

BESpeak

APRIL 2017

NEWSLETTER OF THE BALTIMORE ETHICAL SOCIETY

Together We Can Be More – *Bmorethical 2017*

by Hugh Taft-Morales, BES Leader

I'm excited about our upcoming American Ethical Union (AEU) gathering slated for June 8-11 in Baltimore! Working with the AEU Assembly Committee, I am currently combing through many wonderful proposals for workshops submitted from around the country. When the program is unveiled next month, I hope that many of you will register to attend *Bmorethical 2017*. It's a great opportunity to learn more about our movement, develop new skills, and build relationships with other Ethical Culturists. Also, the theme of the Assembly, *Communities Confronting Systemic Racism*, is even more important given current political realities.

I know many of you will come out to help host our annual gathering. BES member Jeanne Sears is already involved in helping with local volunteers and logistics, and Emil Volcheck is co-chair of the Assembly Committee. And those of you who have been active in the American Ethical Union for decades will naturally register to attend. Those of you who have served on national committees and the AEU Board appreciate our national network of mutual support. Since most of you *have not* had this opportunity, however, I want to share more about why our AEU is so important to me.

Of course, my commitment to the AEU is no surprise. Having chosen Ethical Culture Leadership as my vocation, I appreciate the support and training given me by the Leadership Committee and a wide variety of volunteers. I've been able to get to know my wonderful fellow colleagues who choose to serve particular Societies – or society at large – through Ethical Culture Leadership. I've been to nearly thirty multi-day Leader retreats, where my colleagues supported each other and coordinated national projects through the National Leaders Council (NLC), which I now serve as President.

I've been able to visit many Ethical Societies. After joining the Washington Ethical Society and then serving three Ethical Societies (Philadelphia, Baltimore, Northern



(continued on page 6)

SUNDAY PLATFORMS

10:30 a.m.

(details on pages 4–5)

APRIL 2

“The Good News
About Racism!”

Eraka Rouzorundu
Empowerment Specialist

APRIL 9

“The Diversity of Islam”

Hugh Taft-Morales
Ethical Leader

APRIL 16

“Everything You Ever Wanted
to Know about Recycling”

Robert Murrow
Coordinator, Baltimore
City Recycling Program

APRIL 23

“Becoming White”

Hugh Taft-Morales
Ethical Leader

APRIL 30

“The Good Will Revolution:
Leave the Rat Race to the Rats”

Michael Irving Phillips
Author, WEAA radio host

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.

BESpeak

is published monthly
September through June by
the Baltimore Ethical Society
306 W. Franklin St., Suite 102
Baltimore, MD 21201-4661
410-581-2322

Issue 468

Editor: Kathryn Merrill
Proofreading & Circulation: Judy Katz
Deadline: 10th of the prior month

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

OFFICERS & EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBERS

President.....Paul Furth
Vice President.....Thomas Higdon
Secretary.....Janey Solwold
Treasurer.....Karen Elliott
Fred Compton Stephen Meskin
Charles Shafer Alan Shapiro
Gordon Stills Emil Volcheck

COMMITTEE CONTACTS

BuildingAlan Shapiro
CaringKirk Mullen
Communications
Deliverables.....Kathryn Merrill
Ethical Action.....Charles Shafer
Ethical EducationArgentine Craig
Film Series.....Joe Adams
Financial Stephen Meskin
Membership..... Wayne Laufert
 and Janey Solwold
Program.....Joe Adams
Public Relations.....Paul Furth
Social Events Mav Vaughan

ACTIVITY CONTACTS

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

ETHICAL CULTURE/ HUMANIST OFFICIANTS

Karen Elliott, Paul Furth,
Kirk Mullen, Hugh Taft-Morales
Coordinator: Kathryn Merrill

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

On the web at bmorethical.org

The Tree of Knowledge

by Paul Furth, BES President



The Baltimore Ethical Society is a non-theistic congregation of humanists and free thinkers. We free thinkers are, by nature, group-think averse. Getting together a congregation of free thinkers seems like an insurmountable achievement; and in many ways, it is (likened to herding cats). Ethical Culture offers us free thinkers the opportunity to join together where we agree on actions without having to compromise our ability to be skeptical and to question. That freedom to question in a safe and encouraging environment is what makes our community diverse and thus stronger. It's what I find very appealing.

We come from a diversity of backgrounds and hold a diversity of beliefs. Many of our members were reared in the Catholic Church (the term, "Recovering Catholic" is frequently used). Regardless of our upbringing, we each have our individual path that led us to BES. In the following, I offer to you a glimpse into mine.

Perhaps it's fitting that the biblical symbol that led to the banishment of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden be called "the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil." Fitting, because it was a related question for which I sought knowledge and understanding that led to my rejection of traditional religion. I share with you some of these questions from my long ago past, not to convince or sway anyone's faith or beliefs, nor to make any grandiose condemnation of, or comment on, religion. Rather, I offer the following simply as a glimpse of the thought process of one early free-thinker's attempt to make sense of the surrounding culture, religion and universe.

While in a Catholic high school, I dared to question whether the need for faith and a belief in Christ was the only way into heaven. In my attempt to understand, during my younger years, I considered people in inaccessible areas of the world who are without such information or exposure to Christianity. Do these people go to hell? The possibilities that came to me were that: 1. these people would be condemned to hell, thus making God unjust and maleficent; or, 2. these people get a 'get out of hell free' pass which would advocate ignorance over knowledge - a position that would make a belief in God equivalent to advocating ignorance; or, 3. there is no hell.

The absence of hell was the only reasonable conclusion that this young teenager with an inquisitive mind brought up in theological teachings could reach. Back in my youth, I jokingly said that I destroyed hell with one question. In a real sense, I did, and thereafter it freed me further to contemplate any honest question, regardless of potential heresies. That question became my forbidden fruit, my 'get out of hell free' pass.

There would be other such questions this young mind would contemplate. Here's one simple question that I ask people just to get them to think: "Who is the more

(continued on page 7)

Tots-to-Teens Ethical Education

When children grow and succeed, the world grows and succeeds. The theme for the month of April is: *Celebrating and Protecting the Earth*.

The ethical value "I" statements for April are:

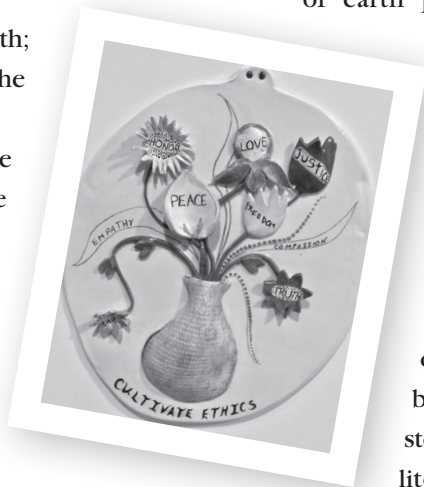
- I am part of this earth;
- I cherish it and all the life upon it;
- I learn from the world around me by using my senses, mind and feelings.

April celebrations include birthdays among our Tots (Audrey, 4/14), Pre-Ks (Stoneya, 4/17), Teens (Camille 4/19 and Solana 4/19), and Earth Day

Pre-K classroom lessons and activities this month will include "Let's Recycle; Let's plant a seed; Let's fly with the wind; Let's read *The Earth Book* by Todd Parr" and outdoor events will

capture and stimulate the senses and the curious mind. All facilitated by teacher Jill Gordon.

During the month our Pre-Teen Group (ages 6-12) will engage in story-telling, poetry, images, videos of earth protection and care.



Teacher Monica Cooper brings the urban environment into the classroom

Continuation of lessons on the 4th Sunday (April 23rd) focused on Spanish culture and language by teacher Anita Brownstein through music, art, literature and dialogue (learning Spanish phrases and practicing on each other).

We conclude the month (Sunday, April 30) with a lesson on the theme of *Celebrating and Protecting the Earth* taught by parent and middle school teacher, Beth Milstead.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Poetry Group

Sunday, April 2, 9:30 a.m.

Mindfulness Meditation

Sunday, April 9, 9:30 a.m.

Board Meeting

Sunday, April 9, 12:30 p.m.

Charm City Film Series

Wednesday, April 12, 6:30 p.m.

Ethical Action Meeting

Sunday, April 16, 12:45 p.m.

Annual Membership Meeting

Sunday, April 23, 12:30 p.m.

Newcomers Meeting

Sunday, April 30, 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	April 2
G to L	April 9
M to R	April 16
S to Z	April 23
Everyone!	April 30



SECOND SUNDAY FAMILY MEET-UPS!

Starting Sunday, May 14th, join other families with young children immediately following Sunday platform to have fun, build community, and let off steam. We will be selecting FREE family-friendly destinations (usually close to BES) for these regular monthly gatherings. The activities will be selected with 2-6 year olds in mind, but all are welcome! If you have questions, email Maya at mayagk@gmail.com or Beth at emluginbill@gmail.com and if you're having trouble finding us on the day of the event call/text Maya at 301-467-9881 or Beth at (301) 247-4072.

Sunday, May 14: picnic and outdoor games at St. Mary's Park (rain plan: Walters Art Museum Drop-In Art Activities)



APRIL 2

“The Good News About Racism!”

Eraka Rouzorodu
Empowerment Specialist

There is a reason why the valiant efforts to address racism and improve race relations have been only marginally successful. The “good news” about the increased visibility of racism is that the door is open for frank and direct conversations about racism and white supremacy that allow us to finally address the core issue. This presentation offers solutions to the problem and will empower each individual with a foundation for direct action. “The Good News About Racism!” was selected for inclusion in the 2016-2017 post-graduate curriculum at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. The presentation elevates this critical conversation from hatred to understanding, from fear to courage, and from blame to responsibility.

Eraka Rouzorodu is a nationally acclaimed Empowerment Specialist. She has presented for organizations such as the Smithsonian Institution, Association of Black Psychologists, Lockheed Martin and General Dynamics; spoken at various colleges and universities around the country; and keynoted at various national conventions. Her latest publication is “Answers: A Philosophical Foundation for an Empowered Life,” a “how-to” personal empowerment manual. Eraka is committed to “the empowerment of individuals through a principle-based life, to the empowerment of the human race through principled individuals and to achieving justice in all human relationships.” Learn more at www.progressivehumanbeing.com.

APRIL 9

“The Diversity of Islam”

Hugh Taft-Morales
Ethical Leader

As intolerant political ideologues whip up anti-Islam hysteria, one lesson we can all teach the world is that Islam is incredibly diverse. Targeting nearly a quarter of the human race – 1.6 billion people – for harassment violates ethical standards and makes the world less safe. Let’s stand up to ignorance and fear. Hugh Taft-Morales, who admits that he has a lot to learn, urges all of us to join him in exploring the rich world of Islam at this time of rising bigotry.

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.

APRIL 16

“Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about Recycling”

Robert Murrow
Coordinator, Baltimore City Recycling Program

Baltimore recycles almost 30% of its trash, a complicated and challenging endeavor. How do we stack up to recycling powerhouses like Portland and Seattle? What are the prospects for recycling even more? Is this even worthwhile? Can we avoid using incineration? How do we know which bin to use for plastic containers? We have all had many questions about recycling but never had the chance to ask when face to face with a person in charge of a huge multifaceted recycling program. From controversies and composting to E-waste and alternatives, this is your chance to get your questions answered from one of the region’s foremost experts.

Robert Murrow is the Coordinator of the Baltimore City Recycling Program, Chief of the Northwest Solid Waste Division and was the Public Information Supervisor for the Baltimore Department of Public Works for 15 years. He is currently a member of the national E-waste Committee of the U.S. Conference of Mayors. He has a lot of enthusiasm for this topic and loves talking about recycling.

APRIL 23

“Becoming White”

Hugh Taft-Morales
Ethical Leader

Race is a social construction. But it is also a profoundly powerful, frightening, and omnipresent part of our current public conversation about the future as a nation. Hugh Taft-Morales shares the development of his racial identity as a white person and his evolution towards more consistent dedication

to anti-racism activism intended to help deconstruct white supremacy.

APRIL 30

“The Good Will Revolution: Leave the Rat Race to the Rats”

Michael Irving Phillips
Author, WEAA radio host

Our rat race culture pits people against each other in a competition to get as much money, materials, and power as possible. Greed, selfishness and ruthlessness are assets, and kindness and sincerity are liabilities. Winners are highly respected and everyone else is a loser. Surprisingly, rat race culture is not compulsory. The alternative is the Goodwill Revolution which encompasses a set of principles that mobilizes the inherent goodness of mankind as the key to true happiness. Kindness, compassion, and honesty become valuable assets, while selfishness becomes a liability. The book is a blueprint for transforming American ghettos through revolutionary cultural change to improve education, employment, crime and reclaim political power using bottom-up solutions.

Michael Irving Phillips is the author of ‘Leave the Rat Race to the Rats’ and “Boycott Money and Save Your Soul – Launching The Goodwill Revolution,” He is the Co-host of WEAA’s ‘Caribbean Exchange.’ He received an MA degree in Education from Howard University, and is also the author of several poetry books.

MEMBER PROFILES

Let’s get to know each other a little better. We have begun posting short biographies of our members in our website’s *Members Only* section. A few profiles based on the text used in recent welcoming ceremonies can be seen there. Now, we want to hear from you.

Go to the *Directory* or *Member Profiles* page and you will see a “Tell Us About Yourself” link in the sidebar that will take you to a form submission page. Type some details and attach a portrait-type photo. Use the published profiles as a guide. If you have any questions, contact Wayne Laufert (wlaufert@aol.com) or Janey Solwold (jsolwold@gmail.com).

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.

MARCH WITH THE AEU

March for Science – Saturday, April 22

The American Ethical Union is proud to partner with the March for Science to support and safeguard the scientific community. We will attend the Washington DC and various satellite marches.

People’s Climate March – Saturday, April 29

The American Ethical Union will again partner with the People’s Climate Movement, as we did in September 2014, and march for climate justice and clean energy. This time we will be marching in Washington DC and in sister marches across the country.

Visit aeu.org for more details on when and where to meet up the AEU for the different marches.

SOMEONE GETTING MARRIED?

BES has a Leader and a team of officiants who are trained and licensed to conduct weddings, memorials, and other life passage ceremonies. For information, contact weddings@bmorethical.org.



CHARM CITY

Film

SERIES

Wednesday, April 12,
6:30 p.m.

This month, the Charm City Film Series will be screening *Good Ol' Freda*.

Freda Kelly was just a shy Liverpool teenager when she was asked to work for a local band hoping to make it big. Though she had no concept of how far they would go, Freda had faith in The Beatles from the beginning, and The Beatles had faith in her.

Many people came in and out of the band's circle as they grew to international stardom, but Freda remained a staple because of her unfaltering loyalty and dedication. As the Beatles' devoted secretary and friend, Freda was there as history unfolded.

In *Good Ol' Freda*, Freda tells her stories for the first time in 50 years. One of few documentaries with the support of the living Beatles and featuring original Beatles music, the film offers an insider perspective on the beloved band that changed the world of music.

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

Together We Can Be More – *Bmorethical 2017*

(continued from page 1)

Virginia), I've been able to speak at Ethical Societies in Manhattan, Brooklyn, Long Island, Northern Westchester, North Carolina, Chicago, Mid Rivers Missouri, St. Louis, and Austin, Texas. I got to attend Lay Leadership Summer School four times - once as a student and three times as staff - and met Ethical Culturists of all ages from all places. No wonder I feel deep connection to the AEU and to our small but idealistic collection of Ethical Societies.

I have witnessed from the inside AEU efforts to support local initiatives and enhance our national voice. I attend bi-monthly AEU Board meeting in New York, chaired by President Andra Miller, and see first-hand the tremendous work being done by the Board and by Bart Worden, our Executive Director, and L Miller and Larissa Perez, the staff in our national office. I see them manage the Mossler Fellowship given each year for special projects to grow Ethical Culture. I see the work it takes to coordinate four national conferences - for our youth group (YES), for our young adults (FES), and for our committees work-

ing on Ethical Education and Membership Growth.

I worked with our AEU Communications Director, Emily Newman, who ensures that there is a strong Ethical Humanist presence in Social Media and helps maintain the AEU's website so it is more open and accessible for newcomers and more useful as an interactive resource for Society lay leaders and members. I know how Ethical Culturists acts as important force in the Humanist movement by serving on boards of the Humanist Institute, the Institute for Humanist Studies, the Secular Coalition for America, and the International Humanist and Ethical Union.

But most of all, I am inspired by seeing how other Ethical Culturists share our unique philosophical worldview and work to contribute to the larger society. So no wonder I am excited to prepare for *Bmorethical 2017*, our national Assembly. I hope you will join me there and deepen your connection to Ethical Culture.

SAVE THE DATE!

June 8-11, 2017 at the Holiday Inn
301 W. Lombard Street



ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Sunday, April 23, 12:30 p.m.

Please stay after the platform address on April 23rd for our Annual Membership Meeting. At this meeting, we celebrate a year of success by reporting on our growth and achievements over the past year. We welcome the new leadership team when we announce our election results. We renew our commitment to the society and to each other when we review and approve the society's budget and pledge campaign goal for the next fiscal year July 1, 2017–June 30, 2018. We encourage questions, comments, suggestions, and volunteering. This is democracy in action, folks, so please attend this important meeting! We hope you can join us!

The Tree of Knowledge

(continued from page 2)

moral person; the one who acts from an expectation of a reward or the one who acts without an expectation of a reward?"

There are at least three ways to answer this question, but the one most people answer is that the more moral person expects no reward. However, many theological religions teach 'believers doing good works will be rewarded with heaven.' Thus, it could conclude that these religions are making believers less moral. One can try to carve out a moral exception for these religions, but that leads to the "end justifies the means" ideology that fundamentalist and religious radicals use to rationalize all manners of immoral behaviors.

The search for the answer, the Truth, often is the focus of many. People can turn to theological religions for answers, others expect that science will reveal truths about the universe, while some might rely on both. There are many preachers and scientists who use their "knowledge" of the Truth as a badge of importance, as though their thoughts somehow make

them better than others. I'm saddened by those who feel so badly about themselves that they must put down people so needlessly. Science and my youthful mindset have demonstrated to me that so often what matters is not the answer as it is the question. It's important to have that intent to seek knowledge and understanding. Asking questions allow the mind to be free and open to new possibilities.

That Tree of Knowledge is not about finding the right answer. It's about finding the right question. It's the questions that leads, that gives us our journey. It has given my life much meaning. For me, intelligence is measured not by how much someone knows, but by one's willingness to honestly question. It takes courage to question in a culture or religion that equates questioning to being disobedient. I find it an honor to be with a group of such intelligent people, people willing to trade that Garden of Eden for the freedom to find understanding, to create meaning, to disobey that which appears as irrational and harmful to others, to question.



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 April will be on the 9th and 23rd.

SPECIAL NOTE

March 26th marks our annual Pledge Luncheon. At BES, as with your public radio or television station, your pledge supports the work we do. It's a promise from you that this Community means something to you. Please, if you haven't already done so, give your commitment to support BES. April also marks our annual Board election. We have a very good group of candidates. Feel free to question them. I encourage you to cast your vote, and then join us at our Annual Membership Meeting on April 23rd when the election results will be announced.

— Paul Furth, BES President



BALTIMORE ETHICAL SOCIETY

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

NEWSLETTER

Please do not delay!

TIME VALUE

ETHICAL ACTION MEETING

Sunday, April 16, 12:45 p.m.

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

NEWCOMERS MEETING

Sunday, April 30, 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, April 9, 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.