



ETHICAL CULTURE

M O N T H L Y

VOLUME 32 NUMBER 10

Visit our web site: www.essexethical.org

JUNE 2013

JUNE 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

Sunday, June 2 Annual General Meeting of the Ethical Culture Society Membership

will be held promptly at 10 a.m. at the Society and all members are invited to attend. There will be reports from the Leader and the lay leadership as well as elections and several important procedural matters to vote on. One is the possibility of changing the name of the Society to the Ethical Society of Essex County to conform to the name registered with the State and the Federal government. There will be no Platform address that day. We hope you will join us.

— Andy Weinberger

June 9 Lesley Risinger and David Shephard, "Freeing the Innocent"

Lesley Risinger, founder and director of Seton Hall Law School's Last Resort Exoneration Project, has worked closely in the cases of two men who were exonerated: Luis Kevin Rojas and Fernando Bermudez. Ms. Risinger assisted her mother over seven years to gain the release and exoneration for Mr. Rojas; and for Mr. Bermudez she led and assembled the team that gained his freedom and, unusually, had him declared actually innocent, a rarity in the law. Astoundingly, neither man had the benefit of DNA evidence.

Ms. Risinger will discuss:

1. What the DNA exonerations tell us about the problem of convicting the innocent

2. The price paid by innocent people who are wrongfully convicted

3. Some causes of convictions of the innocent

4. Special problems of non-DNA cases (where there is no DNA evidence available to help determine guilt or innocence)

Ms. Risinger became the founder and director of the Last Resort Exoneration Project at Seton Hall Law School in February of 2011. This project is dedicated to the freeing of the convicted innocent in the prisons of New Jersey. Since the Project was founded, Ms. Risinger has reviewed the cases of over two hundred prisoners who have filed the onerous application required by the Project and has identified two as presenting sufficiently clear evidence of innocence to warrant going forward with them, with another in the process of decision.

Ms. Risinger has acted as a consultant to the New York Attorney General's Office on the effect of post-conviction rules on the convicted innocent. She has also acted as consultant to the Exoneration Initiative in New York. She teaches a course in Exonerations at Seton Hall Law School and has lectured at Yale Law School on the difficulties involved in obtaining exoneration. She has also spoken on a program of the annual meeting of the New Jersey State Bar Association and moderated a panel on emerging DNA issues at the ABA's 2012 forensic science conference. She is the co-author with her husband, Professor D. Michael Risinger, of *Innocence is Different: Taking Innocence into Account in Reforming Criminal Procedure*, 56 N.Y.L.S. Law Rev. 935 (2012) and *The*

Emerging Role of Innocence Lawyer and the Need for Role-Differentiated Standards of Professional Conduct, a chapter in Sarah Cooper (ed.) *Controversies in Innocence Cases in America* (Ashgate Press) to be published in the late spring or early summer of 2013.

David Shephard was only 20 years old when he was arrested in 1983 for a horrendous rape he had nothing to do with, owing to poor identification procedures. He was convicted in 1984



and sentenced to thirty years. During his imprisonment he fought for DNA testing of the forensic evidence in his case, which finally showed that he was innocent, and in 1994 he was released, having served ten years in prison. Mr. Shephard found work first with the City of Newark and then with the Essex County welfare department. Mr. Shephard fought for and received compensation for his wrongful imprisonment from the State. He founded the Northeast Council of the Wrongfully Convicted which tries to help newly freed prisoners. Mr. Shephard is a well-known face at the Innocence Project in New York and he frequently speaks out to try to help those who have been wrongly convicted.

June 16 Martha Gallahue. Martha will deliver the final Platform of the season. She will share her reflections gleaned from the AEU 98th Annual National Assembly, her experience representing ethical culture at the UN, in the context of ESEC's year in Maplewood. She will also clarify some of the purposes of the upcoming retreat on June 29th. This retreat is open to



Photo: Jerry McCreel/The Star-Ledger

Ethical Culture Society of Essex County



Martha Gallahue, *Interim Leader*
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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**

members, to Friends, to seekers interested in the ethical culture mission.

Mark Your Calendar: Society Retreat facilitated by Martha, at the Society, Saturday, June 29th, 11 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Have a great summer and see you when Platforms resume in the fall!

LEADER'S COLUMN

Dragonflies

As we approach the completion of another season at "Essex Ethical", we also approach the call of summer, the call to relax and maybe even to reflect.

We at ESEC who have lived longer than what we have ahead of us have much to reflect upon. We live in paradox. We experience transience and our own fragility; at the same moments, we have glimmers of wisdom. We know the challenges of living in hope amidst loss, healing amidst sickness and physical discomfort, appreciation and gratitude as death creeps up on us. It takes a long time to arrive at such maturity. At our member picnic on May 5th, where we honored Barbara Cotler at the same time of Dick and Nancy's departure to Minnesota, and of members who are living elegantly into their 80's, I felt surrounded by that light and color associated with lives who radiate the results of countless good deeds, lives lived to make life better for others, and lives "coherent in one community that articulates our identity as a religious and educational fellowship dedicated to the achievement of ethical lives..."

In the midst of my own reflections as I was about to begin this column, I found a card that described dragonflies, "an ancient order of insects...that date back 300 million years. Dragonflies, go through a growth process through the naiad stage during which they switch from aquatic to land form capable of flight in their mature stage. The words that captured me were, "Dragonflies, through their metamorphosis, remind us that our true colors take time to develop. Dragonflies are filled with light and color, they can help us



see through our illusions and allow our own light to shine forth!"

Beyond fragility and resilience, we choose through membership in our ethical community to do what we know to share our lives practicing always self-improving as the means to self-empowerment for the sake of the common good. Yes, we prize our individuality. But we prize it by means of developing tools for better-intercooperation, forbearance and inter-dependence. Mutuality and reciprocity lie at the heart of our ethical journey through life together.

Barbara moved to Maplewood because there was an ethical society here and in her many long years as a member, we have no doubt disappointed her many times. Yet, like all of our long term members, she keeps on keeping on. Nancy and Dick had many opportunities to join other groups in the community. Any community, religious or secular, would have welcomed them because of their great skill in community service. But they chose us and stayed and gave and gave just as Barbara has. Just as our 80+er's have. And Lucy, our newest member just approaching her 18th birthday joined us at the picnic too. How lucky she is to have mentors like us. While we appreciate the energy and talent of other self-selecting members, to be the backbone of the community, sometimes it is appreciating the eldest and the youngest to grasp the long trajectory and many metamorphoses that a human being undergoes, at least those human beings determined to fullest realization.

The picnic, informal and somewhat spontaneous as it was, reflected the most colorful possibility reflected in our people. Let us like the dragonfly go for the long run as an ethical culture species, whose goal is the fullest realization a human being is capable of. Let this community be in service through shared leadership in dedicated commitment we give thanks to here in ethical summer. Let this summer be a time of reflection.

To those of you who read this, give some thought to your own stage of development. Consider the benefit of having your own humanism reified and challenged by the expe-

rience of living it out in community — here and now in our ethical culture society in Maplewood. We are not ancient, we are only 137 years old, but we reflect what is universal, what is essential in all religions and to some degree that makes us ancient. Like the dragonfly, we are fragile because we are small. Yet, we have within us the elements needed for endurance. Let us appreciate that and let our own inspiration for the message appeal to those seekers in the community looking for a home.

And may this summer be a particularly colorful and radiant one!

— *Martha Gallahue*

FROM THE UN

Safety of Journalists

Every May 3, the UN commemorates World Press Freedom Day. This year the theme was safety. Press freedom is enshrined in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which states that “everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.”

Today this liberty is in serious trouble. Around the world, there was an alarming rise in the number of journalists killed and imprisoned. Independent reporters are especially subjected to repressive laws, government intolerance for dissent and outright impunity for the killers. In 2012 alone, 121 journalists were killed. Furthermore, harassment, arbitrary arrest and online attacks continue to be widespread. In 2012 alone, 35 journalists disappeared and 232 were imprisoned. In addition there is a high level of impunity: 9 out of 10 cases go unpunished.

In the majority of unsolved cases, local journalists were the victims. These journalists are not killed in combat crossfire but they are killed for reporting local stories of political corruption,

Jerome Kaplan

We mourn the death of ethical society member Jerry Kaplan, 86, who passed away on Wednesday, May 8th. His son Michael wrote that Jerry “died peacefully at the home of his significant other Flo Hauer’s, with Flo and my brother Andrew present.”

Jerry Kaplan was born in the Bronx and resided in New York. He served in the U.S. Army during and after World War II. He moved to Roselle Park, N.J., in 1960 and lived there for three years before moving to Maplewood in 1963, where he remained until December 2012, when he relocated to Ocean Township.

Jerry received his bachelor’s degree in mathematics from Cornell University and his master’s degree in English from New York University. He was a writer, editor and teacher. In the field of education, he coauthored several elementary textbook series. His other



publications included short fiction and articles that appeared in *Commentary*, *The New York Times*, *The Jewish News*, the *News-Record* and various journals.

Jerry was predeceased by his wife, Thelma, in April, 1999. He is survived by his loving sons, Michael and his wife, Norene, of Metuchen, N.J.; Andrew, of Astoria, N.Y., and Bruce and his wife, Kate Robin, of Los Angeles, Calif. Jerome was the beloved grandfather of Henry and Eve Kaplan. He is also survived by his loving companion, Flo Hauer.

A member of the Essex Ethical Culture Society, Jerry presented a Platform several years ago titled, “Confessions of a Liberal.” Among his many fine qualities, Jerry will also be missed for his good cheer and kibitzing.

We plan to hold a memorial service which will include his son’s original musical composition for Jerry. Please watch for an email announcement to come.

A short video tribute to Jerry was put together with the help of family & friends that can be viewed at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SVk67OD6Ngk>

exposing environmental issues such as land disputes, illegal logging, deforestation or mining. Government and military officials are often the leading suspects in murder cases; as a result it is extremely difficult to prosecute cases of murdered journalists.

For example, Pakistan has failed to prosecute a single suspect in the 23 journalist murders over the past decade. In the Philippines, 55 journalist murders remain unsolved for the past 10 years. Ortega, a radio talk show host, who exposed corruption was shot in the back while shopping. The police made arrests and traced the murder weapon to a provincial governor’s aide. In 2013 the alleged conspirator who had turned state’s witness was killed in prison.

Since the rise of global communi-

cations, some governments have challenged the universality of press freedom, maintaining that this right should be curtailed to accommodate culture, heritage and threats to national security.

Consider Turkey which is a major jailer of journalists (49 imprisoned). Limits of critical expression go well beyond alleged threats to national security. Reporters are prohibited from writing something that could be seen as insulting to the Turkish people. Prime minister Erdogan told CNN’s Christiane Amanpour in a September interview that while he accepts criticism he will not tolerate insult, apparently reserving for himself to distinguish between the two.

Threats to the universality of freedom of expression also come from lead-

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



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JOURNALISTS (from page 3)

ers in the Islamic world who have promoted various resolutions in the UN condemning blasphemy and defamation of religion.

Freedom of expression is not an absolute. Where to draw the line to this freedom is a difficult issue. A notorious example is the use on the radio in Rwanda of hate speech and incitement to kill. The human right to life supercedes freedom of speech. Some African governments have abused the concept of hate speech to justify restrictions on legitimate and lawful criticism.

In 2012 the UN approved a plan of action to improve the safety of journalists: more coordination of different agencies

involved in the safety of journalists, extension of work already conducted by UNESCO and pressing governments to be more proactive in protecting journalists and especially helping local free lancers who are particularly vulnerable.

Free speech is essential and a precious right. We need information to make decisions. What we don't know can hurt us.

In the early 20th century, George Orwell said: "If liberty means anything at all, it means the right to tell people what they do not want to hear."

Dr. Sylvain Ehrenfeld, the International Humanist and Ethical Union (IHEU) and National Ethical Service representative to the UN and Dr. Reba Goodman, member of National Ethical Service

For more information online, look at: committee to protect journalists (www.cpj.org) and reporters without borders (www.rsf.org).

Folk Friday at Ethical June 14

Sing-along and jam with friends 7:30 p.m. Second Friday of each month, September through June at the Ethical Culture Society, 516 Prospect St., Maplewood. Bring acoustic string and rhythm instruments, join in playing, singing or listening (led by Lisa Novemsky). Bring some refreshments to share. Folk Fridays have expanded to invite all crafts people in the society to come and listen to music while doing crafts. Everyone is invited! Contact: lnovemsky@comcast.net or (973) 763-8293.

— Lisa Novemsky

EC Office News

We have hired a new office manager, Elizabeth (called Liz) Cunningham. Her hours will be Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays 9 to 11:30 a.m., and Sundays 9:30 to 11 a.m. The Sunday hours will offer a time for Martha, board members, committee heads *et al* to submit things they need done.

— Jeanine Rosh