

BESpeak

FEBRUARY 2016

NEWSLETTER OF THE BALTIMORE ETHICAL SOCIETY

News from the Ethical Culture Movement

by Hugh Taft-Morales, BES Leader

For those of you who don't know, I am very involved in the American Ethical Union (Ethical Culture's federating body) and the National Leaders Council (the equivalent of our clergy group). I offer you some informal updates about various projects in which I am involved.



Let me start by saying how excited I am about our 2016 annual AEU assembly in St. Louis. Following the theme of "the arc of history that bends toward justice," the first day of the Assembly be internally focused on capacity building in our movement, while the second day be outwardly directed at racial justice. We hope to encourage attendance by people in the larger St. Louis community. If you haven't attended an AEU Assembly yet, I recommend that you consider a trip to the heartland in July!

Later in the summer there's an opportunity to participate in something that transformed my relationship with Ethical Culture: Lay Leadership Summer School (LLSS). Attending the 2006 Summer School in the beautiful hills of North Carolina cemented my future as an Ethical Culture Leader. The intensive, challenging, and deeply rewarding week-long experience with other committed Ethical Humanists inspired me not only to become a Leader, but also to serve on the LLSS staff in 2012, 2014, and now again in 2016.

I urge you to consider attending this summer, from August 13-20. You will have the opportunity to build connections and a shared sense of purpose, expand your understanding of Ethical Culture history, philosophy, and future, stimulate reflection, and improve as a leader, decision maker, problem solver, and celebrations creator. Look for that application coming soon to an Ethical Society near you!

Graduate of the 2014 LLSS, BES's own Kate LaClair, used her experience to become the new chair of the AEU Ethical Action Committee. There Katie supports me in my production of the Ethical Action Report which comes out 8 times per year, as well as Ethical Action Feature articles that appear in the AEU newsletter Dialogue which comes out four times per year. Both publications are available at AEU.org.

In general, the national Ethical Action Committee that Kate chairs helps educate

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SUNDAY PLATFORMS 10:30 a.m.

(details on pages 4-5)

FEBRUARY 7

"Equal Justice Discussion: Fixing a Broken System"

Todd Oppenheim
Public Defender

FEBRUARY 14

"Healing through Humanism"

Rebecca Hensler
Founder, Grief Beyond Belief

FEBRUARY 21

"Throwaway Culture: The Excess of Consumerism"

Hugh Taft-Morales
Leader, Baltimore Ethical Society

FEBRUARY 28

"Harm Reduction, Cost Containment, and a Renewed Commitment to Fundamental Fairness"

Judge Andre Davis
U.S. Appeals Court

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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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

Meeting the Challenges of Today

by *Paul Furth, BES President*

The Historic Congress Hotel has been the home of the Baltimore Ethical Society (BES) for over 10 years, a period of significant growth in membership and activities. The Space Rentals Committee (SRC) helps us to serve the community by making available the use of our beautiful space for many groups to meet.

This eight-story landmark was built in 1904 as the Hotel Kernan by philanthropist and entertainment impresario James Lawrence Kernan, connected to two adjacent theaters, the vaudeville Maryland Theater (razed in 1951) and the Auditorium theater which in 1940 became the Mayfair Theater and still stands (sadly, in deplorable condition) on Howard St.

In August 2014, BES took on the monthly rental of the front hall (Suite 103), part of the hotel's 1900-square-foot ballroom, decorated in the dramatic French Renaissance Revival style. This room now serves as our primary meeting space. This additional space has helped us support more social change and justice groups than ever before by providing meeting space, either for a nominal fee or at no cost. In the past year, BES has provided space to organizations such as Jews United for Justice, the Frederick Douglass Humanist Society of Baltimore, Compassion and Choices, the Humanist Service Corps, the National Youth Council, Turnaround, the LGBTQ Humanist Council of Baltimore, Baltimore NOW, SMART Recovery, the Charm City Film, Series, the Baltimore Coalition of Reason, the Maryland Justice Project, and Out For Justice.

To help offset the additional costs for this beautiful room, the BES Board formed the SRC. SRC is charged with finding commercial and non-profit renters for our spaces that would be otherwise largely unused, and tracking room usage through the shared BES Google calendar. Importantly, renting space also increases the visibility of BES in the community, and may indirectly attract new members. The first SRC Chair, Mary Beth Sodus, got the ball rolling and organized the SRC team that includes Monique Stins, and Emil Volcheck, with Hugh Taft-Morales and myself as ex-officio members. Joe Adams currently serves as Chair. Please talk with Joe if you can help.

A parade of commercial groups and organizations are now renting space at BES, including a woman's hat social, a singles mixer, baby shower, and a dance troupe that uses space for rehearsals.

Our newest tenant is Stephanie Avinger LCSW-C, a psychotherapist who sees clients in the library. We're excited about our association with all our tenants.

A very helpful key to find and manage commercial renters has been our new secret weapon: Monica Cooper, who, conveniently, lives in the building. Monica serves as an enthusiastic promoter of the rental space, a one-woman public relations department, and concierge. Her priority is customer service giving renters a great experience, and rentals have been steadily increasing through word-of-mouth as a



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Ethical Education: Tots to Teens

On the February theme of Evolution (Dr. Charles Darwin) and Family Love (Valentine's Day), the pre-K children (ages 3-5) will be engaged in story-telling/listening and learning activities that illustrate the diversity of life on Earth.

Exciting lessons on the evolution of the tadpole into a frog; caterpillars into a butterfly; coloring of hearts, creating a poem and singing lovely songs will round out the month, as guided by pre-K teacher Jill Gordon.

The tots (toddlers ages 1-2) will have stories read with toys in the Library with Toddler Care staff member,

Ruth Schoonover.

Carrying out the theme of evolution and change with children in the 6-12 year group will be teacher Linda Joy Burke. They will be focusing on the care and protection of the Earth through discussions and internet connections/activities.

For the teenage group, there is good news! Angela Donn and Todd Wade have expressed interest in organizing Navigators with us, with Monique Stins in the liaison/coordinator role. Looking forward to outdoor scouting events, family friendly hikes. Visit navigatorsusa.org to learn more.

PLEASE JOIN THE PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE

Interested in educating the public about BES and our good work? Then please join the Public Relations Committee. We will have a quick meeting after the February 7th Platform at 12:15 p.m.

Please join us or email Paul Furth at PDQBlues@aol.com if you would like to help. Thank you.

GRIEF BEYOND BELIEF SECULAR SUPPORT WORKSHOP

Sunday, February 14, 1:30 p.m.

An interactive grief support workshop for those who are grieving without myths or mysticism and for anyone who loves someone who is grieving.

Participants will have the opportunity to tell their own grief stories, learn from others' experiences, and acquire new strategies for processing grief in ways that combine reason and emotion. Whether recently bereaved or learning to live with your grief, you can benefit from the experience of the founder of the secular community's largest grief-support network, Grief Beyond Belief, and from sharing compassion and comfort with other nonbelievers.

RSVP is not required, but helpful, so that we can offer our speaker a sense of how many people will be attending: email Margie at mroswell@gmail.com.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Poetry Group

Sunday, February 7, 9:30 a.m.

Charm City Film Series

Wednesday, February 10, 6:30 p.m.

Baking Night at Moveable Feast

Thursday, February 11, 5:45 p.m.

Darwin Day Celebration

Friday, February 12, 6:30 p.m.

Mindfulness Meditation

Sunday, February 14, 9:30 a.m.

Board Meeting

Sunday, February 14, 12:30 p.m.

Grief Beyond Belief Workshop

Sunday, February 14, 1:30 p.m.

Ethical Action Meeting

Sunday, February 21, 12:45 p.m.

BES Eatery Social

Sunday, February 21, 1:00 p.m.

Family Board and Card Games Party

Sunday, February 21, 3:00 p.m.

Newcomers Meeting

Sunday, February 28, 12:30 p.m.

Sunday Assembly Baltimore

Sunday, February 28, 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	February 7
G to L	February 14
M to R	February 21
S to Z	February 28



FEBRUARY 7

**“Equal Justice Discussion:
Fixing a Broken System”**

Todd Oppenheim
Public Defender

Todd will lead a discussion on the many problems with the justice system along with possible solutions. Mr. Oppenheim will cover the bail system, rulings on issues of stops and seizures of citizens by the police, and the proliferation of the war on drugs within our courts. The talk will focus on an insider's perspective of everyday occurrences in the courts that often get lost with general public.

Todd Oppenheim became a criminal defense attorney in 2013 at the Office of the Public Defender (OPD). Ever since, he has been a diligent, outspoken, and effective advocate for the indigent people of Baltimore. As a public defender, he has fought hard to defend his clients in a system that is stacked against them.

FEBRUARY 14

**“Healing through Humanism:
Grief Beyond Belief and the
Secular Support Movement”**

Rebecca Hensler
Founder, Grief Beyond Belief

Following the death of her infant son, she recognized a need for grief-support services free of the constant references to heaven, angels, spirits and signs that dominate mainstream grief support. When she did not find the kind of community she needed among the many grief-support sites on the internet, Rebecca created Grief Beyond Belief, an online community in which grieving non-believers gather to share their memories, experiences and emotions, including their anger and frustration with religious and spiritual “comfort.” The network that she founded now includes a Facebook page, a closed Facebook group, and an independent website, and collaborates with a variety of affiliates from a secular pet-loss group to a Portuguese-language grief-support group out of Brazil.

Rebecca will speak on the needs of those grieving without faith and the comfort offered by secular peer-to-peer grief support, how Humanism informs secular grief support and helps nonbelievers learn to live with grief, the role of the growing secular support movement in the broader freethought com-

munity, and expansion of Grief Beyond Belief from the internet into real-life grief-support workshops. Following her talk, Rebecca will welcome questions about surviving and healing from grief as a nonbeliever, as well as about Grief Beyond Belief itself.

Rebecca Hensler is the founder of secular grief support network Grief Beyond Belief. She has a BA in Political Activism and an MS in Counseling, and works as a middle school dean in San Francisco.

FEBRUARY 21

**“Throwaway Culture:
The Excess of Consumerism”**

Hugh Taft-Morales
Leader, Baltimore Ethical Society

In the United States we have a “throw away culture.” Our relative wealth, cheap overseas labor, and a ravenous appetite for quick profits have combined to bring out the worst of capitalism. It leads to wasteful economics and more environmental degradation. Worst of all, it doesn't make our lives better. While millions of people living near landfills and dumps scavenge anything of value from the trash we discard, Hugh Taft-Morales asks, “Can't we come up with a better way to live?”

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.

FEBRUARY 28

**“Harm Reduction, Cost Containment,
and a Renewed Commitment to
Fundamental Fairness”**

Judge Andre Davis
U.S. Appeals Court

The judge will be talking about the work of the Court of Appeals and the changes in the Court's jurisprudence, including the changes reflected in the Court as a result of President Obama's seven successful nominations.

Andre Maurice Davis is a Senior Judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit. He previously was a federal district judge, and was nominated first for a seat on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit by President Bill Clinton in 2000. He was renominated to the Fourth Circuit by President Barack Obama on April 2, 2009, and he was confirmed by the Senate on November 9, 2009. On February 28, 2014 Davis assumed senior status. Born in Baltimore, Davis grew up in East Baltimore.

WHAT ARE GIANT CARDS?

They are not very big cards. They are the size of credit cards and they are used like gift cards. People find them convenient rather than carrying a lot of cash or writing out checks while there is a long line waiting. And they are easily used on the self check-out lanes.

You buy them from BES at face value and they are worth that much at a Giant supermarket. If you don't use the full amount on the card, the balance is available for your next shopping trip. The balance is shown on your receipt but if you forget it, there is a phone number listed on the card to call to get your balance.

BES makes money on the cards because we buy them at a 5% discount. We typically buy mostly \$100 face amounts, and a few at \$50 and \$25. However, we can order whatever face amount you want. Just tell Stephen Meskin, who is handling Giant Cards now, what you need.

"IF YOU WANT TO SING OUT, SING OUT"

Singing is fun so come and join us. Everyone is welcome. Rehearsals after platform on the first Sunday of each month, with mini rehearsals of only 30 minutes (12:15 to 12:45) on the third Sunday. Looking especially for accompanist and experienced conductor.



SAVE THE DATE! BUILD MAYORAL FORUM

Sunday, March 13, 4:00 p.m., Location TBA

Join BES Members and friends attending the 2016 Baltimoreans United In Leadership Development (BUILD) Mayoral Forum. Based on past years, BUILD expects all the leading candidates to attend along with thousands of Baltimore residents. This is an opportunity to show the candidates that we stand behind BUILD's "One Baltimore" platform calling for specific commitments to promote jobs, education, public safety, and opportunity for our youth. Look for more details as the event approaches. If you would like to be involved in this or other BUILD activities, please contact Thomas Higdon, Chair of BES's Ethical Action Committee, at higdon.thomas@gmail.com.



FAMILY BOARD AND CARD GAMES PARTY

**Sunday, February 21, 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.

CHARM CITY
film
SERIES

**Wednesday, February 10,
 6:30 p.m.**

This month we will be screening *Citizenfour*, a real life thriller, unfolding by the minute, giving audiences unprecedented access to filmmaker Laura Poitras and journalist Glenn Greenwald's encounters with Edward Snowden in Hong Kong, as he hands over classified documents providing evidence of mass indiscriminate and illegal invasions of privacy by the National Security Agency (NSA). *Citizenfour* places you in the room with Poitras, Greenwald, and Snowden as they attempt to manage the media storm raging outside, forced to make quick decisions that will impact their lives and all of those around them. The film not only shows you the dangers of governmental surveillance – it makes you feel them. *Citizenfour* won the Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature at the 2015 Oscars.

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, February 21, 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.

SUNDAY ASSEMBLY BALTIMORE

Sunday, February 28, 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.

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 ASSEMBLY

DARWIN DAY CELEBRATION

Friday, February 12, 6:30 p.m.

Celebrate Darwin Day with the Baltimore Coalition of Reason! We'll meet at BES for a potluck dinner and talk on evolution by Fred Edwords of the American Humanist Association. Watch the Dialogue list and meetup for details.

BAKING NIGHT AT MOVEABLE FEAST

Thursday, February 11, 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.

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.



VEGAN MAC 'N CHEESE SMACKDOWN

Saturday, February 20, 3:00–6:00 p.m.

The Vegan Mac 'n Cheese Smackdown will be on Saturday, February 20, from 3:00–6:00 p.m. at the Urban Business Center, 1200 West Baltimore Street, Baltimore, MD 21223, sponsored by the PEP Foods Collective. PEP Foods makes vegan living affordable and accessible to everyone, regardless of income, through urban gardens, an industrial vegan kitchen, and free public cooking & education programs. \$10 in advance or \$15 at the door to taste all the exciting submissions. PEP Foods has created the best-tasting, and most affordable vegan cheese there is, which will be available for purchase, along with beer, kombucha, and many other items.

Register: www.pepfoodsinc.com/fundraisers/#macncheese

News from the Ethical Culture Movement

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the AEU, Societies, and the public on how to promote personal moral development and social responsibility through direct assistance, social action, and public advocacy. In particular, it tries to coordinate movement wide responses to social justice challenges. It encourages projects that reflect Ethical Culture values, including: the importance of inherent human worth, potential, relationships, and community; the long-term goal of social transformation; a conviction to work together with other groups where we can agree; and, the importance of reason.

In consultation with the clergy group of our movement, the National Leaders Council (NLC), the AEU has focused our activist efforts in a few areas in recent years. They include expanding LGBTQ rights and marriage equality, economic justice, reforming criminal justice, combating money and power in politics, and supporting the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.

As vice-President of the NLC, I attend occasional Board meetings of the AEU. In December I gave an update of some of the main projects of the Leaders group. One is a restructuring of the purpose and program of the Leader's three annual in-person meetings, which will be supported by virtual business meetings via Podio a couple of times during the year.

The summer in-person NLC meeting will emphasize *continuing education* – for the Leaders, for the Leaders-in-Training, and to a degree for the movement as a whole as it would immediately precede the AEU Assembly. The fall NLC meeting will focus on planning for the movement, with an emphasis on planning the next Assembly and supporting the priorities and projects of the AEU Board and the Executive Director. The winter/spring NLC meeting will focus on Leader retreat and renewal. Personally, I am looking forward to this winter's retreat as I could use some renewal!!! With that, until next time, I bid you adieu.

Meeting Challenges

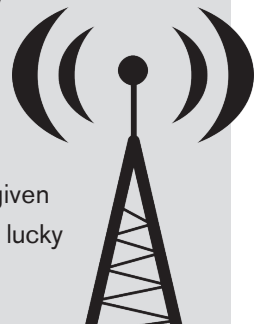
(continued from page 2)

result. You might remember Monica's recent platform address; she's also Director of the Maryland Justice Project.

It's my opinion that our members' actions, activities and deeds are far more valuable than any moneys we may collect. Even if we didn't have a beautiful place to meet or the money to support the rent, BES would still continue to be our community and do good work as long as everyone continued the efforts we do to help make the world a better place for all. Fortunately, we do have a space to meet. And having this space, and offering its use to other humanist-based organizations, helps attract people to our message and goals. Yet, it does come with a cost. Please help support us so that we can help support you.

"RADIO BES" NEEDS YOU!

Mark your calendar for Sunday, March 13, when members will gather right after platform for our annual Pledge Drive Luncheon. This year's theme is how important it is that we continue to "broadcast" humanism from our home at Radio BES. Come celebrate our community with hot catered food, and your cold dish potluck contributions, accompanied by music and fun! There may even be fundraising "swag" given away to some lucky participants!





BALTIMORE ETHICAL SOCIETY

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

NEWSLETTER

Please do not delay!

TIME VALUE

ETHICAL ACTION MEETING

Sunday, February 21, 12:45 p.m.

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

NEWCOMERS MEETING

Sunday, February 28, 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, February 14, 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 and look for us on Facebook, Twitter, and MeetUp.com @bmorethical

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