



Decolonizing Ethical Culture

by Hugh Taft-Morales, Ethical Leader

Though my fall work schedule had been pretty hectic, in November I took a one-day trip to attend a workshop at the Riverdale-Yonkers Society for Ethical Culture. I attended “Decolonizing Ethical Culture” along with Baltimore Ethical Society members Sophia Purekal and Joanna Brandt and about three dozen other Ethical Humanists. I did so because the future of Ethical Humanism will depend on our ability to embrace a significantly broader swath of our population than we have in the past.

Across our movement, our demographics – being primarily older and white – point to the roots of our family tree. The branches we grow today and tomorrow, however, must reflect the ever-more multicultural reality of American society. Fortunately, we have a talented corps of young adults actively engaged in questioning, prodding, and transforming our movement into the Ethical Humanism of the future.

When Felix Adler gave the talk titled “The Judaism of the Future,” he saw a world running headlong into oblivion. In 1876 the United States had not healed from a brutal Civil War, and yet brutality continued in the form of oppressive working conditions, urban poverty, and the emergence of Jim Crow. The young Adler was alarmed that the golden rule was being eclipsed by an intoxicating materialism that numbed half of our populace to the suffering of the other half.

Things don’t feel so different today. While many people suffer from drought, war, and incarceration in jails and cages, others enjoy unprecedented wealth. Add to that the specter of devastating climate change, and no wonder young people are encouraging revolutionary change. Of course, “young” is relative. The Decolonizing workshop leaders – Je Hooper, Sarah Tielemans, storæ michele, Anthony Cruz, and Christian Hayden – for example, are almost a decade older than Adler was when he boldly launched Ethical Culture. They bless our movement with a wealth of academic training, life experience, and embodied compassion. Now it’s up to us to use their gifts wisely.



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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 with notice.

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

BUILD, BES, and the Kirwan Commission

by Sophia Purekal, BES member

On Thursday, November 21, members of the Baltimore Ethical Society joined our partners of Baltimore United in Leadership Development (BUILD) at a meeting at Memorial Baptist Church to demand that Baltimore City Government adopt the recommendations of the Kirwan Commission. The Kirwan Commission's 26 member team of government, education, and business leaders put forward their recommendations earlier this year of how to rescue public education in Maryland State, concluding with a plan that would require a \$4 billion increase in spending over the coming five years from city, county and state sources. BUILD is advocating for the adoption of the Commission's recommendations. Thursday's meeting had nearly 440 people in attendance, including members of six new churches. Principals, students, and one parent from Baltimore City Schools came to the microphone, as did congregation lead-



ers from several large churches and one synagogue. Mayor Bernard C. "Jack" Young was in attendance, and answered affirmatively to all of BUILD's requests that Baltimore City would meet Kirwan's funding recommendations. The meeting ended with a call to action – that BUILD would bring even more faith and civic groups into its fold, would forge new relationships with partners, and would have an even larger turnout for meetings scheduled in 2020 in Baltimore and Annapolis.



The thirteen BES members in attendance were Joe Adams, Paul Furth, Maggie Barris (+ one friend), Janey Solwold, Ray Noemer, Max Romano, Marianna Romano, Madalena Romano, Sophia Purekal, Argentine Craig, Howard Shultz, and Kimberly Sheridan.

BES Members Attend DACA Rally



BES member Jeanne Sears attending the DACA rally in Baltimore.

CELEBRATE DARWIN DAY

Wednesday, February 12,
7:00 p.m.

This year we will celebrate Darwin's birthday with a presentation by Prof. Jonathan Pevsner speaking on Leonardo Da Vinci and his influence on Darwin. This event will take place at 7:00 pm on Wednesday, February 12 and is a cooperation between the Second Wednesdays Speaker Series of the Village Learning Place and the Baltimore Coalition of Reason.

TABLETOP GAME NIGHT

First Fridays, 7:00 p.m.

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

SMART RECOVERY

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). More info at smartrecovery.org.

Winter Clothing Drive a Tremendous Success!

Initially, we hoped to collect 6–8 winter coats for young students at the Margaret Brent Elementary/Middle School. Through your generosity, however, we were able to collect 10 beautiful coats, thereby exceeding the upper range of our goal by 25%. What's more, we collected almost 60 winter hats, many of them handmade thanks to the kindness of our friends at the American Turkish Friendship Association (ATFA). We also collected a dozen scarves, 7 pairs of mittens and gloves, and 16 pairs of socks.

Nilgün Ozturk (from ATFA) and Janey Solwold (from BES) delivered the items to Margaret Brent Elementary in early January. Thank you to the members of ATFA and BES who filled our collection baskets with socks, mittens, gloves, scarves, and hats. And thank you also to the BES members who donated to the coat fund.



Pictured, from left to right, are Janey Solwold from BES, Dr. Nilgün Ozturk from ATFA, and Sabrina Gay, Community Coordinator for the Margaret Brent Elementary/Middle School.

Ignite Baltimore 21



Ignite Baltimore 21 presented 15 insightful talks on diverse topics that included preventing suicide, promoting positive social change through comedy, and using melanin for protection during space flight. BES produced this event for the second time since taking over operations in 2018. All the videos are on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/user/ignitebaltimore>. To help out with producing the next Ignite Baltimore, please see Khandra Sears or Emil Volcheck.

BES Fall Festival



Karen Elliott presides at the BES Fall Festival in October.

Decolonizing Ethical Culture

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At the time of this writing – a couple of hours after the workshop and couple of hours before my deadline – I am still digesting the day. So, for now, I'll just share some subjective take-aways. First, it became clearer to me that we need to approach Ethical Culture in a more *embodied* fashion. When we gather, let's *sing* more, *move* more, and *feel* more in our chest and in our gut. These elements evident in ancient spiritual practices need to find a home in Ethical Culture. As more and more folks drift away from theism, many still want the emotional and deeply interpersonal experiences they got in traditional religion. We can offer more holistic experiences without sacrificing our commitment to reason.

Second, let's continue to acknowledge that the land on which Ethical Societies stand is stolen land. This should not be done merely as a form of penance that abstractly processes guilt without demanding a real transfer-

ring of sovereignty, land, and power back to indigenous people. There is real work we need to do to heal the wounds of colonialization. Third, we must continually reexamine our vocabulary, choosing words that invite more than repel, that embrace more than exclude, that open up more than close off. I know I am guilty of over-reliance of the vocabulary of traditional western philosophy, a vocabulary that claims for itself universal application but excludes many other forms of wisdom.

I'm sorry I can't better transfer the experience of the day to you through this column. Given the importance of getting to know the leaders of the Future of Ethical Humanism, perhaps the old expression is true – you had to be there. I'll leave you with a quote from the workshop by Audre Lorde: "Any future vision which can encompass all of us, by definition, must be complex and expanding, not easy to achieve."

2020 PLEDGE LUNCHEON

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

BES will host its 2020 Pledge Luncheon on Sunday, February 23, after our regular platform. The luncheon is the kick-off to our annual pledge drive, and all are invited to attend.

More details will follow as the luncheon approaches, but for now, mark your calendars!

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.

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 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 Platform 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.

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