

# BESpeak

JANUARY 2016

NEWSLETTER OF THE BALTIMORE ETHICAL SOCIETY

## Embracing Winter

by Hugh Taft-Morales, BES Leader

As the world continues to be buffeted by violence and bigotry, I find the end of the year calls me to seek sources of renewal. If we are to bring out our best in trying to heal a broken world, we all need time to refill our tank. This winter I hope to do so by turning more to one of the most common sources for humanist inspiration: nature.

I have a good friend who served as a headmaster at a boarding school in Vermont. The winters up there are brutal, he would tell me. He explained that the only way to get by relatively unscathed by the cold and dark is to *embrace it*. That's why he held winter festivals and offered occasional school holidays when the snow hit. That's why he encouraged the building of toboggan runs and urged students to join the ski team

Well, I am not much of a winter sports enthusiast. Oh I love watching winter sports. I love the winter Olympics. But my wife has to drag me out to sled on the hill along side our house in Takoma Park. In exchange for the thrill of being a kid again, she continues to brave icy slopes and inevitable crashes. My ever-more fragile ligaments and bones shy away from such activities.

But I am determined to do a better job of embracing winter should it throw its snowy blanket over us again this year. Investing in a better pair of boots, I hope to take more walks in fresh snow. I intend to breathe in more intentionally the cold air, treating as if it was a cool stream soothing my parched throat. I want to be enveloped in the silence that descends after a blizzard, when much of the world stays home and the roads are yet plowed.

For our wedding anniversary this summer, our children gave my wife and me a fire pit in our yard. I look forward to at least one snowy day around a fire with cocoa in mittened hands. Maybe I will look up through the clear, cold atmosphere in awe of the twinkling stars who no longer exist, only their light trails remain telling me that they once existed light years away. Shivering in the cold I might feel renewed.

I hope the following poem inspires you to get to your feet and gaze at the constellations that seem brighter in winter, nature's most punishing of seasons.



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

(details on pages 4-5)

#### JANUARY 3

##### Pancake Breakfast

#### JANUARY 10

##### "400 Years: How History Fuels My Anti-Racism"

Hugh Taft-Morales  
Leader, Baltimore Ethical Society

#### JANUARY 17

##### "From Talk to Action: Part 3"

Diamonte Brown  
Director, Out for Justice  
Thomas Higdon  
Chair, Ethical Action Committee

#### JANUARY 24

##### "Strategies to Reduce Food Insecurity"

Tam Kelley  
MD Hunger Solutions

#### JANUARY 31

##### "Mentoring Our Youth"

Robin Saunders  
Director, UMB CURE Program

### ETHICAL HUMANIST SUNDAY SCHOOL

Every Sunday  
10:30 a.m. – Noon

Programs for both preschool and school aged students.

### TODDLER CARE

Separate supervision provided for children up to age two.

# BESpeak

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## Issue 455

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

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Meditation ..... Karen Elliott  
Poetry..... Kirk Mullen  
Workshops..... Hugh Taft-Morales

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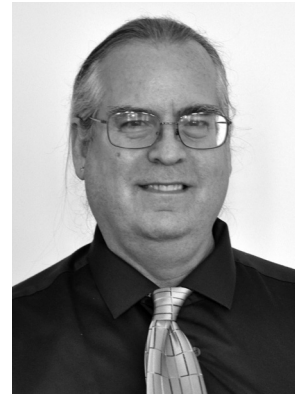
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**Contacts by e-mail:** use President,  
VicePresident (one word), Treasurer,  
Secretary, or Admin followed by  
@bmoreethical.org. For general  
questions: ask@bmoreethical.org.

**On the web at bmoreethical.org**

# Membership, A Passport to Action

by Paul Furth, BES President



In a society that increasingly treats people as commodities and corporations as people, finding a community that encourages civil discourse and celebrates individuality has become all too rare. Yet, that's precisely the foundation on which Ethical Culture was built. We, as a Society, profess to be humanists, to hold high the inherent dignity of every person. The Baltimore Ethical Society (BES) is an oasis for free thinkers to come together, exchange ideas, question dogma, and honor each individual as a person of great worth.

Becoming a BES member is a way to proclaim those principles. And there is one particular group within the Society that wants to help people find their experience fulfilling in our society.

The responsibility for accepting applications to our community and helping people learn in greater detail about BES occurs within the Membership Committee (MC). In addition to distributing Society information, MC helps maintain the directory and our e-mail lists. Also, MC runs the Newcomers Meeting, which happens at the end of every month. BES events are open to everyone, member or not, but the Newcomers Meeting is available for those who want to learn more about BES and Ethical Culture, and for prospective members. MC also creates name tags, schedules welcoming ceremonies, writes member bios, updates membership lists, revises and distributes welcome packets, collects signatures from the Public Relations Committee sign-up sheets, processes visitor sign-ups, and much more.

Janey Solwold and Wayne Laufert are our Co-Chairs. Recent past Co-Chairs include Emil Volcheck, Judy Katz and Karen Elliott.

Janey joined BES in May 2013. She came to BES with a desire to help build a community to counter the disproportionate influence of churches and other theological institutions. She was aware of Ethical Culture, yet years went by before she found BES from an Internet search. One of the early people she encountered was Hugh Taft-Morales, our Society Leader. Janey joined MC in September 2013. She accepted a leadership role in April 2014 at the request of Emil, who at the time was busy with many other duties, including being BES President.

Wayne, like many of our members, was raised Catholic. He first encountered humanism during his high school years. Through the writings of Kurt Vonnegut, and later Bertrand Russell, Wayne realized that he was a humanist, but he didn't pursue it for years. He had seen BES at past Baltimore Book Festivals in Mount Vernon. In 2013, he read a short fictional story by BES Leader Emeritus, Fritz Williams, in Free Inquiry Magazine. Through an Internet search, Wayne found BES and attended a few summer Sunday Platforms, including Emil on Esperanto and Hugh on yoga. Wayne enjoyed meeting like-minded people and became a member shortly afterward. Being a reporter and editor on a weekly newspaper for 24 years, Wayne

(continued on page 7)

# EEC 2016 Tots-to-Teens Comprehensive Program

## Openings

Two openings on the Ethical Education Committee (EEC) are available to B.E.S. members.

If you have children in any age group (1-17) or interested in ethical values education for our young people, you are invited to be part of the EEC. We meet for one hour once a month via conference call and participate once a month in a student-focused activity/event. (See President Paul Furth's article in the December 2015 issue of *BESpeak*).

Feel free to contact Argentine Craig (ascraig@comcast.net), EEC Chairperson, with any comments/questions by Friday, January 8.

## Teens Talk

To develop the 4th level of our comprehensive tots-to-teens program, we are adding a new feature involving teenagers. After the platform speaker concludes his/her talk, the Teens (13-

17) will convene in Room 102 to participate in a facilitated dialogue among themselves on the topic/issue presented by the Platform Speaker. This session will be co-facilitated by a Teen (one each Sunday) and a member of the Ethical Education Committee on a rotation schedule.

Contact Argentine Craig (ascraig@comcast.net) for questions/comments.

## Sunday School

For children 6-12, Sunday School teacher Linda Joy Burke will focus on Planetary issues (Earth protection and care) starting in January.

Registration for children 3-5 years for 2016. Contact our pre-K teacher Jill Gordon (msjillgordon@gmail.com) if you plan to register in 2016.

The Toddler Group: (pre-3). Ruth Schoonover continues to be available in the BES Library with story book reading and age-appropriate safe play toys.

## OTHER ACTIVITIES

### Poetry Group

Sunday, January 3, 9:30 a.m.

### Mindfulness Meditation

Sunday, January 10, 9:30 a.m.

### Board Meeting

Sunday, January 10, 12:30 p.m.

### Charm City Film Series

Wednesday, January 13, 6:30 p.m.

### Baking Night at Moveable Feast

Thursday, January 14, 5:45 p.m.

### Ethical Action Meeting

Sunday, January 17, 12:45 p.m.

### Family Board and Card Games Party

Sunday, January 17, 3:00 p.m.

### BES Eatery Social

Sunday, January 24, 1:00 p.m.

### Between the World and Me Book Discussion

Sunday, January 24, 1:00 p.m.

### Sunday Assembly Baltimore

Sunday, January 24, 2:00 p.m.

### Newcomers Meeting

Sunday, January 31, 12:30 p.m.

## REV. DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY PARADE

Monday, January 18, 10:30 a.m.

Join BES and march in Baltimore's MLK Parade! We will meet at 10:30 a.m. at BES then head to the start at 11:30 a.m. to march with other Baltimore organizations in Dr. King's memory. Please contact Thomas Higdon for more information or to RSVP. RSVP's are greatly appreciated but not required. Wear warm clothes and walking shoes. All are welcome!

## SAVE THE DATE!

BES Pledge Luncheon is Sunday, March 13, 2016

## 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	January 3
G to L	January 10
M to R	January 17
S to Z	January 24



**JANUARY 3**

## Pancake Breakfast

As 2015 draws to a close, we celebrate with a hearty breakfast and time to connect. Pancakes are on flap, with a variety of expert chefs turning out to turn things over. If you would like to volunteer to help, to bring a side dish to go with pancakes, or another breakfast/brunch-type food item, please contact Greg Corbitt. Everyone is invited to bring a warm article of clothing such as gloves, scarves, hats, socks to adorn our mitten tree. Coffee, tea, and juice beverages will be provided. The Pancake Breakfast is free and open to all. This year warm items provided as mitten tree decorations will be donated to TurnAround, which provides support services to victims of domestic violence.

**JANUARY 10**

## “400 Years: How History Fuels My Anti-Racism”

**Hugh Taft-Morales**

*Leader, Baltimore Ethical Society*

400 years is a long time. In 2019, three years from now, we will mark the 400th anniversary of the first time Africans were brought to this continent against their will. How can anyone possibly process the stunning juxtaposition of systemic oppression of people of color set in the context of expressions of noble democratic ideals? Hugh Taft-Morales shares his personal journey from minimization of this reality, through guilt and humility, to empowerment. Today he begins work on a project to mark the coming 400th anniversary. Come hear how he embraces anti-racism activism in a way that makes his life more meaningful and fulfilling.

**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.

**JANUARY 17**

## “From Talk to Action: Part 3”

**Diamonte Brown**

*Director, Out for Justice*

**Thomas Higdon**

*Chair, Ethical Action Committee*

This is the third installment in our series “From Talk Action: A Community Conversation on Systemic Racism. Ms. Diamonte Brown will begin with a brief progress report on actions taken since our last event in August and then lead a facilitated conversation on the issue of solitary confinement in Maryland. The average length of stay in segregation in Maryland is 130 days, 228 days for the mentally ill. This is twice the national average. The goal of this conversation is to develop action items to reduce the use of solitary confinement in Maryland and mitigate its negative consequences.

**Diamonte Brown** is the Director of Out For Justice. Out For Justice is an ex-offender, member-led organization that promotes the reform of policies that adversely affect the ex-offender re-entering into society successfully. Out For Justice strives to change the perception of the ex-offender by promoting the 3 Es of Education, Empowerment, and Engagement. Learn more at [out4justice.org](http://out4justice.org).

**JANUARY 24**

## “Strategies to Reduce Food Insecurity”

**Tam Kelley**

*MD Hunger Solutions*

Food insecurity exists when a household has insufficient access to enough nutritious food to support an active and healthy life. People who are food insecure may skip meals, reduce the size of their meals, or may go hungry. Tam Lynne Kelley of Maryland Hunger Solutions will discuss the relationship between food insecurity, poverty, and health disparities. Strategies that have been proven to reduce food insecurity will be reviewed, including specific steps that BES can take to reduce food insecurity in our community.

**Tam Lynne Kelley** works with Maryland Hunger Solutions, a state-wide non-profit that works to end hunger and promote well-being. She has worked in social services and public health for over fifteen years. She has experience working with peo-

ple experiencing homelessness, English Language Learners, and people who are HIV+. She received a B.A. in Sociology from Franklin & Marshall College in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. She earned a Master of Social Work with a concentration in Management and Community Organizing from the University of Maryland, Baltimore and she is a Licensed Graduate Social Worker (LGSW) in the state. In addition, she holds a Global Health Graduate Certificate from University of Maryland, Baltimore, which further fueled her passion for social justice and work that addresses the social determinants of health.

**JANUARY 31**

## **“Mentoring Our Youth”**

**Robin Saunders**

*Director, UMB CURE Program*

The UMB CURE Scholars Program is a groundbreaking program that prepares sixth- to 12th-grade students in Baltimore for competitive, lucrative, and rewarding research and health care careers at UMB and other health institutions in the region. What is the CURE Program? The National Cancer Institute’s (NCI) Continuing the Umbrella for Research Experiences (CURE) program was established by the NCI’s Center to Reduce Cancer Health Disparities (CRCHD) in 1999 to help support underrepresented students in biomedical research and career development. CURE utilizes a pipeline approach and provides career navigation, workforce training, and mentorship to diverse scholars at all stages of academic and career development. The CURE program is driven by a mission to build a diverse biomedical workforce, which is critical to addressing the health needs of all Americans and to eliminating cancer health disparities in the nation.

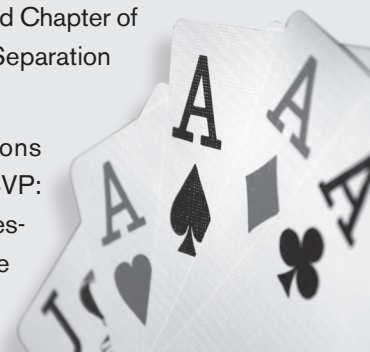
**Robin Saunders**, EdD, MS, is the executive director of the UMB CURE (Continuing Umbrella of Research Experience) Scholars Program. She has worked in K-12 settings, community colleges, and comprehensive universities around the country. Most recently, she served at Kennesaw State University in Kennesaw, Ga., as program coordinator for the Master’s in Education program, departmental assessment coordinator, and assistant professor. She is originally from Columbia, Md., and earned both her master’s and doctorate degrees from Johns Hopkins University in educational leadership – teacher leadership development.

## **FAMILY BOARD AND CARD GAMES PARTY**

**Sunday, January 17, 3:00-6:45 p.m.**  
**at the home of Marjeta Cedilnic**

Join members of the Baltimore Parenting Beyond Belief Meetup for a board and card games party at the home of Marjeta Cedilnic in Howard County. Feel free to bring a game or play one of the many there. Please bring a snack or drink to share (or 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.



## **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@bmoreethical.org](mailto:weddings@bmoreethical.org).

## **bmoreethical t-shirts**

**bmoreethical**  
THE BALTIMORE ETHICAL SOCIETY

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CHARM CITY  
**Film**  
SERIES

Wednesday, January 13,  
6:30 p.m.

Our Film Series returns in January with a screening of *Heist: Who Stole the American Dream? And How We Can Get it Back*, 2011, 76 minutes. The film was a 2012 *New York Times* Critics' Pick and an official selection of film festivals around the country. View the trailer at [heist-themovie.com](http://heist-themovie.com).

"Has the virtue of taking the long view of a crisis that recent films like 'Inside Job' and 'Too Big to Fail' have only sketchily explored. It makes a strong case that government regulation of business is essential for democracy to flourish." – *New York Times*

"Perhaps the best film yet about the roots of today's economic conditions in the U.S., domination of public policy by corporate interests, and grassroots resistance that has emerged in the past few years." – *TheWorkSite.org*

The Film Series is free and open to the public. Donations are suggested. Refreshments are provided, and films are followed by discussion led by a local expert on the issue.

**BES EATERY SOCIAL**

Sunday, January 24, 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](mailto:nww10@hampshire.edu).

**SUNDAY ASSEMBLY BALTIMORE**

Sunday, January 24, 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](https://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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**BAKING NIGHT AT MOVEABLE FEAST**

Thursday, January 14, 5:45–8:00 p.m.

*This date is subject to change. Please check with Karen before attending.*

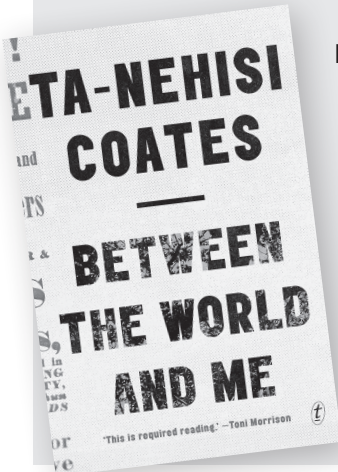
Join BES members and others for this enjoyable outing at a great organization – check out their website at [www.mfeast.org](http://www.mfeast.org).

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.



## BOOK DISCUSSION OF TA-NEHISI COATES'S *BETWEEN THE WORLD AND ME*

Sunday, January 24, 1:00 p.m.



BES member Kirk Mullen and Leader Hugh Taft-Morales will lead a discussion of the #1 *New York Times* bestseller, *Between the World and Me*, by Ta-Nehisi Coates. Toni Morrison called it “required reading” a bold and personal literary exploration of America’s racial history by “the single best writer on the subject of race in the United States.” Bring your own lunch. Those who have been attending Lane Burk’s Salon might particularly like to attend. Email Hugh at [leader@bmorethical.org](mailto:leader@bmorethical.org) to sign up!

## Membership, A Passport to Action

(continued from page 2)

saw an opportunity to use his skills and offered to help revise and create literature for new BES members. He joined MC last year and became Co-Chair with Janey so Emil could focus his energy elsewhere.

Since joining the committee, Janey and Wayne have documented the processes and procedures they use to carry out the committee’s work. They also developed the Welcome packet, which is given to all new members. This packet includes information about BES and Ethical Culture, as well as volunteer information for many of the BES committees.

Janey and Wayne continue to help grow the membership of the Society and increase its diversity. Together, they instituted the Welcome Table to create a friendly environment and facilitate connections among visitors and members. You’ll generally find Janey at the Welcoming Table on Sunday mornings. She is frequently joined by Wayne.

In addition to our two Chairs, MC

members include Greg Corbitt, Stephen Meskin, and Emil. Hugh and I are ex officio members.

Future endeavors include getting member profiles online and increasing the information in the welcome packet. More volunteers will be needed, though. Both Janey and Wayne are very committed to BES and their committee. They expressed a big desire for more people to join MC to help with offering new ideas and pitching in to help carry out the mission. If you would like to join the Membership Committee or would like to learn more about what you can do to help, please speak with Janey and Wayne.

The Baltimore Ethical Society, in emphasizing action over belief and honoring the individuality of each person, is a community that brings unity to a diversity of opinions in order to create a more ethical world. Our Membership Committee helps those who seek and desire such a community find that oasis.

## Embracing Winter

(continued from page 1)

**ORION**, Ron Yazinski

*It's a cold December night,  
But for a change, the stars are out,  
Sparkling as if recently polished be-  
cause company is coming.  
Orion reclines on the horizon  
As if he really were a god tired of  
the rut.*

*The wind bullies the trees.  
I like to think it's caused by the con-  
fusion of angels,  
Their wings beating at the speed of  
hummingbirds,  
Flitting from those who pray for  
their own needs  
Towards those who pray for others,  
then back again,  
Never getting anything done.*

*But I know there are neither pagan  
gods  
Nor confused messengers of light.  
At the soul of this most beautiful  
universe  
There is only the elemental elegance  
of vibrating strings.  
And I know it's true, because, on  
nights like this,  
I can feel the sympathetic reverbera-  
tions in my heart.*

*Yes, I know a wise man would go  
back inside his house  
To the warmth of his family and  
friends  
And explain these oscillations in  
terms they might understand,  
Like the vibrations of the guitar  
strings he plays  
As they sing Christmas carols;*

*And failing that,  
Point to the tinsel which hangs from  
the Christmas tree  
With the angel impaled on top,  
And how the strands tremble as the  
model train encircles it.  
To which someone says that it  
sounds like "Cat's Cradle,"  
And everyone laughs and drinks  
and feels better.*

*But this is not a wise man shiver-  
ing out here,  
Watching Orion get to his feet.*



**BALTIMORE ETHICAL SOCIETY**

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

**NEWSLETTER**

Please do not delay!

**TIME VALUE**

**ETHICAL ACTION MEETING**

**Sunday, January 17, 12:45 p.m.**

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

**NEWCOMERS MEETING**

**Sunday, January 31, 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, January 10, 9:30 a.m.**

Mindfulness is a tool we can use in our daily lives to act in a more ethical way. We practice mindfulness meditation so that it comes naturally in stressful times. Join us as we sit (on chairs) and breathe (just the way it comes naturally) and listen to the words of Thich Nhat Hanh, one of the world's best-known teachers of mindfulness.

**bmorethical**

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