



# ETHICAL CULTURE

M O N T H L Y

VOLUME 25 NUMBER 5

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JANUARY 2006

## FUND RAISER NEWS

### Food & Fun at Jim Quigley's

Got those post holiday blues? Wondering when you'll get your light back? Cheer up! On **January 21st**, Jim Quigley offers respite from the "post new year's blues", with gourmet food, fireplace and fun! 8 to 10 people can enjoy an evening at Jim's place. Always a FUN-raiser, this event will sell out quickly, so make your reservation NOW! (\$20 donation). Snow date is January 28th.

### Trivial Pursuits

There's not a serious bone in our bodies when we meet the Trivial Pursuits challenge at Jeanine Rosh's, on **February 10th**. We begin with some hot cider and crunchies, then play for laughs, and end with dessert and drink. Donation is \$15. Limited to 10 people. Snow date is February 17th.

### Coming in the spring

**April 8th**, Marjorie Berg, songbird extraordinaire, returns for an intimate concert at the home of Mira Stillman.

All new material in a real cabaret setting. Capacity is limited, so reserve early. (\$25 donation).

**Sometime this spring:** Marshall's Ribs! Unlike Adam, Marshall is never caught short and keeps replenishing those luscious ribs. This will be a treat. We'll be announcing that date soon.

**The Friday Film Society** will present Vittorio De Sica's *Shoeshine* on Friday evening, **Jan. 20**, at 7:30 p.m. at the Society. This masterpiece of Italian "neo-realism" was the first foreign film to receive an Academy Award. (De Sica went on to film *The Bicycle Thief* and

## LEADER'S MESSAGE

### Dear Members & Friends

**B**y the time you read this, the better part of the festivities will almost be past and we shall be turning our attention to restoring our bodies to their normal sizes as well as getting back to neglected tasks which were put aside during the busy holiday season. During this time of year, while often relieved to be free of the more frantic pace of events, I nevertheless miss the packed schedule of all those delightful social events and reunion with those not seen at other times. This quieter time of respite invites reflection, at least for me.

I have been thinking about my service as Leader to Essex, its joys and challenges. I have concluded that there is a part of my work, a part to which I am deeply attracted, that has over the years received less attention than I believe it deserves. I am referring to the pastoral part of my work. By this I do not necessarily mean tending to

those who are ill or who need counseling and support, or who are in grief, or who ask for my ceremonial services. These things I do and they take precedence. Rather I am referring to something more basic –just very simply staying abreast of people's lives.



All too often what commands my attention are the organizational demands of the work. My involvement with members at those times is as co-workers on various tasks. Little time is available to catch up with each other's lives. Even social events, much like cocktail parties, are prone to more impersonal subjects.

Therefore my New Year's resolution is to arrange to ask to visit each of you in your homes so we can get acquainted with how life is going for us. I would not be intrusive and please do not hesitate to decline if you should so desire or propose another place of meeting. This is strictly voluntary.

*Meanwhile, Happy New Year — Boe*

### White Elephant Sale

Our most profitable fund-raiser, this event needs your full support.

Now is the time to bring your clean usable items for the **May 21st** sale. Don't wait for spring to dig into your cabinets and cubby holes and pull out those items you'll never use, but wish you had. It's too much for you perhaps,

but just right for someone else. Donate early and often. Bring it all to the society now. We're accepting everything but clothes and linens at this time. If you have large items, call us. We'll try to arrange for a pick-up. When in doubt, call the office.

We're depending on you!

— Jeanine Rosh



*Umberto D.*) In *Shoeshine*, two Neapolitan waifs are caught up in the meatgrinder of an implacable bureaucracy.

Popcorn and soda will be offered. The whole evening is free. So, bring your friends and come! —Win Thies

# 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 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 ([howardgilman@netscape.net](mailto:howardgilman@netscape.net)). 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.

For those interested in receiving their copy of Ethical Culture Monthly by First Class Mail for a charge of \$10/year or \$5/half year (beginning in January), call the office, 973-763-1905, and request our First Class Mail Special.

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of Essex County,  
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**...act so  
as to elicit  
the best  
in others  
and in  
ourselves**

1955-2005 • 50 YEARS

Rosa Parks with  
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.  
(© UPI/Bettman)

ROSA PARKS, in her book, *Quiet Strength*, (ZondervanPublishingHouse, 1994) wrote: "Our mistreatment was just not right, and I was tired of it. ... I kept thinking about my mother and my grandparents, and how strong they were. I knew there was a possibility of being mistreated, but an opportunity was being given to me to do what I had asked of others."

"Four decades later I am still uncomfortable with the credit given to me for starting the bus boycott. I would like [people] to know I was not the only person involved. I was just one of many who fought for freedom." [From an interview with Rosa Parks in 1996]

#### QUOTES — Martin Luther King, Jr.

There is nothing more dangerous than to build a society, with a large segment of people in that society, who feel that they have no stake in it; who feel that they have nothing to lose. People who have a stake in their society, protect that society, but when they don't have it, they unconsciously want to destroy it.



Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. conducts a meeting of the Montgomery Improvement Association in 1955. Rosa Parks is seated in the front row. (© Don Cravens, Life magazine)

Photos <http://www.achievement.org/autodoc/page/par0gal-1>

Interview text <http://www.grandtimes.com/rosa.html>



If a man is called to be a streetsweeper, he should sweep streets even as Michelangelo painted, or Beethoven composed music, or Shakespeare wrote poetry. He should sweep streets so well that all the host of heaven and earth will pause to say, here lived a great streetsweeper who did his job well.

Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.

I refuse to accept the view that mankind is so tragically bound to the starless midnight of racism and war that the bright daybreak of peace and brotherhood can never become reality. I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word.

Our nettlesome task is to discover how to organize our strength into compelling power.

Violence as a way of achieving racial justice is both impractical and immoral. It is impractical because it is a descending spiral ending in destruction for all. It is immoral because it seeks to humiliate the opponent rather than win his understanding; it seeks to annihilate rather than to convert. Violence is immoral because it thrives on hatred rather than love.

I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character.

Dr. Joseph Chuman has been the Leader of the Ethical Culture Society of Bergen County, New Jersey, for the past 27 years, and before that he was leader of the Essex Ethical Culture Society. He is a visiting professor of religion and human rights at Columbia University where he teaches in the Masters of Liberal Studies Program at the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. He is the founding member of the International Institute for Secular Humanistic Judaism, and



has taught contemporary civilization at Columbia College, religion at Barnard College and Hunter College, as well as at Fairleigh Dickinson University.

He has written for secular Jewish publications and has been published in numerous periodicals and magazines of opinion. He is co-founder of the American Ethical Union's online journal, *Ethics Matters*, and the online *Ethical Culture Review of Books*, and he is past president of the National Lead-

ers Council of the American Ethical Union.

Dr. Chuman also teaches at the United Nations University for Peace at San Jose, Costa Rica.

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MARK YOUR CALENDAR

**Folk Singing Friday Jan. 13**

7:30 p.m. second Friday of the month with Lisa Novemsky.

**The Friday Film Society Jan. 20**

Vittorio De Sica's *Shoeshine*, Friday at 7:30 p.m. at the Society (see page 1).

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ETHICAL EXCERPTS

From Chapter One of *"The Humanist Way — An Introduction to Ethical Humanist Religion"* by Edward L. Ericson

**A**lthough the more conservative students of comparative religion still refuse to accept early Buddhism as one of the world's religions (because of its lack of belief in a God), from the standpoint of this book — and that of many other students of religious philosophy — such an objection is unwarranted. To restrict religion solely to theism (belief in God) is the tendency of those who have never seriously considered alternative expressions of religions faith and experience. But religion is a term we choose to claim, and to apply to Humanism's spiritual life, believing that the function that religion serves in living remains as vital as ever.

It is natural, spontaneous, and inevitable to experience ethical commitment as religious, because ethical feeling functions as religion has always functioned, guiding and uplifting our hearts and minds as religion has always done. Ethical faith is unitive. It gives wholeness to personality and to our vision of life. Religion provides human beings with a sense of relatedness and rootage in the sources of our being, of-

fering focus, direction, and motivation to our moral struggles and aspirations, undergirding social idealism, and highlighting the beauty and mystery of our universe.

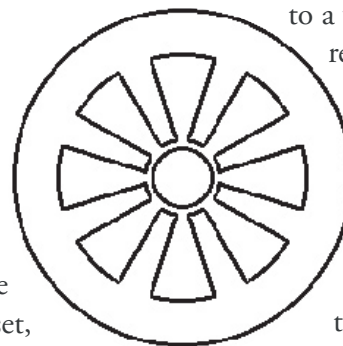
Emerson was right in observing that we will worship "something," and we had therefore beware what gods we adore, lest they engrave their likenesses on our faces. If we serve unworthy masters, or make idols of false theories and ideologies, we hasten to the destruction of our own designing. But if we desire to live and be free, we must plot our course by freedom's star.

**What is Nontheistic Religion?**

Since a nontheistic conception of religion is basic to Naturalistic Humanism, it may be helpful to be as specific as possible in our usage of that term. At the outset, it is essential to understand that "nontheistic" is not used as synonym or euphemism for "atheistic." The atheist, like the theist, takes a definite position with respect to the doctrine that God exists. The atheist denies or disbelieves it. The theist affirms it. But while the individual member of the Ethical Humanist movement may be an atheist, agnostic, theist, deist, or

believe whatever else the individual regards to be probable or true about the God question, the ethical philosophy takes no official position with respect to such belief. As nontheistic religion is defined, the prefix "non" should be understood to mean simply that the theistic reference does not apply. Ours is a religion or belief of a totally different type in which the God question is not of primary concern. As we have emphasized before, Ethical Humanism's starting point is ethics, not speculative theology.

Ethical Humanism is commitment to a way of life, to a creative relationship to others and thereby to ourselves, in which metaphysical and theological arguments are set aside. Whether or not God exists may be an interesting question. But the answer to that question — if answerable at all — should make no crucial difference in how we ought to live, how we ought to treat our fellow beings. My ethical obligations and potentialities — and yours — remain exactly the same, whether God exists or does not exist. Our shared task is to live decently, compassionately, and caringly in the world we inhabit.



# ETHICAL CULTURE SOCIETY OF ESSEX COUNTY

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## ETHICAL CULTURE

### SUNDAY MORNING PLATFORMS

**January, 2006**

Platforms begin at 11 am. All are welcome. Platforms are subject to change without notice. Sunday School 11 am–12:15 pm. Youth of Ethical Societies (YES): contact Society office.

**Jan. 1 Boe Meyerson,** “*Our Communal Future,*” Discussion

Boe Meyerson is the Leader of the Ethical Culture Society of Essex County. She also serves as the Ethical Humanist Chaplain at Columbia University. Boe represents the National Leader’s Council on the Board of Directors of the American Ethical Union and serves on the Board of Directors of the New Jersey Division of the United Nations Association.

On the first day of this New Year we will have the opportunity to share our visions, hopes, wishes and aspirations for our community (at various levels — family, congregational, civic, national, global). All participation is voluntary. All are welcome.

**Jan. 8 Maryellen Kluxen,** “*After the Tsunami: Aceh, Indonesia — Then and Now*”

Maryellen Kluxen, volunteer with Project Hope, is a registered nurse and has been active in multicultural community organizing and progressive healthcare policy (for consumers and workers) for many years. This was her first volunteer assignment in disaster relief; she is currently a nurse at Rutgers University, Newark.



After the tsunami hit southeast Asia on December 26, 2004, thousands of international relief workers came to the area to give material aid.

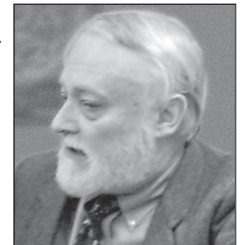
Ms. Kluxen will give a slide presentation that will cover part of a medical relief mission sponsored by Project Hope from late January to April, 2005. Over two hundred American medical volunteers served aboard a US hospital ship in Aceh, Indonesia, the area worst hit by the wave, caring for the survivors and their families. It will cover the nature of the project, the Indonesian people that were served, the local response to the tsunami and the earthquake in March 2005, and a brief discussion of how the area is healing nearly one year later. With question and answer time.

**Jan. 15 Panel with Matthew Johnson and others** *Martin Luther King Day Observance: “Race and Justice in Maplewood/South Orange.”*

Matthew B. Johnson, PhD, is the co-chair of the South Orange/Maplewood Martin Luther King Holiday Committee and a resident of South Orange. He is a practicing clinical and forensic psychologist and also teaches in the department of psychology at John Jay College in New York City. He is one of the leaders of the Newark-based People’s Organization for Progress.

**Jan 22. Jim White,** “*Make the Global Local*”

Jim White is Leader Emeritus of the Ethical Culture Society of Essex County. By profession, he is the principal attorney for Mental Hygiene Legal Services representing psychiatric patients in New York State. Jim is also a community activist in Harlem and with the Coalition Against the Violence Initiative.



All of our immediate social-political concerns in some way mirror conditions and traumas many of our sisters and brothers constantly cope with worldwide. And, in a shrinking world, issues of war and eco-catastrophe will impact more and more DIRECTLY on us. Learning about The Millennium Development Goals can help us to connect the global to the local on a weekly basis for more effective and far reaching activism.

**Jan. 29 Joe Chuman,** “*The Realm of Politics and the Realm of Faith*”

This talk focuses on the increasing theocraticization of American society by examining the proper domains of government and religion. To what extent should they be kept separate? To what extent can they be?

(continued on page 3)