



ETHICAL CULTURE

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Visit our web site: www.essexethical.org

NOVEMBER, 2005



Leader's Message

"If you can not bring yourself to respect children, you are probably deficient in the ability to feel that anyone or anything is higher than you."

"Reverence has more to do with politics than religion."

"It is a natural mistake to think that reverence belongs to religion. It belongs rather to community. Wherever people try to act together, they hedge themselves round with some form of ceremony or good manners, and the observance of this can be an act of reverence."

"The one great philosopher who praises reverence is Nietzsche, who is also the most given to mockery. Reverence and a keen eye for the ridiculous are allies: both keep people from being pompous or stuck up."

"Reverence is an ancient virtue that survives among us in half forgotten patterns of civility, in moments of inarticulate awe and in nostalgia for the lost ways of traditional cultures. We have the word 'reverence' in our language but we scarcely know how to use it."

These are not my words. But if you are interested in them, their author and/or in their deeper meanings or my own interpretations of them and the subject of 'reverence' in general, come to our platform meeting on Sunday, Nov. 6, when I shall address this topic.

— Boe

FUND RAISER NEWS

Theater Party Nov. 6

"Ease on Down the Road" to the Stroller's production of "The Wiz", that whimsical Broadway adaptation of "The Wizard of Oz" at the Burgdorff Cultural Center at 2 p.m., preceded by lunch at the Society. So you can get up, get dressed, come to the platform, stay for a delicious lunch and ease over to the Burgdorff Center to see the show. Lunch and matinee cost \$23. See any committee member or call the society for information or a reservation.

Winter Concert at the Society

Come Saturday, Dec. 3 at 3 p.m. for Margie Berg in Recital. If you have attended the last two Stirling Duo Concerts, you remember the dulcet, passionate tones of Margie Berg. This

year, she brings her lovely voice and charm to center stage. Margie's most recent solo performances were with the Baroque Orchestra of North Jersey as Lieschen in Bach's "Coffee Cantata", in recital with pianist John Pivarnik and in Concert Opera of NJ's Opera Gala Concert. Recently, she has sung the roles of Edith in the "Pirates of Penzance" and the attendant in "The Faerie Queen". Marjorie gives recitals of sacred music and chant at St. Rose of Lima Church, and has been a frequent soloist with the Harmonium Choral Society and at the Abbey at Delbarton. Donation is \$25. Refreshments and conversation with the artist and her accompanist will bring the day to a mellow conclusion. Please keep in mind that all of our fund-raising events are a great opportunity to relax and spend time with people! Think of these

times as therapeutic and rejuvenating, as well as great fun. Reserve early and do bring your friends.

Scandinavian "Julebord"

If the term is fascinating, the event will be even more spectacular. On Saturday evening, Dec. 10, plan to attend our fund-raiser dinner at the home of Anja Moen. Anja explains that "Julebord" is a holiday table — a food extravaganza featuring gravlax, shrimp, cured beef, herring salad, sweet cabbage, soft bread, and rice pudding with red sauce and other Scandinavian delicacies. Seating is limited, so reserve now. Call Nancy Bohn or the office. Donation is \$25.

Facts about Norway



According to the web site of Pacific Lutheran University (<http://www.plu.edu/~scancntr/nordic-culture/norway.html>):

- Women hold nearly 40% of parliamentary seats and almost half of the cabinet posts.
- It is impolite to place your hands in your pockets when standing in front of a large group.

SOCIAL ACTION COMMITTEE

The Committee met (Sept.–Oct.) and discussed how it is working toward its objectives for 2005. One objective is taking actions to curtail global warming, which includes both a subcommittee on "greening" the society and bringing in some speakers on the topic. Our second objective is to

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.

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of Essex County,
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“Not to be absolutely certain is, I think, one of the essential things in rationality.”

— *Bertrand Russell*
(1872 - 1970)

“Am I An Atheist Or An Agnostic?”, 1947

work to ease the situation of immigrants in the Detention Center in Elizabeth, NJ. Anja and Joan have already taken the training required for visiting with detainees at the detention center. Joan reported that there are, in fact, immigrants living in our community who need help. Anja will make a presentation with suggestions for action at the next Social Action Committee meeting.

Win Thies then gave a short report describing the information about Living Wills now available on our web site. Go to <http://www.essexethical.org> and click on “Planning Your Living Will” to see our materials. Gus suggested that a program on Living Wills might be offered as a service every year.

Finally, a presentation by Betty Levin on the National Department of Peace. Continuing to support and publicize this national project is one of our 2005 objectives. Betty told us that the Bill, H.R. 3760, was reintroduced into the House on Sept. 14. This bill now has some sixty House sponsors plus at least two interested Senators. It would establish a cabinet level Department in the Federal government with a responsibility to educate and promote peace.

For detailed information on the bill, go to <http://www.thepeacealliance.org/main.htm/>.

Betty spoke eloquently of the need to call our representatives immediately and to ask them to support the bill, especially by becoming a co-sponsor. Betty has also taken the lead in local action for peace. The Social Action Committee is co-sponsoring a Conflict Resolution Workshop with Naomi Drew at the Society Building on Saturday Nov. 5, 1–5 p.m. For more information about Naomi Drew, see her web site at <http://www.learningpeace.com/pages/aboutnaomi.html>. The Social Action Committee is, as always, open to new members.

— *Meredith Sue Willis*

TRIBUTES

Sylvia Kramer has made a donation to the society in honor of her granddaughter Tasha's bat mitzvah.

Congratulations to some fine couples in our EC family, celebrating long and satisfying unions: Nancy & Dick Bohn, 50 years; Patty

& Bob Bender, 40 years; and Terri Suess & Jean, 25 years. Good luck and many more happy years together to all. *Love, Betty Levin*

FROM THE UN

September was both a turbulent and an important month at the UN. The US administration's attack against the UN continued, most noticeably by the orchestrated publicity against the Oil For Food Program. In addition, the new ambassador John Bolton's last minute maneuvers strongly affected the final agreement for the major 60th anniversary summit at the UN. The media coverage of these events was both inadequate and misleading.

The \$64 billion Oil For Food program was extremely complex, one of the largest humanitarian efforts in history. Firstly, and most importantly, did the program accomplish its mission? What has passed unnoticed and unappreciated — the program was very successful. Enough food was imported to adequately feed all 27 million Iraqis. In addition, as a response to the great concern for the effects of the sanctions on children, malnutrition of children under the age of 5 was sharply reduced, dramatically cutting child mortality rates. The program contributed to a national vaccination plan reducing childhood disease and eradicated polio.

Who was responsible for overseeing the program? It was the UN Security Council, via a Security Council Sanctions Committee composed of diplomats of 15 nations including the US. This committee monitored all contracts. The policing of smuggling was the task of the US Navy. By agreement of the Security Council Committee and Iraq, sanctions were lifted for oil shipments to Turkey and Jordan.

Finally, did the UN raise concerns about the pricing of contracts? It did so, twice, during the year 2000. The outline of roles and responsibility between the UN management and the Security Council Committee were not always clear. Kofi Annan has accepted responsibility for some management shortcomings. Benon Savan, the former director of the Iraqi program is alleged to have illegally gained \$147,000 over a 4-year period. Also, undoubtedly, Saddam Hussein siphoned off money in the pricing of the contracts.

Given the role of the national interests of the governments in the Sanctions Committee, the enormous size of the \$64 billion program, and its success in mitigating the serious plight of Iraqis, particularly children, the price seems worth paying. [See www.oilforfoodfacts/faq.aspx]

The next major event was the high level 60th anniversary summit. Diplomats struggled for many months to hammer out an agreement on the Millennium Development Goals, and attempts to reform the structure of the UN. However in came John Bolton, US representative, pressuring for major changes in the document. As a result, in conjunction with other countries who had agreed, although reluctantly, with its commitments, the final document was weakened, and became a disappointment to many.

There was no agreement on the composition of the Security Council to make it more representative. Also missing was a restructuring of the discredited Human Rights Commission. US objection to any mention of the duty of nuclear powers to disarm, prevented any agreement on nuclear proliferation — a big disappointment.

What we found most disturbing was the absence of a clear definition of terrorism, as presented by Kofi Annan, and backed by the Western powers, stating that violence and attacks on civilians for political reasons is totally unacceptable. This definition was blocked by Islamic governments' sympathy for the Palestinian cause.

However, there was some good news among the disappointments. There was a reaffirmation, though weakened, of the Millennium goals on curing disease and halving the incidence of the world's grimmest poverty by 2015. A Peace Commission to help nations emerging from conflict was created. This is new and could be important enough to prevent countries from relapsing into civil war and devastating flows of refugees.

Finally, and in our view very important, in spite of the regrettable dilution of the language by the US, the international community acknowledged responsibility to protect civilians from genocide and ethnic cleansing. Under international law a country cannot hide behind sovereignty to commit genocide on its citizens. The 1948 Genocide Convention had already agreed to this. It is nevertheless extremely important to reaffirm this basic moral imperative.

Kofi Annan has often stated that in our increasingly interrelated world critical problems have a habit of crossing national boundaries. Solutions need joint action. The ever-growing community of non-governmental organizations is promoting this larger vision. Although many nations have a narrow and shortsighted view of their interest, governments are being pushed to form regional as well as international agreements to solve problems. The times demand it. — *Phyllis Ehrenfeld, AEU Nat'l Service Conf. Rep. to the UN; Sylvain Ehrenfeld, IHEU Rep. to the UN 10/05/2005 (submitted by Boe)*

MARK YOUR CALENDARS:

Conflict Resolution Workshop

So many people have asked when we will learn how to do conflict resolution. The time has arrived with the introduction of the Department of Peace cabinet-level bill into both the House of Representatives and Senate in the last two weeks. The House bill had much momentum, but the Senate bill came as almost an anti-climax, with Senator Mark Dayton introducing the bill in the Senate on the anniversary of Pres. Kennedy's signing of legislation establishing the Peace Corps. So, adding our energy to Peace Education, our workshop is all set to happen on Saturday, Nov. 5, 1–5 p.m. at our building. The workshop will be led by educator and author Naomi

Drew, the visionary founder of Partners in Peacemaking. The fee is \$20.

Please send in your registration as soon as possible: make check payable to Ethical Culture Society, 516 Prospect St., Maplewood, NJ 07040. Indicate "Conflict Resolution" on the envelope.

This is a major Peace Site activity, giving meaning to our honor as first Peace Site in the world and supporting the Dept. of Peace cabinet level bill. Be the first among your friends to learn conflict resolution, and ask your friends, neighbors and relatives to join you in this special workshop. (*For information, call Betty Levin, 973-763-1033.*)

Folk Singing November 11

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

Panel on "Religious Music: The Holidays and School"

Sunday, Nov. 13, 2 p.m. at the Society, a panel hosted by the Education Committee will discuss religious music in the public schools, exploring the governing policy as well as the community's attitudes. The panel will be: Jim Buchanan, music educator and performer; Bill Gold, lawyer and former Board of Education member; Celia King, former Township Committee member; and Mark Mucci, lawyer and active with the Community Coalition on Race. Panel moderator Joe Gluck recently retired from the NJSO, performs (violin), coaches, teaches and is a member of the Essex Ethical Culture Society.

Society Film Program

Save Friday, Nov. 18, 7:30 p.m. for "Bridge on the River Kwai", with riveting performances by Alec Guinness and Bill Holden. We had an enthusiastic group viewing and discussion of "Grand Illusion" last month. Drinks and popcorn will be provided. \$2 contribution.

ETHICAL CULTURE SOCIETY OF ESSEX COUNTY

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SUNDAY MORNING PLATFORMS

November, 2005

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.

Nov. 6 Boe Meyerson, Leader, “*Reverence*”. Boe’s Platform Address will explore this subject from a profoundly Humanist perspective.

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.

Nov. 13 Al Levin, “*Tiger Woman*”. “I am originally a print journalist. I covered the New Jersey statehouse for the associated press (AP). Then I wrote for the New York Post when it was a liberal newspaper and when a big newspaper strike came along, I moved into WABC-TV News and from there into making TV documentaries.

“Most of my documentaries were on public television, and some have won major awards, like the Cable Ace Award in 1994 for “Gang War: Bangin’ in Little Rock”, a look at the Crips and the Bloods and how these gang kids were slaughtering each other. I also did a documentary ‘Inside The Jury Room’, now used in many law schools.

“There was also a film I did with my late wife in Japan, a look at the women’s lib movement blossoming there, ‘Land of the Rising Sun AND DAUGHTER’.

“Long ago with an activist wife, three daughters and a son I was inevitably tuned into the female struggle for equality. It has been pretty successful in the USA and more or less doubled America’s brain power. I am dazzled by the growing number of exceptional women who permeate our culture.

“That is why I chose ‘Tiger Woman’ as the title of the talk I will give. As much as females are now achieving, there is more they can deliver and that is the challenge for both sexes: Keep the pressure on — everybody gains.

“If you check out ‘feminism’ on Google you will be stunned now at how women are on the march, domestically and globally. ‘Emily’s List’ shows how our national political system is being reshaped! And the future looks better.”

Nov. 20 Alice Robinson-Gilman and Sue Willis will lead a **Book Discussion** on this year’s South Orange/Maplewood “Two Towns One Book” selection, *How Race is Lived in America — Pulling Together, Pulling Apart*, a collection of articles by correspondents of The New York Times. The book includes an article set in Maplewood/South Orange, featuring our own Sunday School graduate Johanna Perez-Fox.

Alice Robinson-Gilman grew up in Queens, New York and went to City College of New York, majoring in English literature. 17 years later she

received an MSW from Stony Brook University. She is mother to college student Molly, her proudest achievement; she is an avid gardener and reader and in recent years has fulfilled a life-long desire to act by working with the Maplewood community theatre group, the Strollers. As a volunteer, she has worked for the Jersey Battered Women’s Service and is about to begin a new volunteer position at EIES, the Electronic Information and Education Service of New Jersey.

Meredith Sue Willis, fiction writer and native of West Virginia, teaches novel writing at New York University. A past president of the Essex Ethical Culture Society, she is now the chair of the South Orange/Maplewood Community Coalition on Race. Her newsletter for readers and writers is online at <http://www.meredithsuewillis.com/booksforreaders.html>. She lives in South Orange with her husband Andy Weinberger. Their son Joel is a junior in college.

Nov. 27 Thanksgiving Member Panel

Dec. 4 Boe Meyerson, Leader, *Colloquy on “Acceptance”*. Boe will facilitate the first of a series of this alternative type of Sunday meeting — diverse, participatory formats involving readings, voluntary group sharing, commentary, poetry, music and meditation.