

BESpeak

MAY 2017

NEWSLETTER OF THE BALTIMORE ETHICAL SOCIETY

Politics, War, and a Better Alternative

by Hugh Taft-Morales, BES Leader

Of all the campaign advertisements of our last presidential election cycle, the one that frightened me the most was set at the Ellsworth Missile Site in South Dakota. It was produced by the Clinton campaign. In it, a nuclear missile launch officer warns us that, "Self-control may be all that keeps these missiles from firing." At that point in the campaign, I felt relatively sure that Donald Trump - a man seemingly proud of his unthinking lack of self-control - would *not* end up in the White House.

Now I worry about the man who has his finger on the trigger of our military machine. Despite his numerous "America First" campaign promises not to try to be the policeman of the world, the unpredictable President Trump has pretty impulsive tendencies for a commander-in-chief. In that same campaign ad, for example, Trump says, "I love war," and threatens ISIS by yelling, "I would bomb the shit out of 'em."

And now, after flailing away at one bad news item after another this month (failure to dismantle Obamacare, the Russian investigation, and falling approval ratings), Trump is doubling down on a tried-and-true method of gaining public support - lash out with military fury. This tactic may not always bring the long-term desired political results for most presidents, but in the short run too many Americans support war-fighting presidents. In many ways U.S. citizens have lost their post-Vietnam hesitation to show the world how easily we can destroy and kill.

My emotional reaction to Trump's March 6th missile attack on Syria reminded me how I felt on January 17, 1991. When George Herbert Walker Bush ordered the first bombing runs over Iraq and Kuwait, I worried not only about the suffering it would cause, but I also worried about the righteous belligerence it would arouse in my fellow citizens. On May 2nd of 2011 similar righteous belligerence animated the crowd in front of the White House cheering the killing of Osama bin Laden. I want the passion of our citizens directed more towards peaceful conflict resolution.



(continued on page 6)

SUNDAY PLATFORMS

10:30 a.m.

(details on pages 4-5)

MAY 7

"A Path for Rebuilding Police-Community Relations in Baltimore"

Michael Greenberger
Professor, University of Maryland School of Law

MAY 14

"Questions"

Hugh Taft-Morales
Ethical Leader

MAY 21

"Are Men Obsolete?"

Sven Sinclair
Economist

MAY 28

"Remembrance Sunday"

Karen Elliott and
Hugh Taft-Morales

ETHICAL HUMANIST SUNDAY SCHOOL

Every Sunday

10:30 a.m. - Noon

Individualized programs for preschool children and school aged students.

This month's theme is Empathy.
Learn more on page 2.

TODDLER CARE

Separate supervision provided for children up to age two.

Ethical Education: Empathy

Welcome to my first ever BES ethical education article. As an Ethical Culture member and parent of two young children, this month's topic of "empathy" very much speaks to me. By definition, empathy is "the ability to experience the same feelings as someone else." In raising and educating Ethical children, the importance of teaching empathy is crucial to helping them see the inequities in our world and eventually developing a sense of justice that ignites them to work toward a brighter future.

I am touched that the social justice work of BES and its members regularly models empathy and productive ways of transforming that value into action.

May's ethical core values include:

- Every person is important and unique.
- Every person deserves to be treated fairly and kindly.

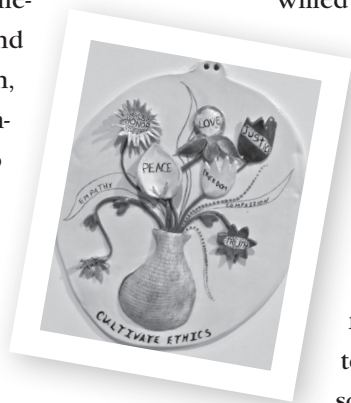
Our pre-K students will focus on empathy through the following books: *The Feelings Book* and *The OKAY Book* by Todd Parr as well as *When Sophie Gets Angry - Really, Really Angry* by Molly Bang, and others. As the mother of a fierce and strong-willed 3.5-year-old, I value the

lessons in feelings and empathy my daughter will get through her Ethical Education class this month.

I also want to take this opportunity to ask for summer volunteers to teach Sunday morning lessons to our school age kids.

Please contact Argentine Craig at ascraig@comcast.net if you are able to help out!

Lastly, don't forget that May marks our first 2nd Sunday Family Meet-Up. We will be selecting FREE family-friendly destinations close to BES and gather after platform for community building and letting off steam.



SECOND SUNDAY FAMILY MEET-UPS!

On Sunday, May 14th, join other families with young children immediately following Sunday platform to have fun, build community, and let off steam. 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).



OTHER ACTIVITIES

Poetry Group

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

Mindfulness Meditation

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

Second Sunday Family Meet-Up

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

Board Meeting

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

Ethical Action Meeting

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

Newcomers Meeting

Sunday, May 21, 12:30 p.m.

Memorial Day Weekend Picnic

Sunday, May 28, 12:00 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	May 7
G to L	May 14
M to R	May 21
S to Z	May 28



MAY 7

“A Path for Rebuilding Police-Community Relations in Baltimore”

Michael Greenberger

Professor, University of Maryland School of Law

Over the last three years, police community relations nationwide have deteriorated to a seeming point of no return. Police shootings and other police malpractices have led to the deaths of unarmed inner city minority civilians across the country. In Baltimore, the death of Freddie Gray, resulting from a so-called “rough ride” in a Baltimore Police Department van, led to rioting in West Baltimore that went on for days in May 2015.

The serious economic and psychological damage to the citizens of Baltimore continues to this day. Soon after the Baltimore Freddie Gray riots were quelled, the then Baltimore Mayor, Stephanie Rawlings-Blake, called upon the U.S. Department of Justice’s Civil Rights Division to begin a “pattern-or-practice” investigation of the Baltimore Police Department. Following the investigation, the DOJ released a scathing report detailing long standing patterns of civil rights violations by the Baltimore Police Department.

As a result of the report, the DOJ and City of Baltimore signed a consent decree to create systemic, across-the-board police reforms. The consent decree model has been used successfully in other cities to restore police community relations, and despite the resulting hopelessness and outrage over the findings of the DOJ report, the implementation of the consent decree gives us reason to be optimistic about the future here in Baltimore.

Michael Greenberger is the Founder and Director of the University of Maryland Center for Health and Homeland Security and a professor at the University of Maryland Carey School of Law. The Center has a staff of more than 40 professionals and works on a broad range of cyber security/and crisis management issues for government agencies, universities and public health entities. Professor Greenberger also served as the administrator for a law school, social work and undergraduate course entitled “Freddie Gray’s Baltimore: Past, Present, and Moving Forward.” Next fall, he will teach a course to undergraduates at the University of Maryland College Park entitled: “The Law and Policy of Inner City Policing.”

MAY 14

“Questions”

Hugh Taft-Morales

Ethical Leader

One of the most profound characteristics of the human race is our ability to question. This talent is fundamental to the scientific method and the construction of knowledge. It is fundamental to liberating skepticism and freethought. Persistent questioning can confuse and vex us and they can liberate us. Questions can provoke oppression by authorities devoted to defending the status quo. Just ask Socrates? Hugh Taft-Morales will explore this topic by asking more questions that you may want to hear!

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.

MAY 21

“Are Men Obsolete?”

Sven Sinclair

Economist

White men without college education are considered a key demographic behind Donald Trump’s electoral victory and other reactionary social movements of our time. Their resentment may not be entirely irrational, because the 21st century looks rather bleak for low-to-average-skilled men as common male characteristics, once an important comparative advantage, are increasingly irrelevant in the technologically advanced world. How will the roles for most men in the future society differ from those in the past? Can the new roles be fulfilling, or will they be a perennial source of strife?

Sven Sinclair, a member of the Northern Virginia Ethical Society, is an economist, actuary, former physicist, one-time Jeopardy! champion, halfway-decent chess player, news junkie, and an insatiably curious person. Sven was born and grew up in Zagreb, Croatia, and lives in Columbia, MD. He

is married to Melissa Sinclair, Director of Lifelong Learning for the Washington Ethical Society and National Director of Ethical Education for the AEU.

MAY 28

“Remembrance Sunday”

Karen Elliott and Hugh Taft-Morales

Memorial Day Sunday offers BES members and guests a chance to celebrate people who have died but left us with gifts that enrich our lives. Whether the person was a family member or a historical figure, we owe so much to those no longer with us. We miss their living presence but take solace in the work, ideals, friendship, and love they offered to the world. In our quest to live more meaningful and ethical lives, we can turn to those who have gone before for inspiration, guidance and strength. During this platform program, members and guests are free to remember someone important in their lives. Karen Elliott and Hugh Taft-Morales will preside.

MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND SUNDAY PICNIC

**Sunday, May 28, 12:00 p.m. at the home of
Dianne and Stuart Hirsch**

Join us for food, fun, and fellowship following the Sunday program which will end early at 11:30 a.m. Members Dianne and Stuart Hirsch have agreed to open their home to us again and so we will gather for our annual picnic from 12:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. The picnic is potluck so please bring a dish to contribute. Directions will be handed out and/or provided on request.

**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.

MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND CAMPING TRIP

**Gifford Pinchot Pennsylvania State Park
Saturday, May 27 – Monday, May 29**

This camping trip is a great opportunity to enjoy nature, make new friends, and deepen connections with existing friends. This year Washington Ethical Society is opening up their annual camping trip to all American Ethical Union members and friends and has reserved space for 200 campers!

Registration and fees are due by May 1. Any late registrations will be considered on a case by cases basis. Visit aeu.org for a link to the online registration.

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. Profiles based on the text used in recent welcoming ceremonies and a few other samples 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. If you don't have a picture of yourself, our photographer can take one after a Sunday meeting. Use the published profiles as a guide. If you have any questions, contact Wayne Laufert (wlaufert@aol.com) or Janey Solwold (jsolwold@gmail.com).

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THE BALTIMORE ETHICAL SOCIETY

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**FREE YOUR
VOICE WINS
ELLIOTT-BLACK
AWARD**

We are proud to announce the 2017 Elliott-Black Award winner is BES's nominee, Free Your Voice.

Free Your Voice is a Baltimore youth group that fights for environmental justice. It was started by, and is composed of, students at Ben Franklin High School. The group has formed as a committee of United Workers, a local nonprofit dedicated to fighting environmentally unsound development that is particularly detrimental to low income residents. The students organized a campaign to oppose a proposed South Baltimore trash incinerator as a danger to the health of their and other low income neighborhoods. The group's efforts and demonstrations helped defeat what would have been the nation's largest incinerator less than a mile away from a high school.

Free Your Voice has highlighted how environmental injustice impacts marginalized communities and inspired residents to engage in political action that betters their lives. They illustrate "Deed Before Creed" in that they have been all about taking action, sometimes at personal risk. They have sought to dedicate their time to projects that serve the greater good of humanity.

Politics, War, and a Better Alternative

(continued from page 1)

I am not naïve about the dangers posed by men like bin Laden, Saddam Hussein, and Syrian president Bashar al-Assad. I don't want to overlook the suffering such brutal bullies cause. And I don't want get pulled into debates about tactics for "taking out" such actors with the least possible "collateral damage," a euphemism that masks the suffering of innocent people. Instead I will simply say that violence is a poor long-term strategy for limiting violence. Perhaps in response to short term threats it's naïve to repeat Gandhi's aphorism, "an eye for an eye makes the whole world blind." But over the long haul, Gandhi was right.

Retributive justice and revenge may satisfy us emotionally, especially when those we attack have done terrible things. If, in fact, Trump was disgusted by the gas attack that killed men women and children, that's a sign of his humanity. It would worry more if he felt no repulsion. But a president needs to weigh his emotional needs against the pragmatic realities and long-term policy implications. I hope that by the time this article is published, the White House has a clear, thoughtful strategy for moving forward in this powder-keg region of the world.

But I am also worried that this initial missile attack has garnered Trump praise. I fear this reward will feed his ego and encourage continued military violence. With little else going well for his administration, Trump may be tempted to ramp up the perpetual war scenario and wrap himself in the flag. The deliberative nature of Congress theoretically could temper impulsive violence. But as the 1973 War Powers Resolution slowly atrophies into

history, the executive branch as reclaimed a dangerous monopoly over the use of violence overseas.

This is not a partisan complaint. I was glad that Obama was cautious about committing ground troops and broadening the theater of battle, but I criticized his over-use of force through drone strikes and secret detentions. While I was pleased that Obama received the Nobel Peace Prize, I was concerned that it was a bit early in his tenure to me certain that he fully accepted the tenet of non-violence.

How fully has *any* president accepted Martin Luther King Jr.'s words given at his 1964 Nobel Peace Prize ceremony? In that acceptance speech King declared that, "nonviolence is the answer to the crucial political and moral question of our time - the need for man to overcome oppression and violence without resorting to violence and oppression. Civilization and violence are antithetical concepts." This idealism inspired me greatly when I was young, and it still does today. U. S. foreign policy should reflect this idealism.

Unfortunately some violent autocrats have gained their power due to power politics and the shortsighted greed of the United States and other global powers. Too often we prop up human right violators for economic advantage and we sell weapons to the highest bidder. We can do better as a nation. As an Ethical Culture Leader I hope that, whatever our internal debates our Ethical Society may have about how to deal with violent bullies around the world, that we nurture our idealism and pave the road to a better tomorrow.

BMORETHICAL 2017: COMMUNITIES CONFRONTING SYSTEMIC RACISM

**American Ethical Union 102nd Assembly
Holiday Inn Inner Harbor
June 8–11, 2017**

Come learn about growing our local Ethical Societies and effective ways of confronting systemic racism through the distinguishing characteristic of Ethical Culture: the nurturing of ethical relationships and conversations that lead to action. With assistance from our partners, including humanist groups and grassroots organizations with first-hand knowledge of fighting systemic racism, we will develop more comprehensive strategies to work within organizations, amongst communities, and in our personal relationships to build racial justice.

**Register at aeu.org/event/aeu-102nd-assembly
Early bird discounts end May 8.**

See you at #bmorethical2017!

Dear BES members and friends,
Take advantage of a rare opportunity to attend our annual national Assembly right here in our hometown of Baltimore. This important gathering of over 100 Ethical Culturists from around the country is focusing on an issue of great concern to many BES members – confronting systemic racism. There will also be plenty of time for fun and conversation with members of other Ethical Societies. Check out the registration options including one-day, two-day or whole conference at aeu.org.
Hope to see you all there – Hugh



So Long, and Thanks for All the Fish

(continued from page 2)

out the class. Let me point out that I avoid insults, meanness or put downs; rather, my humor is irreverent, light-hearted, and often playing with words.

After that first class, I went to Hugh to apologize for my remarks. He told me he actually enjoyed the humorous quips, which helped put people at ease for what generally can be a dry and intimidating topic. That was all the encouragement I needed. I continued that class with the quips, albeit fewer. At the very next Sunday Platform that Hugh gave, I threw out one little humorous remark at the beginning of his presentation. The audience laughed. Thus, I began to include at least one funny quip at every Platform. People began to relax, which made things

more enjoyable. Others began to include their own humorous remarks from time to time. Now that's what I call a success.

Humor can put people at ease. It can lighten people's mood. It's the great leveler that brings down pretenses. Humor helps strengthen community. I even encourage being at the receiving end of a good-natured quip, if just to keep me grounded. Humor demonstrates to everyone that we are human after all, and can enjoy ourselves even while we address highly serious and deep topics such as civil rights, social justice, and science. Humor may actually help us deal more effectively with these serious issues.

Often, I inject humor when I speak

with people about BES. I add, "The only dogma we have is that we have no dogma." At Newcomers Meetings, Wayne and I banter about during our discussions. People like it – we've never had a complaint.

Even during the Board Meetings, humor has helped make them much more enjoyable and allows everyone to speak freely. Recently, a member commented about her pleasant surprise to find the Board members laughing with one another, making for a congenial working relationship.

I now take my final bow as your President, hitchhiking my way through the galaxy to help bring joy and a bit of laughter intermixed with our serious work. Thank you.



BALTIMORE ETHICAL SOCIETY

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

NEWSLETTER

Please do not delay!

TIME VALUE

ETHICAL ACTION MEETING

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

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

NEWCOMERS MEETING

Sunday, May 21, 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, May 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.

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

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