



# ETHICAL CULTURE

M O N T H L Y

VOLUME 27 NUMBER 10

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JUNE 2008

## SUNDAY MORNING PLATFORMS

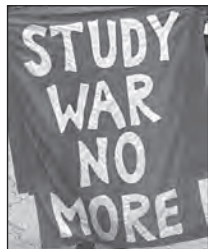
### June 1 **Boe Meyerson:** *“My Ideal Ethical Society”*

Leader Boe Meyerson will discuss her vision of an ideal Ethical Society. Ideals are not realities. They are chosen aims which a person or a group of people aspire to pursue and attain. She will discuss what she believes is necessary to enhance our ability to create a more humane and just world for others as well as to enhance our own capacity to create the “beloved community” in which we nurture the best in each other in good fellowship and shared commitment. Boe’s address will explore some ways to pursue these goals.

Boe Meyerson is the leader of the Ethical Culture Society of Essex County and is also the humanist chaplain at Columbia University.

### June 8 **Andrew Kafel:** *“Close the School of Assassins and open a School of Peace”*.

Andy Kafel will be speaking on behalf of NYC SOA Watch and showing a 20 minute video: “Hidden in Plain Sight.” NYC SOA Watch is a small grassroots local chapter of SOA Watch, an “independent organization that seeks to close the US Army School of the Americas, under whatever name



it is called, through vigils and fasts, demonstrations and nonviolent protest, as well as media and legislative work.”

Andy Kafel, an activist living in Jersey City, is interested in promoting peaceful resolution

of conflict with justice. In addition to NYC SOA Watch, he has been involved with NY CISPES (Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador) for 10 years, the NYC Peoples’ Referendum on Free Trade for 7 years and Grassroots Haiti Solidarity Committee for two years. He travels to the Fort Benning Vigil almost every year, reads liberally and takes his world citizenship very seriously. (See “SOAW 11” story on page 3).

### June 15 **Rev. Tony Johnson:** *“Liberationist Humanism”*



My brand of humanism derives from struggles for personal and social liberation. Rock music is one medium of the struggle. This address draws on a lifetime of experience and three outstanding songs.

The Rev. Tony Johnson is a Unitarian Universalist minister affiliated with the Community Church of New York. He was previously parish minister of the First Unitarian Universalist Church of Essex County and Unitarian congregations in East Brunswick, New Jersey and Burbank, California and has served in leadership positions in numerous professional and social justice organizations. He has taught at Bloomfield College, Meadville Lombard Theological School, Monmouth University and the New School and published articles on religion, society and philanthropy.

[This is our last issue before the July-August break. Best wishes for the Summer!]

### Fundraiser Events

**June 7th** at 2:00 p.m. Gloria Torrice’s daughter will graciously host an early “Fun & Food Dinner,” \$20 per person. Call 973-325-8575 to reserve.

**July 12th** is our **annual afternoon at Boe’s** — A Day in the Country — and yes, the lake is still there, too. Eat, drink, swim, paddle, chat. Always great food and camaraderie. \$25 per person. (Rain date July 13th).

### Mini Market

Don’t forget to browse at the Mini Market, located in the parlor — new items each week — offering good, useful items for re-sale. If you would like to participate, bring your clean, saleable items on Sunday, we will sort and ticket those that are marketable — and you take them back home if not sold.

— *Jeanine M. Rosh*

## LEADER’S MESSAGE

### The Killing of Sean Bell and the Crime of Criminalizing Drug Use and Possession



As recorded in the *NY Times*, Sean Bell was killed on the day of his wedding at 9 a.m. when, while driving away from a bar where narcotics trafficking was suspected, his car struck an unmarked police vehicle in which there were three undercover police narcotics officers (showing no ID) who fired fifty shots at Mr. Bell who was unarmed.

(continued)

# Ethical Culture Society of Essex County



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

Attention members! Please submit your email addresses to [ethicalessex@netscape.com](mailto:ethicalessex@netscape.com) to receive newsletter and other special event notices.

After trial, the police officers were acquitted by the Judge who found the three defendants not guilty of intentional homicide but rather of carelessness and incompetence which charges were not before him and which he left to the police department to handle.

Many have criticized the judgment and others supported it. There were some good reasons for the officers to be concerned (based on a comment made inside the bar, officers believed Bell had a gun) and there were good reasons for Mr. Bell to be very anxious to leave a place as quickly as possible where trouble was brewing.

I submit, however, that the real culprits in this tragic fiasco are the drug laws themselves. A disproportionate number of police at every level are devoted to narcotics enforcement. Sixty percent of state prisoners are serving time for drug offenses costing taxpayers \$40,000 per prisoner per year.

The criminalization of drug possession is the cause and not the remedy for dealing with drug related crimes of theft and robbery. If narcotics were legally sold, crime and the costs of crime would go down immensely. Addicts resort to crime (theft and robbery) because they can not afford the high costs of their habit. Narcotics are expensive because they are obtained illegally and their distribution is a very profitable business of the Mafia and other criminal organizations. The victims here are the addicts and the public.

Much has been said about the dangerous effects of narcotics. The truth of the matter is that as far as violence is concerned, the number one substance most likely to produce violent behavior is not cocaine or crack or heroin but rather is alcohol — a perfectly legal substance. Prohibition was lifted because it produced more crime (e.g., the Mafia) than abstinence. We have yet to learn the same lesson learned during Prohibition. If we want to reduce street crime, we need to legalize narcotic use and possession. Once legal, its distribution can be monitored and help can be offered at the very places where it is purchased.

The current drug policy is the real crimi-

nal in the Sean Bell killing, not the officers and not Mr. Bell.

This puritanical nation is addicted to the mindless and ineffective use of the police to solve a problem that is created by the narcotics laws themselves. What is truly criminal is prohibition itself which artificially raises the cost of these substances.

Our relentless drug enforcement addiction is an excellent example of redoubling one's efforts after having forgotten one's aim.

— Boe Meyerson

## PRESIDENT'S LETTER

### Outstanding Platforms

As we look back at our outstanding platforms this past season arranged by Platform Chair Elaine Norstein, we can justly be pleased. And now our success will be shared with a new AEU Committee, FES, the Future of the Ethical Society. This committee has called around to obtain tapes of outstanding programs to show at various colleges throughout the country to introduce bright young adults to the Ethical Society Movement.



We have provided three such programs to the effort: Youth Member Matthew LeClair's challenge to his public school about consistently proselytizing about religion in the classroom; Dr. Edward Tick, author of *War and the Soul*, and his return to Vietnam with traumatized vets who are still seeking peace and reconciliation; and finally, former Ethical member Norman Gershman, now a master photographer, has returned to Albania to photograph Muslim Albanians who saved Jews from the Nazis, pursuing *Besa*, their Code of Honor. We were privileged to see this exhibit which was displayed at the United Nations, the Jewish Theological Seminary and Vad Yashem in Jerusalem.

We can feel proud that the quality of our programs will help introduce a new generation of young people to our extraordinary movement.

(continued)

As I complete my tenure as president, I thank all Board and Committee members for helping to contribute to a meaningful time in my life.

— Betty Levin, President

## CONGRATULATIONS to Susan Kennedy

... on the birth of her granddaughter, Rachel. She joins brothers, Timothy and James, all lovely children of son, Benjamin, and daughter-in-law, Erin. Benjamin is a graduate of our Ethical Culture Sunday school.

— Betty Levin

## FROM THE UN

### Does The UN Have The Power to Do Its Job?

Does the UN effectively promote international security, peace and wellbeing worldwide? The UN is a repository of our hopes. It reflects and embodies the highest ideals. Yet — it also embodies and reflects the realities of international politics.

In a 2007 poll, two out of three Americans were disappointed at UN failures. Yet the same proportion wants the UN to play a strong role in settling global problems. The UN was designed with a Secretariat given the power to implement policies and actions designed by the member states. The UN was never intended as a world government and was never given the power and the funding to achieve goals not fully agreed upon. The strongest political body, the Security Council, has 15 members with five major countries holding veto power. Even the threat of a veto determines what comes up before the Council. The Secretary General is far more secretary than general. If the major powers cannot agree on an action, it will not happen.

Much of the UN's work is not controversial. Over 80% of the UN's work

(continued on page 4)

## THE SOAW 11

### April 10, 2008 — Last of the SOAW 11 Report to Jail

The 11 courageous souls that willingly put their freedom and bodies at risk to stand in witness against the SOA/WHINSEC during the November 2007 Vigil are now serving, or have completed serving, jail sentences ranging from 30 to 90 days.



The SOAW 11 range in age from 25 to 78 and are from very diverse walks of life. Ed Lewinson, a 78-year old history professor who in November crossed the line for the fourth time, was sentenced to 90 days in federal prison and a \$500 fine. This is his first conviction since in previous years the government refused to prosecute due to his blindness.



Ed is a Professor Emeritus of History at Seton Hall University in South Orange, New Jersey. He crossed the line at the School of the Americas demonstrations in 2003, 2004 and 2005. Ed's message to all Americans: first of all, to stop the war in Iraq. To stop the war, to cooperate internationally, to stop the torture everywhere, to stop building American bases and to help countries in whatever way help is needed and to demonstrate in the streets. Support candidates that really oppose the war and demonstrate against the funding of the war. "I crossed in 2003 because of

what graduates of the SOA had done in their own countries, in terms of torture and assassination and I wanted to contribute something towards stopping this. By closing the SOA, it increases the awareness of what they did. The only way it'll stop is by having people organize and force it to stop."

(back row, left to right): Ed Lewinson, Stephen Schweitzer, Chris Lieberman, Ozone Bhaguan, Gus Roddy, Art Landis. (front row, left to right): Michelle Yipé, Joan Anderson, Diane Lopez Hughes, Le Anne Clausen.



### April 28 Postscript —

#### Ed Lewinson Released from Solitary Confinement

Good news from the SOA Watch Attorneys: SOA prisoner of conscience Ed Lewinson has been released from the "hole" and is now part of the general population at FCI Elkton. And the attorneys report he is happy to be there. Thanks to all who wrote to the warden.

(Text from nycsoaw.org; photos: Tom Bottolene)

# ETHICAL CULTURE SOCIETY OF ESSEX COUNTY

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## ETHICAL CULTURE SOCIETY OF ESSEX COUNTY     JUNE 2008

**From the UN** (*continued from page 3*) is humanitarian and highly effective within a small budget. The UN is the first recourse for aid in both natural and manmade disasters. Essentials for survival come quickly — bags of food, crates of medicine, blankets and tents. Rescue workers under the blue flag appear in hours. Through its many agencies, the UN promotes clean water, safe schools, vaccination and education campaigns. The UN is a leader in promoting security, education, and empowerment of women. The greatly feared worldwide pandemic, triggered by avian flu, has so far been avoided, thanks to international cooperation carried out through the UN.

Disappointment with the UN springs primarily from the UN's limited ability to control human rights abuses, and particularly the genocides in Rwanda and Darfur. The Rwanda genocide happened because the US, under President Clinton, actively lobbied against sending more peacekeepers. The ongoing genocide in Darfur continues in part because China protects Sudan from excessive attention in the Security Council. The Sudanese government uses the currency it earns from selling oil to China, to buy weapons from China.

Yet even in the mine-strewn and politically explosive area of peacekeeping



the UN has negotiated 172 peaceful settlements of regional conflicts. The UN peacekeepers can keep a peace process going, but only when there is a process to keep. The major powers must agree to effectively intervene for the UN to carry out its function.

When governments agree the UN can intervene with speed and effectiveness. In some cases, as in Haiti, the UN has a strong mandate to use force to protect civilians. In the war in Lebanon between Hezbollah and Israel, when tensions threatened to ignite the entire Middle East, the participants and the governments wanted a ceasefire. The UN was there, ready and able to call a halt using peacekeepers. They stopped what could have been a spreading conflagration.

There are currently 16 peacekeeping operations. The need for peacekeepers has grown sharply from 10,000 personnel in 1999, to 85,000 in 2007. Amazingly, the UN spends

less on peacekeeping worldwide, than New York City spends on the annual budget of the Police Department. The UN is developing a Peacebuilding Commission to prevent countries at risk from falling into or returning to internal conflict.

The UN is desperately needed. Problems are now global, crossing borders without passports. Climate change, resistance to international terrorism, weapons proliferation, epidemics spread by world travel, all demand cooperation. The participation of the world's largest economy, the US is essential. It is tragic that the US has pursued a mostly unilateral approach, rejecting the Kyoto Climate Change Treaty, the International Criminal Court, and payment of its arrears in dues to the UN.

During this election year it is a melancholy fact that the candidates have not mentioned the UN or the urgent need for active global cooperation. We must demand a wiser policy from the next administration. At its best, the UN is the world's conscience. The Secretary-General has a bully pulpit to be used both for consciousness raising and to keep alive a vision of the world as it should be.

– Phyllis Ehrenfeld, Pres., Nat'l Service Conf. of AEU, NSC Rep. to UN.; Dr. Sylvain Ehrenfeld, IHEU Rep. to UN.