



Some Springtime Reflections on the Ethical Culture Movement

by Hugh Taft-Morales, Ethical Leader



Every spring reminds us of the possibility of rebirth. This is a good thing, given the natural challenges for social movements that are born, age, fade, and disappear. Ethical Culture is no different. As the days lengthen and the temperatures rise, we must ask ourselves, will our humanistic movement flourish beyond our lives?

Let's be real – we may be at a crucial moment in our history. Many of our Ethical Societies have aging memberships, and some may not exist in a few years. Boston just closed shop. Chicago just left the AEU. Some of our Societies report feeling unconnected to the AEU and our national community. If such trends continue, we may be in the last couple of decades of a sustainable national network. Will we continue to shrink, leaving a sprinkling of sustainable Ethical Societies operating somewhat on their own without a vibrant AEU?

Perhaps not, but only if we try some radically different approaches to rebirth. We need a bold path forward. I have an idea I want to suggest.

Before I do, however, those who know more about organizational development – from inside and outside of Ethical Culture – would need to critique this idea thoroughly. I have shared this idea with a number of people in the AEU, and have gotten positive reactions. My intuition draws me back to this idea again and again. I think it makes sense for who we are as a community here and now, and what we could be as a community in the future.

This is my idea. Maybe the AEU should consider creating “clergy teams” – a number of Leaders, and perhaps lay leaders too, that serve a group of societies, allowing those with particular skill sets to serve many Ethical Societies. *Administrative Leaders* could shape good governance; *Educational Leaders* could teach; *Creative Leaders* could perform and shape aesthetic inspirational settings; *Pastoral Leaders* could counsel and heal. A clergy team might also serve new Societies currently

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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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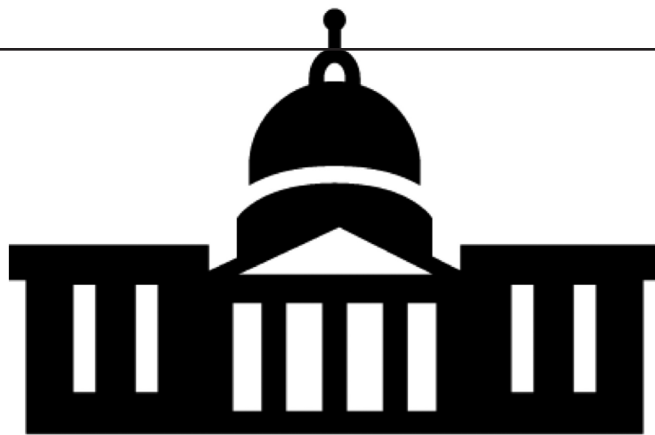
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On the web at bmorethical.org



**RECLAIMING DEMOCRACY
FOR ALL**

American Ethical Union
104th Assembly
Tampa, FL ★ 2019

Get Ready for AEU Assembly in Tampa • June 20-23, 2019

It's never too early to get excited about and ready for AEU Assembly. In fact, you can book your hotel room with AEU discount and take advantage of good flight deals now. Our 104th Assembly will be in Tampa June 20-23, 2019 on the theme: "Reclaiming Democracy for All." The theme connects with our commitment to work together democratically and inspires us to promote democracy at all levels of our community, whether local, national, or global. Now is certainly the time to lift our collective voice in support of democracy.

AEU 2019 Assembly will have two keynote speakers. On Saturday, June 22, 9:15-11:15am, we'll hear about: A Progressive Legislative Agenda for Florida with Carlos Guillermo Smith, House District 49 in Florida House of Representatives and Defending the Right to Vote: Florida and Beyond with Howard Simon, former Executive Director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Florida. See more at <https://aeu.org/event/aeu-104th-assembly>.

**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.



Memories of Fritz Williams

by Emil Volcbeck, Past President (2012-2015)

Fritz Williams was the first person I ever knew who balanced and blended being a rational skeptic while being a warm, deeply caring human being. He projected sincerity and authenticity in a way that I wanted to emulate. He told stories from his childhood with openness and depth of feeling that reminded me of Fred Rogers. When my father passed, I turned to Fritz for advice on how to write a eulogy. He encouraged me to focus on my father's influence on my life, and so helped me to write in a more meaningful and authentic way.

The first BES meeting I attended was the last day the society met at the Mount Royal location. Fritz was speaking about Islamic fundamentalism and violent extremism. I appreciated his nuanced view that Islam contained both peaceful and violent elements. We can't hold Islam responsible for the violent acts of a minority of adherents, but at the same time, we can't ignore the elements of the faith that can be interpreted to support and justify violent acts. Rosemary Klein and

Kathryn Merrill helped him to publish a set of six platform addresses as pamphlets (Three Conditions Press, 2008, available from BES). One is titled "A Conversion Story," which tells his journey from a traditional theistic religious faith as a priest in the Episcopal Church to a Humanist worldview. He shared more insights about that journey in the collection of short stories "Joe, Beer, Bologna, and me." He read one of the stories titled "Roundtrip" as a platform address at BES (<https://vimeo.com/106062133>). In another story, we learned that sensitivity training helped him to recognize the self-deception that he experienced as a priest. The pamphlet "A Religion for the 21st Century" tells more about his journey and what he was seeking in Ethical Culture as a religion.

In one of his last platform addresses, "Kayla and Me," he tells about his relationship with his granddaughter Kayla, who was at the time in her 20s and incarcerated. When Kayla was being sentenced, he wrote to the judge to request compassion and



Former BES member Clive Graham shared this photo from a naming ceremony that Fritz performed at BES in 1990. At the time BES met at the Bolton Street Synagogue.

lenience. He shared his embarrassment and frustration when the judge condescendingly lectured to him that his soft-minded attitude was partly at fault for her misdeeds. This platform really displays his humility, sincerity, and deeply caring attitude toward bringing out the best in others. (See <https://vimeo.com/210236763> access restricted by passphrase available on request to members). I will miss Fritz but am glad that we can hold memories of his warm humanity and look back at his some of his works.



Pictured following the celebration of life for Helena Wright in 2014, from left to right, are Leader Emeritus Fritz Williams, Lorraine and Gordon Stills, and Belva Williams.

Five of Fritz's favorite platforms, edited and published by Three Conditions Press, are available for purchase at the Society. All proceeds – each is \$2 or all five are \$8 – support BES.

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 in Full Swing



Sunday School is in full swing this spring, and our youth have been enjoying lots of outdoor time in the garden, on the playground, and on the basketball court. Our teachers are constantly mixing in ethically-themed stories, discussions, and child-led playtime to keep the students engaged and having fun. Consider joining us for a Second Sunday family meet-up or spreading the word to other families with young kids.

TABLETOP GAME NIGHT

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

FUTURE OF ETHICAL SOCIETIES CONFERENCE – WITNESSING PAIN AND PROMISE: TRACING BALTIMORE'S DIVERGING STORIES

Friday, May 24 – Monday, May 27 in Baltimore

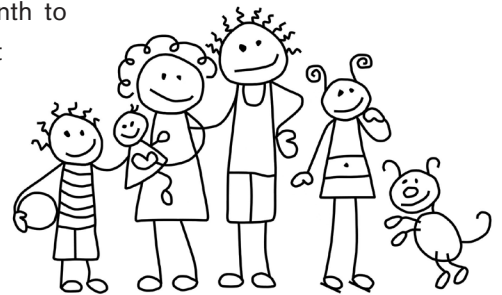
Baltimore is a complex “city of neighborhoods,” where history meets the future. It was the birthplace of the U.S. national anthem, a leading port for immigrants, and the home to Edgar Allan Poe, Edith Hamilton, Frederick Douglass, Billie Holiday, and John Waters. Declining manufacturing industries have given rise to a new service-oriented economy. In 1951, the Baltimore Ethical Society was the first racially integrated congregation and Sunday School in Baltimore.

Every year, Future of Ethical Societies has gathered to build community and rejuvenate our shared passion in humanity, the earth and social justice. This year young adults from across the nation will meet in Baltimore to explore what it means as people who hold sacred relationship, learning, and ethical living to bear witness to a city that encapsulates our struggles and striving as a nation. What does it mean to trace the narrative of place, history and identity? Who is heard and who is seen? What could it mean for us as we move in our own city and neighborhood?

The conference is open to all people aged 18-35. You need not be a FES Member to attend. Please email fesconference@gmail.com with any questions. Learn more and register at <https://aeu.org/event/fes-conference-in-baltimore/>.

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 mayagk@gmail.com or Beth at emluginbill@gmail.com.



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 or to make arrangements, please contact our Officiant Team Coordinator at weddings@bmorethical.org.

Meet the Membership Committee

**RESPONSIBLE FOR RECRUITMENT AND
ORIENTATION OF NEW MEMBERS**



WAYNE LAUFERT, CO-CHAIR

Where Born:

Baltimore

Member Since:

2013

Why I Volunteer:

BES committees do vital work and need support.

A Favorite Quote:

"Write drunk, edit sober"
– Peter De Vries (sort of, maybe)

Other Interests:

Baseball, comics, old horror movies

JAYNE SOLWOLD, CO-CHAIR

Where Born:

Great Falls, Montana

Member Since:

2013

Why I Volunteer:

To be a part of creating a vibrant humanist community in Baltimore.

A Favorite Quote:

Peace is not the absence of conflict,
but the presence of justice.

Other Interests:

Horses, documentary films,
NYT crossword puzzles

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

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

Please stay after the platform address on April 28th for our Annual Membership Meeting.

At this meeting, we celebrate a year of success by reporting on our growth and achievements over the past year. We welcome the new leadership team when we announce our election results. We renew our commitment to the society and to each other when we review and approve the society's budget and pledge campaign goal for the next fiscal year July 1, 2019–June 30, 2020.

We encourage questions, comments, suggestions, and volunteering. This is democracy in action, folks, so please attend this important meeting!

We hope you can join us!

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.

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.

HUMANIST improv GROUP

Alternate Tuesdays,
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 twice a month. Please visit our website or MeetUp group to RSVP and for specific dates.

PLEDGE PAYMENTS

Please remember that pledge payments for the current fiscal year (2018-2019) are due by June 30th. Thank you to those who’ve already completed their pledge payments!

If you haven’t pledged for the current fiscal year, there’s still time to do so! Checks can be mailed or put in the Sunday collection. It would help if you note on the check “FY-19 pledge.”

If you have any questions about your pledge, you may contact our Treasurer, Richard Heffern, at treasurer@bmorethical.org.

IN THE NEWS:

BES Pledge Luncheon

We kicked off our pledge drive for fiscal year 2020 on February 24 with a fun-filled community luncheon. Entertainment (and education) was provided by the game show “Pledge Your Bets!” hosted by Tevis Tsai (right) with help from Hugh Taft-Morales (left) and Mel Tillery (center).



Humanitas

BES’s Leader Hugh Taft-Morales was in the crowd for the NYC opening of Je Hooper’s Humanitas, a vivid re-imagining of the meeting of Felix Adler and W. E. B. DuBois. This avant-garde production, both challenging and playful, will certainly spark interesting dialogue in our movement!



PROGRAM COMMITTEE MEETING

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.

MEMBER PROFILES

Let's get to know each other a little better. For over a year now, we have been posting short biographies of our members in our website's Members Only section. Profiles of our newer members have been posted based on the text used in their welcoming ceremonies but we need to hear from our longer-time members. 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).

Some Springtime Reflections

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being planted by the AEU, helping them become sustainable new humanist communities. Clergy teams could allow more fluidity in how leadership inspires and guides Ethical Culture. It might serve the world in ways we cannot imagine.

This idea recurs to me every time I see the young dynamic people coming into our Societies, as lay members and Leaders-in-Training. Many are deeply committed to our legacy of social justice. Some are reviving our commitment to civil rights and working across racial lines. Could a new approach to leadership build on Adler's efforts to connect with Tuskegee, Hampton and other historically Black colleges? Could we build on the common "hu-

manitas" Adler felt with W. E. B. DuBois?

I've heard concern that the model of a dedicated single congregational Leader per Society may not work as we move into the future for a whole host of reasons. Maybe we should even rethink the title "Leader" so as to better reflect what leadership could become should we flourish. Who knows what that term would be, but as team members serving a broader collection of congregations, maybe it would be part of a new springtime for Ethical Culture. All this may be more possible if we set aside the habitual attachment to the one congregation, one Leader model. Don't you think it might be worth looking into?

"Everybody can be great. Because anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and your verb agree to serve. You don't have to know the second theory of thermodynamics in physics to serve. You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love."

- Martin Luther King, Jr.



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

**INTERESTED IN A
PAST PLATFORM
THAT YOU MISSED?**

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.



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

NEWSLETTER

Please do not delay!

TIME VALUE

ETHICAL ACTION MEETING

Third Sundays, 12:30 p.m.

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

NEWCOMERS MEETING

See Website for Dates, 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

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.

bmorethical

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, 2521 Saint Paul St., Baltimore, MD 21218. If you would like to subscribe to the online version of this newsletter, sign up at bmorethical.org. Thank you.