



ETHICAL CULTURE

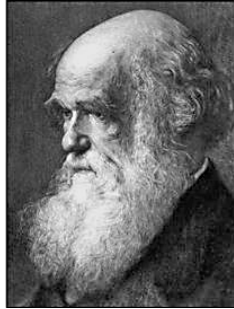
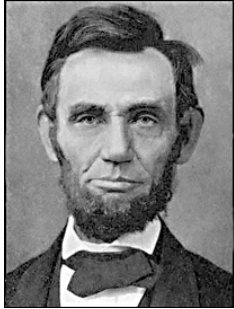
M O N T H L Y

VOLUME 28 NUMBER 6

Visit our web site: www.essexethical.org

FEBRUARY 2009

SUNDAY MORNING PLATFORMS



Feb 1 Leader Barbara (Boe) Meyerson, "Celebrating Darwin's and Lincoln's 200th Birthdays"

Both Darwin and Lincoln were born on February 12, 1809. Both made major contributions to human civilization. Darwin did so by showing our species evolved over time from earlier life forms. He showed how, like other species, humans were descended from less developed species. In short, he demonstrated the human race to be part the order of nature and not separate from it. This was a big blow to those who saw the origin of our species as a unique act of a god. This was a great blow to the self esteem of most people whose religious understanding placed humans in a category infinitely higher than all other species over which God gave them dominion.

Similarly, Lincoln, in freeing American slaves and abolishing slavery clearly dealt a comparable blow to the self esteem of slave holders who believed slavery to be justified by the inferiority of Blacks.

The moral and intellectual contributions of these two great men to our civilization will be explored in this platform address.

Boe is the Leader of the Ethical Cul-

ture Society of Essex County. She is also the Humanist Chaplain at Columbia University.

Feb 8 Laura Sodano, "Hunger Next Door"

Laura Sodano, Community Outreach Coordinator for the NJ Food-Bank, will outline the state of hunger and poverty in New Jersey, and what we can do about it. She will also show a ten-minute video about the Food-Bank's work. These are just a few of the statistics she cites:

An analysis of monthly client totals from emergency pantries served by the Community FoodBank of NJ shows a 30 percent increase this year in the number of people seeking food assistance. Similar data is being seen at food banks all over the country.

October 2008 saw 240,000 jobs lost which brings the total number of jobs lost since December 2007 to 1.2 million. Additionally, 1.4 million college-educated Americans are now unemployed, accounting for over 58% of the total rise in unemployment among people over 25.

The Community FoodBank of New Jersey annually —

- Distributes 23 million pounds of food and other groceries in 18 New Jersey counties.

- Distributes 2 million pounds of fresh fruits and vegetables through our Produce Program.

- Helps private, nonprofit groups where hungry people turn for help — food pantries, shelters for the homeless, soup kitchens, child care centers,

battered women's shelters, senior programs.

- Serves over 1,220 charitable organizations from its Hillside headquarters and its Southern Branch in Egg Harbor Township and an additional 436 charities through our Partner Distribution Organizations: the Food Bank of Monmouth and Ocean Counties in Neptune, NORWESCAP Food Bank in Phillipsburg, and Mercer Street Friends Food Bank in Trenton.

She invites those attending to bring a contribution, in money or food. These are the foods they need most: canned tuna; peanut butter in plastic jars; cereal; hearty protein soups; meals in a can: chili, spaghetti-o's, stew, etc.



Ms. Sodano says, "I am a huge Bruce Springsteen fan. Hunger and FoodBanking are a couple of Bruce's favorite causes. 16

years ago, at a concert in Syracuse NY, he encouraged us fans to volunteer at their local FoodBank. I called information, got the number, started coming to pack up food one Saturday morning and kept coming back! I made the switch from volunteer to staff 12 years ago when in between jobs in the corporate sector, I said, 'I love it here and will do anything'. I became the operations assistant for 10 years, working in the warehouse on inventory, safety and food donation issues. I joined the volunteer services department 2 years ago, and continue to serve the FoodBank. (continued)

Please help us help those in need

You are invited to bring canned or boxed food items for the food pantry box in our front hall. Donations go to the Hillside Pantry Program.

Platforms begin at 11 a.m. All are welcome. Platforms are subject to change without notice. For information, contact the Society office, 973-763-1905.

Ethical Culture Society of Essex County



Boe Meyerson, Leader
Jim White, Leader Emeritus

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Editor's note

The newsletter invites you to submit articles, announcements, commentary, etc. for publication. ITEMS MUST BE RECEIVED BY THE EIGHTH 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.

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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 ethicalessessex@netscape.com to receive newsletter and other special event notices.

Being here is not just a job to me, it is a fulfilling ministry."

Feb 15 Betty Levin, MA, CCMHC, "Quiet Miracles: My life as a therapist and the connection with Ethical Culture."

Levin will discuss the interaction between therapy and Ethical Culture, and how the two approaches have fed and enriched one another in her life, providing her passions with focus and meaningfulness.

Betty Levin has been a member of the Ethical Culture Society of Essex County for 49 years and is its immediate past president. Her grandchildren are fourth generation Ethical Culturalists. Professionally, she has practiced humanistic therapy for 35 years. She is founder and one of the first presidents of the New Jersey Association of Women Therapists.



Feb 22 Anne Dushanko Dobek [rescheduled from December]



How does an artist perceive the rainforest: the vivid colors, the incredibly surreal textures, the amazing shapes and the overwhelming biodiversity of flora and fauna?

Follow artist and naturalist Anne Dushanko Dobek as she joins a team of scientists working at the La Selva biological Research Station in Costa Rica.

Hear her firsthand account of this expedition and the fascinating research taking place so close to home. How does this research impact the preservation of the rainforests, our air, our water and our lives?

Born and raised in rural South Jersey, the artist spent many hours as a child collecting and studying insects. It is not surprising then, that Dushanko Dobek's knowledge and concern for the environment and its more ephemeral inhabitants should inform her art.

Working in mountains, meadows and seas, the artist's often surreal and seductive imagery belies the more ominous threads of environmental and spiritual loss.

Dushanko Dobek has been exhibiting for over 20 years both nationally and internationally including at the Gulbenkian Foundation Brussels, Musée Cantonal des Beaux Arts in Lausanne, Switzerland, the Museum of Art and Design in New York, and the High Museum in Atlanta. Individual and collaborative works are in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, the Newark Museum, the National Gallery of American Art, the Library of the Victoria and Albert Museum and the Montclair Museum of Art.

She has been awarded two commissions by New Jersey Transit for a series of etched glass windscreens. The artist oversaw the installation of the completed works at Hudson Bergen Light Rail Stations in 2000.

A frequent lecturer on issues related to art and the environment, Dushanko Dobek has spoken at conferences, museums and universities in this country and Europe. Included among the venues where she has given presentations are the Musée Cantonal des Beaux Arts in Switzerland, the Newark and Montclair Art Museums, and the Lepidopterists Convention.

Sponsored by Earthwatch, she has also worked with Dr. Lee Dyer of Tulane on interactions of parasites and plants and their effects on Lepidoptera larvae, at the La Selva Biological Research Center in Costa Rica.

The artist has degrees from Rowan University and Pratt Institute. For more information visit her at web.mac.com/dushankodobek.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Ethical Culture Society of Essex County
516 Prospect St. (corner of Parker Ave)
Maplewood, NJ 07040; 973-763-1905 or
ethicalessessex@netscape.com

"Thank You, Jack" Fund Raiser Concert

March 7 is the date to reserve on your calendars! We are saying thank you to Jack Tiner for the donation of his Baldwin piano in a gala we call "Yes We Can, Jam!"—



2 p.m. is the time we get it on with this exciting gathering of local professional musicians (to be announced) as well as our own “amateurs” in a afternoon of music for all ages.

The piano — *Yes It Can* — a Baldwin ebony grand piano built in 1977.

The music — *Yes It Does* — jazz, Broadway, classical and who knows what else!

The venue — *Yes We Can* — at the society on March 7 at 2 p.m. We want everyone to hear this great instrument. Refreshments will be served. For information, call Lisa Novemsky, Jeanine Rosh or the office. We can't wait to see you there!

Ethical Philosophy — lecture/discussions led by Boe Meyerson (M.A. in Philosophy from Columbia Univ.), 2nd and 4th Sundays of the month at 1 p.m. following the social hour after platform meetings. The focus will be on exploring different ethical theories.

Public Affairs Forum led by Boe Meyerson, 1st and 3rd Sundays at 1 p.m. following the social hour after platform meetings. The focus of each discussion will be on current issues and events which raise ethical issues and/or are likely to have significant impact on our lives or the lives of others. Participants will be invited to make recommendations regarding the issues to be covered.

If you are interested in attending any of these programs, please call the office (973-763-1905) or e-mail the office (ethicalessex@netscape.net) to register for the course. Just give your name and phone number or e-mail address and state which course(s) you wish to attend. Non-members and friends are welcome as well as members. There is no fee.

T'ai Chi Classes. For information, or for information about our Society, call Betty Levin, 973-763-1033. Also,

consult the Ethical Culture Web site, www.essexethical.org/TaiChi.

Veterans Welcome Home Project

The “Welcome Home Project” for veterans of the Vietnam, Iraq and other wars, met to discuss reentry issues, peer support as well as actions contributing to growth and support and how to encourage family support.

For February meeting date, call Ed Bokert 973-762-6036 or email ethicalessex@netscape.com; also for information, contact Betty Levin 973-763-1033 or go to the society's web site, www.essexethical.org.

The Welcome Home Project is a program for helping veterans and families of veterans transform and transcend the effects of war, before, during or after deployment. We offer a safe space for veterans and families to come together and share their stories, struggles, accomplishments and solutions. And the help of others. (Note: This is a support group, not formal therapy.) Meetings are held at the Ethical Culture Society, the program is free and confidential (donations welcome).

LEADER'S ARTICLE



By the time you read this article Barak Obama will be President of the United States. Not since the inauguration of John F. Kennedy has there been such anticipation. Both men demonstrated the ability to inspire Americans to live up to our greatest and most beloved ideals. Few Presidents have had the ability to rally a nation to strive to create a better world. Yet in times like these when (as Wordsworth once said) “getting and spending we lay waste our powers,” there is a need for inspired leadership

that can help this nation live up to the ideals of its founders

When Ethical Culture was founded, Adler gave his first Platform Address on May 15, 1876. He chose to speak about the demoralized state of the nation. He lamented that “There is a great and crying evil in modern Society. It is want of purpose. It is that narrowness of vision which shuts out the wider vistas of the soul. It is the absence of those sublime emotions which, wherever they arise, do not fail to exalt and consecrate existence.” His remedy is to turn to “that deep-seated, long and carefully matured conviction that man was set into the world to perform a great and unselfish work, independent of his comfort, independent of his happiness, and that in its performance alone can he can find his true solace, his lasting reward.”

And so in like manner (though different rhetoric) Obama goes forth to rally the nation to live up to its highest ideals. — *Boe Meyerson*

FROM THE AEU

Ethical Culture

The following is a statement on where Ethical Culture/Ethical Humanism¹ stands at the beginning of the 21st century. Its intent is to clarify our shared beliefs in language that resonates with the familiar and unfamiliar alike. Open to the possibilities of the future, it is part of a living canon—an expression of those Ethical Culture Leaders who endorse it and are devoted to furthering Ethical Humanism within its context.

Dedicated to cultivating moral development in personal life and moral reform in society, Ethical Culture seeks to nurture relationships in which we act so as to elicit the best in others and thereby in ourselves, to provide inspiration and guidance for moral living, and to transform the way humanity views the meaning of life.

Our faith is inspired (*continued*)

ETHICAL CULTURE SOCIETY OF ESSEX COUNTY

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ETHICAL CULTURE SOCIETY OF ESSEX COUNTY NEWSLETTER · FEBRUARY 2009

and animated by the deliberate and reasoned choice of attributing worth and dignity to all. Imbued with a profound sense of interrelatedness, we recognize that we are both dependent and independent—each a unique end unto ourselves. We understand that if any one of us were different life itself would be different. It is through this sense of ourselves as members of an organic whole that we reinforce the attribution of moral worth to every individual.

Ethical Culture is a religion of ethical relationships, a Humanist² movement in which ethics is central. We organize congregationally in order to live out our values in community with others, inspired by the ideal of perfected living that always lies beyond our reach. Together we direct our efforts toward assuring a just and abundant life for all.

We are committed to life-long learning and endeavor to keep our beliefs consistent with our advancing knowledge of ourselves and of the rest of nature. We love life, embrace it in all its particularity and diversity, and accept it, and the natural world in which it occurs, as all and enough.

We are dedicated to the principle that relationships of respect, compassion, and integrity are the building blocks of personal and global harmo-

ny. We hold that democracy is not just a political system but also a personal commitment — a continual exercise in freedom of conscience, thought, and moral responsibility expressed through humane deeds. We seek to promote personal moral development and social responsibility through direct assistance, social action, and public advocacy.

Ethics begins with judgment and choice, and we know that how we choose to treat others is what is most important, as the kind of world in which we live radiates from personal decisions and interactions. The values and principles that guide our choices rest on a natural interpretation of experience, and are derived from the emotional capacities and intellectual abilities of human beings and the culture they create.

Ethical Humanism connects personal living with moral responsibility to and for community. Our relationships bind us together in universal citizenship. This sense of mutuality leads us to a shared responsibility for the kind of world in which we live. Examining life through the prism of human experience, we see that we are capable of wonderful and inspiring things. We find that there is meaning in the potential for personal growth and cultural transformation.

Since its founding in 1876, Ethical Culture has evinced a reverence for life and a dedication to its improvement, uniting with others of goodwill in an effort to create a more humane world. In placing deed before creed our welcome becomes broader and more inclusive than the boundaries of our beliefs. Standing as a beacon of hope for all, we extend the hand of welcome to those who share these aims and are eager to work toward them within the Ethical Humanist context.

We, the Leaders of the Ethical Movement, in accepting this statement as a product of many minds and recognizing that we may be of varied convictions on its particulars, affirm our substantial agreement with its affirmations and confirm our dedication to live by the principles it espouses and to promote the values it reflects.

¹ Today the historic identification, Ethical Culture, and the modern description, Ethical Humanism, are used interchangeably.

² “Humanism is a progressive philosophy of life that, without supernaturalism, affirms our ability and responsibility to lead ethical lives of personal fulfillment that aspire to the greater good of humanity.” Humanism and Its Aspirations, Humanist Manifesto III, The American Humanist Association, 2003.

Adopted by the National Leader’s Council of the American Ethical Union, November 1, 2008