



ETHICAL CULTURE

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MARCH 2006

LEADER'S MESSAGE

Dear Members and Friends,

You may have seen recent articles in the NY Times and other publications describing the work of the Genographic Project sponsored by National Geographic Society launched last year. It is attempting to do nothing less than use mass data on DNA taken from people all over the world to trace the genetic trails of historical events and tease out the answers to such questions as to whether Neanderthals and Homo sapiens mated at some point or the identity of the first human community and its current descendants. In order to do this, it is intensively collecting massive genetic data on a global scale. It seeks to do this as speedily as possible before indigenous populations become extinct or migrate.



Individuals who volunteer to participate in this project and provide genetic data not only serve to advance human knowledge but also can gain surprising insights about themselves. Results of individual tests are given to the participants. One young American man thought he was at least 70% African American. It turned out he had no African American genes and was a mixture of Indo-Euro-

pean (57%), Native American (39%), and 4% East Asian.

In the developed countries the price of the testing is \$99.95 and involves only a saliva cheek swab that is provided in a kit and mailed to participants. Anyone interested in participating can go the National Geographic Society website and click on the Genographic Project. I decided to participate and eagerly await knowledge of my earliest ancestors.

Great scientific, historical and archeological discoveries are being made all the time. Yet seldom (with the major exception of medicine) is it the case that they have the potential to give so many individuals such intrinsically personal knowledge. Yet as I contemplate these and other such marvels of modern science, I am both elated at the greatness of human scientific and technological accomplishments but also, at the same time, sharply reminded of humanity's pre-vaillingly slow pace in making comparable ethical progress. All the genius of our time could not save thousands massacred in Darfur or the victims of the Holocaust. I could make a longer list but there is no need to add depression to our already anxious mood as we await the next escapade of this militaristic regime. Rather let us encourage attempts to harness science to better understand and thereby avoid the roadblocks that all too often return us to Stone Age ethics.

— Boe

FUND RAISER NEWS

Marjorie Berg — An Evening of French Music, Sat., Apr. 8

[Please note change of time and venue: at the Ethical Society, 7:30 p.m.]

Please join us at a Soiree on Saturday, Apr. 8 at 7:30, when soprano Marjorie Berg and pianist John Pivarnik will present a program of French music at the Ethical Society building. Marjorie will sing the wild and spirited *Songs of the Auvergne*, folksongs from the French countryside collected and harmonized by composer Joseph Canteloube in the 1920s. Mr. Pivarnik will play *Sonatine* by Maurice Ravel, and the program will conclude

with dramatic arias from three French operas: *Romeo and Juliet*, *Manon* and *Faust*. Wine and cheese will be served before the program, and dessert and coffee will follow.

Marjorie Berg has been a soloist with the Baroque Orchestra of North Jersey, The Masterwork Chorus, Harmonium Choral Society, New Jersey Concert Opera, and The Stirling Duo. She has also been also a guest soloist at Ogden Memorial Presbyterian Church in Chatham, and St. Mary's Abbey at Delbarton, St. Rose of Lima Church and Christ Church in Short Hills.

John Pivarnik is Organist and Music Director at Christ Church in Short Hills. His undergraduate degree in pi-

ano performance is from Susquehanna University, and his graduate study was at Temple University. He studied vocal accompanying at Cologne Musik Hochschule in Cologne, Germany, and last summer he studied at the Franz Liszt Piano Academy in Hungary. Mr. Pivarnik will present a piano recital at Christ Church in Short Hills on Sat., May 20 at 7:30 p.m., performing works by Bach, Haydn, Brahms, Chopin and Ravel.

White Elephant Sale: Please mark the corrected date, **Sat., May 20** for our big sale of the season. Our most profitable fund raiser, this event needs your full support. (continued on page 2)

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 (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.

Ethical Culture Society
of Essex County,
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Visit our web site: www.essexethical.org

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

Fund Raiser News (continued from page 1)

Please bring your clean usable items to the society — dig them out now, say your goodbyes and give them over to the sale. One person's throwaways are another person's treasures. The dollars add up quickly. People always need furniture, so if you are in doubt, DON'T throw it out, give it to us. 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! We also need help to set up and dismantle — please volunteer.

Marshall's Ribs are coming, later this Spring! This new event is planned for spring weather, when we can sit outside, savor the scents of the smoker and the season. We'll have a date soon.

Luncheon at the Lake: The ever popular gourmet lunch at Boe's place is scheduled for **June 24**. Mark your calendars for this "must attend" event. The view, the food and the company are spectacular. —*Jeanine Rosh*

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

First Fridays Potluck Dinner Mar. 3

The Society will be hosting Potluck Dinners from 7 to 9 p.m. on the first Friday of each month during the spring: March, April, May and June. All Ethical Culture Society members, friends and others from our wider communities are welcome. Bring a main dish or salad that will serve six and the society will provide beverages and dessert. Enjoy meeting and greeting others, possible board games, song groups and book discussions may follow. Mark your calendars. The potlucks are set for March 3rd, April 3rd, May 5th, and June 2nd. Hope to see you there! —*Terri*

Second Fridays Folk Singing Mar. 10

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

Third Fridays Film Society Mar. 17

7:30 p.m. at the Society. As usual, we'll have popcorn and sodas. And discussion after the

viewing. All free! So, come and bring your friends and neighbors. —*Win*

Public Affairs Program

Sun., Mar. 19, 2-4 p.m.

The Adult Education Committee will present a public affairs program on Sunday afternoon, Mar. 19, from 2-4 p.m. The topic will be Personal Liberties, Public Security, and the Patriot Act, all current issues of great importance. Deborah Jacobs, Executive Director of the ACLU, will bring us up to date and will lead the discussion, after which the floor will be open to the public for questions and comments of a balanced nature. Joe Gluck will be the moderator. Please come, bring your friends, and voice your thoughts about this important subject.

"GRASSROOTS FRIDAYS" PUBLIC FORUMS

Fri., Feb. 24, at 7:30 p.m.

Fri., Mar. 24, at 7:30 p.m.

The Adult Education Committee announces a new series of Friday discussion forums that will be held on the fourth Friday of every month at the Society. The meetings, free and open to the public, will address issues of importance to the community and to the nation. The forums will be impartial in their views. Come and talk about your ideas, listen to your neighbor's ideas and propose ideas for future programs.

The first forum (Fri., Feb. 24, 7:30 p.m.) discusses how to make public space more secure in South Orange/Maplewood without infringing upon individual privacy and freedom. Recent concerns about gangs and trespassing have resulted in several suggested measures to increase security, which have met with both approval and disapproval.

The second forum, which will take place on Fri., Mar. 24, 7:30 p.m., will address the Abbott Decision and funding of public K-12 education in New Jersey. School funding is an issue of great concern for all residents and homeowners of our community, whether we have children in school or not. Come and talk about what you think.

Future programs will (continued on page 3)

Forums (continued from page 2)

be chosen with the participation of those attending. All programs will start at 7:30 p.m. at the Society. Telephone 973-763-1905 for further information.

Platforms (continued from page 4)

and will spend the weekend in Maplewood in a series of gatherings to acquaint local activists with the work of the group. Madelyn Hoffman, Director of New Jersey Peace Action, will introduce Mr. Omar at Platform. (Mr. Omar was the guide on Ms. Hoffman's trip to Afghanistan this fall.)

April 2 Boe Meyerson: "Universal Health Care as a Human Right"

TRIBUTES

Congratulations to our own **Gloria Torrice** for having been awarded an artists grant to study at the prestigious Vermont Studio Center! As some oldtimers may remember, Gloria was our first artist in residence when we held classes at the Ethical Society, some 40 years ago, for children, teens and adults.

Also, good luck to Gloria in moving to West Orange after giving up her beautiful home in Newark. — *Betty Levin*

Betty Levin's 80th birthday Feb. 24

Happy Birthday Wishes to Betty Levin on the occasion of her 80th birthday. Many thanks for your contributions to our Ethical Culture Society, Betty, and all best wishes for success in your future endeavors. We are looking forward to the Elder Wisdom Project and to continuing to further our society's role as the first Peace Site.

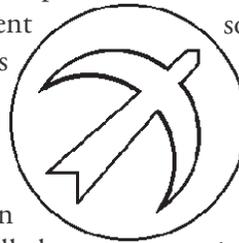
Note: Society members and friends—There will be a celebration for Betty on Sat., Feb. 25, details to follow. —*Terri*

SOCIAL ACTION COMMITTEE NOTES

Next meeting is Mar. 5 after platform.

We had an unusual two-part meeting Jan. 22 with members of the Society Board attending for part of the meeting, then going to the Board meeting. Meanwhile, the rest of the Social Action Committee repaired to the kitchen for excellent hot ziti and sauce provided by Win Thies. Thank you, Win, for your generosity!

During the two parts of the meeting, we had two separate presentations on aspects of the situation for immigrants at the present time in the United States. First, Serge Pakhomou, an oceanographer and student of forensic science who came to the U.S. from Russia fifteen years ago, told us his experience. His application for asylum was rejected after years of applications and effort, but he was not informed of the decision or of a deportation order that was put out against him. Meanwhile, through his job, he was pursuing a green card. When he went to a regular hearing, he was arrested because of the outstanding deportation order and taken to the Elizabeth detention center, a facility run by a for-profit company called



the Corrections Corporation of America. Mr. Pakhomou told us that most of the inmates there are tax payers, many highly educated, and people with family connections. Most are also, he said, in prison for very small technicalities. He was ultimately released and his next hearing later this month. Mr. Pakhomou suggested that a small group like ours might help by visiting and talking to detainees in Elizabeth, but also that we should find other groups and make connections. Terri Suess recommended that we write an article on Serge, to put a human face on immigration issues, and also do research into the CCA and how it is profiting from people being held for immigration offenses.

After moving into the kitchen and enjoying Win's ziti, we were visited by Eric Lerner of the New Jersey Civil Rights Defense Committee (See their

website at <http://www.nj-civilrights.org/index.php>). The NJCRDC has been focusing its efforts on trying to publicize the plight of detainees who are being held in county jails. They have organized petitions signed by the inmates and by demonstrations on the outside. They have had a major success in the upcoming removal of detainees from the Passaic County jail. They also have set up a hotline for detainees and are seeking volunteers for their future demonstrations and possible to person hotlines when detainees need to talk to someone.

Mr. Lerner also gave an excellent overview of how there are not only practical needs for action and help for the detainees, but serious constitutional issues as well. The Constitutional issue is that it is not, in fact, a crime to be a so-called "illegal alien." It is further unconstitutional, said Mr. Lerner, to hold people who are not accused of a crime. We further discussed the far reaching possible consequences of "administrative detention," which is how most of these immigrants are being held, and how if immigrants not accused of crimes can be detained, what is to stop a dictatorial government from detaining others, also administratively.

Our next meeting is set for March 5, 2006, after the platform, at which time we will discuss next steps. [A platform with representatives of the NJCRDC has been proposed.] Thanks to Fred Sebastian for this connection, and deep thanks to Mr. Pakhomou and Mr. Lerner for their most informative presentations. — *Meredith Sue Willis*

ETHICAL CULTURE SOCIETY OF ESSEX COUNTY

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ETHICAL CULTURE SUNDAY MORNING PLATFORMS

March, 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.

Mar. 5 Boe Meyerson:

“East Meets West: Enhancing Ethical Humanism with Buddhist Teachings”

This address will explore the ways in which Buddhist theories concerning human nature, human happiness and ethical conduct (as well as the methods of achieving them) can enhance Ethical Humanist thinking and practice, as derived from our founder, Felix Adler, and his inspiration, the great Enlightenment philosophers who provided a modern, intellectual foundation for the idea of human dignity.

Boe is leader of the Ethical Culture Society of Essex County and Humanist Chaplain at Columbia University.

Mar. 12 Tom Obrzut:

“Homelessness and the Right To Shelter in New York City”

Tom will talk about his work with homeless mentally ill people in mid-town. Besides a discussion of the specifics of his work, he will be talking about the Callahan Decree — a lawsuit brought by the Coalition for the Homeless in 1979 that created a “Right to Shelter” in New York City, the only such “right” in the United States — and the mayor’s plan to



reduce the 36,000 homeless people in the New York Shelter system by two-thirds by 2008.

Tom Obrzut has worked with homeless people in New York and New Jersey for the last twenty years. He currently is the program director of Travelers Hotel, an SRO shelter for homeless mentally ill people in mid-town Manhattan (40th Street and Eighth Avenue, across from the Port Authority). Tom has developed clinical programming for the traumatized and mentally ill, the HIV positive, the drug-addicted and for forensic homeless populations.

Mar. 19 Sylvia Kramer:

“The Healing Power of Poetry”

Sylvia Kramer, poet and author (and Essex Ethical member), will offer a program on the healing power of poetry at the Society, at 11 a.m., Mar. 19.

Poets analyzed man’s condition long before behavior was conceptualized as a science. The source of poetic imagination lies close to man’s innermost hopes and fears. Poems help us make order out of chaos, opening doors to a deeper understanding of self and connections to the world around us.

A poetry therapist and writing instructor for over thirty years, Sylvia has lectured and conducted workshops throughout the state at colleges, rehab centers, senior facilities, as well as at civic and religious organizations. She

is author of *Velvet and Stone*, a collection of poems and short stories; *Our First Seventy-Five Years Caring for the Elderly*, *Images of MetroWest* and over one hundred articles, feature stories and poems published in various newspapers, magazines and anthologies. She is on the staff of Dorot University Without Walls, a telephone outreach program for homebound seniors.

Mar. 26 Wahid Omar:

“The Programs of Afghans for Tomorrow in Afghanistan”



Afghans for Tomorrow (A4T) is a humanitarian organization dedicated to the reconstruction and development of Afghanistan. Their motto is “The best gift removes dependency on more gifts.” *Sew for Hope* operates through A4T. They are committed to sustainable and community driven projects in an effort to make the Afghan people economically independent. Their website is: www.afghans4tomorrow.com.

Wahid Omar is the Director of Education for A4T (continued on page 3)