



# ETHICAL CULTURE

M O N T H L Y

VOLUME 31 NUMBER 4

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

DECEMBER 2011

## 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. 4 Dr. Barbara Velazquez,

*"On Creating a Humanitarian Consciousness"*

Dr. Barbara Velazquez of the Taskforce for Humanity Coalition will discuss her work and that of her colleagues in attempts to create a better world through promoting a more evolved consciousness. She will discuss her journey as a server, the philosophy and values behind her efforts, the founding and work of the Taskforce. Dr. Velazquez will also mention some of the like-minded organizations with which the Taskforce collaborates. And she will discuss the Maplewood Kindness Campaign and the Kindness Committee of Northern NJ.



Dr. Velazquez holds a Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology and has a private practice in Maplewood. She is the founder and president of the Spiritual Unity Network ([www.spiritualunitynetwork.org](http://www.spiritualunitynetwork.org)) and is Director of the Taskforce for Humanity Coalition ([www.taskforceforhumanity.org](http://www.taskforceforhumanity.org)). She is on the Board of Voices around the world, an organization seeking to promote progressive education practices and is a member of the Organizing Group of the Network of Spiritual Progressives. Dr. Velazquez is a Metaphysician and teaches the Ageless Wisdom.

### Dec. 11 Zia Durrani & Anja Moen,

*"Women in war, women in crises"*

Zia Durrani and Anja Moen will describe the organization "Women for Women International."



The Board has decided to sponsor a woman (sister) in a war zone through the organization Women for Women International. This organization helps women survivors of war rebuild their lives. In 1993, the founder, Zainab Salbi, started her work in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Since then the organization has helped more than 316 thousand women survivors of wars. The organization helps through education and access to income-generating opportunities, among other things. The organization was awarded the 2006 Conrad N. Hilton Humanitarian Prize.

Zia and Anja will describe this organization and the situation of women in war zones, through information from the organization, and also from two books we have studied:

*Half the Sky* by Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl Wudunn. This book describes women's crises around the world and also gives inspiration and practical steps for action.

*A Thousand Sisters* by Lisa J. Shannon, about Lisa's own struggle to live a meaningful life and thereby commit to helping other women. She organizes runs for women and sets a goal of raising a million dollars for women in

Congo — the worst place on earth to be a woman. She travels to Congo to meet some of the sisters she sponsors and other women in the program. This book will change your perspective on human cruelty as well as human kindness.

Join us to start our Ethical sponsorship of a sister in Congo. This program will give us the opportunity to study other places in the world and help a woman we can become personally involved with.

### Dec. 18 Martha Gallahue, *"The Power of Friendship in Leadership."*

At solstice, tradition holds that we enter into a period of reflection during the winter season. Using this as a starting point, Martha will offer a reflection on the relationship between self-awareness and enlightened activism. This Platform will be a mix of personal experience and stories from her work with the National Ethical Service and National Peace Academy. She will mention how ritual can provide the link between the two.



Martha, our Interim Leader, is a licensed psychoanalyst in private practice, Main Representative at the UN for National Ethical Service and serves on the faculty of National Peace Academy.

### Dec. 25 Christmas Day gathering

led by our president, Anja Moen, for those who would like to share the festive spirit of the day with good companions.



*(continued next page)*

# 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:  
Fred Sebastian  
Rosalie Sussman  
Betty Levin  
Allen Parmet  
Zia Durrani

EC Monthly newsletter writers/contributors:  
Elaine Durbach, *platforms*; Anja Moen.  
Howard Gilman, *editor/graphics*

#### Editor's note

The newsletter invites you to submit articles, announcements, commentary, etc. for publication. ITEMS MUST BE RECEIVED BY THE FIRST OF THE MONTH FOR INCLUSION IN THE FOLLOWING MONTH'S EDITION. Items should be no more than 150 words, preferably submitted via email to the editor (gilman.howard@gmail.com). Items can also be delivered to: Editor, Ethical Society Newsletter, 516 Prospect St., Maplewood, NJ 07040. Please call the office, 973-763-1905, and leave word especially if your item is time-sensitive.

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

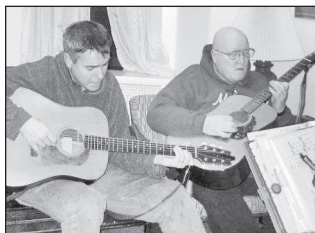
NEW! — info@essexethical.org

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 NEW! — info@essexethical.org to receive newsletter and other special event notices.

## SAVE THE DATES



### December 9 FOLK FRIDAY

Bring instruments and come to sing to Folk Arts Friday,

2nd Friday of the month, December 9th, 7:30–9:30 p.m., coordinated by Anja Moen and Lisa Novemsky.

#### *Community Quilting & Other Folk Arts*

Do you want to create your own square in our ECS quilt? Knit? Crochet? Then come to Folk Friday at 7:30 p.m. on the 2nd Friday of every month from October to June, 7:30 p.m. in the parlor. See you there!

—Anja

## LEADER'S MESSAGE

### From Martha Gallahue

Little more than three weeks ago, we voted for candidates who will represent us in the state and local political arenas. None of them will have an easy time making the right decisions as needs grow and resources diminish.

Did you vote for the charismatic candidate or the one you thought would work the hardest? Is a hard worker the best representative if she doesn't connect to people well or know the issues? Will our chosen leaders educate their constituents or pander to them if their decisions are unpopular? Are these leaders focused on doing the right thing or settling for the expedient? And finally, are the best people stepping up to run for office?

We may apply these questions to ourselves insofar as we all are called to be leaders today. Do we strive to do our best or do we settle for sounding good? Are we using ourselves to the fullest by taking on some form of leadership responsibility? Do we work to learn new habits to address more effectively some of the issues that require different behaviors as in the environment? Do we measure the cost to others with regard to our ordinary choices? In other words are we striving to live the ethical culture motto to bring out the best in others by bringing out the best in ourselves?

And would it make a difference if we ALL identified ourselves as leaders who are accepting responsibility in changing the world via ourselves for the better.

To me, the best leaders today model the way for others, inspire a vision, challenge the usual way of doing things, and empower others to be leaders. We can only learn this in community where leadership includes shared responsibility. And with the right vision, such shared responsibility inspires friendships. In other words, true leaders know how to build trusting and transparent communities. And exemplary communities strengthen themselves in shared purpose. This shared purpose overrides whatever differences we may have with each other.

So, where does such a community exist? I see this happening in our Ethical Culture Society here. Together we mourn the loss of our beloveds, hold creative Platforms that demonstrate the radiance of our vision, engage in Settlement House in Maplewood, show important films such as *Gasland* that expose the evils of hydrofracking, host art shows and chamber music in our building, welcome newer members in the community. We feed one another after Platform as we gather clothing for a community in Kenya — all in the space of our building which is a peace site.

We have only one missing piece. Not all of our members and friends engage fully in the experience. Often the stated reason is because, "There is so much going on at home." Yet, one of our active members delivered food to meet her agreement to provide it a mere five days before her husband died. How could she do that? She could because she connects to our agreement to be inter-related in her community. Indeed, when her husband did die the outpouring of care was great — but only among the inner circle. So, like the child playing hide and seek, I call, "Come out, come out wherever you are." Come back — see for yourself and reengage your own leadership skills in the community you belong to.

— Martha Gallahue

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

From Anja Moen

Another year is coming to an end. For me every year seems to pass faster and faster, with days often filled with too much nonsense and too little importance.

This year I am looking forward to the end of the year. If it is true that most of the soldiers in Iraq are coming home, let us all welcome them and celebrate the safe return of those who are returning.

I will never forget a young wife and mother who did not get her soldier-husband home. In the TV documentary she looked so young. With her youngest baby on her hip and another little one running around she said, "When I got the news of my husband's death, all the colors in my life disappeared."

The Board of Trustees has decided to sponsor a woman through Women for Women International who has experienced the atrocities of war herself and survived. This connects us to the reality of life in war zones even in this small way. I am grateful to the Board that we have taken on this monthly economic responsibility to help change a life.

Through reading *A Thousand Sisters* by Lisa Shannon, I learned about the worst atrocities done to women and their families in the war in the Democratic Republic of Congo, but what was even a deeper lesson was that amidst these terrible things were many acts of extraordinary kindness and humanity that so many of the women in this book performed.

Please join us for the Platform on December 11th when Zia Durrani and I will talk on this subject, "Women in War, Women in Crisis."

Mira Stillman's husband, Jerry, who passed away in late October, dedicated his whole life to knowledge, science, and peace. He was one of the founders

of NJ Peace Action, and he was active there his whole life. This year he was honored as their Person of The Year. I am so grateful that I had the opportunity to have some really good conversations with Jerry.

Hanukkah, 20th to 28th; Solstice, 22nd; Christmas, 25th; and Kwanzaa, 26th to January 1st are all celebrations bringing light, hope, and joy into this, our darkest month.

However you, and your family and friends celebrate this season, I wish you peace.

See you at platform! —Anja

## JERRY STILLMAN

Blessed is the memory of Gerald (Jerry, Yaenkel) Stillman, husband of our devoted member, Mira. Jerry passed away on Sunday, October 30.

Jerry was cofounder, with Dorothy Eldridge, of NJ SANE, influenced by the birth of his first son just as nuclear testing was causing fallout of strontium 90, contaminating fields of grass where dairy cows grazed. Mira went door to door to petition against the testing and eventually fed their newborn dried milk to ensure his good health. Jerry was honored as Peace Ac-

tion Person of the Year this past May 2011, just weeks before he and Mira celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary. They have three children and five grandchildren.

Jerry and Mira were also organizers of a Reading Circle (*Nekhe Farber Yiddish Leyenkrayz*) exploring Yiddish literature, meeting for almost 10 years at one another's homes every 4–6 weeks. Jerry last attended the group at his own home in June. He was highly accomplished in Yiddish as well as 6 other languages. Jerry served on the editorial board of *Jewish Currents*, wrote a monthly column on Jewish secular heritage, little known events and Yiddish culture. At the ceremony for Jerry, they spoke lovingly of his wisdom, gentleness, compassion.

When asked what kept him going all these years, he invoked the saying usually associated with real estate — "location, location, location." Similarly, in matters of nuclear disarmament, he declared, "education, education, education" — that when people know about the devastating dangers of nuclear weapons, they will be motivated to influence our government to take notice.

— E. Betty Levin, Board of Trustees

For Jerry Stillman

*A tribute (with humor!) to the life of a man who appreciated humor*

Yank or Yankl, also Jerry  
Eyes that twinkle  
Sometimes merry.

Translating *mayses*,  
Powering cities.

Yiddish, English, Russian  
*Vas nokh?*  
Tongues of Eastern Europe  
With hardly a *lokh*.

Mira and Jerry  
A piano playing duo  
Composed a dual life  
through and through. Oh!

A practical guy  
Rather cycle than drive  
With 3 sons in tow  
All of whom thrive

Man of this year  
for his actions of peace  
Blessed be Yank  
The man who was *zeese!*

Scholar, writer,  
Engineering abilities,

— Lisa Novemsky  
*Yiddish translations: Vas nokh? (what then?);  
lokh (a hole); mayses (stories); zeese (sweet)*

# ETHICAL CULTURE SOCIETY OF ESSEX COUNTY

516 Prospect Street  
Maplewood, New Jersey 07040

Phone: 973-763-1905

Email: [info@essexethical.org](mailto:info@essexethical.org)

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

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the needy and books for children.*



## ETHICAL CULTURE SOCIETY OF ESSEX COUNTY NEWSLETTER · DECEMBER 2011



### Day of the Dead Platform — Honoring Our Dear Departed

Hewing to our commitment of seeking to understand diverse peoples and cultures, Karen Bokert presented the Honoring Our Dear Departed/ Day of the Dead platform on Oct. 30, at Halloween time, *Dia de los Muertos* in the Mexican culture. After lecturing to us briefly on the varied worldwide commemoration of this experience, participants volunteered to share memories of their dear departed as well as bringing a photo and memento of their remembrance. The *Mesa des Ofrenda* (Table of Offering) was soon filled with lovingly-framed photos of those being remembered as well as a chosen memento of that memory. Fathers were the preponderance of those being remembered; other dear ones were also pointed out. Tears were shed unashamedly with comfort from the other participants.

After the solemnity came the celebration. Poignant articles depicting this Mexican holiday were assembled by Karen: *Pan de Los Noe* (bread) which we later shared, flowers, fresh vegetables displayed in a folk basket, memory candles which had been lit by participants, colorful paintings executed by artist Karen Bokert depicting Mexican folklore, assorted skeletons and other holiday items, all heaped on a colorful Mexican tray. Lisa Novemsky provided musical interludes on her guitar consistent with the theme and Rosalie Sussman had baked a succulent honey cake to share, memorializing E. Betty Levin's mother, Evelyn.

Many non-members attended, taking this opportunity for remembrance within a different cultural framework. Many people asked for a repeat next year — October 28th. Mark the date and join us!

— E. Betty Levin