

# BESpeak

OCTOBER 2015

NEWSLETTER OF THE BALTIMORE ETHICAL SOCIETY

## Our Place in the World

by Hugh Taft-Morales, BES Leader

Last month, in my first platform address of the program year here in Baltimore, I touched on Ethical Culture's place in the world. What about our history, mission, and communities make us unique? What do we bring to the world that you can't find anywhere else? In this column I would like to expand on my brief answers to those questions.

We are, I said, first and foremost, a community of people striving to live lives that better reflect our ethical values. We are an ever-evolving community of people sharing, discussing, and refining our values through open, compassionate and honest dialogue. That dialogue flourishes best when built upon effective communication and respectful relationships.

Human beings are not born with the ability to communicate effectively and grow respectful relationships. They are things that, hopefully, we learn over our lifetime. Sometimes we succeed and sometimes we fail. As an Ethical Culture Leader, I see my role as providing guidance and tools so that we have a better shot at success.

I spoke a bit about how this is connected to the pragmatic tradition. John Dewey, arguably our nation's most influential philosopher, spoke at Ethical Societies and contributed to our toolkit. He saw most human endeavors as efforts to solve problems. The problem at the heart of Ethical Humanism is, given the challenges of existence - from the capitalized scourges of Poverty, Injustice, War, and Ecological Collapse to our mundane attempts to be kinder and less self-centered - where do we find the power to carry on? Where do we find the energy and commitment to help heal a broken world?

As individuals we find our energy in many different places. We are all different, and no two of us share the exact same formula. Even in an ideal world, we might all seek different sources of rejuvenation in different proportions - exercise and rest; socializing and solitude; entertainment and meditation; chemicals and abstinence. Each one of us will get different levels of support from Ethical Culture as well. My role is to get to know you and to support your individual journey.



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### SUNDAY PLATFORMS 10:30 a.m.

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#### OCTOBER 4

### "Exploring Humanist Giving" (video presentation)

AJ Chalom

Foundation Beyond Belief

#### OCTOBER 11

### "So Many Good Deeds, So Little Time"

Hugh Taft-Morales

Leader, Baltimore Ethical Society

#### OCTOBER 18

### "Protecting Victims of Domestic Violence"

Suzanne Bailey, Esq.

Women's Law Center of MD

#### OCTOBER 25

### "A World of Refugees"

Hugh Taft-Morales

Leader, Baltimore Ethical Society

### ETHICAL HUMANIST SUNDAY SCHOOL

Every Sunday

10:30 a.m. - Noon

Programs for both preschool  
and school-age students.

All are welcome.

### TODDLER CARE

Separate supervision provided  
for children up to age two.

# BESpeak

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## Issue 452

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

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**Contacts by e-mail:** use President,  
VicePresident (one word), Treasurer,  
Secretary, or Admin followed by @  
bmorethical.org. For general  
questions: ask@bmorethical.org.

**On the web at bmorethical.org**

# Program Committee: A Face of BES

by Paul Furth, BES President



Since our very beginning in 1950, BES has invited speakers to deliver information and ideas to challenge us in action, to live by our deeds. Quite often, it's these forums that bring in many newcomers and give them their first introduction to BES. Because of the variety and depth of the topics, these discussions also bring together more BES members than any other event.

Every Sunday at 10:30 a.m., BES presents Platforms on topics ranging from social justice, humanism, race, equality, women's issues, LGBT rights, Ethical Culture, science, history, current events and more. It takes a team to plan these weekly discussions throughout the year. And that team we call the Program Committee (PC). Emil Volcheck and (more recently) Greg Corbitt are the Co-Chairs. Emil, a member of BES since 2003, has chaired PC since the end of 2011. Prior to Emil, PC was chaired by Rosemary Klein, and before her, Stephen Meskin. Before joining PC because they needed more volunteers, Emil chaired the Public Relations Committee. He launched a new BES website in 2004. He was BES Secretary for 2 years, then afterward was President from 2012-2015. Juggling both President and PC Chair was a monumental task, of which Emil has given to us so much.

Emil's favorite talk, which resulted in a report, a first for BES, was Diamonte Brown's "From Talk To Action," which included breaking into smaller group discussions. Such table discussions helped to create human connections and facilitate community conversations. As a result, we have a closer relation between BES and her organization, Out For Justice. His fondest Platform had James Croft as speaker, now Ethical Leader in Saint Louis. I, too, remember James joining us for one of the early Game Nights before his wonderful talk, and the discussion we had after his Sunday talk when I disagreed with his view on the nature of atheism-humanism. It's perhaps this freedom to question, disagree and engage in civil discourse that I most appreciate about our Sunday Platforms. And it was during Game Night that he hit it off with Eric (one of our BES youths), and Andy Brokaw blogged about Eric waking her up to say he's going to BES having packed his own snack and ready to go all by himself!

Another very memorable speaker was Lisa Simeone. She spoke to BES about the unprofessional and distasteful treatment she endured by NPR (some of which you can read on-line). Whereas most of our discussions often focus on people doing ethical actions, here's an example where someone faced an ethical challenge. I appreciate that discussion for the revelation that NPR is much more a corporate enterprise, often more against humanist ideals than I was led to believe. I appreciate the 'destruction of sacred cows,' especially when they are my own.

Perhaps one of Emil's low moments came during his first year as PC Chair, when Gordon Stills (a highly respected member) vehemently criticized the PC for not having any talks during February to honor MLK or Black History Month. Such an

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## ETHICAL EDUCATION CONFERENCE AND FAMILY WEEKEND

Friday, November 6 – Sunday, November 9, 2015

American farm communities faced a major challenge in the early going: every farm needed a barn, but a single farm family could rarely manage the labor and materials required. To meet this challenge, members of the community would come together in a barn-raising.

AEU Ethical Education faces the same challenge. Energy, expertise, and ideas are spread throughout the Movement. If each Society keeps to itself, both our individual “barns” and the larger community will fall short of their potential. This weekend aims to engender a new spirit of barn-raising in the Ethical Education program, connecting programs to each other and finding ways to share practical ideas and build structures of mutual support.

Sessions this year will be almost entirely peer-to-peer, with lots of opportunity for conversation, brainstorming, fun, and connection. There will once again be a children’s program for AEU families. Registration coming soon at [aeu.org](http://aeu.org).



### A Family-welcome, Halloween-themed Party Saturday, October 24, 5:30 p.m.

There’s family fun afoot at this **Meet, Eat, and Greet** evening of scumptious food, good company, and lots of **Spook-tacular** activities including pumpkin and cookie decorating and classic games aplenty! Fun activities for all from toddler through teen. Edifying activities for parents (including step & grand) and guardians also!

Bring a dish (any dish) or just attend this potluck supper. Doors open and festivities begin at 5:30 p.m. Beverages will be provided. **Give us a howl or a scream if you’d like to enjoy this lighthearted evening.** RSVP or contact us with questions at [ask@bmorethical.org](mailto:ask@bmorethical.org) or call the Society at 410-581-2322.

## SOMEONE GETTING MARRIED?

BES has a team of officiants trained and licensed to conduct weddings, memorials, and other life passage ceremonies. For more information about our ceremonies or to make arrangements, contact [weddings@bmorethical.org](mailto:weddings@bmorethical.org).

## OTHER ACTIVITIES

### Poetry Group

Sunday, October 4, 9:30 a.m.

### Diversity Salon

Sunday, October 4, 1:00 p.m.

### Baking Night at Moveable Feast

Thursday, October 8, 5:45 p.m.

### Mindfulness Meditation

Sunday, October 11, 9:30 a.m.

### Board Meeting

Sunday, October 11, 12:30 p.m.

### Book Discussion

Sunday, October 11, 4:00 p.m.

### Charm City Film Series

Wednesday, October 14, 6:30 p.m.

### Volunteer at Real Food Farm

Saturday, October 17, 9:05 a.m.

### Ethical Action Meeting

Sunday, October 18, 12:45 p.m.

### BES Eatery Social

Sunday, October 18, 1:00 p.m.

### Family Board and Card Games Party

Sunday, October 18, 3:00 p.m.

### BES Boo!

Saturday, October 24, 5:30 p.m.

### Newcomers Meeting

Sunday, October 25, 12:30 p.m.

### Sunday Assembly Baltimore

Sunday, October 25, 2:00 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 4
G to L	October 11
M to R	October 18
S to Z	October 25

**OCTOBER 4**

## “Exploring Humanist Giving” (video presentation)

AJ Chalom

*Foundation Beyond Belief*

AJ Chalom is the Humanist Giving Program Coordinator for Foundation Beyond Belief, a humanist charitable foundation. AJ introduced the reality that religious people give more to charity than non-believers. She discussed why it is important for secular people to increase their visibility within the philanthropic world, and she showed examples of the best practices used to identify worthy beneficiaries we can support. This is a video of her platform address delivered to the Ethical Humanist Society of Chicago on May 3, 2015.

**AJ Chalom** lives in suburban Chicago, where she enjoys lake walks, classical music, and all that life throws her way. She is passionate about the work of Foundation Beyond Belief (FBB). She balances life with her children, her busy husband, and always finding another cause to expend her energy. A lifelong humanist, she has worked extensively within the Humanistic Jewish movement. She has worked as a geologist, a historic preservation researcher, and a teen organizer. As the humanist giving program coordinator at FBB, AJ focuses on researching and selecting potential beneficiaries. Learn more about her work at [foundationbeyondbelief.org](http://foundationbeyondbelief.org).

**OCTOBER 11**

## “So Many Good Deeds, So Little Time”

Hugh Taft- Morales

*Leader, Baltimore Ethical Society*

Ethical Humanism proclaims the importance of “deed before creed.” But how do you figure out WHAT deed to do? Given limited time and energy, how can humanists maximize the effectiveness of their commitment? Hugh Taft-Morales offers some variables to consider in your deliberations, including effectiveness in respecting both the worth of individuals and relationships, and maximizing both the potential of individuals and the realization of social justice. Ultimately, however, individuals and groups should focus on where they agree pragmatically so as to avoid the paralysis of infighting and burnout. Find out more about sustainable ethical action.

**Hugh Taft-Morales** joined the Baltimore Ethical Society as its professional leader in 2010, the same year he was cer-

tified 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 18**

## “Protecting Victims of Domestic Violence”

Suzanne Bailey, Esq.

*Women’s Law Center of MD*

Suzanne Bailey is the Director of the Multi-Ethnic Domestic Violence Project (MEDOVI) of the Women’s Law Center of Maryland. MEDOVI helps foreign-born victims of domestic violence and sexual assault get legal immigration status without relying on the abuser for sponsorship. She will report on the work of the MEDOVI project, legal options provided by the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), and inspiring stories of women who have overcome hardship and violence.

**Suzanne Bailey** is an attorney and currently Director for the Women’s Law Center of Maryland’s Multi-Ethnic Domestic Violence Project (MEDOVI) which is a statewide program that provides pro bono immigration legal assistance to Maryland residents who are foreign born victims of domestic violence, human sex trafficking, intimate partner stalking or sexual assault. Some of her current and past commitments are the American Immigration Lawyers Association National Committee on T Visas, U Visas, and VAWA; Governors Task Force on Human Trafficking Foreign Nationals Subcommittee and Human Trafficking Ambassador; Domestic Violence Coordinating Councils; and the Board of Directors for the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence. Read more at [www.wlcmd.org](http://www.wlcmd.org).

**OCTOBER 25**

## “A World of Refugees”

Hugh Taft-Morales

*Leader, Baltimore Ethical Society*

Globalization, poverty, war, and climate change has accelerated the migration of people all over the globe. It has generated bigoted backlash against “the other” as well as acts of



welcome and kindness. It has created new opportunities for economic growth as well as security risks and strain on social services. Hugh Taft-Morales explores one particular story of migration in his extended family as a way to process our current debate about the ethical responsibilities and limits of welcoming refugees.

## **ETHICAL ACTION VOLUNTEER OUTINGS**

### ***Baking Night at Moveable Feast***

**Thursday, October 8, 5:45–8:00 p.m.,  
901 N. Milton Ave., Baltimore**



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 Karen Elliott know you are coming ([KarenSElliott@aol.com](mailto: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.

### ***Volunteer Day at Real Food Farm***

**Saturday, October 17, 9:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.,  
2801 St. Lo Dr., Baltimore**

We are volunteering with Real Food Farm throughout the year, contributing to a self-sustaining community and to the elimination of food deserts and food insecurity in

Baltimore. All ages welcome! Be sure to dress for the weather, wear sturdy shoes, and bring water and a snack. We will help out, rain or shine!



## **Our Place in the World**

*(continued from page 1)*

I can, however, continue to nurture two resources available to you at the Ethical Society: community and inspiration. With the contribution of time, energy and resources of so many members and volunteers, we have much to offer. Regarding community, most of us bring out our best when working with others. I do yoga more regularly and energetically by attending classes. I write more letters to my legislators armed with templates and envelopes at an Amnesty International meeting. I shout out for justice more loudly at group vigils for Black Lives Matter.

It is the close intentional communities offered by Ethical Culture that makes us different from other freethought organizations. Unlike many groups today that rely on occasional meet ups, we emphasize an ongoing congregational format. When becoming a part of our community, members make a deeper commitment than usual to support each other through life's ups and downs. We say more often, "I am here for you," and then we strive to live up to these words.

This is one of the reasons why we meet every week – why we have seasonal celebrations to mark the passage of time – why we offer ceremonies that mark life passages such as births, weddings, and memorials. In celebrating and sharing the bigger arc of our lives, we open ourselves up to others in more challenging, meaningful and fulfilling ways. It demands caring hearts and open minds. Our communities grow best in a sea of gratitude, patience, and joy.

Regarding inspiration, personally I strive to offer accessible, thought provoking programs that speak to intellect and emotion. I work with others on our many committees to provide opportunity for ethical action and continuing education that feed our appetite for meaning. We do not abandon our commitment to reason and evidence when stirring up inspirational experiences. For those seeking "humanist spirituality", they will find in Ethical Humanism not divine miracles or supernatural magic, but inspiration with the steady legs of science, the wings of imagination, and outstretched helping hands. This is a trio I have been touting for the last few months.

We are a community of diverse thinkers, so I am sure some of you have a different take on what makes us unique. Please share with me what you think is Ethical Humanism's "place in this world." Then help me let the world know about us. The time is now. The place is here. The job is ours.

CHARM CITY  
**Film**  
SERIES

Wednesday, October 14,  
6:30 p.m.

This month we will be screening the film *Finding Vivian Maier*, 2014, 84 minutes, Academy Award nominee for best documentary feature.

Winner, Best Documentary, by Film Critics Awards in Dublin, Shanghai.

Winner, Cinema Eye Honors Award, Outstanding Achievement in a Debut Feature Film.

"Narratively gripping, visually striking, and ultimately thought-provoking, Shines an overdue spotlight on its subject's long-hidden brilliance."

Now considered one of the 20th century's greatest street photographers, Vivian Maier was a mysterious nanny who secretly took over 100,000 photographs that went unseen during her lifetime."

The Charm City Film Series is free and open to the public. Donations are suggested. Complimentary refreshments are provided, and food is available for purchase at a reasonable price. Films are followed by discussion led by a local expert on the issue.

**FLOWER POWER IS BACK!**

Want a beautiful garden next spring? Want to help BES? Get your seeds and bulbs through *Flower Power* and BES gets some money in return. Thanks to a joint initiative between Gardener's Supply and Dutch Gardens, over a million people are invited to participate each year.

Pick up a catalogue at BES or visit [flowerpowerfundraising.com/campaign?campaign\\_id=22210](http://flowerpowerfundraising.com/campaign?campaign_id=22210) and we will get 50% of the proceeds from every sale. Help even further by sharing with your friends and family or on Facebook.

**SUNDAY ASSEMBLY BALTIMORE**

Sunday, October 25, 2:00 p.m.

Come to the next Sunday Assembly Baltimore!

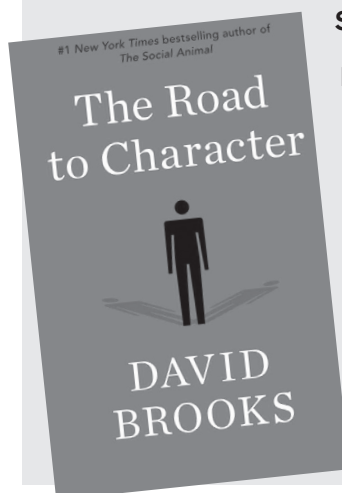
What happens at a Sunday Assembly? A Sunday Assembly service consists of songs (pop songs mainly) sung by the congregation, a reading (usually a poet), an interesting talk (that fits into live better, help often or wonder more), a moment of reflection and an address, which sums up the day and hopefully 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](http://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](http://sundayassembly.com).

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**BOOK DISCUSSION ON DAVID BROOKS' THE ROAD TO CHARACTER**

Sunday, October 11, 4:00 p.m.



Hugh Taft-Morales will lead a book discussion of the latest offering by *New York Times* journalist David Brooks – *The Road to Character*. Known as a sophisticated Republican willing to "engage with" the liberal agenda, Brooks was praised writing "a pitch-perfect clarion call, issued not with preachy hubris but from a deep place of humility, for awakening to the greatest rewards of living." Come share some snacks and your reaction to this work.

## DIVERSITY SALON

Sunday, October 4, 1:00 p.m.

An evolving discussion about how perceptions of the Other affect our relationships. Meets on the first Sunday of every month at BES. If you have any questions, contact Lane Berk at 410-727-1880 or Dianne Hirsch at [diannehirsch1776@aol.com](mailto:diannehirsch1776@aol.com).

## Program Committee: A Face of BES

*(continued from page 2)*

oversight was unintentional, considering the difficulties in organizing these talks. Gordon's words, however painful, were taken to heart by Emil who then established a protocol to make certain that African-American cultural issues and speakers be included in events throughout the year, and plans for MLK Day. This year, BES marched in the MLK Parade for the first time. Gordon later commented that he was happy with what was done and the efforts made. What was a low point, Emil turned into something very positive for everyone.

Although many of us newer members have come to expect Sunday Platforms throughout the entire year, that was not always the case. Several years ago, these forums happened between Labor Day through Memorial Day. During Stephen's tenure as Chair, Platforms were extended through the summer months. These discussions are more 'informal' due to the casual nature of the talks, often given by members. I remember years ago, Hugh Taft-Morales, our Leader, gave interactive summer talks entitled, "Yoga: Body and Mind" and "Yoga, Humanism, and You!" and Richard Campbell's discussion, "Katsu-Ryu Kempo: The Physical & Ethical Dimension of a Martial Art," talks that

would be unlikely to happen during the more 'formal' Platforms. There is, quite frankly, very little difference in the quality of talks. Some summer talks that still are quite memorable are Fred Compton's, "How Humanism Has Helped Me," and Kate LaClair's presentation on her research on Alzheimer's Disease, among many others too numerous to list.

Sunday Platforms are more than just the talks; the socials afterward are as important as the discussions themselves. These socials are an opportunity for everyone to mingle, talk with one another, get to know new people and just have a great time.

Many Platforms over several years have been preserved. Initially, only audio-recordings (including tapes from the 1950s-1960s) were made. Audio MP3 recordings can be heard from our website. More recently, Ray Noemer has videoed talks, and posted them on Vimeo.com for all to view freely.

Emil soon will be stepping down as Co-Chair. Even more than ever, PC needs greater participation by all committee members, which include Joe Adams, Jayme Smith, Margie Roswell, Angad Singh, Uta Allers, and more volunteers to help. Please consider being part of this face of BES. Be a member of the Program Committee.

## FAMILY BOARD AND CARD GAMES PARTY

Sunday, October 18,  
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 make a small monetary contribution to 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: to do so or to have questions answered, please call 301-642-1065.

## BES EATERY SOCIAL

Sunday, October 18, 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@hamphshire.edu](mailto:nww10@hamphshire.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, October 18, 12:45 p.m.**

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

**NEWCOMERS MEETING**

**Sunday, October 25, 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, October 11, 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**

Visit [bmorethical.org](http://bmorethical.org) and look for us on Facebook, Twitter, and MeetUp.com @bmorethical

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