



## Climate Change and the Loss of Cultures

by Hugh Taft-Morales, Ethical Leader

Last month the United Nations' scientific panel on climate change warned that climate change will threaten our lives sooner than previously thought. It made me wonder again, why are developed nations pushing consumerism to the point of threatening our existence? I think we need to look to indigenous cultures to learn better ways to live, but these very cultures are being wiped out by modernity.

This was made clear by anthropologist Wade Davis. (See: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KfbGdoTQKuM>). Davis argues that, like endangered species that will never return, these cultures are a valuable resource and we shouldn't simply shrug our shoulders. But we do. Why?

I went back to some anthropology writings by Margaret Meade and Ruth Benedict for insight. Their work made westerners more aware of cultures throughout the world, and how it showed that what people say is good is relative to time and place. Some called this "anthropological relativism." It seems obvious today, but it revolutionized how people thought of cultures and ethics.

Much of the west, however, soon developed a more dramatic claim: "what is good is relative to time and place." "Ethical relativism," as this was soon labeled, led many to believe that there is no better or worse ways to live, so why not just have the most fun? Ethical relativism contributed to the a dangerous cultural slide towards a superficial hedonism - what Felix Adler, who founded Ethical Culture, described over 140 years ago as a "*basty pursuit of affairs in the hours of labor, and the no less eager chase of pleasure in the hours of leisure, wandering festive halls, chewing artificial phrases, breathing a stale and insipid perfume from which the spirit of joy has fled.*" We find having mastered the art of conspicuous consumption, we are not happier. We are more hectic and less satisfied.

Ethical relativism allows us to look upon the rapid loss of cultural worlds without concern. So what if indigenous cultures somehow unchanged by modern economic development disappear? We condemn genocide, but accept ethnocide as inevitable.



(continued on page 5)

### SUNDAY PLATFORMS

10:30 a.m.

(details on page 4)

#### NOVEMBER 4

##### "Baltimore During the Civil War"

Neal McFarland

#### NOVEMBER 11

##### "Annual Fall Family Festival"

Facilitated by:

Mary Beth Sodus, Karen Elliott, and Hugh Taft-Morales

#### NOVEMBER 18

##### "Hope, Faith, and Persistence"

Michael S. Franch  
Ethical Culture Leader

#### NOVEMBER 25

##### "Self-Hatred, Inner Peace, and Gratitude"

Hugh Taft-Morales  
BES 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.



## NAVIGATORS USA CHAPTER 43

Baltimore Navigators is a co-ed, inclusive, secular family scouting group designed for 7-12 year olds. We meet the first and third Sundays of the month and are always looking for new families to join! We have a camping trip coming up in November and we'd love to have you around our campfire. Please email [baltimore Navigators@gmail.com](mailto:baltimore Navigators@gmail.com) for more information and visit [NavigatorsUSA.org](http://NavigatorsUSA.org).



# Sunday School for November

Our Sunday School is off to a good start with an uptick in attendance and the return of our wonderful teachers. Don't forget to invite families you know to come join us.

Our theme for November is Gratitude & Generosity, a very appropriate topic for this time of year. As we head into the holiday season, it is especially important to teach our youth about being grateful for what they've got and generous towards others.



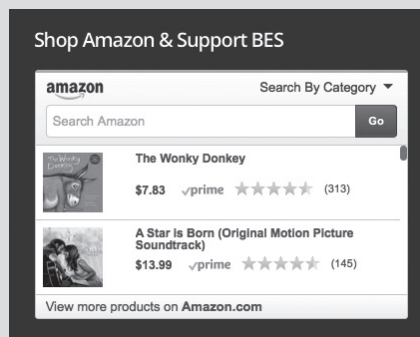
Our preschoolers will be reading *The Quiltmaker's Gift*, *Rainbow Fish*, and more. All our youth will

be invited to join in our fall festival and Stone Salad - great ways to live out the values of generosity and gratitude. Being valued members of the Ethical Society and participating in this community and our struggles for social justice are also ways

we demonstrate and live out these values with and for our youth.

## DONATE TO BES AT NO COST TO YOU!

Did you know that if you shop at Amazon, you can generate income for BES? All you have to do is go to the BES website and **scroll down to use the Amazon search box**. Amazon will make a donation to BES based on your purchase – and there is no cost to you! Please keep this in mind for any holiday shopping that you may do – or, for that matter, any other shopping at Amazon.



## OTHER ACTIVITIES

**Tabletop Game Night**  
Friday, November 2, 7:00 p.m.

**Poetry Salon**  
Sunday, November 4, 9:30 a.m.

**Mindfulness Meditation**  
Sunday, November 11, 9:30 a.m.

**Board Meeting**  
Sunday, November 11, 12:30 p.m.

**Book Discussion**  
Thursday, November 15, 7:00 p.m.

**Baltimore American Indian Center Pow-Wow**  
Saturday, November 17, 3:30 p.m.

**Ethical Action Meeting**  
Sunday, November 18, 12:30 p.m.

**Newcomers Meeting**  
Sunday, November 25, 12:30 p.m.

**SMART Recovery**  
Every Saturday, 10:30 a.m.

**Humanist Improv Group**  
Every Wednesday, 6:15 p.m.

**The Baltimore Go Club**  
Every Thursday, 6:00 p.m.

## CHECK OUT OUR MEETUP GROUP

Learn about and RSVP to events, get directions, or arrange car pools.

[www.meetup.com/bmoreethical](http://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	November 4
G to L	November 11
M to R	November 18
S to Z	November 25

## SUNDAY PLATFORM PROGRAMS

NOVEMBER 4

### “Baltimore During the Civil War”

Neal McFarland

Neal McFarland will share some of the fascinating history about Baltimore during the Civil War. He'll start with Lincoln taking office and talk about the political situation and effect on Baltimore of the bloodiest conflict in American history. Come hear this narrative supported by photos and graphs of Fort McHenry and other sites in our city during this eventful time.

**Mr. Neal McFarland** has a BA in Sociology from the University of Baltimore, and has given many presentations at Towson Toastmasters, the Broadmead Community, and other venues.

NOVEMBER 11

### “Annual Fall Family Festival”

Facilitated by Mary Beth Sodus,  
Karen Elliott, and Hugh Taft-Morales

The air is cooler, the trees more colorful, and the BES-ers are gathering together to feel thankful for hopefully a whole lot of things - but, for sure, we'll be thankful to be gathered together to celebrate the autumn and our families - not the least of which is our wonderful BES extended family - and to enjoy our traditional Stone Salad.

Bring something to add to the salad, bring your voices ready to sing, bring your friends of all ages, and definitely bring your sense of gratitude for those good things we are fortunate enough to have - including our ability to act to help create a better world in various ways (don't forget to vote on or before the 6th and encourage others to). If you want to bring more than just a salad ingredient, please bring a side dish or dessert that goes well with salad. (Bread, apple cider, and dressings will be provided.)

Together we'll enjoy some old traditions and maybe we can start some new ones, too!

NOVEMBER 18

### “Hope, Faith, and Persistence”

Michael S. Franch  
*Ethical Culture Leader*

I believe that we do change the world when our lives exhibit our faith and hope. We might not see it, it might not be imme-

diately evident, but we can change the world. To do that, we need not only faith and hope but also persistence. We have to persist because there will always be bad things to combat and good things to build. We can lose faith. We can lose hope. But we have to persist.

**Michael S. Franch** is an Ethical Culture Leader and an active member of the National Leaders Council of the American Ethical Union. He served as Leader of the Baltimore Ethical Society from 1975-1984 and is currently an affiliate minister at the First Unitarian Church, Baltimore. A historian by training he spent most of his career, and until his 2007 retirement, working in health policy at the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. He enjoys playing the concertina, storytelling, English country dance, and bicycling around Baltimore (he has only been hit once). He lives in the Baltimore neighborhood of Waverly. He is president of the Baltimore City Historical Society and a board member of the newly-formed Green Burial Association of Maryland, which he'd be happy to tell you all about.

NOVEMBER 25

### “Self-Hatred, Inner Peace, and Gratitude”

Hugh Taft-Morales  
*Ethical Leader*

Often we are war with ourselves. We amplify the inner voices telling us that we are good enough and not ethical enough. We can fall into an unproductive cycle of self-hatred. How do we escape from self-criticism on the one hand and indifference on the other? How do we take a heroic stance against injustice, while admitting that we usually fall well short? In this season of thanksgiving and gratitude, Hugh Taft-Morales explores these questions.

**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.

## SMART RECOVERY MEETING

Every Saturday, 10:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m., downstairs

SMART Recovery (Self-Management And Recovery Training) is a free peer-support group for individuals who have chosen to abstain, or are considering abstinence from any type of addictive behaviors (substances or activities), by teaching how to change self-defeating thinking, emotions, and actions; and to work towards long-term satisfactions and quality of life. SMART is not a 12-step group like Alcoholics Anonymous. For more information about SMART, visit [www.smartrecovery.org](http://www.smartrecovery.org).

## THE BALTIMORE GO CLUB

Every Thursday, 6:00 – 10:00 p.m.

Come play the ancient Chinese board game go, also known as weiqi or baduk. BES hosts the Baltimore Go Club at VLP every Thursday night from 6:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. All are welcome!

## Climate Change and the Loss of Cultures

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ble, the result of antiquated ways of life not keeping up with progress.

Wade Davis stresses that ethnocide is neither inevitable nor wise. It's a result of bad choices on the part of the powerful that have put our ecosystem in grave danger. While many of the "exoticized but dismissed" cultures have found ways to live in harmony with nature, modern materialism has reaped accelerating climate change that may be our undoing as a species. Other cultures can remind us that there are better ways to live in harmony with nature. Perhaps losing one or two cultures will not hurt us, Davis admits, but neither will the loss of one or two steel bolts from the frame of a plane. When enough bolts fall off, he warns, the plane will fall apart and all on board will die.

A respect for a broad array of cul-

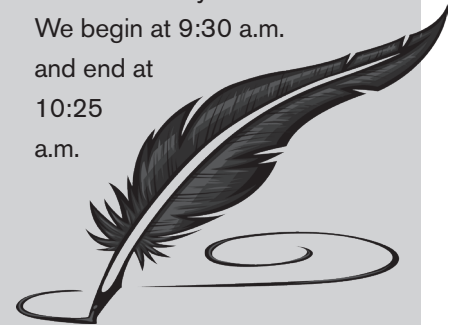
tures might help us question our blind allegiance to capitalistically-fueled and individualistic materialism. Other cultures offer radically different ways to conceive of personal identity, power, and the importance of relationships. Ethical Culture suggests that our very identity is created by relationships. In a way, the more cultures we can know about and connect with, the greater we are as a result. A life focused only on our selves will be a less fulfilling life.

Davis claims that, "when we lose a culture, we lose a part of ourselves." Do we really believe that? If we did, perhaps our relationship with our planet would be less dominated by exploitation. Perhaps we would focus more on growing as a person and species. Perhaps the United Nations grim warnings would be heeded so that we would save ourselves. Time will tell.

## poetry SALON

Sunday, November 4,  
9:30 a.m.

The Baltimore Ethical Society's Poetry Salon is dedicated to the appreciation of all types of poetry. You may read your own poems or you may read the poems of others. We meet on the first Sunday of each month. We begin at 9:30 a.m. and end at 10:25 a.m.



## HUMANIST improv GROUP

Every Wednesday,  
6:15 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.  
2510 Saint Paul St.  
(ring bell at rear of building)

Did you know that a central tenet of humanism and good improv is Bringing out the best in others brings out the best in ourselves? One goal is to see if improv can be used to explore social justice issues. Another is to have fun and be silly for a little while. We meet once a week to do improv exercises and work on improv skills and maybe even to perform.

# BESpeak

**BALTIMORE ETHICAL SOCIETY**

2521 Saint Paul St., Baltimore, MD 21218

## **NEWSLETTER**

Please do not delay!

**TIME VALUE**

## **ETHICAL ACTION MEETING**

**Sunday, November 18, 12:30 p.m.**

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

## **NEWCOMERS MEETING**

**Sunday, November 25, 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 11, 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**

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