

# BESpeak

**BALTIMORE ETHICAL SOCIETY**

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

## **NEWSLETTER**

Please do not delay!

**TIME VALUE**

## **ETHICAL ACTION MEETING**

**Sunday, November 15, 12:45 p.m.**

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

## **NEWCOMERS MEETING**

**Sunday, November 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, November 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.

# **bmorethical**

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Welcome to BESpeak, the newsletter of the Baltimore Ethical Society. Donations from readers like you help us keep it in production. Send checks payable to Baltimore Ethical Society to: BESpeak, 306 W. Franklin St., Ste. 102, Baltimore, MD 21201. If you would like to subscribe to the online version of this newsletter, sign up at [bmorethical.org](http://bmorethical.org). Thank you.

# BESpeak

NOVEMBER 2015

NEWSLETTER OF THE BALTIMORE ETHICAL SOCIETY

## Expungement and Shielding Clinic

by Hugh Taft-Morales, BES Leader

Arriving at the New Psalmist Baptist Church on the cold, raining Thursday morning of October 1st, I volunteered with Out 4 Justice and other groups at an Expungement and Shielding clinic. This was the same morning when new legislation took effect in Maryland - like the Maryland Second Chance Act - allowing those with criminal records for minor offenses to have the records erased, especially when the offenses are no longer crimes.

Our criminal justice system makes it unreasonably difficult for those arrested for minor offenses to get jobs and housing. Being guilty of a crime such as disorderly conduct or driving with a suspended license can make it hard for those without the privilege of significant financial and legal resources, to contribute constructively in our society. In the end, those most affected, as well as their families and taxpayers, are worse off.

I was unprepared, however, for the scale of the event. First, the New Psalmist Church was the biggest church I have ever entered. There Diamonte Brown, Executive Director of Out 4 Justice, directed me to a cafeteria where I was to help attendees find an appropriate legal volunteer. In my area were about 80 lawyers from four organizations: the Maryland Volunteer Lawyer Service, Legal Aid, the Homeless Persons Representation Project, and the Office of the Public Defender.

I was humbled by my ignorance regarding the names of the groups and the services offered. Thankfully we non-lawyer volunteers were assisted by people such as Michael Pinard, Co-Director of the Clinical Law Program at the University of Maryland and the UMD School of Law Reentry Clinic. Without people like him, as doors were opened and the crowds began to build I would have been unable to cope with those seeking answers to many questions: "When am I going to be seen?" "Can I get my case judgment printed out here?" "Who handles the shielding process?" "Which organization can best handle my case?" "Why is this taking so long?" There were some kinks in the process and anger bubbled around me.

Clearly most who had come for help had been struggling for a while with a confusing and frustrating legal system that had thrown their already difficult lives into chaos.



(continued on page 7)

### SUNDAY PLATFORMS

10:30 a.m.

(details on pages 4-5)

#### NOVEMBER 1

### "Fighting For Our Youth"

Melissa Rock

Child Welfare Director, AYC

#### NOVEMBER 8

### "Manners and Morals"

Hugh Taft-Morales

Leader, Baltimore Ethical Society

#### NOVEMBER 15

### "Stone Salad & Soup Fall Festival"

#### NOVEMBER 22

### "Speaking Up and Speaking Out"

Karen Storey

President and Co-founder,  
Interactive Training

#### NOVEMBER 29

### "How Are We Treating Ex-offenders?"

Monica Cooper

Co-founder, Maryland Justice Project

### ETHICAL HUMANIST SUNDAY SCHOOL

Every Sunday, 10:30 a.m. - Noon  
Separate programs for preschool children and school aged students.

### TODDLER CARE

Separate supervision provided  
for children up to age two.

# BESpeak

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## Issue 453

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

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bmorethical.org. For general  
questions: ask@bmorethical.org.

**On the web at bmorethical.org**

# Diversity in Creed, Unity in Deed

by Paul Furth, BES President



Felix Adler envisioned a community placing more importance on what people did rather than what they believed. He founded Ethical Culture to promote personal ethical development and civic responsibilities, to be publicly active and engaged through social justice and advocacy. Thus, “Deed before Creed” became the clarion call. Today, we continue in that tradition. Our Ethical Action Committee (EAC) represents the legs which propels our Society to action, the committee that puts the movement into that deed.

The immediate past Chair was Katherine (Kate) LaClair, a member of BES for four years. She was Chair for three years after being on the EAC for only a few months, taking the reigns from Ben Busby when he asked her. Through her guidance, BES has engaged in many actions, some political (active in preserving Marriage Equality and the Fairness for All Marylanders Act), some directly involved with the neighborhood community, and all based on social justice, equality and addressing and fulfilling the human needs. Kate was raised in Ethical Culture in New Jersey, and found her community when she came to Baltimore, where she’s doing Alzheimer’s research. She came to BES to explore her own ethical ideals, dedicating herself to being part of a community of giving as well as receiving, to find space where people could bring their passions and get results. As a result, she’s learned that being active can change how we view our own ethics and to see the results and consequences of those efforts.

Kate’s most personally important action during her tenure was partnering with Safe & Sound to stop the building of a new the youth jail. Rather than building more prisons that trap youths into a lifetime of hardships and incarceration, the money could be used on recreation centers and education to keep children out of jail. Although we were unable to fully stop the youth jail (the city instead renovated an existing unit), she learned much, enjoyed working with Karen Helm, working with the many other organizations involved and getting BES members to testify in front of the city government.

Volunteering every third Saturday with Real Food Farm is something that gives her pride. It’s about providing secure food supplies for everyone, especially those who are living with poverty, and serves as training for young people to learn urban farming skills and to increase the strength of their community bonds. Volunteering is a great way to contribute to common community in an otherwise segregated city. You can purchase their produce every Sunday at the Waverly Farmer’s Market.

Kate now is Chair of EAC for the AEU, and is focusing more on her graduate work. She hopes that BES will continue to be a place where people find support, to bring their passions and energy to help others, and continue to have EAC be that expression of ethics.

(continued on page 7)

## BES EATERY SOCIAL

Sunday, November 22, 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. If you have any questions, please contact Nathan Whitmore at [nww10@hampshire.edu](mailto:nww10@hampshire.edu).

## Diversity in Creed, Unity in Deed

(continued from page 2)

Thomas Higdon has stepped up to continue those ideals. He sees EAC with two roles. First, EAC is a forum for social justice having an impact on the community, and to be more effective in our efforts, pairing up with other organizations, leading the charge, focusing on one or two issues at any given time. In addition, EAC provides a platform for people to get involved on issues they're passionate about. In his short time as Chair, he has secured the funds to join Baltimoreans United In Leadership Development (BUILD) where BES can play a role to bring a humanistic view on ethical advocacy. In the tradition of democracy, a principle foundation of Ethical Culture, actions taken by BES through EAC must first be approved by the majority of members. Thomas is now securing that vote.

In addition, Thomas has plans to bring more members into EAC with the help of existing committee members talking with others individually on why they're involved and the importance of being active. You are all invited to join EAC.

Being a part of this call to action has helped build confidence, which is also vital outside of BES. In addition to those already mentioned, EAC members include Gil Munk (Secretary), Joe

Adams (Assistant Secretary, Legislative Liaison to First Unitarian Church, Nutrition as Medicine Potluck), Charles Shafer (Expungement Project Coordinator), Karen Elliott (Baking Night at Moveable Feast), Lane Berk and Dianne Hirsch (Salon Discussion on Race), Angad Singh, Laura Griffin (Educating BES members about police brutality, racial discrimination, and racial privilege), Greg Corbitt (ADORE Liaison), Bernie Brown, Fred Compton and Emil Volcheck. EAC meets on the third Sunday.

You are encouraged to bring your ideas and passions for actions to EAC for discussions, vetting and building upon through a meeting of minds. We are each a leader. And it's through the EAC that we, as individual leaders, can combine forces to demonstrate our values, to secure the rights and protect the innate human dignity for all people. While we are a group that is welcoming to a great variety of thoughts, opinions and beliefs, the strength of our convictions are demonstrated on what we do and the actions we take to help bring out the best in others, and thus ourselves. We are, literally, "Diversity in Creed, Unity in Deed." And it's through EAC that gives legs to our Society, a process to make real our actions and advocacy.

## Expungement Clinic

(continued from page 1)

The lack of a clear procedure for handling the nearly 1000 participants only multiplied their frustration. The need was great and the resources limited. Each lawyer was working as quickly as they could. I tried to respond to the many questions and complaints with respect and compassion: "Please be patient - I will ask someone who knows." "I know this is frustrating - everyone is having to wait." "Thanks for your understanding."

As my four-hour shift completed I was wiped out. Things were so busy that I barely had enough time to brief my replacement as more people streamed in the door. I shared with the new volunteers the importance of offering reassurance to those attending. Without legal training, or even a basic understanding of the groups attending and the new laws involved, I appeared pretty incompetent at times. But what was most humbling was when one gentleman noticed my frazzled state and *offered me* support. "Don't worry," he said. "This is working out pretty well." Given the pettiness of the hassles of my life, his compassion for a person living a privileged comfortable life struck me.

Our legal system does not bring out the best in those caught up in legal problems. The barriers it creates make it hard to secure housing, employment and legal help. We need many more events like this Expungement and Shielding clinic. Despite my sense of inadequacy in the face of so great a need, my help - along with the help Kate LaClair and Charlie Shafer - who told me of the event - was a part of making it possible. As I left I told myself, and then Diamonte, that I would help at similar events. She said, "you're signed up, Hugh!" I hope you can join me next time.

CHARM CITY  
**film**  
SERIES

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

This month we will be screening the film *Cowspiracy: The Sustainability Secret*, 2014, 85 minutes.

Follow the shocking, yet humorous, journey of an aspiring environmentalist, as he daringly seeks to find the real solution to the most pressing environmental issues and true path to sustainability. Watch the trailer at [www.cowspiracy.com](http://www.cowspiracy.com).

"Cowspiracy may be the most important film made to inspire saving the planet." – Louie Psihoyos, Oscar-Winning Director of 'The Cove'

"Pulls no punches and makes no apologies: 'The future of our planet is being destroyed by this industry.' Hard to argue with the data." – The Huffington Post

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.

## Common Ground 2015

On October 8 Hugh Taft-Morales joined his fellow Ethical Culture clergy colleagues Bart Worden (Executive Director of the American Ethical Union, and Leader of Ethical Culture Society of Westchester), Anne Klaeysen (Leader of New York Society for Ethical Culture), and Emily Newman (AEU Communications Coordinator) at the 2015 Common Ground Conference at Rutgers University. The conference focused on contributing to social progress by creating understanding and cooperation between religious believers and secular humanists. Hugh's presentation presented Ethical Culture's non-theism and "deed-before-creed" pragmatism as tools to foster such understanding and cooperation. The highlight for him, however, was simply sitting on a panel next to the grandson of Mahatma Gandhi!

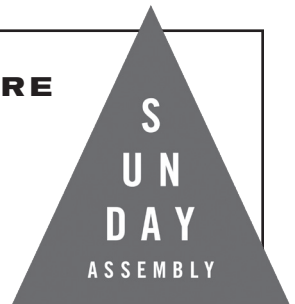


### SUNDAY ASSEMBLY BALTIMORE

Sunday, November 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](http://fb.com/sundayassemblybaltimore).



### DIVERSITY SALON

Sunday, November 1, 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).

# Search Success

Our pre-K children, ages 3 to 5, now have a wonderful teacher – Jill Gordon!

A fraction of the many talents and values Jill brings to the position are evident in this descriptive excerpt from her application letter: “I have taught and learned with children of all ages throughout my career in the arts and in the classroom. I’ve been concentrating on those under five years old for the past several years in a progressive, emergent pre-school environment. I am also an artist working primarily with cloth, and a writer of personal narratives. I am also a mother of two radiant children ages 9 and 5. My personality is gentle and kind, and I strongly believe in being honest, and seeing the light in all people.”

Jill will engage our pre-K students through use of an established, approved ethical education curriculum that emphasizes learning about and practicing values. To help the children develop social skills and an un-

derstanding in the areas of humanistic values and behaviors, she will create, facilitate, and lead activities that involve and integrate music, art, games, songs, stories, and field trips. She will also develop activities in support of BES programs such as Human Light and the BES Fall Festival (this year taking place on Sunday, November 15th), which traditionally features a rendition of the old and beloved folk tale “Stone Soup.”

Thanks go to the Ethical Education Search Committee – pre-K parents Kim Knox and Maria Vachino, EEC member Rosemary Klein, and EEC chair Argentine Craig – for the efforts they extended over a three-month period.

To Jill, we extend a most warm welcome to the BES teaching staff and the BES family of members and friends.

Much more about this accomplished educator and her contributions to our pre-K class will follow in future *BESpeaks* as well as on our website.

## TIM WISE VIDEO AND DISCUSSION

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

Come view and discuss a video on “Exploring White Privilege” on November 22nd at 2:00 p.m. We will watch selections from a DVD by Tim Wise followed by a discussion. Tim Wise, an anti-racist activist, urges us to engage in anti-racist activism. Are you a “white ally” in this work? Do you want to be? Does the term “white ally” even make sense?

Wise has given speeches at over 600 college campuses, trained teachers, corporations, non-profits and police about dismantling white racism. He is author of numerous books including, *White Like Me: Reflections on Race from a Privileged Son* and *Dear White America: Letter to a New Minority*.



## OTHER ACTIVITIES

### Poetry Group

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

### Diversity Salon

Sunday, November 1, 1:00 p.m.

### Mindfulness Meditation

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

### Board Meeting

Sunday, November 8, 12:30 p.m.

### Charm City Film Series

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

### Baking Night at Moveable Feast

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

### Ethical Action Meeting

Sunday, November 15, 12:45 p.m.

### Family Board and Card Games Party

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

### Volunteer at Real Food Farm

Saturday, November 21, 9:00 a.m.

### BES Eatery Social

Sunday, November 22, 1:00 p.m.

### Tim Wise Video & Discussion

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

### Sunday Assembly Baltimore

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

### Newcomers Meeting

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

## NOVEMBER 1

### “Fighting For Our Youth”

Melissa Rock

*Child Welfare Director, AYC*

Ms. Rock’s talk will be about how Advocates for Children and Youth improves outcomes for Maryland’s foster youth through policy advocacy. She will explain how they leverage their relationships with state agencies and use the state legislative process to improve the lives of foster children.

**Melissa Rock** is the Child Welfare Director for Advocates for Children and Youth. She works with the statewide child welfare administrators and stakeholders to improve the experience of children and families involved with the abuse and neglect system. In 2012, Melissa was appointed to the Department of Human Resources’ Alternative Response (AR) Advisory Council, to oversee Maryland’s implementation of AR and made a co-chair of the AR Evaluation Workgroup. Melissa graduated from the George Washington University Law School in 2001, with high honors, from Brandeis University in 1998.

## NOVEMBER 8

### “Manners and Morals”

Hugh Taft-Morales

*Leader, Baltimore Ethical Society*

The philosopher and politician Edmund Burke defended manners as fundamental to our ethical lives. He claimed that, “Manners are of more importance than laws. Manners are what vex or soothe, corrupt or purify, exalt or debase, barbarize or refine us, by a constant, steady, uniform, insensible operation, like that of the air we breathe in.” Is there a connection between the erosion of civility and unethical behavior? What, if anything, does *South Park*, talk radio, and on-line bullying say about the state of ethics in America? Leader Hugh Taft-Morales tries to explore this without sounding too cranky and old-fashioned.

**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.

## NOVEMBER 15

### “Stone Salad & Soup Fall Festival”

Celebrate the brisk days of autumn, at our Fall Festival. Let us gather together to feast, and delight in the bounty and beauty of autumn. We will have sign-up sheets for various fall fare the next three Sundays. Think of all the wonderful foods in season, beets, and cauliflower, dates and grapes even persimmons, pomegranates and tangerines are at their ripest. Plan to wear your most comfortable clothing, even cozy flannel. Dress in the colors of fall including, burnt oranges, butternut, walnut, and scarlet or burgundy, and many more. The program will be led by Mary B., Thomas Higdon, and Karen Elliott. Contact Mary Beth Sodus to volunteer or for more information at [Marybethsodus@gmail.com](mailto:Marybethsodus@gmail.com).

## NOVEMBER 22

### “Speaking Up and Speaking Out”

Karen Storey, CSP

*President and Co-founder, Interactive Training*

Karen will tell us about her work within Dorsey Run Correctional and MCI-W. Her work with two Toastmasters Gavel clubs has helped hundreds of inmates transition their communication skills to the community. Karen helps by teaching interview, public speaking, and interpersonal communication skills. Her goal is to give each inmate the communication tools necessary to help them be successful. She will share her experiences, lessons and a few stories.

**Karen Story, CSP**, is President and Co-founder of Interactive Training, an organization dedicated to improving communication and leadership skills. Interactive Training was started in December 1997. Karen works with individuals, government agencies and corporations to help them achieve their communication goals. Karen is a dedicated professional and leader of both community and professional organizations. Her work with faculty at Hopkins has helped cautious and inexperienced speakers to gain confidence, poise, and credibility in a brief amount of practice time. Additionally, Karen and her husband Frank started a Toastmasters club at Dorsey Run Correctional and MCI-W. She will share with us her ex-

perience teaching communication and leadership skills to inmates.

**NOVEMBER 29**

## “How Are We Treating Ex-offenders”

**Monica Cooper**

*Co-founder Maryland Justice Project*

Do Ex-Offenders really get a second chance? Are we aware of the collateral consequences of incarceration? Are we aware of our personal biases against returning citizens? What can we do to ensure that returning citizens regain their full rights?

**Monica Cooper** is a graduate of the University of Baltimore and a proud member of the International Honor Society of two year colleges Phi Theta Kappa. As the Co-founder of Maryland Justice Project she has work tirelessly to change the conversation around incarceration and the justice system in the United States.

## SOMEONE GETTING MARRIED?

The Baltimore Ethical Society has a Leader and a team of officiants who are trained and licensed to conduct weddings, memorials, and other life passage ceremonies. For more information about our ceremonies or to make arrangements, please contact our Officiant Team Coordinator, Kathryn Sloboda, at [weddings@bmorethical.org](mailto:weddings@bmorethical.org).

# bmorethical t-shirts

**GET YOURS  
TODAY!**

Available in black,  
purple, and white

**ONLY \$15**

## FAMILY BOARD AND CARD GAMES PARTY

**Sunday, November 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 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.

## ETHICAL ACTION VOLUNTEER OUTINGS

### *Baking Night at Moveable Feast*

**Thursday, November 12, 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, November 21, 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!