

BESpeak

JANUARY 2018

NEWSLETTER OF THE BALTIMORE ETHICAL SOCIETY

BUILD in West Harlem Park

by Hugh Taft-Morales, Ethical Leader

Crunching steps on shards of glass captured my paradoxical experience walking the streets of Harlem Park West this past November 30th. The shards were everywhere, and sparkled in the glare of streetlights in one of the most violence-plagued parts of Baltimore. Their beauty belied their danger, the cutting grittiness under the sole of my shoe reminded me of sand, as if I was walking down a beach. The relative silence all around us, due in great part because of the rows and rows of abandoned houses and empty lots, offered a veneer of calm over a city full of violence. Three families with children at *Roots and Branches*, the local community school, lost a loved one due to violence just this year.

Baltimoreans United in Leadership Development (BUILD) was hosted by *Roots and Branches*, a point of light for the children and families of West Harlem. The principal welcomed us with a broad smile, happy to have the community space she protected from extinction receive some attention. With a food pantry, washer and dryer, and safe space for kids after school, *Roots and Branches* serves folks too often neglected by the powers that be. "Come back," the principal encouraged us. "We need you to show the city the importance of this community space."* BUILD was there to do just that - to demand that those with means reached out a helping hand to West Harlem.

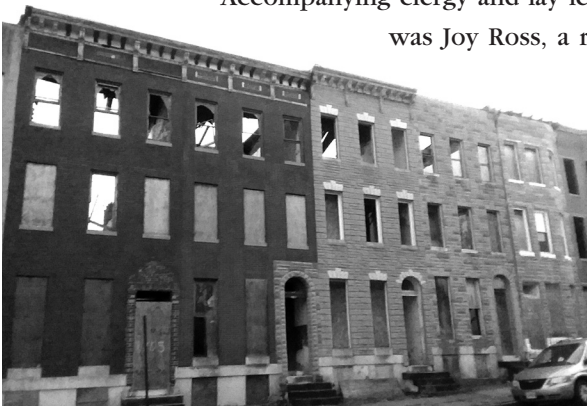
Accompanying clergy and lay leaders on a neighborhood tour

was Joy Ross, a registered nurse and president

of the Harlem Park Resident's

Association. This 503c non-profit was determined to bring development, jobs, and safety into her neighborhood. Joy came from North Carolina with her husband so they could

(continued on page 7)



SUNDAY PLATFORMS 10:30 a.m.

(details on page 4)

JANUARY 7

Education: A Vehicle for Change

Stacie Henderson
Outreach Director,
Waldorf School of Baltimore

JANUARY 14

"The Children's March: Civilized Queerness"

The Revolutionary Lover
Jé Exodus Hooper
#preacher #performer #phdbound
#producer #provocateur

JANUARY 21

"Does Character Count in Politics?"

Hugh Taft-Morales
Ethical Leader

JANUARY 28

"Making Sense of Sapiens: Humans and Humanism"

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.

SOMEONE GETTING MARRIED?

The Baltimore Ethical Society has a Leader and a team of officiants who are trained and licensed to conduct weddings, memorials, and other life passage ceremonies. For more information about our ceremonies or to make arrangements, please contact our Officiant Team Coordinator, Kathryn Merrill, at weddings@bmoreethical.org.

Beginnings

by Matthew Milstead, Ethical Education Committee

Until the about the time I turned ten, vacations in my family usually entailed loading up the old station wagon or minivan and making a three-hour drive to my grandparents' house in central Pennsylvania. Their house had dozens of oak trees, and we often visited when they trees would rain acorns all over the yard. I enjoyed squishing the greener acorns on the sidewalk and looking at the gritty contents inside their shells. There was one occasion when my grandfather saw me do this, and between puffs on his musty-smelling cigar, he asked if I realized I had just stepped on an oak tree.

I think he was trying to convey, in his wryly humorous manner, the awesome potential contained in something that could begin as small as a nut, and end up taller than his house. As a kid, it sort of made me feel like an oak-tree murderer. Some lessons miss their mark, I guess.

Eventually I got the message. Things don't begin in their completed form. Whether it's a tree, a project, or a human being, it starts out with the

potential to develop in unpredictable ways. The unpredictability can be scary – maybe the acorn grows into a tree, and maybe the tree falls on the car during a thunderstorm. But beginnings are more about hope than fear – the potential for good that comes from fresh starts. Maybe the tree be-

comes a home to a nest of robins, or a base for a tree-house, or one end of comfortable hammock on a lazy summer afternoon.

The new year invites us to choose what we'd like to begin in our own lives. We can unburden ourselves of past regrets and embrace the possibility of the future. We can try to avoid squashing too many acorns.

I'll conclude with two stanzas from *The Trees*, by Philip Larkin:

*Is it that they are born again
And we grow old? No, they die too.
Their yearly trick of looking new
Is written down in rings of green.*

*Yet still the unresting castles thresh
In fullgrown thickness every May,
Last year is dead, they seem to say,
Begin afresh, afresh, afresh.*

Happy New Year!



OTHER ACTIVITIES

Poetry Group

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

PR Committee Meeting

Sunday, January 7, 12:30 p.m.

Mindfulness Meditation

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

Second Sunday Family Meet-Up

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

Board Meeting

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

Relocation Exploratory Committee Meeting

Sunday, January 21, 12:15 p.m.

Ethical Action Meeting

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

Program Committee Meeting

Sunday, January 28, 12:30 p.m.

Newcomers Meeting

Sunday, January 28, 12:30 p.m.

Ethical Humanist Storytelling Workshop

Sunday, January 28, 2:30 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/bmoreethical

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	January 7
G to L	January 14
M to R	January 21
S to Z	January 28

SUNDAY PLATFORM PROGRAMS

JANUARY 7

Education: A Vehicle for Change

Stacie Henderson

Outreach Director, Waldorf School of Baltimore

Stacie Henderson is passionate about the field of education as a vehicle for positive change. She is a lifelong learner at Loyola University Maryland, where she obtained a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology, a Master of Science in Counseling Psychology, and is currently enrolled as an Executive MBA candidate. She has held various education administrative, operational, sales, and marketing positions in the private and public, secondary and postsecondary levels, and in the education technology sector. She is a native and lover of all things Baltimore, Maryland, and spends her weekends biking around, soaking up the city's charm.

JANUARY 14

"The Children's March: Civilized Queerness"

The Revolutionary Lover Jé Exodus Hooper

#preacher #performer #phdbound #producer #provocateur

In celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s lifelong legacy, journey with us as we explore the subtle erased history of Bayard Rustin and Walter Neagle in a topic entitled, *The Children's March: Civilized Queerness*. The Revolutionary Jé Exodus Hooper, an AEU leader in training will address a historical premise of rightness within framework of the Civil Rights. By centering our focus on Rustin and Neagle, we will create a hermeneutic for queer bodies of today through unearthing a radical love ethic, sexual healing and the re-imagination of family. These key points will aid in inclusive language, framing of consent and embracing our Wholly Humanist curiosity.

Jé R. Hooper is the founder of FrequencyHouse Productions and a recent Ph.D Interdisciplinary Arts candidate at Ohio University. His work promotes the intersections of art, justice, and religious ethics in efforts to obtain social equity. As a clergy person, he skillfully engages congregations in trans-linguisticism, performative preaching, and affect theory involving onomatopoeic communication. He is best known for his recent works, entitled "Moving Upon the Face of the Deep" featuring Dr. Cornel West, "The Black Sacred Communion", and latest collaboration with his life partner, Storäe Michele, "the listening heart."

JANUARY 21

"Does Character Count in Politics?"

Hugh Taft-Morales

Ethical Leader

Although we praise someone for having "character," constituents often elect those who display little of it? Why are ethical qualities such as honesty, responsibility, humility, and respect for others not valued more by voters? Why are so many willing to turn a blind eye to contemptible personal behavior on the part of politicians? Is the "noble statesmen" a quaint relic of the past? Hugh Taft-Morales explores these questions in an attempt to unearth some reason for optimism about the future of ethical politics in the United States.

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.

JANUARY 28

"Making Sense of Sapiens: Humans and Humanism"

Hugh Taft-Morales

Ethical Leader

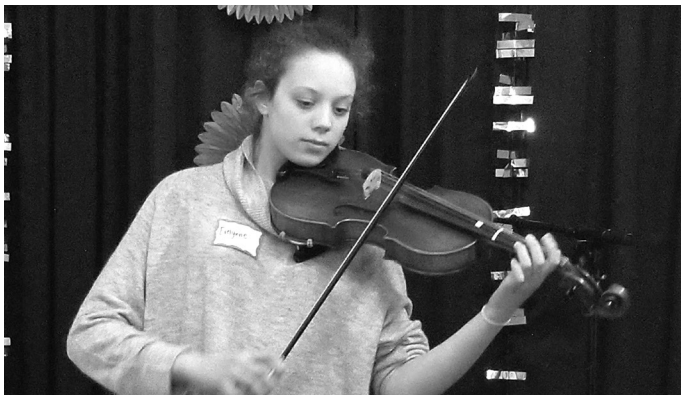
Yuval Noah Harari, in his book *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind* proposes that three revolutions – cognitive, agricultural, and scientific – have shaped what we have become as a species. Hugh Taft-Morales explores how what we as humanists can draw from Harari that can make us more self aware and able to chart our future development. How can self-awareness as a species help us become more ethical and happy?

MISS A PLATFORM?

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.

HumanLight Celebration and Potluck Dinner

On Saturday, December 23, we joined together to celebrate HumanLight with the Baltimore Coalition of Reason. HumanLight is a celebration of the winter season conceived by the New Jersey Humanist Network as a humanist or secular alternative to traditional religious celebrations. HumanLight features music and the lighting of three candles celebrating Reason, Compassion, and Hope. HumanLight was first celebrated in 2001 in New Jersey and has since spread throughout the country. This year is the eighth celebration of HumanLight by the Baltimore Coalition of Reason. To learn more, visit the HumanLight website (www.HumanLight.org).



PROGRAM COMMITTEE MEETING

Sunday, January 28,
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.

ETHICAL HUMANIST STORYTELLING WORKSHOP

Sunday, January 28,
2:30 p.m.

Want to be able to tell your Ethical Humanist story more effectively? BES members are welcome to attend a free storytelling workshop led by Leader Hugh Taft-Morales aimed to help you more effectively express your journey into Ethical Humanism. Participants will begin writing their story during the workshop and some will share their story with the group. Members can RSVP to Hugh at HughTM@Gmail.com.



BES WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS



Dom Eggert (left) and Mike Kohut (right) were welcomed to the Baltimore Ethical Society by President Thomas Higdon on December 17, 2017.

If you have not yet had a chance to meet Dom or Mike, please introduce yourself the next time you see them!

SECOND SUNDAY FAMILY MEET-UPS!

Join other families with young children immediately following platform on the second Sunday of each month 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 may-agk@gmail.com or Beth at emluginbill@gmail.com.



AMERICAN ETHICAL UNION 2018 ASSEMBLY

"Seeds for the Future: Environmental Justice and Ethical Culture"
#ethalseeds2018

Ethical Culture holds sacred, and strives to protect and nurture, the web of interrelations between each other and our environment. Climate change adversely affects everyone, but especially marginalized populations in this country and around the world who bear the brunt of polluted air, water, and soil. We must help stop the environmental degradation of inner cities, poor rural areas, and places where many indigenous people live. Come learn more about environmental justice so we can plant seeds that grow into effective activism for the benefit of everyone now and in the future. There will also be workshops on best practices for growing our movement.

BUILD in West Harlem Park

(continued from page 1)

both find better jobs. She said that while things are tough in their new 21217 zip code, “We will stay, and we will fight. But we need resources.” Joy said that she has staked a claim and built a home for her family, so she’s determined to make it work. She complains that Sandtown, the neighborhood just to the north where Freddie Gray died, gets a lot more funding due to local politics even though it’s just separated by a city street. There was the paradox again – a rough, bleak environment struggling with an opioid crisis, shown to us by a tour guide displaying an energetic determination. Ms. Ross had hope.

As Bishop Miles reminded us when we returned to the school for shared reflection, “Hope is not desire. It is expectation.” Before this evening I did not have an expectation that West Harlem would grow healthy. The Bishop explained that, just like Nehemiah repairing the walls of Jerusalem, we have to respond with expectation in healing Baltimores. Only then will

we see “roses grow out of concrete,” the quote from Tupac Shakur adorning a new mural on a corner building near the school. My brief visit nurtured in me, and in BES members Janey Solwald, Ray Noemer, and Jason Persichetti, an expectation that we’d be back. You’ll hear more from us about West Harlem, a neighborhood we hope – no, we expect – will grow into a rose.

*Note: You are invited to attend a screening and discussion of the film *Resilience* at Roots and Branches School on Friday, January 12, from 6:00–8:30 p.m. This one-hour documentary delves into the science of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and the movement to treat and prevent toxic stress so prevalent in many marginalized communities in Baltimore. How can we break the cycle of adversity and disease? The event is being hosted by the Baltimore Gift Economy. (See: <https://baltimoregifteconomy.wordpress.com/>) RSVP for this on Facebook at: <https://www.facebook.com/events/743238085873574/>.



PR COMMITTEE MEETING

Sunday, January 7,
12:30 p.m.

The committee will discuss how to energize our social media presence, the future of our newsletter, and elect a new committee chair.

ACTION ALERT BAN THE BOX

In 2015, BES partnered with Out for Justice, an advocacy group lead by individuals who have been arrested, incarcerated, or otherwise impacted by our criminal justice system. In 2018, OJF's legislative priority is to “ban the box” on university applications.

The Maryland General Assembly passed SB543/HB694: Maryland Fair Access to Education Act of 2017 with bi-partisan, veto-proof majorities during the 2017 legislative session. Governor Hogan vetoed the bill citing concerns related to public safety on college campuses. If you believe that prospective college students should be judged for admission based on their academic qualifications, and **not** solely because they checked a box indicating they have a criminal record, then call your legislators and demand they vote to override Hogan's veto. Don't know your legislators? Search here: <http://mdelect.net/>.



BALTIMORE ETHICAL SOCIETY

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

NEWSLETTER

Please do not delay!

TIME VALUE

ETHICAL ACTION MEETING

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

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

NEWCOMERS MEETING

Sunday, January 28, 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, January 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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