

BESpeak

MARCH 2017

NEWSLETTER OF THE BALTIMORE ETHICAL SOCIETY

Can We Be One in Song?

by Hugh Taft-Morales, BES Leader

Most of you know that I love singing. Many of you have been a part of recent efforts headed by Stephen Meskin to form a modest BES chorus. I heard a Krista Tippet interview with Alice Parker – a 90-year-old composer, conductor, and teacher of singing – that inspires me to bring back this effort.



Parker spoke about how singing joins human beings in ways few other arts can. Parker calls singing the “language of babies.” She says, “that’s what they’re born knowing. From their first utterance, it’s all singing.” Bobby McFerrin said we probably sang before we spoke.

I don’t recall singing much in my life until my parents enrolled me in the boy’s choir of Trinity Church in New Haven, Connecticut. History and philosophy greatly shaped my intellectual growth, but few pastimes gave my intuitive life such room to grow. This is what fascinated Ms. Parker and animated her work in drawing forth this “language of emotions.”

Equally as important to her is the *communal* expression of singing. As she explains, “In any place there’s a group of singing, where two or three are gathered together, we can sing.” Tippet noted how mysterious the process can be. She said that you can take, “a collection of very ordinary people, some – many of whom have no training, maybe all of them have no training, probably a fair number of any group like that is tone deaf, and yet make a gorgeous noise.”

Ethical Humanism has a long tradition of bringing people together around ideas. Explaining, comparing, debating ideas can be an important part of community and is a necessary part of a functioning civic body. But it’s not enough. Ideas, in and of themselves, don’t always engage the whole person. Rationality does not necessarily nurture the web of relationships so necessary for a complete life.

Parker explains it this way: “It has to do with the fact that the walls that we put up around ourselves in order to get through growing up in polite society and stuff simply dissolve when we are all listening together to a song, and when we’ve called

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SUNDAY PLATFORMS

10:30 a.m.

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MARCH 5

“Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network”

Jabari Lyles

Director, GLSEN Baltimore

MARCH 12

“Fragility and Resilience”

Hugh Taft-Morales

Ethical Leader

MARCH 19

“Autocracy and Populism on the Rise: Lessons from Turkey in the Trump Era”

Mahir Zeynalov

Journalist

MARCH 26

“Kayla and Me”

Fritz Williams

Ethical Leader

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.

Ethical Education Program

"There is nothing more precious in life than the time we spend with our children"

The theme for the month of March is FAMILY. In the broadest definition of the word, it embraces the nuclear, the extended, the diverse and mixed relationships. According to Felix Adler (founder of Ethical Culture in 1876), the primary place of the family furnished the cornerstone of his conception of the moral structure of human society and remains central as the principal child-rearing unit and should continue to express the most complete and nurturing relationship in the lives of men and women.

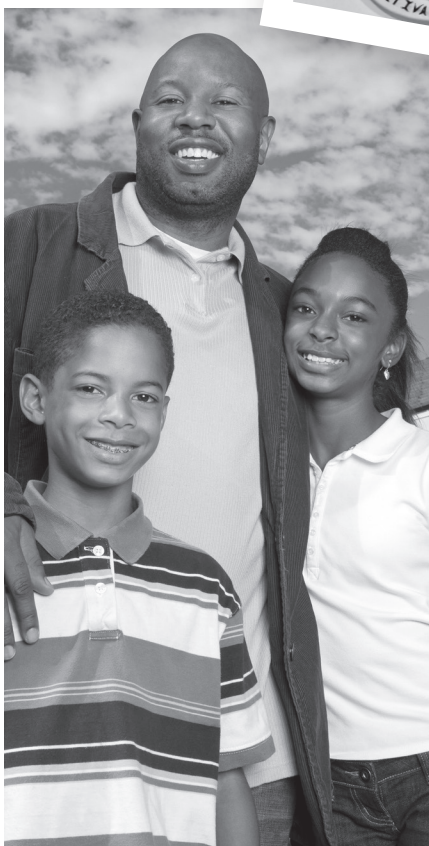


Enlivening the concept with varied activities, the pre-K children will be listening to the reading of books to include *The Relatives Came* by Cynthia Rylant and *The Family Book* by

Todd Parr, plus drawing pictures and sharing their experiences of being in a family.

The Pre-Teens will be engaged in noting and celebrating "Women's History Month" in the acclaimed words of President Barak Obama: "We must carry forward the work of the women who came before us and ensure our daughters have no limits on their dreams, no obstacles to their achievements, and no remaining ceilings to shatter."

During the last Sunday (March 26), the pre-teen group will continue their learning experiences in Spanish culture and language through stories, art and dialogue.



OTHER ACTIVITIES

Poetry Group

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

Charm City Film Series

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

Mindfulness Meditation

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

Board Meeting

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

Ethical Action Meeting

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

Community Pledge Luncheon

Sunday, March 26, 12:00 p.m.

Program Committee Meeting

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

Newcomers Meeting

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

CHECK OUT OUR MEETUP GROUP

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/bmorethical

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



MARCH 5

“Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network”

Jabari Lyles

Director, GLSEN Baltimore

The Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN) is the nation's leading organization devoted to addressing LGBTQ issues in America's K-12 schools. Established in 1990, GLSEN has over 25 years of experience providing outreach and training to school staff, students and administrators, conducting and disseminating research, and leading the national conversation about creating safe and supportive school environments for all students. Through its research, GLSEN has identified specific interventions for schools to improve school climate and cut down on anti-LGBTQ bias-based remarks and language. GLSEN has roughly 40 chapters across the country. Learn more at their website www.glsen.org/chapters/baltimore.

Jabari Lyles, Director of GLSEN Baltimore, has been working in education, community organizing and social justice activism for years. He is the former Executive Director and current President of GLCCB, Baltimore's LGBTQ community center, has worked with FreeState Justice, and has been a public school teacher and speaker in Baltimore City. Jabari has presented on LGBTQ issues at conferences locally, statewide and nationally.

MARCH 12

“Fragility and Resilience”

Hugh Taft-Morales

Ethical Leader

There are many times when as individuals, or as a country, we have felt fragile. Times can be hard, and the strengths we rely upon can slip from our grasps. We can be knocked down. How do we get back up? How do we go on? What is resilience, and from where does it spring? Hugh Taft-Morales

explores the important trait of resilience to survive health challenges, national crises, and ecological threats. At a time when many are feeling grave uncertainty about the future, maybe paradoxically it is in our very fragility that resilience is born.

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.

MARCH 19

“Autocracy and Populism on the Rise: Lessons from Turkey in the Trump Era”

Mahir Zeynalov

Journalist

The American immigration ban is seen in Turkey and elsewhere as discrimination against Muslims, complicated by President Trump's business interests in Istanbul. As one of the United States' most strategic allies, Turkey is critical in the fight against ISIS, and has NATO's second largest army. Yet with the recent rise in authoritarianism, relations with the U.S. are deteriorating.

Mahir Zeynalov is the first Turkish journalist to be deported from Turkey, and the first that President Erdogan sought to have imprisoned. He rose to international prominence documenting the recent media crackdown in Turkey. He worked for Turkey's leading English-language daily until it was shut down by the government in 2016. He started his career at the *Los Angeles Times*, regularly contributes to the *Huffington Post*, and is a frequent commentator on CNN, NBC, Al Jazeera, BBC and others.



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MARCH 26
“Kayla and Me”

Fritz Williams
Ethical Leader

In this reunion with BES friends, Fritz will reflect on his relationship with Kayla, his granddaughter who is serving a four-year sentence as an accomplice to a violent crime. She and her boyfriend became addicted to heroin, and she was waiting for him in their car (which they were living in, by the way) while he, armed with a pointed finger inside a jacket pocket, robbed a Turkey Hill convenience store. Fritz wrote a letter to the judge, but failed in his attempt to secure a more moderate sentence, and once a month now, he makes a 700-mile round trip to visit her at the women's prison near Erie, PA, and every week he writes a letter to her – exactly 120 letters so far. What will come of it all is hard to say. Most drug addicts and alcoholics suffer relapses, and for heroin addicts, relapses are often deadly. But for Fritz and his granddaughter, his efforts to support and encourage her have produced an amazingly open and loving extended conversation between an 80-year-old man and a troubled young woman in her early 20s.

In his old age, **Fritz Williams**, Leader Emeritus of the Baltimore Ethical Society, is enjoying his fourth career. In the 1960s he worked as a parish priest at Episcopal Churches in Philadelphia and in Bucks County, PA. In the 1970s he wrote and produced documentaries and educational television programs at WITF-TV (PBS), Harrisburg, PA. In the 1980s, working for WTVS-TV, Detroit, he helped create and produce a media-based campaign aimed at calling attention to the needs of young people in that distressed metropolitan area. In the 1990s and the opening decade of the 21st century, he served two terms as leader of the Baltimore Ethical Society. Currently, he is attempting to share his deepest and most personal memories, ideas, and fantasies in writing – prose and poetry, fiction and non-fiction.

**CAN'T MAKE IT TO THE SOCIETY ON
SUNDAY MORNINGS? INTERESTED IN A
PAST PLATFORM THAT YOU MISSED?**

Watch them on our vimeo page! Simply go to
vimeo.com/user4409178 to see video recordings of
many of our platforms from the last several years.

**CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS
FOR SUMMER SUNDAYS**

During the summer months, BES Sunday morning meetings feature talks that are less formal than platform addresses. These talks run 10-30 minutes in length and are commonly offered by BES members or friends. The speaker usually invites discussion following their talk. The Program Committee encourages BES members and friends to suggest topics for talks they'd like to give and invites you to contact Program Committee Chair Joe Adams with your ideas and suggestions. Proposals must be submitted by April 30 to guarantee consideration.

Our partner Out for Justice, in cooperation with Job Opportunities Task Force (JOTF) is hosting a march and lobby day. If you are interested in participating, please RSVP directly to them using the contact information above.



**UNITED
FOR
JUSTICE**

LOBBY DAY IN ANNAPOLIS

Tuesday, March 28, 2017

Join us in Annapolis as we march to the capitol, rally on Lawyers' Mall, visit with legislators, and host informative workshops to urge support for state legislative proposals that ensure
JUSTICE FOR ALL.

Transportation can be provided for those traveling to Annapolis. Buses will depart from your location between 7-8AM and return by 3PM.
RSVP is required.

For more information contact:
Seanniece Bamiro / Job Opportunities Task Force/ sbamiro@jotf.org
Nicole Mundell / Out for Justice, Inc. / nhanson@out4justice.org

CHARM CITY Film SERIES

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

This month, the Charm City Film Series will be screening ***The Overnights***.

In the town of Williston, North Dakota, tens of thousands of unemployed hopefuls show up with dreams of honest work and a big paycheck under the lure of the oil boom. However, busloads of newcomers chasing a broken American Dream step into the stark reality of slim work prospects and nowhere to sleep. The town lacks the infrastructure to house the overflow of migrants, even for those who do find gainful employment.

The Overnights engages and dramatizes a set of universal societal and economic themes: the promise and limits of re-invention, redemption and compassion, as well as the tension between the moral imperative to "love thy neighbor" and the resistance that one small community feels when confronted by a surging river of desperate, job-seeking strangers.

The film is free and open to the public. Donations are suggested. Films are followed by discussion.

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 March will be on the 12th and 22nd.



A Friend in Need

(continued from page 2)

enjoy San Diego. Ralph was grateful, his mood seemed far improved, but I had to get back home ASAP.

Despite the toll, in time, money and stress, that this trip took on me, I would do it again even knowing how much of a nightmare it was. That's what friendship is about; when in crisis, while others forsake, real friends step in.

And I've made many friends at BES. In a very real sense, I consider the Society itself a friend. And your Society is calling for your help. We're in the midst of the annual Pledge Drive. Our Society exists only through you, our members.

We ask every member to contribute through the three t's - time, talent and treasure. As I often say, in my opinion, your time and talent are much more valuable donations because that's the essence of what we do - action. Yet, it's also good to have a community space to meet, lights, air-conditioning,

a Sunday School to teach our young students about ethics and critical thinking, newsletters, various social media outreach tools, attendance at festivals, a group to help members in need, a variety of presenters on Sunday throughout the year, gifts we give to every new member, to name but a few things your Society does - all of which cost money. And your Society depends upon the support of you, our members, to make all this happen.

Please keep March 26th open. We'll hold our Annual Pledge Luncheon, BES's gift to you for your continual support.

Consider the benefits that BES offers you, then consider how much more we could do with additional resources. Contribute what you can afford. Even consider increasing your commitment for this year. Your Society depends on your support. A friend is calling for your help. Please answer the call.

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 contact weddings@bmoreethical.org.

2017 BES Community Pledge Luncheon

Sunday, March 26, 12:00 p.m.

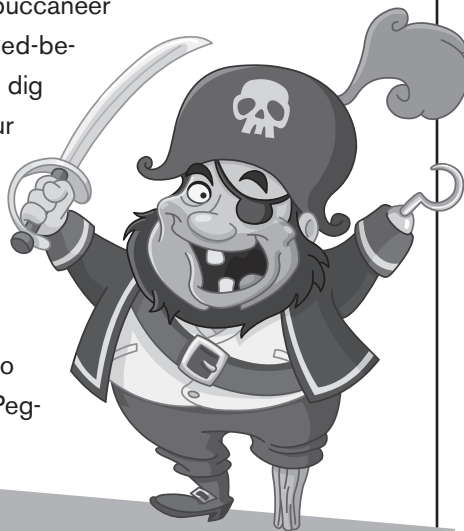
Baltimore Ethical Society Members!

With our recent shift in political winds, we need progressive humanist broadcasting more than ever! So we're launching of "Pirate Radio BES!" Avast ye, all hands on deck!

Argh, matey, that's right. We're asking you to join us as we take humanism to the high seas at our 2017 BES Community Pledge Luncheon on Sunday, March 26 right after platform! No hornswagging out of this cheap opportunity to do pirate-talk. Shiver me timbers and batten down the hatches, you might say. Prepare your duffle and join BES buccaneer

helmsmen Paul Further-than-we've-sailed-before and Hugh Taft Moral-less as we all dig deep and heave ho! Let's maximize our booty so we don't have to scuttle the ship. Let's tighten the rigging of the S. S. BES and turn the evil in the world into shark bait. They'll be camaraderie, some "yo ho ho," vittles, and some grog (should you want to put some sheets to the wind). Please RSVP ASAP either to Peg-Legged Paul or Hi Ho Hugh so that we know how many fish to fry.

Translator's note: For all you land-lubbers, tell Paul or Hugh that you'll attend our Pledge Luncheon right after platform on March 26th! Supplement delicious food from the Land of Kush with your own pot-luck item to share. See you all there!



SILENT AUCTION

Monique is planning a silent auction to take place during the pledge drive luncheon. Members who would like to contribute an item or service for the silent auction should contact her via email at momiek1@hotmail.com.

PROGRAM COMMITTEE MEETING

Sunday, March 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.

Can We Be One in Song?

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forth the emotional underpinning of that song, the context out of which the song arises." As I grow older, personally, I seek more ways to dissolve those walls.

This month I turn 60. (*Please no fuss, no gifts - don't make me regret bringing this up!*) Parker speaks of how music echoed her sense of wholeness that came more fully into focus as she grew older. She said, "I was about 60 when I began to see my own experiences adding up to me instead of being very diverse experiences in conducting, and composing, and teaching, and mothering, and all the rest of it. ...when you begin to get out of it, it's as if you're putting your head up above water, and you're looking out and saying, 'Oh, is that the way it works?'"

Ethical Culture, often called a religion of relationships, can grow stronger through singing. A chorus creates relationships because, in Parker's words, it "has to be face-to-face, and it has to be local." So often I hear people say, "Oh, but I'm not a singer." If we think about this more as connection than performance, however, perhaps it will be an important bonding experience during these divided times. As Alice Parker explains, "As the first often faint sounds come from my throat, I'm beginning to spin a web connecting me to the group, and my whole effort is to get connecting threads coming back from them. As the song builds, the thread becomes a line, a rope, a cable, a bridge. And finally, there is no division. We are all one in song."



BALTIMORE ETHICAL SOCIETY

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

NEWSLETTER

Please do not delay!

TIME VALUE

ETHICAL ACTION MEETING

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

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

NEWCOMERS MEETING

Sunday, March 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, March 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.

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Visit bmorethical.org and look for us on Facebook, Twitter, and MeetUp.com @bmorethical

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