

BESpeak

FEBRUARY 2017

NEWSLETTER OF THE BALTIMORE ETHICAL SOCIETY

Home, Caring, and Being Cared For

by Hugh Taft-Morales, BES Leader

I missed being at the Baltimore Ethical Society (BES) in December due to a *left* hip replacement. I was disappointed not to be able to dance at HumanLight. And I will miss being with you all during February as I get my *right* hip replaced.

As I recovered from surgery in December, I did enjoy being home. Instead of leaving my Takoma Park house to be at Ethical Societies in Baltimore and Philadelphia, I stayed near the proverbial hearth and practiced being cared for. Generally I'm not a good patient, as my wife Maureen knows well. I did better this time, more readily accepting my limitations. Maureen was tremendously supportive, and children home for the December holidays warmed my heart.

I was lucky to have a caring surgeon and team at Holy Cross Hospital. They were professional and casual simultaneously, and made the surgery seem less dramatic than what I had whipped up in my imagination. The personal care was a far cry from some health care horror stories I have heard. It's so easy to feel caught up in an uncaring bureaucracy that seems oblivious to our inherent worth.

In general, one of the hardest things for anyone facing serious challenges – whether medical, financial, or emotional – is the sense of helplessness. For someone like me, lucky to have avoided that sense of helplessness for much of my life, it's relatively easy to suffer a temporary period of physical helplessness. I knew the helplessness was temporary.

This experience is good for me, reminding me that total independence is a myth. Even when we're healthy, we constantly rely on others. Even our sense of identity is wrapped up in relationships – relationships with those close to us and those with whom we simply share a group affiliation, whether that's through a sports team, a nation, an ethnic group, or an Ethical Society.

At BES we have a community home that happens to be at 306 W. Franklin. The Old Congress Hotel has been a humanist home for me for seven years. But, if in the future we have to find another place to meet, I know that "home" is more than a physical



(continued on page 7)

SUNDAY PLATFORMS 10:30 a.m.

(details on pages 4–5)

FEBRUARY 5

"Triumphs and Struggles to Maintain a Clean Water Source"

Kellogg J. Schwab, Ph.D.
Director, JHU Water Institute

FEBRUARY 12

"The Beauty & Mystery of the Human Genome"

Jonathan Pevsner, Ph.D.
Professor, Kennedy Krieger Institute
and Johns Hopkins Medicine

FEBRUARY 19

"Coming of Age in the Other America"

Stefanie DeLuca, Ph.D.
Author and Professor,
Johns Hopkins University

FEBRUARY 26

"Baltimore's White L(ies) and the Black Butterfly"

Lawrence Brown, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor,
Morgan State University

ETHICAL HUMANIST SUNDAY SCHOOL

Every Sunday
10:30 a.m. – Noon

Individualized programs for preschool children and school aged students.

TODDLER CARE

Separate supervision provided for children up to age two.

Looking Ahead:

The Ethical Education Program for the Tots-to-Teens Program

With three wonderful teachers (Jill Gordon: Pre-K; Monica Cooper and Anita Brownstein: Pre-Teens), and Toddler Care staff: Ruth Schoonover (with members of the Ethical Education Committee: Pat Denholm, Maya Kosok, Kim Knox, Matthew Milstead, Max Romano, Monique Stins, Tevis Tsai and Chairperson Argentine Craig), the BES Tots-to-Teens Ethical Education Program have planned fun-learning activities, built around the following themes and core ethical values.

February

Theme: Children around the world

Core Ethical Value: I am a member of the world community which depends on the cooperation of all people for peace and justice.

March

Theme: Family

Core Ethical Values: Every person is important and unique. Every person deserves to be treated fairly and kindly. I can learn from everyone.



April

Theme: Celebrating and protecting the Earth

Core Ethical Value: I am part of this earth. I cherish it and all the life upon it. I learn from the world around me by using my senses, mind and feelings.

May

Theme: Empathy

Core Ethical Value: Every person is important and unique. I can learn from everyone when I listen.

Continuing on the last Sunday of each month are Spanish Language and Culture lessons, taught by Pre-Teen Teacher Anita Brownstein.

In addition, our participation in Navigators, USA Scouting activities (coordinated by Dr. Monique Stins), makes for an integrated and diverse body/mind/spirit experience. See the notice below for more information.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Poetry Group

Sunday, February 5, 9:30 a.m.

Charm City Film Series

Wednesday, February 8, 6:30 p.m.

Mindfulness Meditation

Sunday, February 12, 9:30 a.m.

Board Meeting

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

Ethical Action Meeting

Sunday, February 19, 12:45 p.m.

Program Committee Meeting

Sunday, February 26, 12:30 p.m.

Newcomers Meeting

Sunday, February 26, 12:30 p.m.

CHECK OUT OUR MEETUP GROUP

There is no cost to join the site, and it is the easiest way to RSVP to an event, get directions, or arrange car pools. Together we can create meaningful events, make friends and learn teach and share ethical culture

www.meetup.com/bmoreethical

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 5
G to L	February 12
M to R	February 19
S to Z	February 26



NAVIGATORS USA CHAPTER 43

The Baltimore Ethical Society is proud to sponsor Navigators USA Chapter 43, an all-inclusive, co-ed, secular scouting group. If you are interested in joining Navigators please email baltimore Navigators@gmail.com.

Regular meetings in February will be on the 12th and 22nd, and there will be a flex event on the 26th. The theme for February is "selfcare."

SUNDAY PLATFORM PROGRAMS

FEBRUARY 5

“Water in Baltimore & the World: Triumphs and Struggles to Maintain a Clean Water Source”

Kellogg J. Schwab, Ph.D.
Director, JHU Water Institute

The world faces critical issues relating to water as the result of human pressures and climate trends. In short, we need to answer the following critical question: how can we provide better prediction and management of water quantity and quality for the sustained health of mankind and ecosystems, now and for future generations? In meeting this challenge, we must think and act both locally and globally. Only integrated and evidence-based approaches will find efficient and sustainable solutions for the diverse array of complex global water problems. This discussion will highlight water resources and needs both domestically and internationally.

Dr. Kellogg Schwab is a Professor in the Department of Environmental Health and Engineering at the Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health and Director of the JHU Water Institute. The Water Institute integrates Hopkins researchers from public health, engineering, chemistry, materials science, medicine, behavior, policy, and economic disciplines to address the critical nexus of water, food, and energy. The goal of this program is to achieve sustainable, scalable solutions for domestic, agricultural, and industrial water challenges. Dr. Schwab's research laboratory focuses on environmental microbiology and engineering with an emphasis on the fate and transport of chemicals, emerging contaminants and pathogenic microorganisms in water, food, and the environment. Current research projects involve investigating innovative water reuse treatment options as well as improving environmental detection methods for noroviruses (the leading cause of non-bacterial gastroenteritis worldwide). He is also working with Hopkins colleagues to integrate mobile data collection to assess family planning along with water, sanitation and hygiene around the world.

FEBRUARY 12

“The Beauty & Mystery of the Human Genome”

Jonathan Pevsner, Ph.D.
*Professor, Kennedy Krieger Institute
and Johns Hopkins Medicine*

DNA, formed in the famous double helix, is organized into chromosomes and helps shape the identity of all living things. It is remarkable that the particular sequence of DNA can specify whether a creature is a snake, plant, virus, or human. This presentation provides a brief overview of the tree of life, and in honor of Darwin Day (February 12) we present Darwin's own evolutionary tree. We then explore the DNA in the human genome. Following the completion of the human genome project (2003) and the first report of an individual's human genome (2007), hundreds of thousands of human genomes have now been sequenced. We introduce the genomics revolution that allows genomes to be sequenced, examine the relationship between the genome and disease, and welcome discussion of Darwin's ideas on evolution in contemporary biology.

Dr. Jonathan Pevsner is a Professor in the Department of Neurology (Kennedy Krieger Institute) and the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences (Johns Hopkins Medicine). His lab studies the genetic basis of childhood brain disorders and reported a mutation that causes a rare disease (Sturge-Weber syndrome) as well as commonly occurring birthmarks. (Jonathan now serves as Chief Scientific Officer of the Sturge-Weber Foundation.) The lab recently reported a genetic cause for 5% of autism cases. Jonathan is the recipient of five teaching awards at Johns Hopkins. He wrote a textbook, *Bioinformatics and Functional Genomics* (3rd edition, 2015). He also has a long-standing interest in Leonardo da Vinci, and teaches and lectures extensively on him. He has published articles on Leonardo's studies of the brain, and has been featured as a Leonardo expert on the History Channel and the Discovery Channel.



bmorethical t-shirts ONLY \$15

GET YOURS TODAY! Available in black, purple, and white

SUNDAY PLATFORM PROGRAMS

FEBRUARY 19

“Coming of Age in the Other America”

Stefanie DeLuca, Ph.D.

Author and Professor, Johns Hopkins University

In her new book, *Coming of Age in the Other America*, named an Outstanding Academic Title by the American Library Association, Stefanie DeLuca and colleagues reveal some surprising factors associated with resiliency and upward mobility in a large proportion of disadvantaged youth, despite overwhelming odds. Ten years of fieldwork with families in Baltimore public housing (among the nation's poorest neighborhoods) revealed that those able to move to better neighborhoods achieved much higher rates of high school completion and college enrollment than their parents. About half the youth reported being motivated by an “identity project” or a strong passion such as music, art, or a dream job – to finish school and build a career. Factors associated with lack of success included neighborhood violence, weak labor markets, exploitative for-profit trade schools and under-funded community colleges. The authors identified initiatives to support these ‘identity projects’ which motivate youth to stay in school, as well as greater regulation of for-profit schools and increased college resources. This is a story of a generation of underprivileged but ambitious Baltimoreans that challenges long-held myths about inner-city youth, and how becoming stuck in the same place as one's parents – is far from inevitable.

Dr. Stefanie DeLuca is an Associate Professor of Sociology at the Johns Hopkins University. Her research interests include the effects of programs to help public housing residents relocate to better neighborhoods and schools through housing vouchers. Her work has been funded by the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the National Science Foundation, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the MacArthur Foundation, the Abell Foundation, and by a William T. Grant Foundation Scholars Award, among others. In 2006 Stefanie testified in federal court on behalf of the plaintiffs in the Baltimore *Thompson v. HUD* housing desegregation case. She contributes regularly to media such as the *Baltimore Sun*, *Washington Post*, *The Atlantic*, *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times*, National Public Radio, as well as academic journals. She is a fellow at The Century Foundation, and is a member of the policy advisory board at The Reinvestment Fund.

FEBRUARY 26

“Baltimore’s White L(ies) and the Black Butterfly”

Lawrence Brown, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor, Morgan State University

On May 18, 1896, the U.S. Supreme Court handed down its decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson* which legalized racial segregation in transportation and public accommodations. On December 20, 1910, Baltimore became the first city in the United States to pass a comprehensive racial zoning law. Based on census data gathered 100 years later, Princeton sociologist Douglass Massey describes Baltimore as still hypersegregated and ranks Baltimore in the top 8 currently racially segregated cities in the United States. In *White L(ies) and the Black Butterfly*, Dr. Brown will highlight how white supremacist theology helped sanctify and justify America's racial segregation.

Dr. Lawrence T. Brown, the grandson of Mississippi sharecroppers & preachers, is an assistant professor at Morgan State University in the School of Community Health and Policy, with a doctorate in Health Outcomes and Policy Research. He was awarded an Open Society Institute Baltimore Community Fellowship for helping fathers connect with jobs and resources (2012). Dr. Brown worked as an activist with the Baltimore Redevelopment Action Coalition for Empowerment (BRACE) in the Middle East community dealing with the displacement of 742 Black families from their community.

BES WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS



Dan and Jessica Cohan were officially welcomed as new members of the Baltimore Ethical Society on January 15, 2017.

CHARM CITY
film
SERIES

Wednesday, February 8,
6:30 p.m.

This month, the Charm City Film Series will be screening *If a Tree Falls: A Story of the Earth Liberation Front*.

In December 2005, Daniel McGowan was arrested by Federal agents in a nationwide sweep of radical environmentalists involved with the Earth Liberation Front (ELF) – a group the FBI has called America’s “number one domestic terrorism threat.”

With the arrest of Daniel and thirteen others, the government had cracked what was probably the largest ELF cell in America and brought down the group responsible for the very first ELF arsons in this country.

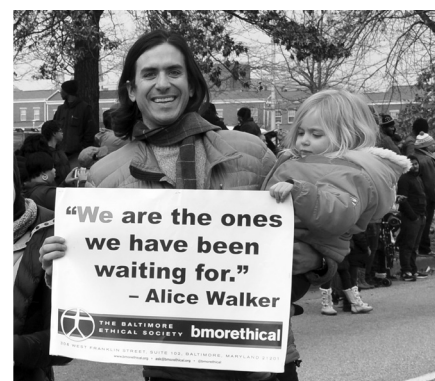
If a Tree Falls: A Story of the Earth Liberation Front tells the remarkable story of the rise and fall of this ELF cell, by focusing on the transformation and radicalization of one of its members.

The film 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.

MLK Day Parade

For the first time in years, my travel schedule allowed me to be in Baltimore for the Martin Luther King Jr. Parade. Even though my recent hip surgery made it hard to march, I was so glad I could cheer on our BES contingent. Martin Luther King, Jr. was a hero of mine from as far back into my childhood as I can remember. When I became a teacher one particular speech he gave stuck with me. In “The Drum Major Instinct” King recalls a parable in which John and James ask Jesus if they can sit at the right hand of God. King points out that such a request might be taken to be selfish. Should Jesus have condemned John and James for this?

King answers that Christ gave James and John a different answer. In King’s words, “He said in substance, ‘Oh, I see, you want to be first. You want to be great. You want to be important. You want to be significant. Well, you ought to be. If you’re going to be my disciple, you must be.’ But he reordered priorities. And he said, ‘Yes, don’t give up this instinct. It’s a good instinct if you use it right. It’s a good instinct if you don’t distort it and pervert it. Don’t give it up. Keep feeling the need for being important. Keep feeling the need for being first. But I



want you to be first in love. I want you to be first in moral excellence. I want you to be first in generosity. That is what I want you to do.’”

For King, there is nothing wrong with wanting to be a moral hero. It’s great to want to be a drum major if you are part of the parade promoting the inherent self worth of every individual. In these challenging times, we need as many marching in this parade as we can get!



HOLD THE DATE: MARCH 26 BES PLEDGE LUNCHEON

Calling all BES members! Calling all BES members! Take your calendars out **NOW** and mark down on Sunday, March 26 in bright bold “Attend BES Pledge Luncheon!” Let’s get pack the house for fun, food, and friendship in celebrating Ethical Culture in Baltimore. We will begin at noon right after platform and be done by 1:30p.m. Contact Paul or Hugh if you can help out with our program, set up, and clean up!



Community Without Conformity

(continued from page 2)

der expression, sexuality, age, beliefs, and other categories that, historically, have been used to divide rather than to unite us. The answer is no, we aren’t doing enough. Not because of a lack of efforts. We fall short because there’s no humanly way to do all that we want to do, especially for those who’ve been historically denied by the majority that worth and dignity. We, as a small community, can do only so much. We need your contributions to help make that dream of Dr. King’s a reality.

I want BES to be as welcoming as possible. I want people of all races and backgrounds to feel comfortable showing up at our events, joining our community, and more importantly, sharing with us their experiences, thoughts, concerns, fears and hopes. I hope all feel invited to serve on our Board and help guide BES to an ever inclusive level. For that reason, I applaud those like Lane Berk and others who go out of their way to invite people of color to our community, applaud the Program Committee for striving to be as inclusive as possible with the variety of platforms throughout the year,

the Ethical Action and Public Relations Committees for participating in events like the Martin Luther King, Jr. March. (This year, we were invited to be part of the float created in his honor.)

Race is a human construct, most likely devised to divide people and justify slavery. Science reveals a greater genetic variation between people of different color hair than different color skin. And yet, we’re taught in this society to see “race” – skin color differences. It’s important to avoid the false rhetoric of becoming “color blind,” which sounds like a rationalization to do nothing to heal the wounds that continue to fester in this country, as we’ve witnessed this past Presidential election. Instead, we can celebrate these differences, welcome all people because of their similarities and variations, and continue to form that more perfect union promised to us 240 years ago. So let’s celebrate National Black History Month through what we can do, including education and actions. BES is a microcosm of that ideal society for which we strive, to love one another, to have a community without conformity.

Home, Caring, and Being Cared For

(continued from page 1)

place. It’s the warmth of personal relationships that turns a place into a home.

A few years ago I read an interview with Colin Powell. He said, “I heard about a boy, an army brat. His family moved to a new community, and when he showed up at his new school, the teacher introduced him by saying, ‘It must be hard finding a new home every couple of years.’ He answered, ‘No ma’am. We always have a home; we’re just looking for a house to put it in.’” The heart of any “home” is warmth of relationships.

I care deeply for our BES community. Maybe I care even more having experienced being cared for by my family. I look forward to being back more at BES helping us all build our humanist home. I hope that you too feel a sense of being at home through Ethical Culture, whether that’s by being at Sunday platforms, or working together for a good cause, or just by reading this newsletter. See you all more often in the spring!

PROGRAM COMMITTEE MEETING

**Sunday, February 26,
12:30 p.m.**

Join the Program Committee and help choose speakers for our Sunday morning meetings! Visitors are also welcome to provide thoughts and speaker suggestions, or to just listen. The Program Committee meets monthly on fourth Sundays.



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 19, 12:45 p.m.

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

NEWCOMERS MEETING

Sunday, February 26, 12:30 p.m.

New to the Society and interested in learning more? Come to the Newcomers Meeting, held following the last Sunday Platform of every month, and find out more about Ethical Culture and our Society – its history, its philosophy, and its organization. Meetings last about one hour and are recommended for anyone who's curious about membership. Please attend at least one Platform before going to a Newcomers Meeting. Contact Wayne Laufert or Janey Solwold for more information.

MINDFULNESS

meditation

Sunday, February 12, 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

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. Thank you.