discussion using the World Cafe format. I first learned of this tool when we used it at the 2014 AEU Assembly in Chicago. Here's a simplified version of how the World Cafe format works. The event consists of a series of rounds. People divide into groups, each at its own table. During each round, each table independently considers and discusses certain questions. Each table has a host who poses questions, facilitates discussion, and records the thoughts and findings of the group. At the end of the round, people move to new tables. Each host remains at their table and tells the new group what the previous group said. At the end, people all come together, and the table hosts report to the assembly. To learn more, visit www.theworldcafe.com.

We are fortunate to have a member, Laura Griffin, who has experience using the World Cafe format. In her work with the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS), Laura used World Cafe for community conversations about how to make Baltimore more welcoming to refugees. Laura and committee member Angad Singh will organize our first World Cafe.

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New Prekindergarten Sunday School Program Launch

A new prekindergarten Sunday school program for children three to five years old will launch on March 1. This new curriculum will focus on a different value every month. The values represent those taught and practiced by adults and older children in ethical humanism and societies.

Knowing that planning is key to making this new program work, the Ethical Education committee has been meeting monthly and more. An important result has been fourteen original creative, comprehensive lesson plans that incorporate ethical values, stories, and learning activities (games, art, crafts, movement, songs, videos, plays, etc.).

In teaching values, the BES curriculum for three to five year olds promises to aid these very young people in developing socially, cognitively, and emotionally. Children in this age group are eager to learn new skills, and they do so through diverse activities that incorporate their need to compare and contrast themselves with others; their desire to explore; and their ability to begin taking initiative.

Helping and responsibility will be the focus of March. Learning by using senses, mind, and feelings is the April focus. May's lessons will emphasize sharing and cooperation.

Grounded in ethical humanism,

BES's pre-k program is guided by the developmental philosophy of Jean Piaget, the social psychology and humanistic psychology of Carl Jung and Abraham Maslow, and the psychosocial development stages elaborated on by Erick Erikson. Central to the heart of this new prekindergarten curriculum are lessons that support the twelve core values articulated by the American Ethical Union.

Behind this program also is the committee's devoted chair, Argentine Craig, a grandmother, academic, and long-time ethical society member. At the September 2014 memorial honoring the life and work of Helena Wright, Baltimore educator and respected BES teacher, Argentine publicly vowed to develop an educational program that would honor the legacy and professionalism of Wright. In that commitment, she is joined by a committee composed of parents and members Ben Busby, Brian Dorsey, Karen Helms, Susan Henley, Monique Stins; past president and educator Rosemary Klein; and current president Emil Volcheck.

In addition to its new preschool program, the Ethical Society will continue to provide toddler care service on Sundays.

To learn more about this new curriculum, including the twelve core values, visit bmoreethical.org.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Poetry Group

Sunday, March 1, 9:30 a.m.

Mindfulness Meditation

Sunday, March 8, 9:30 a.m.

Board Meeting

Sunday, March 8, 12:45 p.m.

Exploring Bioethics

Sunday, March 8, 4:00 p.m.

Baking Night at Moveable Feast

Thursday, March 12, 5:45 p.m.

Science Cafe

Thursday, March 12, 7:30 p.m.

Ethical Action Meeting

Sunday, March 15, 9:15 a.m.

BES Eatery Social

Sunday, March 15, 1:00 p.m.

Family Board and Card Games Party

Sunday, March 15, 3:00 p.m.

Sunday Assembly Baltimore

Sunday, March 22, 2:00 p.m.

Film Club Screening

Tuesday, March 24, 7:00 p.m.

Newcomers Meeting

Sunday, March 29, 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	March 1
G to L	March 8
M to R	March 15
S to Z	March 22
Everyone!	March 29



SAVE THE DATE!

Annual Membership Meeting is Sunday, April 26, 2015

SUNDAY PLATFORM PROGRAMS

MARCH 1

Program To Be Announced

MARCH 8

“Humanism in Deed”

Hugh Taft-Morales

Leader, Baltimore Ethical Society

Ethical Culture, and much of humanism in general, promotes living a life of ethical action. Leader Hugh Taft-Morales promotes activism through Ethical Humanism because: it is reasonable; it promotes values that resonate; it offers inspirational experiences; it connects with other people and groups; and, most importantly, it emphasizes deed before creed. With eyes wide open, Hugh urges humanists to confront the stark realities of a brutal world with courageous commitment. In the words of the founder of Ethical Culture, Felix Adler: “In the deed is the pledge of the sacredness of life; in the deed is the reward of our activities in health; in the deed our solace, and our salvation even in the abysmal gulfs of woe.”

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.

MARCH 15

Program To Be Announced

MARCH 22

“Humanist Anti-Racist Activism”

Hugh Taft-Morales

Leader, Baltimore Ethical Society

In 1922, Langston Hughes wrote that, “Tomorrow, I’ll be at the table, when company comes nobody’ll dare say to me, ‘Eat in the kitchen,’ then. Besides, they’ll see how beautiful I am and be ashamed.” Ninety-four years later, there are still few African Americans at the table. Corporate leadership is still predominantly white, blacks are thrown into prison at a disproportionably high rate, and people of color suffer more acutely from poverty and unemployment. Hugh Taft-Morales challenges himself and all humanists to deconstruct systemic racial privilege so we can all benefit from a more empowering multicultural perspective that honors the inherent worth of all.

MARCH 29

Program To Be Announced

SUNDAY ASSEMBLY BALTIMORE

Sunday, March 22, 2:00 p.m.

Come to the next Sunday Assembly Baltimore!

What happens at a Sunday Assembly? A Sunday Assembly service consists of songs (pop songs mainly) sung by the congregation, a reading (usually a poet), an interesting talk (that fits into live better, help often or wonder more), a moment of reflection and an address, which sums up the day and hopefully gives a take home message. Afterwards we have tea and cake (well, in Britain anyway!) to encourage people to stay and mingle with one another. Visit us on Facebook at fb.com/sundayassemblybaltimore.

The Sunday Assembly is a global movement for wonder and good. It is an international not-for-profit that helps people start and run their own godless congregations. Our motto: Live Better, Help Often and Wonder More. Our mission: to help everyone find and fulfill their full potential. Read more at sundayassembly.com.

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**PROJECT BRIDGE
PRESENTS BALTIMORE
SCIENCE CAFE:
CANCER METASTASIS**

Thursday, March 12, 7:30 p.m.

Project Bridge was founded at Johns Hopkins University in February 2013 with a mission to foster public interest in primary science research. As young scientists that have experienced difficulty communicating their own research to friends and family, they carry out the vision of Project Bridge through the Graduate Student Association at the School of Medicine.

Project Bridge holds workshops and community events for scientists to strengthen communication skills. This increased interaction between researchers and the community will increase the appreciation and understanding of the importance of scientific research.

The Baltimore Ethical Society is proud to host Project Bridge. Dr. Andy Ewald presents visualizing how breast cancer metastases can form using fluorescently labeled proteins. For details, visit www.projbridge.com.

**NOMINATING COMMITTEE
ANNOUNCED**

The Nominating Committee for the 2015-2016 term has been appointed with the following members: Brian Dorsey, Karen Elliott, Paul Furth, Wayne Laufert, Kirk Mullen, and Janey Solwold.

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Networking in the North

(continued from page 1)

son, no one approach to humanism fits all. This also seemed important to the students.

Finally, many students appreciated the concrete explanation of what humanist leaders do—from serving as counselors at colleges to nurturing Ethical Humanist communities like BES. President of the Tufts Freethought Society, Kumar Ramanathan, expressed her appreciation this way: “The panel was a great way to hear from first-hand practitioners of humanist chaplaincy and ministry about their experiences. It is often difficult to explain what those concepts mean in abstraction or theory, but when we think in the realm of actual practice and experience, both on the side of chaplains and ministers and that of those they serve, the importance and vibrancy of this work comes into sharp focus.”

As BES works to let young adults know about Ethical Culture, let’s continue to seek new and fun ways to mix community, education, and activism. I look forward to more Saturday mornings at Real Food Farms in the spring when snow and cold are distant memories!

**FAMILY BOARD AND
CARD GAMES PARTY**

Sunday, March 15, 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/2GBkGN>.



Film

SCREENING

**Tuesday, March 24,
7:00 p.m., at the University
of Baltimore School of Law,
1420 North Charles Street**

This month instead of screening a film at BES, we have accepted the invitation by BES member Charlie Shafer to view the film *Vessel* at the University of Baltimore School of Law. Details at <http://ur1.ca/jqlwe>.

The film *Vessel* begins with a young doctor who lived by the sea, and an unlikely idea. Rebecca Gomperts, horrified by the realities created by anti-abortion law around the world, felt compelled to challenge this. Her method: to provide abortions on a ship in offshore waters. We witness the creation of an underground network of emboldened, informed activists, working at the cutting edge of global reproductive rights, who trust women to handle abortion themselves. *Vessel* is Rebecca's story: one of a woman who heard and answered a calling, and transformed a wildly improbable idea into a global movement.

The BES Film Club will return to its usual schedule in April. Would you like to help select films? Please ask Emil.

BAKING NIGHT AT MOVEABLE FEAST

Thursday, March 12, 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 Karen Elliott know you are coming (KarenSElliott@aol.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 Karen know if you'd like to carpool, and she'll try to match you up with another BES participant.

Seeking help for Suite 103!

Many of us have enjoyed being in the larger space we've used for platform programs the last few months known as Suite 103 (or the Floura Teeter space). Of course, it costs to have this space. When we began renting it, we hoped to make up some of the extra expense through subletting to others for events (weddings, receptions, workshops, etc.). After a few months, however, we have not managed to rent it out very much.

The Board has approved extending paying for Suite 103 for another 3 months until May 15, after which unless we have gotten more rentals we may have to move back to our old space. We are lucky to have a nice room to move back into, of course, but should we continue to grow our old space will be a bit crowded.

There is a committee headed up by Mary B., which is giving the rental efforts one last push. If you have ideas and, just as importantly, time to contribute to this effort, let them know immediately. Speak to them about how you could

help: getting out information about the space to organizations, individuals, and listserves; helping create a rental brochure; being available to show the space or open up and lock up after rentals; etc. If you would like to help, please contact Mary B. (chair), Angad, Monique, Paul, Rosemary, or Emil as soon as possible.





DARWIN DAY 2015

Forty attended the 2015 Darwin Day celebration hosted at BES for the Baltimore Coalition of Reason. Prof. Jason Rosenhouse (JMU) gave a talk based on his book "Among the Creationists."

Exploring Bioethics

Following up on an exploratory February 8 discussion at the Baltimore Free School, Hugh Taft-Morales will offer a series of targeted bioethics discussions. These discussions are free and open to the public. Location TBD.

Sunday, March 8, 4:00 p.m.

Aging, Acceptance, and Enhancement: How should we treat the body?

Should we accept our flawed and failing bodies as they are, or do all we can to enhance our physical being, resist aging, and avoid death? We will discuss ethical issues associated with: treatments intended to boost athletic performance (surgery, steroids, and stimulants); approaches to aging and Alzheimer's; and our tendencies to sacrifice quality of life for longevity. Central to all these issues are questions about what is "natural," how to approach mortality, and how best to distribute health resources.

Sunday, April 12, 4:00 p.m.

Human and Animal Subjects in Medicine and Science

What are the ethical issues surrounding the use of subjects in medical and scientific research? Given the horrors of suffering caused by Nazi doctors and Tuskegee syphilis programs, it seems rational to maintain a skeptical eye. Informed consent, the ground for most research ethics, is often not fully implemented in the case of human beings and never in the case of animals. How do we balance "the common good" that might be served by research with the violation of individual privacy and autonomy?

Sunday, May 10, 4:00 p.m.

Health Care Mandates, Freedom and Ownership

What is the right balance between mandatory health care and personal autonomy? Should individuals be required to have health care, receive inoculations, or contribute to the general health welfare of society? Do people have an ethical or legal responsibility to stay healthy? How much government rationing and regulation should there be of resources such as medicines and organs for transplant? Should the government defend "ownership" of life forms or genetic codes?

Interactive Programs

(continued from page 2)

Angad has recently deepened his commitment to improving the quality and ethical vision of our programs by taking on the responsibility of co-chairing the Program Committee. I'm grateful for this, as well as his past work on the committee. The next time you see him, please congratulate him. If you'd like to improve our programs, there are many ways you can help. If you can't make an ongoing commitment, please suggest speaker ideas or help with set-up and clean-up for snacks every so often. If you have a few hours per month, consider joining the Program Committee. You could help research and choose speakers. Sometimes the committee gets a suggestion for a topic—but no speaker. Turning suggested topics into actionable proposals takes some work. We also have an opening to serve as co-chair with Angad.

BES EATERY SOCIAL

Sunday, March 15, 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.

If you have any questions, please contact Nathan Whitmore at nww10@hampshire.edu.



BALTIMORE ETHICAL SOCIETY

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

NEWSLETTER

Please do not delay!

TIME VALUE

ETHICAL ACTION MEETING

Sunday, March 15, 9:15–10:15 a.m.

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

NEWCOMERS MEETING

Sunday, March 29, 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 Wayne Laufert or Janey Solwold for more information.

MINDFULNESS

meditation

Sunday, March 8, 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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