



400 Years Project

by Hugh Taft-Morales, Ethical Leader

Beginning January 1, 2019, marking the 400th year since the first people were brought against their will to the North American mainland from Africa, I will: write 400 weekly words, offer 400 lessons, and get 400 commitments from 400 people who pledge to confront systemic racism more directly through concrete action.

Since 1619, when the first Africans were brought against their will to the North American mainland, systems of race-based oppression have evolved from indentured servitude through chattel slavery, post-Civil War wage-slave sharecropping, Jim Crow segregation, lynching, housing and loan discrimination, the prison-industrial system, and more. As a history teacher for a quarter century, I am continually challenged to acknowledge and seek ways to heal the devastating wounds caused by systemic racism and white supremacy in the United States.

Given the 400th anniversary of the arrival in Jamestown of approximately 20 African men and women, I am undertaking a personal project that I invite you to join. While there are many others working to commemorate this anniversary, like "The Angela Project," I felt compelled to take action myself. Beginning on January 1st, 2019, I will make a part of my daily work as an Ethical Humanist Leader the following:

- 1) Collect and distribute an annotated list of 400 history books and articles, primarily by people of color, on various aspects of systemic racism and the efforts to repair the harm done;
- 2) Write 52 weekly blog posts of approximately 400 words in length about the 400 years of oppression in the North American colonies and the United States;
- 3) Gather pledges from 400 people, especially those of us who consider ourselves "white," to make the following pledge: *"To mark 400 years of racial oppression in colonial America and the United States, I pledge to confront systemic racism more directly and take concrete steps to repair the harm done;"*
- 4) Share 400 ways, big and small, to help repair the harm done by slavery and racism. They can include individual acts and public policies that address racism, and empower and provide resources to descendants of slaves and people of color.

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SUNDAY PLATFORMS 10:30 a.m.

Our weekly meetings begin with lively, informative talks given by a wide range of knowledgeable, notable speakers. A question/answer and discussion period follows, giving those attending a chance to question the speaker, discuss the issues, and present their own opinions. At the end of the discussion period, there is a coffee hour which gives members, newcomers, and visitors the opportunity to socialize.

Visit bmorethical.org for a listing of upcoming platform topics.

ETHICAL HUMANIST SUNDAY SCHOOL

Individualized programs for preschool children and school aged students.

TODDLER CARE

Separate supervision provided for children up to age two.

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	First Sundays
G to L	Second Sundays
M to R	Third Sundays
S to Z	Fourth Sundays



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Hugh Taft-Morales, Leader

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What Are You Doing?

by Stephen Meskin

There's a popular standard tune that [my wife] Adrien likes to hum and sing snatches of this time of the year: "What are you doing New Year's Eve?" This year, I'm thinking about what's important to me. I'm going to tell you what that is in a minute, but first you might want to think about what's important to you. Knowing what is important helps us make good choices when deciding what to do, not only on New Year's Eve but during the rest of the year and the rest of our lives. What's funny about it, is that what is important often changes over time. So, it is a good idea for us to check in with our importance meter regularly, say once a year, and this is as good a time as any.

Have you done it yet? While I've been blabbing on, have you thought about what's important to you? If you did, you probably included your health, your family and your friends, possibly including BES somewhere in that crowd. That's good, but something like that is expected of most people. However, we are encouraged to go beyond that, to try to make the

world a better place for others, especially those that come after us.

Unfortunately, the choices are overwhelming; there are many needs to be met for people and causes around the world and right here in the US, in Maryland, in Baltimore, and maybe even on our own block. There are causes to educate ourselves about, causes to work for, and causes to give money to.

I said I would tell you what is important to me, aside from health, family, friends, BES, mathematics, public radio, and local theater. First is Climate Change. I think it is an existential threat, but I see little that I can do as an individual other than educate myself and advocate. Second is Racial Harmony, that is racial justice plus understanding. Just by living here we need to try to be aware of when we are racist (that is *when*, not *if*) and how to deal with it. It is an ongoing personal journey of self-education and training. Third on my list is understanding Ethical Culture more deeply.

That's what my list looks like tonight. Maybe we can have a chat some time and compare lists.

GIANT GIFT CARDS

The Giant cards that Stephen Meskin sells on Sunday mornings are cash cards for use at Giant supermarkets. (We are not advocating that you change your shopping habits.) They are not GIGANTIC; they are the size of normal credit cards. We buy the cards at a 5% discount and sell them at face value. The difference gives BES a little income. Stephen usually has \$25, \$50, and \$100 cards and checks should be made out to him. Just like any other such card, it can become demagnetized and not work. The cashier can key in the 16-digit number on the back of the card. There is also a phone number on the back of the card for you to call to find out what your card balance is.

BES Happenings!



BES celebrated the winter season with a delicious breakfast of pancakes and sausages on December 16, 2018.

We were joined by friends from the Baltimore Navigators scouting troop and the American Turkish Friendship Association (ATFA). See the full album here: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/8wV2QR7HGP7LT9vn6>



BES members enjoyed music, juggling, and a potluck dinner at a HumanLight party at First Unitarian Church on December 23, 2018. HumanLight celebrates the winter season with a lighting of candles to celebrate values of Reason, Compassion, and Hope. Six member organizations of the Baltimore Coalition of Reason participated, along with members of the Maryland chapter of Americans United for Separation of Church and State. See the full photo album here: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/yVeaMtXez5HVVJG8A>



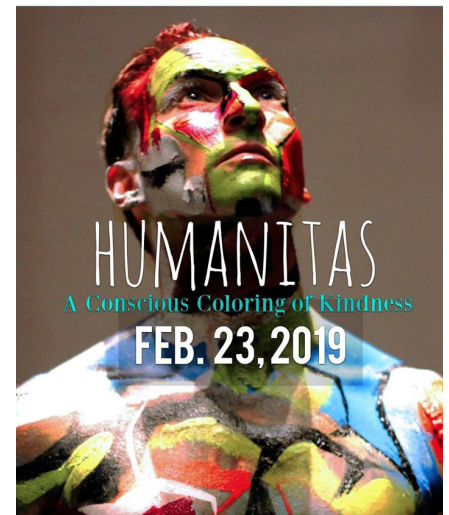
TABLETOP GAME NIGHTS

First Fridays, 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.

HUMANITAS FILM PREMIERE

FREQUENCYHOUSE
PRODUCTION



All are invited to the premiere of *Humanitas: A Conscious Coloring of Kindness*, a film by AEU Mossler Fellow Jé Hooper, at the New York Society for Ethical Culture on Saturday, February 23, 2019. Jé re-imagines the inspiring relationship between Ethical Culture founder Felix Adler and activist-scholar W.E.B. DuBois through poetry, music, and dance. Watch the trailer, learn more about the film, and buy your tickets for premiere here: <https://aeu.org/2018/11/humanitas-film-premieres-february-23-2019>. Facebook event is <https://www.facebook.com/events/593675634424880>.

Fritz Williams, A Remembrance

by Karen Elliott

Recently I saw an article about a study which showed that the best way to teach ideas and have them remembered was with the use of stories. Typically I'd want to see the design of the study before reading further. But this time I barely read past the opening paragraph because I already knew that it was correct – I had learned that from a master at using the art of storytelling to teach. I had seen Fritz Williams in action for years and knew just how well story can be used to teach people of all ages, whether they realized they were being taught or not.

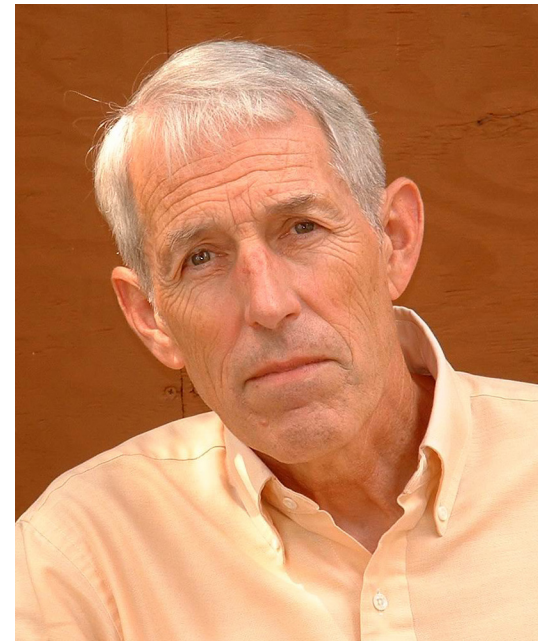
Fritz Williams grew up in a home that we all wanted to have grown up in – at least when it came to his mother. She figured in many of the stories “for the children and the child in us all” he told on Sunday mornings for many years at The Baltimore Ethical Society. Sometimes Fritz's stories were fairly bare bones – accompanied by simple illustrations he had drawn, but still drawing us into his childhood home, allowing us to look over his shoulder as he dropped his mother's good knife through a hole in the kitchen wall or spilled Mercurochrome onto the lace doily his grandmother had made. His mother embodied the kind of values that we teach in our Ethical Education programs for young people – how to be kind and fair and treat everyone with respect.

Over time, Fritz was gifted with better drawing materials and made good use of them. And for certain stories, his wife Belva made him props to help (along with the different tones of

voice he used) differentiate the many characters and places in some of his stories. But he didn't move directly from his childhood in Palmerton, PA to becoming the man that Arthur Dobrin, Leader Emeritus of the Ethical Humanist Society of Long Island, called the Ethical Movement's own Mr. Rogers.

Fritz started out as an Episcopal parish priest and a student of the Bible and its history. He received a Masters of Divinity from the Philadelphia Lutheran Theological Seminary and a ThM in Bible and Biblical Languages from Princeton Theological Seminary. Like many who come to Ethical Culture, he was a lifelong learner and always questioning. His questioning led him to become an atheist, as described in his booklet “A Conversion Story”. He considered becoming a Unitarian Universalist minister, but then found a better fit for himself in Ethical Culture.

Fritz was a story-teller in many ways. He was a writer and producer for public television. The series *Peace-work* was used in a campaign against family violence in Pennsylvania. The *Parenting Puzzle* and *Gunsense* were Emmy-winning productions for Detroit Public Television. He also worked on *The Pennsylvania Germans*, which was broadcast in Germany as well as across the U.S. He also oversaw the professionally produced production of a DVD of his stories for the children. Fritz contributed articles to *Central PA Magazine*, affiliated with the public television in Pennsylvania, and also wrote the “Investing for Life Youth Hand-book” part of the *Better Investing Educational Series*, pub-



lished in 2003. He wrote a series of five booklets, edited by BES member Rosemary Klein, based on some of his most popular platform talks.

In retirement Fritz began writing poetry as well as prose and had his poems published in anthologies. He was named Perry County Poet Laureate in 2011. In 2016 he put together the book “Joe, Beer, Bologna & Me: a medley of short stories” and was working on more writing projects at the time of his death. According to Hugh Taft-Morales, Leader of the Baltimore Ethical Society and the Philadelphia Ethical Society, “He was excited about the potential that he could get some of his stories (for adults, not for kids) published. ... What I found most interesting is that while I thought they were fiction, I wasn't 100% sure - they seemed very real and a part of his life.”

Most important to those of us at BES, Fritz was Leader of the Baltimore Ethical Society during the late 80s and

again from the late 90's until he retired in 2008 as Leader Emeritus. Not only was he a master storyteller for all ages, he used story as a way to illuminate diverse topics. One year he did a series of talks on "The Good Life" – each illuminating one aspect of what he considered a good life, and each including examples of people Fritz knew. His definition of the good life had nothing to do with the typical American dream of fancy cars and large houses. Fritz looked more to things such as making a difference in the community, reading and learning, loving and being loved, and feeling comfortable to be oneself even if one might be considered eccentric. That series had so much to think about in it, that the week after each talk those attending would again examine the same facet of the good life in an interactive program to allow for extended discussion.

BES member Stephen Meskin said of Fritz's talks "[they] usually had the overall structure of a hill. An initial introduction, usually accompanied by a story, suggesting the subject of the talk. Then he would guide us up the hill pointing out deeper issues along the way and some solutions if any. And then he would bring us down the hill, giving us new perspectives and potential solutions based on what he had presented earlier and then finally, we would get back where we started, often applying his observations to his original story."

Fritz was also active in the National Leaders Council of the American Ethical Union. Both on his retirement and upon hearing of his death, Ethical Leaders paid tribute to his skills both as a Leader and as an individual. Kate Lovelady, Leader of the Ethical Society of St. Louis, responded to news of his death, "Fritz was such a lovely person,

with such a wonderful sense of humor and caring. And he was such a good writer. His platform on his 'conversion story' is still one of my favorite expressions of a humanist spiritual journey."

Michael Franch, former Leader here in Baltimore and current Assistant Minister at First Unitarian, lamented the possible loss of Fritz's presence at NLC meeting after his retirement. "[Fritz is] a deep listener and a contributor of deep things. It would be a shame to lose that, to say nothing of your harmonicas, recorders, and vast musical range." Several people also remembered Fritz as being a dedicated long distance runner. He once told me regretfully that he had never been able to do sitting meditation, but his runs provided him with that meditative focus.

Fritz, along with his wife Belva, often contributed music to BES' meetings and after his retirement they continued to play. BES members Em Sabatiuk and Don Helm fondly remembered times spent together after Fritz's retirement when, says Don, "he and Belva would come to Em's for a potluck dinner ... There he would play his harmonica, accompanied by Belva on her harp, for an audience of between three and seven – followed by convivial discussions and sometimes by earnest theological or philosophical debates."

While acting as Leader in Baltimore, and afterwards as well, Fritz spent more time than he was asked to by the Board as a counselor and a father figure of sorts to members and friends of the Society. Long-time BES member Gordon Stills talked about this side of Fritz at his retirement "Here was a kind and gentle man who spoke meaningfully about the ways of life. He was supportive in all things sensible, tolerant of some insensible things, and ready to discuss the possibilities-impossibilities of proposals. Here was a man full of encouragement and support."

Any remembrance of Fritz would be incomplete without some of his own words. This comes from the anthology *Poems of Peace and Renewal*, edited by former BES member Carol Mays.

Nightfall

Pine sweet and cool as moss
Night comes creeping
from the woods,
Hesitates at the lake's edge
And the sky line;
In the fading luminescence
The senses grow keen
To the fish leap splash, water lap,
Lullaby hush of the leaf;
In that pilgrim time between times
The mind grasps the
mystery of transition,
The soul is serene.

IN HIS OWN WORDS

Fritz's commitment to Ethical Culture is clear in a series commemorating five of his favorite platforms that was edited and published by Three Conditions Press. That series is available, and all purchase proceeds – each is \$2 or all five are \$8 – support the Baltimore Ethical Society.

Choose from the following practical and wise publications: *An Island of Goodness*, *Everyday Courage*, *Difficult People*, *The Sacrifice of Isaac*, *A Conversion Story* or *A Religion for the 21st Century*.

Sunday School



We have been enjoying our new digs at the Village Learning Place and the return of all our great teachers. In addition to regular weekly Sunday School, our kids have gotten to participate in the Stone Salad, Pancake Breakfast, and Kwanzaa at the Lewis Museum. Thanks to pre-K teacher Jill Gordon for sharing this update from the 3-5 year olds: *The pre-k class has been enjoying our new space! We have lots of room to spread out now! Our books this fall have focused on friendship. We love to make big drawings together with our new art supplies, like water soluble crayons and liquid watercolors. We have loved exploring the herbs in the courtyard garden this fall, taking walks to the playground at Margaret Brent, and observing the season changing.*



RECLAIMING DEMOCRACY FOR ALL

American Ethical Union
104th Assembly
Tampa, FL ★ 2019

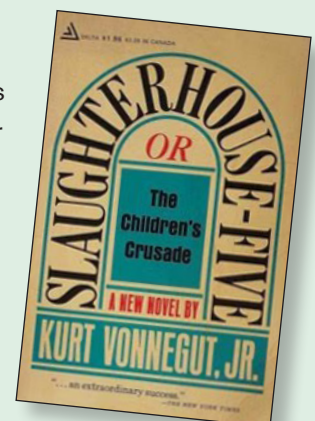
If government of the people is to be by and for the people, then we, the people, need to reclaim it before it completely slips away. Voter suppression targets people of color, women are underrepresented, and money in politics threatens democracy by giving corporate interests such as the NRA disproportionate power. As Ethical Humanists, we commit ourselves to democratic process in our lives, our local societies, and our global community. Please either register to attend the AEU's 104th Assembly on the AEU website (at <https://aeu.org/event/aeu-104th-assembly/>), or donate to the Voices at the Table Fund intended to help younger members, people of color, and other marginalized groups attend. Click here to donate, check "I would like to designate this donation to a specific fund," and select Voices at the Table in Designated Fund dropdown menu. Or make a check out to the American Ethical Union and write "Voices at the Table Fund" in the memo.

READ *SLAUGHTERHOUSE-FIVE* AND JOIN US!

Kurt Vonnegut's most celebrated and popular work, *Slaughterhouse-Five*, was first published as a complete novel on March 31, 1969. Exactly 50 years later, on March 31, 2019, BES member Wayne Laufert will discuss the book in a Platform talk.

Reading *Slaughterhouse-Five* by then, although not required, might help you get more out of the presentation and turn it into a discussion.

Slaughterhouse-Five is short—well under 300 pages in any typical edition, with lots of white space—and easy to read, but profound in its themes. Join us on March 31 for a thorough examination of Vonnegut's masterwork.



YOUTH OF ETHICAL SOCIETIES TAKE ON PRISON REFORM

February 28–March 3, 2019 in St. Louis

Each year the teens of the Ethical Culture Movement, known as the Youth of Ethical Societies (YES), gather for an intense weekend of deep thinking, fun group exercises, and discussions on how to improve the world in which we live. All teens in 9-12th grades are welcome to attend, whether or not they're affiliated with an Ethical Society. YES officers and reps decided to explore Prison Reform for this year's conference.

More details available at <https://aeu.org/event/yes-teens-in-stlouis-2019>.

For questions, contact Trish Cowan, AEU YES Advisor, at 314-680-3348 or trishhotze@sbcglobal.net.



400 Years Project

(continued from page 1)

I undertake this project:

- 1) With gratitude for numerous mentors, teachers, and friends of color who continue to advise me;
- 2) Aware that my privileged position in our society affects my perspective on this issue – both theoretically and practically – and that I must continually educate myself by reading works of people of color who address this issue.
- 3) Aware that I must avoid the bad habit of assuming that the people of color I know personally want to help me solve the oppression which victimizes them;
- 4) Acknowledging that “race” is a social construction that affects many people who are not descendants of slaves, and that racism is clearly not simply a question of black and white;
- 5) Acknowledging that there are many other forms of oppression and injustice – such as sexism, classism, and hetero-normativity – that effect many groups, which we must address as well. In this regard, we must educate ourselves

about “intersectionality;”

- 5) Admitting that this project is modest – particularly in comparison to the depth and breadth of systemic racism in our nation today. This project is meant as part of the larger, more challenging paradigm shift towards a more radical reallocation of public and private resources to help repair the damage already done to countless people and communities of color; and
- 6) Acknowledging that reparations to descendants of slaves is complicated – that it is difficult to identify precisely *who* has been most harmed by race-based oppression and to decide *how* to repair most effectively. I hope this project contributes to a national discussion with African American cultural leaders to determine the form that reparations will take.

Will you join me in this project?

You can read and recommend books, share my blog posts, take the pledge, and take deliberate concrete action. After 400 years, let's bend the arc of the moral universe towards justice.

PROGRAM COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Fourth Sundays, 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 just to listen.

poetry SALON

First Sundays, 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.



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

NEWSLETTER

Please do not delay!

TIME VALUE

ETHICAL ACTION MEETINGS

Third Sundays, 12:30 p.m.

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

NEWCOMERS MEETINGS

Once each month – Dates at bmoreethical.org

New to the Society and interested in learning more? Come to the Newcomers Meeting, held once each 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

Second Sundays, 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.

bmoreethical

Visit bmoreethical.org and look for us on Facebook, Twitter, and MeetUp.com @bmoreethical

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