

Tantrums and Nuclear Weapons

by Hugh Taft-Morales, Ethical Leader

hy are you frightening our children with fears of nuclear war?", I was asked by a clearly annoyed parent of one of my students. Back in the 1980's, as a teacher of Soviet Studies and a member of *Educators for Social Responsibility*, I taught unit on President Rea-



gan's nuclear arms policy, both his stockpiling of nuclear weapons and the treaty he eventually passed to ban intermediate-range nuclear forces (INF).

I told the parent that at that time the dangers of nuclear weapons were all over print media and television. A widely watched made for TV film entitled "The Day After" dramatized the effect of a nuclear explosion. A mushroom cloud with a devilish face graced a 1982 cover of *Time* magazine. In bold letters on the cover were the ominous words, "Thinking the Unthinkable." "Their kids are already frightened," I said, and silence on the part of authority figures can often heighten anxiety. I hoped rational discussion and study would ease my student fears, or at least give them a forum to express them and process them healthily.

Back in the early 80's one could argue that Reagan's carrot and stick approach brought the Soviets to the negotiating table. Maybe "Peace through Strength" was not merely a slogan promoted by Lockheed Martin and Boeing. Now, in 2017, such rationalizations about belligerent talk don't work for me. The tweet tantrums and militarism from our current president do not indicate strategic posturing. They indicate a lack of self-control and a clear and present danger.

This past July my favorite national legislator, Rep. Jamie Raskin (D-MD), made the news by urging his colleagues to prepare for ousting our President from power. Raskin proposed that an 11-member commission of physicians and psychiatrists examine President Trump to determine if he was physically or mentally able to do the job. Some called this legal backup of the 25th Amendment which allows for removal of the president should it be determined that he "is unable to discharge the powers and duties of his office." Others called this move by Raskin too provocative. But as the President ramps up his threats towards North Korea it seems more necessary than ever.

(continued on page 7)

SUNDAY PLATFORMS 10:30 a.m.

(details on pages 4-5)

NOVEMBER 5

"Fall Family Festival"

Karen Elliott and Paul Furth

NOVEMBER 12

"Is Happiness the Goal of Life?"

Hugh Taft-Morales

Ethical Leader

NOVEMBER 19

"Computer Security"

Trevor Vaughan
Computer Engineer

NOVEMBER 26

"Mindful Activism and Peace"

Hugh Taft-Morales 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.



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Hugh Taft-Morales Leader Fritz Williams Leader Emeritus

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On the web at bmorethical.org

Envisioning BES's Future Together

by Thomas Higdon, BES President

n a recent Sunday, Kathryn and I visited the Washington Ethical Society (WES). It was an eye-opening experience, to say the least. I walked away with a new appreciation for what is possible for an ethical society. Founded in 1944, just six years before BES, today WES is a vibrant community of



over 500 members and a Sunday school with more than 60 children. They hold two platform services each Sunday to accommodate the number of members and guests attending. In addition to owning their own building, WES has a full-time Leader and a Director of Lifelong Learning (i.e. ethical education) supported by five other staff members, including a music director. I should pause here to say that I'm not sure I want BES to grow as large as WES, but I am inspired that it is a possibility. However, mine is just one vision for the future of our society. What is yours?

By now, you have received an invitation to a "Visioning Party." These gatherings are an opportunity for BES members who live near each other to get to know one other and share their visions for the future of our congregation. Members will bring their ideas and a team of board members will facilitate a conversation and take notes. The Board will draw from what's shared at these gatherings to develop a new mission statement and to guide our organization into the future.

If you have not yet RSVP'd, please take a moment to do so now. If you are unable to attend the party to which you were invited (or your invitation was "lost in the mail"), here are the dates and times of the other parties.

- Sunday, October 22nd, 1:30-3:00 p.m. at Max's home. Contact Max at maxjromano@gmail.com
- Monday, October 30th, 7:30-9:00 p.m. at BES. Contact Catherine at cccgayhardt@gmail.com
- Friday, November 3rd, 6:00 to 7:30 p.m. at Joey Chiu's restaurant. Contact Tevis at systemicerror@gmail.com
- Saturday, November 11th, 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. at Richard Heffern's home. Contact Paul at PDQBlues@aol.com
- Saturday, November 11th, 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. at Stephen Meskin's home. Contact Kathryn at katamui@gmail.com

Simply reach out to the party's contact person for the address. If you do not attend a party, you will still be invited to provide your ideas via survey in the coming months.

On behalf of the entire Board, we look forward to spending the evening getting to know you better and hearing your ideas!

Generosity, Gratitude, and the Myth of the First Thanksgiving

by Matthew Milstead, Ethical Education Committee

hen we had our last ethical education committee meeting, I volunteered to write on generosity and gratitude with little idea of how to approach such broad topics. I think we can all agree on the ethical merits of generosity and gratitude without much debate. As this is written on behalf of the EEC, it seems appropriate to explore the ways in which we impart these values to our children. With Novem-

ber approaching, one of the most prominent means that comes to mind is the story of the 'First Thanksgiving.'

The basic tale relates the travails of Pilgrims voyaging in search of religious liberty, arriving at Plymouth Rock, and facing existence in a new world to which they had arrived un-

prepared. They overcame the harshness of winter and reaped a bountiful harvest with the help of Tisquantum, or Squanto, and a nearby native population. To celebrate a successful first harvest, the Pilgrims joined with the Native Americans to express gratitude for the abundant generosity of their native benefactors.

After children absorb this story at an impressionable age, their later history classes expose a coarser and more brutal reality of the story and European arrival in the 'New World.' Tisquantum spoke English because he was kidnapped and sold into slavery by European explorers. Arable land

was available to the settlers because a plague spread by European traders had recently killed most of the indigenous population. The Pilgrims didn't even intend for native peoples to attend the celebration of their first harvest - Massasoit and a large number of his people simply showed up unexpectedly and then provided their own food. Numerous other details contradict the simple tale of camaraderie and perseverance.

If we know the idealized story isn't

accurate, why does it

persist in the classroom and in our nation at large? Tony
Horwitz, in *A Voyage*Long and Strange, refers to the history of
America penned by Anglo-American Protestants
as the 'creation myth...of
Pilgrim Fathers seeding a
new land with their piety

and work ethic.' The 'First Thanksgiving' aspect of the myth promotes an example of extreme generosity regardless of race or culture, and gratitude in return.

Kids keep learning this story because it promotes values that are laudable and ethically sound, and encourages them to embrace a common national identity in which these values are esteemed. We want them to emulate the generosity and gratitude in the myth, regardless of how far it strays from historical accounts. While it obscures the real experiences of Na-

(continued on page 6)

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Poetry Group

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

Ethical Philosophy Reading Group

Sunday, November 5 & 19, 2:00 p.m.

Mindfulness Meditation

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

Second Sunday Family Meet-Up

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

Board Meeting

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

BAIC 43rd Annual Pow Wow

Saturday, November 18, 11:00 a.m.

Relocation Exploratory Committee Meeting

Sunday, November 19, 12:15 p.m.

Ethical Action Meeting

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

Program Committee Meeting

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

Newcomers Meeting

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

CHECK OUT OUR MEETUP GROUP

It is the easiest way to RSVP to an event. 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	November 5
G to L	November 12
M to R	November 19
S to Z	November 26

SUNDAY PLATFORM PROGRAMS

NOVEMBER 5

"Fall Family Festival"

Karen Elliott and Paul Furth

BES comes together in community to share gratitude for all of the things we are fortunate to have in this celebration for all ages. Together we enjoy a modified version of the Stone Soup story, putting together a Stone Salad as the story is told.

Bring something to add to our traditional and always delicious Stone Salad, or something to accompany it. Hot cider and the usual coffee and tea will be provided.

Food sign-up sheet: coming soon on Meetup.com.

NOVEMBER 12

"Is Happiness the Goal of Life?"

Hugh Taft-Morales *Ethical Leader*

From ancient Aristotle to contemporary self-help books, many have argued that the goal of life is happiness. Leading 19th century agnostic, Robert Ingersoll, proclaimed, "Happiness is the only good. The time to be happy is now. The place to be happy is here. The way to be happy is to make others so." Is he correct? How does this fit in with Ethical Humanism's emphasis on social justice? Can it support our version of the golden rule, where we bring out the best in others and thus in ourselves?

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.

NOVEMBER 19

"Computer Security"

Trevor Vaughan Computer Engineer

Trevor Vaughan will talk about basic computer security issues. From the reality of having your information out on the web, to home computer safety, and to kids and the internet.

Trevor Vaughan is a computer engineer. He has degrees from the University of Maryland and University College. He's one of the owners of Onyx Point, a company that specializes in computer automation, security, and compliance. He's given several talks on security. He lives with his wife, BES member and Social Chair, Mav Vaughan, and daughter in Catonsville.

NOVEMBER 26

"Mindful Activism and Peace"

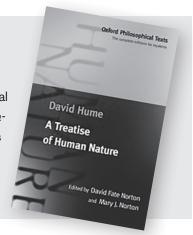
Hugh Taft-Morales *Ethical Leader*

Building peace is not only an act of compassion. To be sustainable, peace building must also be guided by equanimity and thoughtfulness. When advocating for peace, however, we are often confronted by hostile proponents of violent methods and brutal militarism. As our current administration speaks of war and threatens North Korea, how can Ethical Humanists resist war by embracing "ahimsa," or non-violence toward all living things?

ETHICAL PHILOSOPHY READING GROUP

Sunday, November 5 and November 19, 2:00 p.m.

Join us every other week on Sundays at 2:00 p.m. in the BES Library to discuss great ethical texts from the history of philosophy! Our first book is David Hume's *A Treatise of Human Nature*. This is a long book, so we're breaking it up into smaller, more easily digestible chunks (about 20-30 pages every 2 weeks). For November, we'll be meeting on November 5 and November 19. Contact Dom Eggert (dom.eggert@gmail.com) if you have questions or would like to sign up for the group's email list.



HOST A COFFEE HOUR

After each Sunday platform, BES members and visitors gather in the foyer for coffee and snacks. This is an opportunity to catch up with old friends and make new ones; to discuss current events and hold philosophical debates; and to organize for ethical action.

Coffee Hour is truly at the center of our congregation. Given its importance, it makes sense that we would be more intentional in its organization, so we are trying something new. Instead of the old clipboard sign-up system, we are launching a new system.

Starting in November, members and friends will be invited to volunteer to be a Coffee Hour Host. Hosts will provide a healthy snack of their choosing, set up the snacks brought by other members, and clean up afterward. Hosts should plan to begin set-up during the Question & Comment portion of the platform and stay until the end of coffee hour, usually 1:00 pm.

Each coffee hour will have four hosts. Sign-up for one spot or organize a group of family and friends. You will automatically receive a reminder email two days before your Sunday. If you cannot make it on your Sunday, please try to find someone to volunteer in your place.

Here is the link to sign-up to be a Coffee Hour Host:
http://www.signupgenius.
com/go/60B0D4FAFAF2FA4F49-signup.

MEMBER NEWS

Long-distance **BES member Carol Mays** wrote to the editor: "I'd like to let the other BES members know about the poetry presentations that I've uploaded to YouTube, in case folks are interested. There are 19 beautiful, relaxing multimedia poetry presentations, with music, gorgeous visuals, sound effects. There is also a spooky one. Folks can find them by going into YouTube and searching for Idyllic Productions. Some of the poems are mine, and some are classical."

CAN'T MAKE IT TO THE SOCIETY ON SUNDAY MORNINGS?

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

Free Your Voice!

On September 28, 2017, Leader Hugh Taft-Morales presents a certificate for \$2,347.00 from the American Ethical Union to Evan Maminski and Liz Samuel, student representatives of Free Your Voice/United Workers. The funds were raised through generous contributions from members of Ethical Society's around the country at Bmorethical 2017, the American Ethical Union's annual meeting. The presentation ceremony was made at the Baltimore Housing Roundtable, a meeting organized by United Workers and other groups envisioning a new model of housing and community development that focuses more on residents of Baltimore than corporations seeking profits. For more information about this coalition, see www.baltimorehousingroundtable.org/.



L to R: Hugh Taft-Morales, Liz Samuel, Evan Maminski. Photo credit: Greg Sawtell



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 (jlsolwold@gmail.com).

Generosity, Gratitude, and the Myth of the First Thanksgiving

(continued from page 3)

tive Americans and Pilgrims alike, the idealized version of events has provided the foundation of a tradition that brings together friends and loved ones each Thanksgiving, and teaches gratitude, generosity, and acceptance of others. Is it worth the sacrifice of historical accuracy? And after all, 'what is history...but a fable agreed upon?'

Have a Happy Thanksgiving!



BALTIMORE AMERICAN INDIAN CENTER 43RD ANNUAL POW-WOW!

Saturday, November 18, 11:00 a.m. Towson University, 2nd floor of the University Union

The Baltimore American Indian Center (BAIC) is holding their 43rd Annual Pow-Wow! Grand Entrance is at Noon and 4:30 p.m. Join us for this social outing with BES member and friends and enjoy music, dancing, crafts, food, and stories.

FREE PARKING is available in the Union Garage off Osler Drive. Admission for adults- \$10 and Children 4-12 years old- \$5. (3 and under are free)

There will be dancers, drummers, Native vendors, health services and more. If you have any questions please email the BAIC at baic.center@gmail.com.

PROGRAM COMMITTEE MEETING

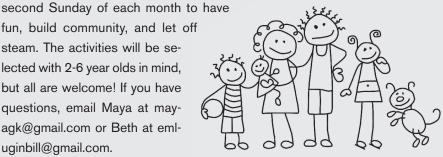
Sunday, November 26, 12:30 p.m.

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

SECOND SUNDAY FAMILY MEET-UPS!

Join other families with young children immediately following platform on the

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.



YES TEEN CONFERENCE - #RESIST

Thursday, November 9 - Sunday, November 12, Frost Valley, New York

Thursday, November 9, 7pm at New York Society for Ethical Culture, 2 West 64th Street, New York, NY 10023. Friday-Sunday at Frost Valley: 2000 Frost Valley Rd, Claryville, NY 12725

The Youth of Ethical Societies (YES) will connect teens from throughout the Ethical Culture Movement for another full weekend of discussion, play, brainstorming, performance, campfires, and bonding.

Registration is online at aeu.org/event/yes-teens-in-ny-nov-2017

Tantrums and Nuclear Weapons

(continued from page 1)

More recently Senator Bob Corker, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, a centrist Republican who developed a strong early relationship with the President voiced grave concerns. Corker is alarmed over the president's reckless threats that may be moving us down "the path to World War III." He described the White House as seeming like "an adult day care center" where advisors scramble to keep the infant-in-chief from throwing tantrums that heighten international tensions. Corker said that the president, far from being presidential, was acting as if he was on a reality TV show. "I know for a fact," Corker said, "that every single day at the White House, it's a situation of trying to contain him."

It's unclear if our Secretary of State Rex Tillerson has the patience to continue containing his boss. Recent statements indicate exasperation with over the president's undermining of diplomatic efforts to ease tensions with North Korea's unpredictable Kim Jong-un. The president tweeted that Tillerson shouldn't waste his time with diplomacy because "we'll do what has to be done." According to an article in *The Atlantic*, that was the 5th or 6th time the president implied his willing-

ness, even eagerness, to choose a military option to deal with North Korea.

Over three decades after the angry parent confronted me, I believe again that fear over the potential of nuclear war is in the air. And, more frighteningly, I am increasingly convinced that the president wants a war. While he is no student of history, I think he probably knows that international conflict can, for the short term at least, garner public support of the White House. Most likely annoyed over his low approval rating, the President could choose to wrap himself in the flag and wage war in an effort to boost his ratings. Besides, he probably wants to play with the new war toys he was given on January 20th.

My September Leader's column was about Timothy Snyder's short book, *On Tyranny*. In it, Snyder cautions us to "be calm when the unthinkable arrives" because a sudden disaster can end checks and balances. What better way to silence unceasing criticism, our president may think, than to begin a righteous war against "Rocket Man?" I have no doubt that many of those who voted for our current president would cheer such bold action. But even moderates could be swayed to rally the

troops in defense of our nation. For someone so in need of approval, war may be irresistibly attractive.

Perhaps I am overly optimistic to assume that when it comes to the nuclear button the president's advisors will check his impulsive nature. Will one of the three generals closest to Trump - military experts who know better than many the cost of war - help constrain his belligerence? Will Homeland Security's Gen. Kelly, Sec. of Defense Gen. Mattis, and National Security Advisor Gen. McMaster steer us away from war? Or will "my generals," as Trump likes to call them, follow the lead of our impulsive commander in chief and allow us to bungle our way into a war where there will be more losers than winners? It's time calmly but firmly to demand peaceful solutions to global conflict.

The president has said that past administrations have failed in their dealings with North Korea. The jury is still out about that, but one could argue that over the past few decades we have avoided war and that is a victory in itself. Let's get behind advocates of diplomacy and demand that our president stop acting like the bully in the playground itching for a fight.



BALTIMORE ETHICAL SOCIETY

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

NEWSLETTER
Please do not delay!
TIME VALUE

ETHICAL ACTION MEETING

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

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

NEWCOMERS MEETING

Sunday, November 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, November 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

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.