



ETHICAL CULTURE

M O N T H L Y

VOLUME 31 NUMBER 9

Visit our web site: www.essexethical.org

MAY 2012

MAY PLATFORMS

Platforms begin at 11 a.m. All are welcome. Platforms are subject to change without notice. For information, call 973-763-1905. Visit our web site: www.essexethical.org

May 6 Solidarity Singers, *Annual May Day concert at the Ethical Culture Society*



The Solidarity Singers will be honoring us with a post-May Day concert of songs celebrating labor, progressive causes and the continuing struggle for justice. There will be familiar songs and/or songs with easy to learn choruses.

Past concerts highlighted the effects of the financial crises on workers and non-upper-class people in general. The Solidarity Singers have sung at rallies and protests in front of banks who are “reluctant to lend but eager to foreclose on peoples’ homes.” We will share some of those songs and some great songs of labor history past, some of which are unfortunately quite relevant today.



May 13 Jim White, *“The Women Who Raised Me”*

For his Mother’s Day presentation, Jim says, “I will try to share vignettes of my relationships with three generations of women relatives who, on farms adjoining

mine, shared weekly roles in shaping my world view, my personal ethical grounding, and my growing sense of vocation. This was a rich, challenging childhood for which I am eternally grateful!”

James White is the Leader of the Riverdale-Yonkers Society for Ethical Culture and as Leader Emeritus at the Essex Society in Maplewood.

Jim was born and raised on a farm in Virginia. He attended Harvard, where he took part in the student protests of the Vietnam War. He later earned a master’s at Teacher’s College in New York and spent five years teaching emotionally disturbed children in Manhattan and the Bronx before studying law at New York Law School. He started a mental health practice in Manhattan that handles cases for psychiatric patients. It’s still his day job, leaving nights and weekends for his second career, in Ethical Culture. In 1989, he was certified as an Ethical Leader, and he led the Ethical Culture Society of Essex County in New Jersey for eight years before coming to Riverdale.

May 20 Annual General Meeting of the Ethical Culture Society Membership, led by interim leader Martha Gallahue

Please note

EARLY STARTING TIME OF 10 A.M.

All members are invited to attend the Annual Meeting of the Ethical Culture Society of Essex County. Hear a brief re-cap of the year just past and help make plans for the year ahead. We will vote on the budget and for our Board of Trustees for the coming year.

Enjoy refreshments and a chance to catch up with friends at 10:00 a.m. The meeting will start promptly at

10:30 a.m. and will conclude by 12:30 p.m.

May 27: Memorial Day Colloquy, led by Anja Moen

If we could shape the upbringing of the children of this country, what would we most want them to learn from the past? This is our chance to



celebrate the people and the experiences that have meant most to us, the values we find most valuable, and to consider what we want to see carried forward.

Anja will lead us in a trip down memory lane, honoring those we’ve lost, and reveling in what we recall — noble and otherwise!

LEADER’S COLUMN

by Martha Gallahue

A Community with a Vision Wins the Day

Did you know that



on May 20th, the day of our 2012 ECSEC Annual Meeting, the world will experience the first solar eclipse since May, 1994? Whether this will influence the quality of our meeting depends upon how interconnected we are with the larger world around us. Because this sense of interconnectedness depends upon us as a collective together, I cannot say one way or another. But I do know that Felix Adler defined spirituality in ethical culture as our “awareness of our interconnectedness” with all life. So, *(continues)*

Ethical Culture Society of Essex County



Martha Gallahue, *Interim Leader*
Boe Meyerson, *Leader Emeritus*
James White, *Leader Emeritus*

Anja Moen, *President*
Lisa Novemsky, *Vice President*
Martin Cotler, *Treasurer*
Susan Kennedy, *Secretary*

Trustees:
Rosalie Sussman
Betty Levin
Allen Parmet
Zia Durrani

EC Monthly newsletter writers/
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Editor/graphics: Howard Gilman

Editor's Note

Newsletter articles, announcements, etc., not to exceed 150 words in length, must be received by the FIRST of the month for inclusion in the following month's edition. Submit items to: Howard Gilman, newsletter editor, preferably via email at: gilman.howard@gmail.com. Items can also be dropped off at 15 So. Pierson Rd., Maplewood; or, if you put something for the newsletter in the EC office's mail slot or in the mail, please give me a call at (973) 763-3914 to be sure I know about it, especially if your item is time-sensitive. — *Editor*

Editor reserves right to edit for length, clarity and content. Opinions offered in this publication are those of the authors.

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Our web site: www.essexethical.org

**...act so
as to elicit
the best
in others
and in
ourselves**

Attention members! Please submit your email addresses to essex@essexethical.org to receive newsletter and other special event notices.

I am thinking upon how this phenomenon might inspire greater awareness in me.

While I have been with you for only two years, I have been with another community within ethical culture called National Ethical Service for over 15 years. We serve the whole ethical culture movement as we focus on our mission at the United Nations. Last year we decided to rewrite our mission statement. Believe it or not, we did it in within a couple of hours and it reads:

Our purpose is to promote a consciousness shift toward our comprehensive interconnectedness as we affirm our identity in ethical culture. We celebrate the transcendent possibility in ethical culture through the practice of ethical behavior and joyful engagement in community life. We see ourselves as change agents who connect with the emerging collective determined to bring about the evolution of consciousness. We dedicate ourselves to promoting and enhancing the highest principles at the United Nations, the AEU Federation and the Culture of Peace worldwide. We support all humanitarian work that is based in reciprocity and mutuality. We understand humanitarian work as vital not only to the relief of suffering but as essential to building a peaceful world.

It was great fun to repurpose ourselves as a National Ethical Service collective and our Council felt energized from the process. We felt renewed to continue our work of raising the voice of ethical culture among our network of civil society coalitions and within the UN itself. You can check us out at: www.nationalserviceaeu.org to see if our work appears to implement our mission.

I believe we have the same opportunity here to revision ourselves. On April 4th, the ECSEC Board approved me to serve again in the Leader role with you for another year. This is a great honor in service. You are teaching me how to be effective here as I am mandated to ramp up your dedication to the literal mission of ethical culture — to transform humanity, one person at a time, one community at a time, one nation at a time, one species at a time. The deeper we feel our inter-connectedness, the closer we will be

with one another in shared vision. Our vision statement will not read the same way as the NES one, because we are more of a family in a vibrant progressive inter-racial community. We have different tasks and a different role to play here. Yet, the one bit we share is our grasp that our ethics builds upon the principle of reciprocity. How I think and behave impacts myself and others. And the more we are aware of the broad spectrum of our interconnectedness, the more easily we will articulate our interconnection between our personal lives and whole of humanity's well being. With shared vision, we will participate more courageously in the changes that are taking place everywhere and especially within ourselves. As a peace site community to which we rededicated ourselves in 2010, we get to choose to belong in the emerging and inevitable triumph of the Culture of Peace.

I invite all of us to begin this together starting with the Platform reflection immediately before our Annual meeting on May 20th. At this time, I will share some thoughts about how to go about this. I hope you will join me, in person if you are a member and in spirit if you are a friend or on the guest list. Whatever the level of your connection, we can walk this walk in solidarity. While only members may participate actively in the Annual meeting itself, I will send my reflection statement to all on our e-list afterwords and ask that the message be posted on our website. I invite all our members, friends and Platform guests to be part of this visioning process which will take place throughout the coming year. (Send a message to: essex@essexethical.org) We have a lot going for us to become a brighter light in Maplewood. Let's have fun along the way as we win the day.

EVENTS CALENDAR

May 8, The Second Tuesday facilitated sharing group meets noon to 1:30 p.m., over a brown bag lunch at the Ethical Culture Society. This group is free and available to our members and friends. As a courtesy, please call 732-287-8728 if you plan to attend so we can notify you if there are any changes or cancellations. Thank you,

— *Esther Barcun*

Folk Friday, May 11

Bring instruments and come to sing. Or — as in “*and/or*” — come and work



with us on our community quilt. Or bring your knitting. Or your crocheting. Or

your wood carving. It's a song and craft night at Ethical Culture. Second Friday of the month, May 11, 7:30–9:30 p.m., coordinated by Anja Moen and Lisa Novemsky.

3rd Saturday Arts, 7:30 p.m., Saturday, May 19

3rd Saturday Arts for May will be announced in the May Platform program and by email.

GUEST COLUMN

Bart Warden, Leader in Westchester Society, spoke at ESCEC in Spring of 2011. Danroy Henry was a college student shot by police outside a bar in Westchester.

It's Past Time to Speak Out

It seems the country is waking up to racial bias in law enforcement. This awareness has taken too long to save the lives of Danroy Henry Jr., Ramarley Graham and Trayvon Martin or to have prevented the mass incarceration of people of color for non-violent offences. It's come too late as well for Kenneth Chamberlain, the 68-year-old resident of White Plains who was killed by police who responded to his medical alert call.

People in law enforcement in our country may well be color blind, at least in the sense of an inability to perceive the uneven justice doled out to people of color. They are not aware, apparently, of the harshness of their responses to African Americans and Latinos compared to their treatment of Caucasians. They do not factor in how their own fears about personal safety may color their perception of the dangerousness of others when

they are preparing to use lethal force. They don't take into consideration how afraid someone whom they perceive as a perpetrator may be when approached by law enforcement officers.

But let's face it: our law enforcement is a reflection of us. Our own attitudes, opinions, misperceptions and apprehensions are what drive the behavior of law enforcement. Our obsession with personal safety, our fear of people who don't look like us, our inattention to the lives of anyone who is not perceived as “our kind” lay the groundwork for racial bias and provide a sustaining environment for that bias.

Consider the case of Kenneth Chamberlain, the 68-year-old former corrections officer whose medical alert sounded sometime around 5:00 a.m. last November 19th, a Saturday. Mr. Chamberlain, who was African American and reportedly “known to the police” did not answer when the medical alert operator tried to reach him so she called for emergency response. The police arrived at Mr. Chamberlain's door but Mr. Chamberlain did not open his door to them. Instead, he said through the door that the medical alert call had been a mistake, that he was fine and not in need of assistance. He asked that the police go away.

The police did not leave, however, but continued to bang on Mr. Chamberlain's door, insisting that he open it for them. This continued for about an hour and, because the medical alert two-way speaker phone was on and connected, there is a recording of the conversation Mr. Chamberlain had

with the police at his door. That means there is a recording of a police officer calling Mr. Chamberlain a nigger at some time before the police broke down his door. That means, too, that there is a recording of Mr. Chamberlain asking why the police have their guns drawn and saying that he believed the police were there to kill him. It also means there is a recording of the operator offering to contact Mr. Chamberlain's son, who lives a few minutes away and a police officer telling the operator that they don't need assistance with mediation.

It is still unclear why the police were so intent on gaining access to Mr. Chamberlain's apartment. They were called for a medical emergency not a crime, and Mr. Chamberlain was clearly awake and alert and able to say he did not need or want assistance. So why they felt the urgency to break down his door, Tasers at the ready, is also unclear. Since the Tasers have video cameras that recorded the breaking of the door and discharging the stun devices, there is a video in existence, seen by the family and the family's lawyers, that shows Mr. Chamberlain some 8 feet away from the door and standing in his underwear with his hands at his sides when the door is broken open. On the audio recording there can be heard the sound of someone saying to turn off the Taser's video after which the video ends. The firing of beanbags (done reportedly because the Taser shots failed to knock Mr. Chamberlain down) and the fatal shooting were not captured on the video.

If you don't believe the killing of Kenneth Chamberlain to be a racially biased incident, I would like to know your reasoning for that conclusion. Perhaps there is exculpatory information that has not been made public by the White Plains police but why would that be so? One would think that in four months' time at least that much would (*continues*)

Bart Warden, Leader for the Ethical Culture Society of Westchester since 1999, is active within the American Ethical Union, serving on the Religious Education Committee, the Growth and Development Committee, and the AEU Planning Committee as a representative of the AEU National Leaders Council.



ETHICAL CULTURE SOCIETY OF ESSEX COUNTY

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Sunday May 20 Annual General Meeting — EARLY STARTING TIME OF 10 A.M.



ETHICAL CULTURE SOCIETY OF ESSEX COUNTY NEWSLETTER · MAY 2012

(continued from page 3)

would have been disclosed. One would imagine that, at the least, there would be a thorough investigation by the District Attorney's office but there is no evidence of that on the DA's web site and if it is happening, it hasn't made the news.

So, are you a concerned citizen who would like to see justice done? Do you support an investigation into the death of Kenneth Chamberlain to at least ascertain the facts? If so, you can do something positive toward better understanding: write a letter to District Attorney Janet DiFiore asking that her office initiate a full and thorough investigation. And while you are out finding a mailbox, spend some time on the street and encourage others to send letters, too. Until we become part of the solution we are bound to be part of the problem — let us not remain silent about these matters. •



Dr. Howard Radest continued the discussion after his March 25th platform, "Can Democracy Survive? — Of Tea Parties and Occupying Wall Street," in which he reflected on what is to be done in a time of fragmentation, anger and distrust.

“Democracy requires parties and persons who listen respectfully to one another and who seek mutual understanding. Democracy requires citizens that know and act upon the political and social world around them in the light of that knowledge. Democracy requires citizens that care for and commit to the public good. In short, democracy requires civility, intelligence, and passion. Separate these requirements from each other and they become destructive of person and place and society.”

Remember we are continuing to collect children's books, canned and boxed foods, and toys for distribution to poor families by the Parenting Center in Maplewood. — *Mira*