

BESpeak

OCTOBER 2017

NEWSLETTER OF THE BALTIMORE ETHICAL SOCIETY

To Live an Ethical Life

by Hugh Taft-Morales, Ethical Leader

In my last Leader's column, written for our September newsletter, I focused on historian Timothy Snyder's warnings in *On Tyranny*. He warns us about the potential of tyranny growing here in the United States: authoritarian rumblings, control of information, invasion of privacy, militarism, and more. Reading Snyder's books and scanning daily news headlines, I continue to be struck by how hard it is to keep real democracy alive.



This month I am looking at a more internal struggle: as a single human being, I continue to be struck by how hard it is *to live an ethical life*. We could long debate what it means to live "an ethical life," but I know generally what it means for me. It means being a better listener, being more aware, being more respectful to people and more compassionate to sentient beings. It means honoring the worth of people, growing ethical relationships, and building social justice in coalition with others. It means living closer to my values and ethical ideals. And it means a lot of hard work.

During these turbulent times, each of us must decide how much we will work in the civic world to assure that, as Lincoln said, "government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth." It is not unreasonable to worry. There are certainly disturbing signs that money-interests are in control of public policy and that too few Americans take citizenship seriously. Without more enlightened, engaged citizens, our future is uncertain.

But an Ethical Society is not a political action committee, a political party, or an advocacy organization. Of course, we believe in deed before creed. And traditionally Ethical Culture has emphasized engaging in the democratic process - as did our founder Felix Adler, and his allies in civic activism, including Jane Addams and John Dewey.

But first and foremost we offer congregational support and humanist inspiration to people trying *to live more ethical lives*. I believe that my main vocational role in our non-theist home on West Franklin Street is to help create a supportive environment for members and friends of the Society struggling to do this. It's why Adler began Ethical Culture. To live ever more ethical lives - lives where we bring out the best in others and thus in ourselves - is a challenging and noble commitment. And it is a life-long project.

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SUNDAY PLATFORMS 10:30 a.m.

(details on pages 4-5)

OCTOBER 1

"Viewing Globalization and the Ethical Imperative Through a Humanist Lens"

Govind Nair

Former Lead Economist, World Bank

OCTOBER 8

"Electronic Personality and Human Relationships"

Hugh Taft-Morales

Ethical Leader

OCTOBER 15

"Strengthening Our Nation of Immigrants"

Dr. Javad Mohsenian

Author and Psychiatrist

OCTOBER 22

"Enemies and Empathy"

Hugh Taft-Morales

Ethical Leader

OCTOBER 29

"The Ethics of Race and Gender as Experienced by One Black Transgender Woman"

Monica Yorkman

Transwomen Activist

ETHICAL HUMANIST SUNDAY SCHOOL

Every Sunday, 10:30 a.m. - Noon

Individualized programs for preschool children and school aged students.

October Life Cycle Celebrations

Our Ethical Education Program for students (pre-k: ages 3 to 5 and pre-teen: ages 6-12) will focus on the October theme of “Life Cycle” expressed through the “I” Ethical Core Values statements:

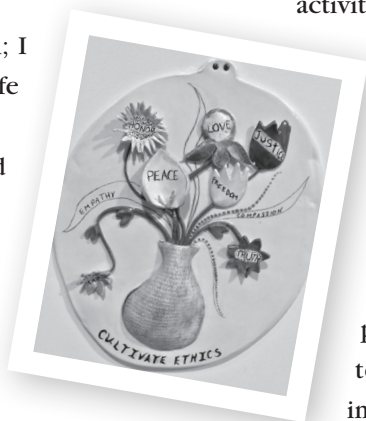
- I am part of the Earth; I cherish it and all the life upon it.
- I learn from the world around me by using my senses, mind and feelings.

Through illustrated stories:

- *The Dead Bird* by Margaret Wise Brown;
- *The Fall of Freddie the Leaf* by Leo Buscaglia;
- “The Garden” story from *Frog and Toad Together* by Arnold Lobel;
- *Lifetimes: The Beautiful Way to Explain Death to Children* by Bryan Mellonie and Robert Ingpen. Coordinated with the activities of

watercolor and oil pastel painting, gathering of autumn leaves and sculpting with Playdough – all provided by pre-K teacher Jill Gordon to make real the life cycle concept.

The same type of “making-it-real” activities are present with the



Pre-Teens by including works of art and working together to create an image of something that would make the world more beautiful – using supplies, supported materials and their own imagination. Guided by teacher Monica Cooper.

Continuing the inclusion of the culture of Spanish-speaking people (language, music, food, art, stories), teacher Beth Millstead will address the traditional “Dia de los Muertos Community Celebration” during the month with the assistance of the Ethical Education Committee members.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Poetry Group

Sunday, October 1, 9:30 a.m.

PR Committee Meeting

Sunday, October 1, 12:30 p.m.

Lunch with Leader Hugh

Thursday, October 5, 12:30 p.m.

Mindfulness Meditation

Sunday, October 8, 9:30 a.m.

Second Sunday Family Meet-Up

Sunday, October 8, 12:30 p.m.

Board Meeting

Sunday, October 8, 12:30 p.m.

Ethical Culture History and Philosophy

Sunday, October 8, 3:30 p.m.

AEU Skills Summit

Saturday, October 14, 9:00 a.m.

Relocation Exploratory Committee Meeting

Sunday, October 15, 12:15 p.m.

Ethical Action Meeting

Sunday, October 15, 12:45 p.m.

Walk Along the Gwynns Falls Trail

Saturday, October 21, 12:00 p.m.

Program Committee Meeting

Sunday, October 22, 12:30 p.m.

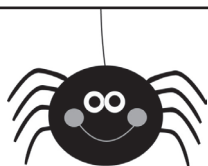
Newcomers Meeting

Sunday, October 29, 12:30 p.m.

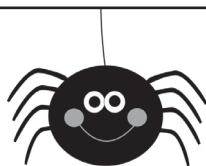
SUNDAY SNACK SCHEDULE

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	October 1
G to L	October 8
M to R	October 15
S to Z	October 22
Everyone!	October 29



BES BOO!



PART 1: Saturday, October 21, 6:00 p.m.

All children, parents, grandparents, BES members/friends will participate in PART I of the 4th Annual BES BOO! celebration.

PART 2: Saturday, October 28, 6:30 p.m.

We will join the Patterson Park Halloween Parade in our costumes and carrying the lanterns and other illuminations made in PART 1 (at BES on Saturday, October 21st). To volunteer to assist/participate/donate, please contact: BES BOO! Coordinator: Monique Stins (momiek1@hotmail.com); EEC Chairperson: Argentine Craig (ascraig@comcast.net); or Social Events Coordinator: Mav Vaughan (mav.vaughan@gmail.com).

SUNDAY PLATFORM PROGRAMS

OCTOBER 1

“Viewing Globalization and the Ethical Imperative Through a Humanist Lens”

Govind Nair

Former Lead Economist, World Bank

The presentation will interpret the ethical implications of globalization with a focus on the role of human reason and agency. This will be based on both a broad empirical examination of salient features of the emergent global society and economy and its associated new moral imperatives.

Govind Nair left the World Bank in 2010 as Lead Economist after a 25-year career to engage in a private practice as a global public speaker, trainer, international consultant, and adjunct professor. He actively volunteers in multiple community activities, including at the Northern Virginia Ethical Society where he is also a Board member. Govind has traveled in over 80 countries and has worked with governments, civil society organizations, private businesses, and academic institutions on five continents. He currently teaches a graduate course in managerial economics at The George Washington University.

OCTOBER 8

“Electronic Personality and Human Relationships”

Hugh Taft-Morales

Ethical Leader

How have computers and artificial intelligence changed our concept of others and affected our personal relationships? Will our relationships to technology become increasingly interpersonal? Can our electronic gadgets become our best friends? Referencing films such as *Her*, *Marjorie Prime*, and *Bladerunner*, Hugh Taft-Morales explores how computer apps, holograms, and robots challenge our concept of social relationships.

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.

OCTOBER 15

“Strengthening Our Nation of Immigrants”

Dr. Javad Mohsenian

Author and Psychiatrist

Ever since Europe occupied Native American land, the United States has been a nation of immigrants. An immigrant himself, Felix Adler, the founder of Ethical Culture, knew that embracing diversity was important to our country. How do we transform recent anti-immigrant hysteria into more productive and welcoming attitudes and policies? Dr. Javad Mohsenian, an immigrant, author and psychiatrist will explore the process of immigrant adoption, adjustment, and contribution to American society, cultural and religious conflicts, as well as the role of the 1979 Iran's revolution in immigration from that country. Dr. Mohsenian will have copies for sale and signing of his sixth book, *Gold for Sugar*, a collection of short stories covering East and West.

Dr. Mohsenian is an Iranian-American psychiatrist who lives in the Philadelphia metropolitan area. He began his writing career in high school. Inspired by the living conditions of the farmers in his homeland, he wrote *Wave in the Wheat Fields*, but no publisher was interested in a novel written by a teenager.

While preparing for Iran's prestigious and highly competitive medical school entrance examinations, he studied every previous test he could find. When he passed the exam, he used the materials he collected to assemble what was to become a best selling, comprehensive compilation. *A Guide to College Entrance Exams* published by Elmi Publishing Company was the young author's asking price for the publication of his first novel.

His second novel *Today is also Late* depicting the struggle of youth against the old traditions, written during his second year of medical school was formally published. *Persian Moonlight*, published by Moore Publishing was his first novel in English, *9/11 Children* his first children's book.

Gold for Sugar is a collection of stories about life, love, re-

SUNDAY PLATFORM PROGRAMS

ligion, prejudice, and exploitation. It's a mankind drama influenced by events the author has witnessed during his travels at home and abroad. *Gold for Sugar* explores human struggle for independence in the face of all kinds of intrusions.

OCTOBER 22

“Enemies and Empathy”

Hugh Taft-Morales
Ethical Leader

In our minds, human beings both create images of the enemy and feel deep empathy towards others. We dehumanize those we label as threats and share the feelings of those we embrace. How do we balance these two often-conflicting tendencies? Can we find a way to protect ourselves while deescalating our own “fight or flight” reactions? Hugh Taft-Morales explores these opposing poles of psychological frameworks for relating to other people and their relation to Ethical Humanism.

OCTOBER 29

“The Ethics of Race and Gender as Experienced by One Black Transgender Woman”

Monica Yorkman
Transwomen Activist

In this talk, Ms. Yorkman will be sharing ways in which colonialism, white supremacy, misogyny, trans-misogyny, and other forms of unethical behaviors impact and inform unhealthy self-views of transgender women of color. Through sharing personal experience, she intends to draw a clearer picture of the unintended negative consequences created by liberal thought perceptions of black transwomen. Finally, she will talk about what ethics look like to a black transgender woman who grew up as an inner city child in a poor family.

Monica Yorkman is a 63-year old black woman of trans experience. Her favorite person in the world is her 87-year old father who is “her rock and the smartest person she knows.” She also has 2 children, 3 grandchildren, and a 2-year old great-granddaughter, who is “the second smartest person she knows.” Ms. Yorkman comes from a family of activists. Her mother, Doris Yorkman along with her best friend Gussie Tweedy were instrumental setting examples for her as far back as the 60's when they started voter's registration drives

in their neighborhood. Her father marched with Dr. King and was present for the “I've Got a Dream” speech. They instilled in her the belief that change has to come from inside and outside of systems. She has been a part of grassroots political organizations since high school protesting against the Vietnam War, for Women's Lib, Equal Rights, Gay rights, and The Black Power Movement.

When she transitioned this last time in 2002, she discovered some disturbing facts she couldn't live with; African American transwomen were dying on the streets of Baltimore at almost 3 times the rate of Caucasian transwomen, between the ages of 29-35. Latina transwomen were dying at almost twice the rate of white transwomen. She realized that the work was not over. In 2006, she founded Sistas of the “t”, an outreach, education, and advocacy organization that works with transgender women of color who engage in commercial sex work. In 2013, she co-founded The Baltimore Transgender Alliance as a means to unify Baltimore's trans communities, empower our trans and gender non-conforming individuals, and increase our political effectiveness. We are just getting started!

SECOND SUNDAY FAMILY MEET-UP!

Sunday, October 8, 12:30 p.m.

Immediately following platform we will head to Federal Hill Park to enjoy the playground and a picnic lunch. There's a beautiful view of the city and nice park space to enjoy. All are welcome!

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.

PR COMMITTEE MEETING

**Sunday, October 1,
12:30 p.m.**

The committee will discuss how to energize our social media presence and how to maximize our Google AdWords.

PROGRAM COMMITTEE MEETING

**Sunday, October 22,
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.

WALK ALONG GWYNNS FALLS TRAIL

**Saturday, October 21,
12:00 p.m.**

**4500 N. Franklinton Road
Gwynn Oak, MD**

We'll start with a bring-your-own-lunch at the picnic tables. The walkers can pick between two paths; the smoother paved way, or the more rugged uphill trek. This is the same location as our walk in July. In autumn weather we're looking for a very different experience!

Starting point Winans Meadow (directions to follow).

Condolences to former BES member, Cathy Malcomb, who lost her 26 year-old grandson, Tyler, to a heroin overdose on July 4. Tyler was a kind and loving young man who valiantly battled opioid addiction for several years. Our thoughts go out to Cathy and her daughter, Nadine, in this difficult time for them.

To Live an Ethical Life

(continued from page 1)

Those of you who know me well know that I am no zealot. A zealot is uncompromising and fanatical in pursuing their religious, political or ethical ideals. I am, if anything, too ready to compromise, too easy going, too willing to be soft on people and overlook proper procedures and systems. Maybe these are weaknesses so intertwined with my strengths that they are hard to correct. I compromise because I am flexible. I am easy going because I don't want to sweat the small stuff. I am soft on people because sometimes we can be very fragile creatures.

Tomorrow, even before I submit this column, I'll speak as part of a lunchtime discussion series at the Impact Hub up at 10 E North Street. The topic is "the fragility of goodness." It's based on talk I gave here in Baltimore on May 22nd of last year. [You can watch it at <https://vimeo.com/167706290>.] It goes into greater detail about how hard it is to care deeply about so much in a world that can be capricious and cruel.

Our fragility about "caring too much" may seem a bit overdone, or sentimental, or precious. For those of us lucky enough to be assured of food and shelter for the foreseeable future, our ethical, emotional fragility is bearable. For those *without* the basic necessities to live, their very existence is fragile - every day hundreds of thousands are broken and risk physical death.

The more fortunate amongst us - physically comfortable enough to be able to wrestle with our conscience over how best to help others - are not caught up in the rising tide of misery. We stand on relatively solid ground. Felix Adler wrote, "We stand, as it were, on the shore, and see multitudes of our fellow beings struggling in the water, stretching forth their arms, sinking, drowning, and we are powerless to assist them."

If we are to live an ethical life, however, we cannot allow ourselves to be overwhelmed by such suffering. We must be courageous enough to acknowledge a sea of suffering, and strong enough to help those we can.

In my role as an Ethical Culture Leader, I want try to live an ethical life together, in community. Whether at the Ethical Society, or in my neighborhood, local school, or town hall, I want to nurture ethical relationships and mutual support in this noble effort to live ethical lives.

Civic activism is important. The historically unprecedented economic inequality before us cannot remain. But we can best fulfill our duties as citizens of the world's longest surviving democracy if we are supported by a community and inspired by our ideals. We cannot allow our fragility to stop us from living a more ethical life. But, as I concluded my last column, the choice is ours.

Building a Shared Vision

(continued from page 2)

Membership - Greet visitors on Sunday mornings; update our email lists; prepare new member packets; and/or help members write their on-line profiles. *Wayne Laufert & Janey Solwold*

Finance - Help with our pledge drive, capital campaign, and/or other fundraising. *Karen Elliott*

Ethical Action - Help organize projects to promote social justice in our community; keep the membership informed on specific issues; and/or represent BES at community meetings. *Charlie Shafer*

Ethical Education - Provide occasional infant and toddler care; and/or update the ethical education brochure and associated web content. *Argentine Craig*

Program - Identify and contact potential program speakers, especially in the arts, sciences, and humanities; and/or preside over occasional programs. *Paul Furth*

Public Relations - Energize our social media presence; manage our Google AdWords; and/or table at local festivals. *Thomas Higdon*

Relocation Exploratory - Help BES find a new home! *Joanna Brandt*

These are just a few ideas and there are so many other ways to contribute. Whatever you choose, just make sure it's an activity that you enjoy. I know that working together we can realize our shared vision for our Society. I've made my commitment. Will you join me?

ETHICAL CULTURE HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY

Sunday, October 8, 3:30 p.m.–5:00 p.m.

Interested in knowing more about our unique alternative to religion? Come for a presentation and discussion of the history and philosophy of Ethical Culture. This overview is great for newcomers to this inspiring and engaging approach to life, and for long-term members who want a refresher or want to share their own insights about Ethical Culture. RSVP to leader@bmorethical.org by October 5th!



INTERESTED IN A 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.

LUNCH WITH LEADER HUGH

Thursday, October 5,
12:30–2:00 p.m.

Are you interested in getting together for a casual lunch with Ethical Culture Leader Hugh Taft-Morales? Are you free from 12:30–2:00 p.m. on Thursday, October 5? Depending on the location of those who RSVP, we'll pick a lunch spot in the Baltimore area. RSVP to Leader@bmorethical.org by October 3rd!

AEU SKILLS SUMMIT

Saturday, October 14,
9:00 a.m.–6:30 p.m.

Share and learn skills, best practices, and ideas about improving your Society's Communications, Ethical Education, and Membership. Registration includes breakfast & lunch, discussions, workshops, and opportunities to connect with members for other Societies. Discounts for groups – \$70 for individual, \$65 each for two, \$60 each for three. For more information and to register go to aeu.org/event/aeu-skills-summit-2017.

CHECK OUT OUR MEETUP GROUP

It is the easiest way to RSVP to an event: www.meetup.com/bmorethical



BALTIMORE ETHICAL SOCIETY

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

NEWSLETTER

Please do not delay!

TIME VALUE

ETHICAL ACTION MEETING

Sunday, October 15, 12:45 p.m.

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

NEWCOMERS MEETING

Sunday, October 29, 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, October 8, 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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