



# ETHICAL CULTURE

M O N T H L Y

VOLUME 33 NUMBER 4

Visit our web site: [www.essexethical.org](http://www.essexethical.org)

DECEMBER 2013

## DECEMBER 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](http://www.essexethical.org)

### **Dec. 1 Martha Gallahue** **“On Starting a Peace Center at** **Ethical Society of Essex County”**

Martha Gallahue will facilitate a colloquy on the future of a Peace Center at Ethical Culture. While it will be interactive, she will offer some linkage between basic premises of ethical culture and modern peace centers that are proliferating throughout the world. She will focus on Adler’s conviction of humanity’s comprehensive interrelatedness, the attribution of worth of each person and the practice of shared leadership within our community. She will share some stories as to how other peace centers began. Martha invites all members, friends and others interested in developing this initiative to contribute their own good ideas on the subject.

Martha is ESEC leader in Maplewood, and serves as edu-learner faculty with National Peace Academy USA. As leader and main representative of National Ethical Service at the UN, she is in shared leadership with a coalition of non-governmental organizations called the Global Movement for Culture of Peace. She will illustrate the progress of Peace Centers with stories about her colleagues in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Gainesville, Florida and Portland, Oregon.

### **Dec. 8 Widney Brown** **“How the Criminal Justice** **System Undermines Effective** **Civil Disobedience Today”**

Widney Brown will speak on the undermining of effective civil disobedience through the current criminal

justice system. Not only is it in conflict with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights but it breeds a culture of punishment and suppression rather than the open discourse necessary for the progress of a healthy legal framework in an increasingly complex world. Widney will share stories as examples of this premise including the recent cases between Greenpeace and Russia, Ed Snowden and Bradley Manning in the United States.

Widney Brown is senior director of international law and policy, leading development of human rights policies and analysis for Amnesty International, responsible for their strategic litigation program and negotiations on international standards. Widney is responsible for advocacy in the UN and regional human rights bodies. She also oversees Amnesty International’s work on global thematic issues, including the business and human rights, refugee and migrant rights and abolition of the death penalty. Widney oversees the organization’s work on all forms of discrimination and she is a key spokesperson on women’s rights.

Widney has extensive experience documenting human rights violations across the world and has contributed written work to numerous publications.

### **Dec. 15 John Freeman** **“The Sufi Tradition in America”**

John Freeman (also known as Zahir Muhammad) will discuss: a. What is “Sufism”? b. What is a Dervish and what are they all about? c. The “arrival” of “Sufism” in the Americas (and what pre-existed); and d. Contemporary Sufi personalities, Sufi Orders, their roles and responsibilities.

John Freeman was in telecommunications management in the “Big 8” (the eight largest accountancy firms), oil & commodities and Wall Street investment banking businesses for 19 years. Migrating to sales and marketing, he is currently a director of sales for a national educational financial management firm. In 1988, seeking a more “spiritual” rationale and purpose in life, the mystical path of Sufism was opened to him, resulting in initiation into the Halveti-Jerrahi Order of Dervishes of Turkey (“The Surgeons of the Heart”), through his spiritual guide, Lex Hixon (Nur al Jerrahi), and as well as initiation into the Muriddiyah Sufi path through Cheikh Abdulla Dieye of Senegal. Zahir practices Spiritual Aromatherapy via training through the Chishti Sufi Order, is knowledgeable in Unani Medicine, has a B.S. in Natural Health and is completing studies toward the N.D. (Naturopathic Doctor).

### **Dec. 22 Huda Shanawani** **“Drew Institute on Religion** **& Conflict Resolution”**

Syrian-born Huda Shanawani served as a translator for the Drew University’s peace seminar last summer. She will describe what transpired there and what is happening in her homeland. The Arab Spring had brought hope and dreams for a democratic freedom to this artist/teacher, yet the events that are taking place in Syria bring back the memories and fear that she grew up with. She said, “Living in the US leaves me physically distant yet mentally and emotionally connected to the Syrian people every moment they are fighting for their rights to live a free, democratic life.”

# Ethical Culture Society of Essex County



Martha Gallahue, *Interim Leader*  
Boe Meyerson, *Leader Emerita*

Andrew Weinberger, *President*  
Zia Durrani, *Vice President*  
Martin Cotler, *Treasurer*  
Rosalie Sussman, *Secretary*

#### Trustees:

Karen Bokert  
Betty Levin  
Lisa Novemsky  
Allen Parmet  
Mira Stillman

*EC Monthly Platforms Editor*

Elaine Durbach

*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](mailto: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.

Ethical Culture Society  
of Essex County,  
516 Prospect St.,  
Maplewood, NJ 07040  
973-763-1905

Our web site:  
[www.essexethical.org](http://www.essexethical.org)

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

Born and raised in Damascus, Syria, Huda Shanawani came to live in the U.S. when she was 16, with her new husband. She finished her college education while raising four children and learning everything she could from what the free culture of America offered.

She has been translating for the official courts of New Jersey for the past 32 years, which led her to be the lead translator for Drew's peace seminar this past June and July in Madison, New Jersey. Teaching Arabic privately for many years led Huda to her starting the Arabic program at Union County College after receiving her Masters degree. She has been teaching Arabic at the college for the last four years.

While pursuing her undergraduate degree at Montclair University, she took a jewelry-making course and was immediately captivated by the act of creating art objects by hand. That experience led her to study painting, fiber art and, ultimately, ceramics, obtaining her Masters Degree in ceramics.

Huda frequently returns to Damascus to visit family. The culture, customs and visual images of her native land inform her work with references of the vivid landscapes and vibrant cities she grew up with.

## Folk Friday Dec. 13, 7:30 p.m.

Sing-along and jam with friends second Friday of each month through June, at Ethical Culture Society, 516 Prospect St., Maplewood. Bring acoustic string and rhythm instruments, join in playing, singing or listening. Bring some refreshments to share. Folk Fridays have expanded to include crafts people to come and listen to music while doing crafts. Open to all comers, all ages, everyone is invited! Email [lnovemsky@comcast.net](mailto:lnovemsky@comcast.net) or call (973) 763-8293. — *Lisa*

## A Family Wedding

Congratulations to Barbara and Marty Cotler on the marriage of their daughter Valerie to her partner of 22 years, Belinda Davidsohn. The couple wed on October 21 after legal recognition of gay marriage began in New Jersey. Maplewood Mayor Vic DeLuca officiated. Valerie and Belinda are the proud parents of two sons, Jonathan, 16, and Daniel, 14. Valerie is an attorney employed

by Novartis Pharmaceuticals and Belinda is a therapist employed by the Livingston school system and also is in private practice.

— *E. Betty Levin*

## Memorial for Jerry Kaplan

I'd like to thank Martha, Lisa, and the rest of the Ethical Culture Society for hosting this. And I'd like to thank them just for existing, as a place and a group of people—as a community that made my dad's life more rich and full.



When I was considering what to talk about today, I began to think about Jerry in this place — the Ethical Culture Society in Maplewood — and how he ended up being a part of it.

When Jerry was in his mid-twenties, he was living in midtown Manhattan. In a long dark room that was at the back of a dental office. It was far from luxurious. I doubt that Jerry permitted my Grandma Rose to see it; she would have cried. But this dark room had everything that Jerry needed: a sink, a hot plate, a refrigerator, a bed, a bathroom. It even had its own private entrance. But most important, this room had a table — where my father could put his old metal typewriter and write long into the night.

The way my father described it, this was an exciting time. He was full of energy. Jerry was writing lots of different things: plays, novels, short stories. He also wrote some "light" pieces that were basically attempts at getting published in larger markets, like *The Saturday Evening Post*. But the pieces that had the most success were short stories that had to do with values and identity and doing the right thing. Stories about what it meant to be a Jew or a father or a son. Stories about things that were important to him.

My father loved writing. But almost as much, he loved the *idea* of being a writer. He loved to take late-night walks, ruminating about his characters. He loved to sit in the Automat, squeezing a few hours out of coffee and a buttered roll. He even used "pen" names, *nommes des plumes*, aliases — Jay Kaplan, Jay Lawrence. Why? Because that's what Jerry thought a writer did.

So Jerry Kaplan or Jay Kaplan or Jay Lawrence or whoever he was had romantic notions about being a writer. He also liked to call himself a “loner” and had some romantic ideas about that as well. Jerry liked picturing himself on those lonesome late-night walks almost as much as he liked the walks themselves.

But even loners crave connection. So it was that Jerry Kaplan found Thelma and had one then two then three sons. And somewhere in between Son Number Two and Son Number Three, the Kaplan family left the city and moved to suburbia. Jay Kaplan and Jay Lawrence and all those other loner-writer versions of Jerry Kaplan never dreamed they’d become suburban homeowners. They were confirmed New Yorkers. But Jerry Kaplan, the husband and father, the man who had already taken a corporate job in publishing to provide for his family — that Jerry listened to Thelma when she said they should move to New Jersey. Why?

I can think of two answers to that question. One is just that [what the hell] have you ever noticed that most big family decisions get made by the wife? Even when the husband has a strong opinion, the wife, no matter how soft-spoken she seems to be — and Thelma was nothing if not soft spoken — that wife won’t be

### Ode to Jerry

from Lisa

*Your dance was one  
of twinkling words  
Spinning ghost-written plays and  
weaving points of view*

*Eating out with friends  
not kitchen-y worlds of disquietude*

*Kids partnered in the games  
of numbers  
crackling and spinning in all  
directions  
challenging all comers.*

*A life consistently edited  
for bare essentials,  
Simplicity with joy*

still until she has fully pressed her argument, multiple times if necessary. If the husband wants some peace — and Jerry Kaplan, Jay Kaplan and Jay Lawrence all liked their peace. They liked to enjoy at least an occasional taste of the quiet that they had in the back of that dentist office apartment. So to have that peace, it made sense for all of the Jerries to give in to Thelma on this one.

The other reason that we moved was that Jerry knew that Thelma was right. It would be a better place to bring up the family. And Jerry wanted to do the responsible thing. But that didn’t mean that he was entirely comfortable with the idea.

What was Jerry worried about? His fear went beyond the typical city-dweller’s smug dismissal of suburbia as a uniform and deadening place. My father was afraid of the values that he thought we’d find in the Maplewood that existed in 1963. He was afraid of his children growing up in a lily-white community, unaware of the diverse world out there. He was afraid of us growing up in a comfortable cocoon of materialism where people thought only of themselves, oblivious to the hardship of others. Jerry worried that his three children would end up deaf to the kinds of issues that he cared enough about to write about.

Ultimately, the things that we’re most afraid of are usually not the things that get us. And that’s true in Jerry’s story, too. I won’t speak to whether Maplewood molded Michael, Bruce and me into empty, oblivious materialists. Though I will say that if I’m a materialist, my bank balances show that, at least so far, I’m a failed one. And that if three kids decide to be a musician, a writer/cartoonist, and a writer/psychotherapist in training, well that’s a pretty unorthodox approach to materialism.

But my father himself had nothing to fear from Maplewood. Instead of losing himself, my Dad became more

of who he already was: he found satisfaction in contributing to the community, in making a difference by tutoring in the town’s schools. Instead of being shipwrecked on an isolated island in a suburban sea, my father, to his surprise, found many others with enriching sensibilities and ideas, both like and unlike (he was always interested in other opinions) like all of you here at the Ethical Culture Society. And instead of losing his voice, Jerry found an open and appreciative audience: his opinion pieces in *The News Record* always generated response.

In the years that my dad spent in Maplewood, at least in those years in which he had relatively good health, he became broader rather than narrower. And interestingly enough, so did Maplewood: it became more vibrant and more diverse. Maplewood, to be sure, went through growing pains, but it, like Jerry, benefited as a result. And I know that my dad was grateful for all of it, and for all of you here at Ethical Culture. Just as Michael, Bruce and I were grateful for him, and the father he was to us. — *Andrew Kaplan*

### Words... from Sylvia Kramer

*Words don’t come easily  
When one writes of a friend  
Who was a pleasure to be with  
And whose Time reached  
its end.  
Political discussions,  
Sharing our written words  
Jerry listened in a way  
I knew my thoughts  
were heard  
He spoke of his family  
and how Flo enriched  
his days  
I loved his subtle humor  
And the Scrabble games  
we played  
That I miss his friendship  
Must be plain to see  
I so cherish the memories  
That now remain with me.*

# ETHICAL CULTURE SOCIETY OF ESSEX COUNTY

516 Prospect Street  
Maplewood, New Jersey 07040

Phone: 973-763-1905

Email: [ecsec.nj@gmail.com](mailto:ecsec.nj@gmail.com)

Website: [www.essexethical.org](http://www.essexethical.org)

NONPROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
UNION, NJ  
PERMIT NO. 395

**We continue to collect children's books, canned and boxed foods, and toys for distribution by the Parenting Center in Maplewood.**



## ETHICAL CULTURE SOCIETY OF ESSEX COUNTY NEWSLETTER · DECEMBER 2013

### SUNDAY 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](http://www.essexethical.org)



**Dec. 1 Martha Gallahue, "On Starting a Peace Center at Ethical Society of Essex County"**

Martha will offer some linkage between basic premises of ethical culture and modern peace centers, focusing on humanity's comprehensive interrelatedness, the attribution of worth of each person and the practice of shared leadership within our community. *(see page 1)*

**Dec. 6 Save the Date** for another collaboration with Slow Foods and a film showing.

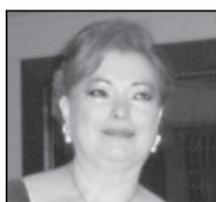


**Dec. 8 Widney Brown, "How the Criminal Justice System Undermines Effective Civil Disobedience Today"**

In conflict with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it breeds a culture of punishment and suppression rather than the open discourse necessary for the progress of a healthy legal framework in an increasingly complex world. Widney will share examples including Greenpeace and Russia, Ed Snowden and Bradley Manning in the U.S. *(see page 1)*



**Dec. 15 John Freeman, "The Sufi Tradition in America"** John Freeman (also known as Zaahir Muhammad), initiated into the Halveti-Jerrahi Order of Dervishes of Turkey, will discuss: a. What is "Sufism"? b. What is a Dervish, and what are they all about? c. The "arrival" of "Sufism" in the Americas (and what pre-existed); and d. Contemporary Sufi personalities, Sufi Orders, their roles and responsibilities. *(see page 1)*



**Dec. 22 Huda Shanawani, "The Drew Institute on Religion & Conflict Resolution"**

Huda Shanawani will describe what transpired at Drew University's peace seminar last summer; and what is happening in her homeland of Syria. The Arab Spring had brought hope and dreams for a democratic freedom to this artist/teacher, yet the events that are taking place in Syria bring back the memories and fear that she grew up with. *(see page 1)*