



Thinking Revolution

by Hugh Taft-Morales, Ethical Leader

While the 2018 midterm elections gave progressives some hope, we continue to struggle with the hate, fear, bigotry and xenophobia on display in U. S. politics. For a few years these dark forces have been rumbling openly. Why? Because hate, fear, bigotry and xenophobia are politically powerful tools.

A couple of days after the midterm, Ethical Culture Leader James Croft called our situation “a nightmare.” Initially I resisted his characterization of a country that just elected more women and people of color to the House than ever before. I wanted to nurture the hope in my heart that our system can build a better future.

But perhaps my perspective is warped by my privilege. I am comfortable enough to want to hold on to hope. But, as James, explains, when people say, the system generally works, they usually really mean that the system generally works...for some of us. It works for me. It works for many people, including most members of Ethical Societies.

But for immigrants arriving on our borders to try to build a new life for their family, for gender non-conforming people, for farmers in poor countries suffering the effects of climate change, the system is not working. Perhaps too many of us think that we can tinker around the edges and all will get better.

All indications are, however, that tinkering won't work. Power has a tendency to protect itself. Too many of us are too comfortable. James Croft points out that often those who really try to expose the ugliness and abuse of power in our system, end up losing their power. They have their White House press passes revoked. They are called a traitor to class and country. They are fired and sidelined because they took a knee during the national anthem.

So what do we do? Perhaps we more readily have to admit, as James put it, that this is a nightmare that is real. Maybe we have to get over our need for optimism so that we can do some radical reconstruction. Perhaps James was right in saying, “Accept the nightmare. You can still be of use.”

James is offering an existential call for courage. Embracing a sobering perspec-

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SUNDAY PLATFORMS

10:30 a.m.

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DECEMBER 2

“Legislative Agenda and Ethical Values in Annapolis”

Mary Washington
Maryland Senator-Elect

DECEMBER 9

“Do You Listen to Your Conscience?”

Hugh Taft-Morales
Ethical Leader

DECEMBER 16

Annual Pancake Breakfast

DECEMBER 23

“Harm Reduction & the War on Drugs”

Rajani Gudlavalleti and Harriet Smith
Baltimore Harm Reduction Coalition

DECEMBER 30

“Anger: Women, Men, and Me Too”

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ETHICAL HUMANIST SUNDAY SCHOOL

Every Sunday

10:30 a.m. – Noon

Individualized programs for preschool children and school aged students.

Separate supervision provided for children up to age two.

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Gratitude and Sadness

A Gift from the Estate of Michelle Baseman

by Hugh Taft-Morales, *Ethical Leader*

On Saturday, July 15, of last year, Michelle Baseman (63) passed away peacefully after a courageous battle with pancreatic cancer. She was survived by 8 brothers and sisters, 6 nieces and nephews, and 5 great nieces and nephews. She was a talented carpenter who restored a grand townhouse for 39 years where I visited her the last time I saw her.

Michelle was attracted to the Baltimore Ethical Society partially because of our intellectually stimulating talks. In her soft-spoken manner she shared her love of science and philosophy, mixing in quips with her wry sense of humor. But Michelle also liked coming to BES because of our warm, welcoming community. Having been known as a man named Michael for most of her life, she did not always feel welcomed at other spaces in Baltimore. I am glad she found us an oasis of welcome and thoughtfulness.

As I shared at her memorial service, Michelle shared with me a 400-page collection of quotes along with her own musings in a document she titled, *Musings for Essential Existence: an Anthology of Aphorisms, Epigrams, Reflections, and Other Writings for*

Ethical Living and Living a Sane Life in an Insane World.

It was a gift I have returned to now and again for a quote or a laugh, and am happy to share it with you. One particular warm quote from Bertrand Russell in his essay about death keeps coming back to me: "...wherever a spark of the divine fire kindled in their hearts, we were ready with encouragement, with sympathy, with brave words in which high courage glowed." This collection, and Michelle's presence when she was with us, seemed gifts enough.

What I did not anticipate was another gift from Michelle that came months after her death. Her sister informed me last spring that Michelle had left a gift to BES in her will. Just this fall, once the estate was settled, we received a check for \$13,965. Without a belief in the afterlife, I have only my imagination available to conjure up Michelle for a final thank you to her for this generous gift. She'd probably crack some morbid joke about it and tell me to get back to work. It reminds me that she remains a part of my life, and her gift will help us at BES continue our work to offer Baltimore a home for Ethical Humanism.

PLANNED GIVING

As we approach the end of the year, and as we may be inspired by Michelle's example, this is an apt time to consider BES in our own estate planning, and to be mindful that if we plan to make deductions on our 2018 taxes for charitable giving to BES, our pledge payments must be made before the end of the calendar year.



Fall Festival and the PoetTree

by Karen Elliott, BES Member

A few times a year our Sunday meetings include a lot more movement, laughter, songs, and sharing than usual. November 11th was one of those times, as together we focused on autumn, family, and gratitude. Thanks to Mary Beth Sodus for decorations and her words to set the tone of the meeting, as well as her reading of a lovely poem by Mary Oliver and brainstorming ideas with me about what to include and when. Thanks to Hugh Taft-Morales for presiding as well as leading two songs. And thanks to everyone who contributed salad ingredients and their voices for a fun interactive version of our modified Stone Soup story. Together we put together three overflowing bowls of "stone salad", which we then ate along with side dishes, soups, and desserts contributed by those attending.

One new activity in this year's Fall Festival was our creation of a PoetTree. When we first decided to participate in the Baltimore Book Festival in 1999, I wanted to provide an activity to draw families to our booth to hear about BES. I came up with a modified version of an activity I'd used in classrooms and

the PoetTree was born. We discovered that adults enjoyed creating leaves for the PoetTree as much as young people did, and it became a staple at our Book Festival booth for many years. Member Gordon Stills added another dimension one year when he began to ask the contributors (especially the young ones) to read their poem out loud before placing it on the tree, and if they did not want to read it then he would. Gordon has a wonderful voice (something I have often been grateful to listen to over the years), and it was a treat to be present during the times he volunteered.

For those who were not present for the Festival, here are some of the poems that adorned our tree:

Fall/ Collecting maple syrup/ pancakes/ campfire/ warming up.

Crisp winds blow again/Rustling the crimson leaves/Release from the trees.

During these times of trouble and upheavals/ Make your actions & words/ Ring out strong/ for reason in this season/ must win out.

For more poems, see the online version of this article at bmorethical.org/fall-festival-and-the-poettree/.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Poetry Salon

Sunday, December 2, 9:30 a.m.

Tabletop Game Night

Friday, December 7, 7:00 p.m.

Mindfulness Meditation

Sunday, December 9, 9:30 a.m.

Board Meeting

Sunday, December 9, 12:30 p.m.

Personal Ethical

Evolution Workshop

Sunday, December 9, 3:00 p.m.

Ethical Action Meeting

Sunday, December 16, 12:30 p.m.

Program Committee Meeting

Sunday, December 23, 12:30 p.m.

HumanLight Celebration and Potluck Dinner

Sunday, December 23, 5:30 p.m.

Celebrate Kwanzaa!

Saturday, December 29, 12:00 p.m.

Newcomers Meeting

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

SMART Recovery

Every Saturday, 10:30 a.m.

Humanist Improv Group

Every Wednesday, 6:15 p.m.

Baltimore Go Club

Every Thursday, 6:00 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	December 2
G to L	December 9
M to R	December 16
S to Z	December 23

SUNDAY PLATFORM PROGRAMS

DECEMBER 2

“Legislative Agenda and Ethical Values in Annapolis”

Mary Washington
Speaker Title

In the rough and tumble world of state politics, it can be difficult to keep your moral compass straight and true. The pressures of getting re-elected and needing to “cut deals” so as to move forward on issues of key concern, make it challenging to focus on ethics. Senator-Elect Mary Washington, Ph.D., has been a leader in fighting for affordable access to water, protecting families from unfair tax sales and foreclosures, helping unaccompanied homeless youth get services and support, marriage equality, protection of transgender Marylanders, elimination of the death penalty, implementation of the Maryland DREAM Act, and securing more funding for Baltimore’s public schools. She will share her legislative agenda for Maryland and how she applies her ethical values in Annapolis.

Senator-Elect Mary Washington, Ph.D., is an advocate for Maryland’s 43rd District as a legislator, professor, ally, public policy leader and trail-blazer. Born in Philadelphia, Mary Washington came to Baltimore due to her scholarly interests and dedication to serving at-risk populations. She earned her Ph.D. and M.A. in Sociology from The Johns Hopkins University and became an assistant professor at Lehigh University. She is currently a member of the part-time faculty at the Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA).

In 2010, Mary made history becoming the first openly LGBT African-American elected official in Maryland – and only the second such state legislator in the country. Senator-Elect Washington has passed landmark legislation that bars the inhumane practice of shackling female prisoners during labor and delivery; sponsored and passed the nation’s first law protecting social media (Facebook) password privacy; secured stronger safeguards from electronic harassment via text or direct messaging; won new restrictions on price-gouging and abusive treatment of consumers by rent-to-own stores targeting low-income and minority communities; and passed the state’s first legislation establishing the community schools model as the statewide strategy for addressing concentrated poverty. Her work as Delegate has earned the trust of her

colleagues and constituents on budget and tax issues, as well as, the impact of funding choices on Maryland’s families.

DECEMBER 9

“Do You Listen to Your Conscience?”

Hugh Taft-Morales
Ethical Leader

As children we often experience an inner voice – messages from our psyche reminding us to act ethically toward others. Most of our lives we try to have a clean conscience. Politicians talk of “voting their conscience.” What is this thing we call conscience? Although it is clearly aroused when we witness injustice, can we nurture it so that it more consistently and smoothly guides our behavior? Can conscience be as effective at nurturing goodness as it is in identifying evil? In the words of Eleanor Roosevelt, “When will our consciences grow so tender that we will act to prevent human misery rather than avenge it?”

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.

DECEMBER 16

Annual Pancake Breakfast

In a break from our usual routine, we will not have a speaker but instead informally celebrate the coming season with a hearty breakfast and time to connect with each other. Pancakes are on tap, with a variety of expert chefs turning out to turn things over. If you would like to volunteer to help, to bring a side dish to go with pancakes, or another breakfast/brunch-type food item, please contact Thomas at higdon.thomas@gmail.com. Everyone is invited to bring a warm article of clothing such as gloves, scarves, hats, socks to adorn our mitten tree. Coffee, tea, and juice beverages will be provided. The Pancake Breakfast is free and open to all.

Besides having a pancake-focused potluck brunch, we will

SUNDAY PLATFORM PROGRAMS

again enjoy sharing with others less fortunate by providing warm decorations for a mitten tree (mittens, gloves, scarves, hats which will be donated to TurnAround, an organization that provides support services to victims of domestic violence.

DECEMBER 23

“Harm Reduction & the War on Drugs”

Rajani Gudlavalleti and Harriet Smith
Baltimore Harm Reduction Coalition

Until we end the war on drugs, we cannot end police violence, overdose, HIV, or myriad other assaults on our communities. How has this “war” been designed to target Black communities, while pulling all communities into its wrath? How can we support people who use drugs while they are under attack? How can we reduce the harm done by these policies for ourselves, for each other? This interactive discussion will cover the racist history and harms of the war on drugs, ethical arguments in both upholding and fighting this “war,” and strategies to reduce some of the harms.

The Baltimore Harm Reduction Coalition mobilizes community members for the health, dignity, and safety of people targeted by the war on drugs and anti sex-worker policies. We advocate for harm reduction as a part of a broader movement for social justice.

Rajani Gudlavalleti is Community Organizer for Baltimore Harm Reduction Coalition (BHRC). For over a decade, she has worked to advance social justice at the intersections of public health and the legal system. Rajani is also a consultant with Baltimore Racial Justice Action (BRJA), a co-organizer of Baltimore Asian Resistance in Solidarity (BARS), and a board member of Foundation Beyond Belief (FBB). She holds a master’s degree in public policy from Johns Hopkins University.

Harriet Smith is Executive Director of Baltimore Harm Reduction Coalition (BHRC). She brings over fifteen years of experience with various Baltimore area harm reduction, racial justice, and equity focused organizations and projects. She is also a long-time facilitator and board member with Baltimore Racial Justice Action (BRJA). Harriet received her master’s degree in gender studies with a focus on health and sexuality from Towson University.

DECEMBER 30

“Anger: Women, Men, and Me Too”

Hugh Taft-Morales
Ethical Leader

There’s a lot of anger in America these days, from the anger that fueled Trump’s election to the anger of the #MeToo movement to the anger of street protests. Where does this anger come from? Where will take us? What do you do with it? Reflecting on Rebecca Traister’s new book, *Good and Mad: The Revolutionary Power of Women’s Anger*, Hugh Taft-Morales explores the history of anger and how it is manifesting in women, men, and himself.



BES member Emil Volcheck receives the Anna Garlin Spencer Volunteer Award from the AEU for his service to BES. The award honors dedicated members for their commitment to help their ethical congregation and the American Ethical Union thrive. Volcheck received the award at the 2018 AEU Assembly in Albuquerque, NM. (Pictured left to right: AEU Executive Director Bart Worden, Karen Elliott, BES President Thomas Higdon, Emil Volcheck)

HOLIDAY SHOPPING CAN HELP FUND BES!

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.

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.

CELEBRATE KWANZAA!

**Saturday, December 29,
Noon to 4:00 p.m.
at the Lewis Museum,
830 E. Pratt Street**

Celebrate this holiday with African dance, storytelling with puppets, drumming performances, workshops, lectures, craft activities and a fashion show celebrating the principle Ujamaa (oo-jah-MAH) or Collective Economics.

Special Admission is \$5. More information at lewismuseum.org/event/kwanzaa-celebration-2018/. Parking is available at the garage on Pratt St. opposite the museum.

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.

TABLETOP GAME NIGHT

Friday, December 7, 7:00 p.m.

Join us in the library as we play a variety of unusual pen and paper roleplaying games. We meet from 7:00–10:00 p.m. on the first Friday of each month. No gaming experience necessary

NAVIGATORS USA CHAPTER 43

The Baltimore Ethical Society is proud to sponsor Navigators USA Chapter 43, an all-inclusive, co-ed, secular scouting group. We meet the first and third Sundays and may have optional “flex” meetings some months.

Our chapter is a family scouting group. Families are expected to participate in the activities – no drop offs. Email baltimore Navigators@gmail.com if you have any questions.



PERSONAL ETHICAL EVOLUTION WORKSHOP

Sunday, December 9, 3:00-5:00p.m.

As part of Hugh's 2018–2019 focus on personal growth, he is offering a “Personal Ethical Evolution Workshop” on Monday, December 3rd at 3:00 p.m. at the Village Learning Place. Get a jump on New Year's Resolutions in a fun, interactive workshop where you will work in on your own, in pairs, and as a group to plan how you can live closer to your ethical ideals in 2019! Bring a snack or something to drink to share. RSVP to Hugh at leader@bmoreethical.org. 12 person limit!

HumanLight Celebration and Potluck Dinner

Sunday, December 23, 5:30 p.m. at First Unitarian

Please join us to celebrate HumanLight with the Baltimore Coalition of Reason on Sunday, December 23, from 5:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

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 ninth celebration of HumanLight by the Baltimore Coalition of Reason. To learn

more, visit the HumanLight website (www.HumanLight.org).

This year we are celebrating HumanLight at First Unitarian. We will have a potluck dinner and desserts, music, and the candle lighting. This is a family-friendly event, and children are welcome. We'll be enjoying music from "Swing & Samba", the duo of Bob Jacobson (saxophone, clarinet) and Michael Spittel (guitar).

Please tell us you're coming (RSVP) and tell us what food you'd like to bring. Sign up for the potluck dinner here (<https://goo.gl/SxmtpU>). If you can't access the Google Doc, then email BmoreCoR@gmail.com or call 443-267-8585.

Thinking Revolution

(continued from page 1)

tive on how bad things have become in our political world might be the first step toward meaningful change. James believes that we are being taught some important lessons that we have to take to heart, as difficult as it may be. Some of these lessons are:

- People are worse than you think.
- People will go to any lengths to win.
- Politics is not about facts or policies, but about feelings and personalities.

I'll admit that I still resist these lessons. I want to see the best in others. I want to think rules can keep power in check. I want to believe that enlightened leaders can explain our way to a better world. But perhaps I'm wrong.

It depresses me.

Two messages James offers give me hope and direction. First he reminds me that we need to talk to others, especially on the opposite political side, with greater curiosity and openness. We need simply to, "[l]earn to listen to other people."

Second, we need to be bolder in our call for change. We need to "[t]hink revolution, not reform." What that looks like will need to wait for another time. But revolution is not about tinkering around the edges. It's about rebuilding our system so that justice counts more than bigotry. It's about assuring that every American has real political power.

BALTIMORE GO CLUB

Every Thursday,
6:00 – 10:00 p.m.

2510 Saint Paul St.

(ring bell at rear of building)

Come play the ancient Chinese board game go, also known as weiqi or baduk. BES hosts the Baltimore Go Club at VLP every Thursday. All are welcome!

SAVE THE DATE! COMMUNITY DINNER

Sunday, January 6, 6:00 p.m.

To bring together our members in a more casual setting, BES is sponsoring a series of community dinners. Our next potluck dinner will be hosted by Mary Beth Sodus in her home in Cross Keys. Please RSVP to MaryBethSodus@gmail.com with the dish you plan to bring. Attendance is limited to 12. We look forward to food, fellowship and fun.

poetry SALON

**Sunday, December 2,
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.



BALTIMORE ETHICAL SOCIETY
2521 Saint Paul St., Baltimore, MD 21218

NEWSLETTER

Please do not delay!

TIME VALUE

ETHICAL ACTION MEETING

Sunday, December 16, 12:30 p.m.

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

NEWCOMERS MEETING

Sunday, December 30, 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, December 9, 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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