



ETHICAL CULTURE

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NOVEMBER 2006

LEADER'S MESSAGE

Land of the Less Free and Home of the Scared

I do believe that Friday, September 30th 2006 is a day that will live in infamy. On that day the United States Senate passed a bill, largely at the behest of the President, which undermines our beloved Constitution, our democracy, our finest values, and the high ideals of the Geneva Convention.



Boe Meyerson

Although the Senate did modify the original bill slightly, it left intact provisions which violate much that this nation has for the most part, despite some serious lapses, held sacrosanct.

Under this bill's provisions for 'enemy combatants', the President could subject any legal immigrant, Resident Alien, foreign citizen living here or in their own country to indefinite detention. These person's would not have the rights under our habeas corpus provisions to a Court hearing, a judicial review, to determine if their detention was warranted, and would not have the right to bail. So if the FBI picked up the wrong person and made a mistake, there is no way such a person could obtain redress until the state took him to a special tribunal. There is apparently no provision for a speedy trial. Furthermore, the trial itself lacks fundamental rights long recognized as essential to a just process. The enemy combatant could be denied the right to examine selected evidence against him and the state need not reveal the source of the evidence. Also, coerced evidence (evidence obtained under torture) can be used so long as it was obtained before December 31, 2005, the date of the passage of the Detainee Treatment Act. The worst abuses of detainees occurred before that act prohibiting torture was passed. Therefore evidence obtained through torture would be admissible if it occurred before that date. Persons and agencies engaging in such torture would not be held accountable. This provision especially constitutes a whitewash of some very foul smelling linen.

America has always prided itself on its wonderful bill of rights, the fairness of its legal system, its willingness to risk letting the guilty go free rather than punish the innocent...etc. etc., etc. If you read the forgoing paragraphs 10 years ago, you probably would think they were a hoax, a joke, a piece of fiction. Imagine going to Britain or France or Italy or Switzerland and being arrested mistakenly and

being subjected to the conditions outlined above. Unfortunately the forgoing is not fiction, is not a dream, and is now a grim reality.

I can think of no higher calling than to dedicate oneself to repealing this obscene legislation and returning it to the barbaric dungeon from which it was so hastily resurrected.

— Boe Meyerson, Leader

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

As you may have heard me say since I have become president of our Society, my primary goal is to create community, one in which we support one another and, of course, bring out the best. These past several weeks demonstrated that possibility handsomely.



Betty Levin

I had a gastrointestinal infection the last two weeks of September. Several members responded magnanimously for my need for medicine, food and some urgent administrative chores for the Society. How rewarding to experience so much kindness, caring and responsiveness — you know who you are! Thank you to all who responded. I am so grateful for our large step toward community building. Come participate in our Colloquy the 3rd Sunday of the month at 9:30 a.m..

— Betty Levin, President

FUNDRAISING UPDATE

Our first fund-raising dinner — An Evening at Esther's — will be on Saturday November 5th at 5 p.m. at Esther Barcun's home. Dinner at Esther's is always the perfect blend of food, fun and philosophy. Donation is \$20. As soon as you read this, please call Jeanine at 973-258-9395 or the office for reservations. Don't miss out on this fun evening.

Coming soon — news on this year's concert — more "DINNER AT..." events. Note: we need dinner sponsors. We can work out details. Maybe if you have the room, we have the chefs — or visa versa. Call me.

We're planning an afternoon at the Stroller's this Spring — to be announced.

— Jeanine M. Rosh

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 Culture 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 \$15/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**

BOARD MEETINGS

The Board of Trustees of our Ethical Society will meet on November 19 and December 19. All are scheduled for 1:30 p.m. following the Platform. Your thoughts and ideas are welcome as part of our discussions though not your votes if you are not a member of the Board of Trustees.

TRIBUTE



The Benders honor Andy Weinberger as *the Arthritis Foundation New Jersey Chapter's Rheumatologist of the Year.*

FROM THE UN

Kofi Annan's Retirement Speech

The state of the world, as viewed from the vantage point of Kofi Annan's final speech to the Assembly foreshadows both the future and the tasks facing the next Secretary General. In Annan's words: "The first challenge: to ensure that globalization benefits the human race as a whole and not only its more fortunate members."

The reality is that some Asian countries have benefited greatly, but many countries have not. The idea that "a rising tide lifts all boats" has produced side effects — violent demonstrations against some of the consequences of globalization, the destruction of vulnerable livelihoods and unexpected environmental damage.

"The second challenge: to heal the disorder of the postwar world with peace and freedom as envisioned in the UN Charter."

Some Eastern European countries are prospering but others are in serious disarray. The Ukraine and Georgia, former Soviet republics, are troubled by internal chaos and corruption. Civil wars abound in Africa and elsewhere. Peace and freedom require diminishing the world wide supply of weapons including small arms which do enormous damage particularly in civil wars and undeveloped countries. The developed world asks

for non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. The undeveloped world asks for disarmament.

Obviously the world needs a major reduction in the weapons trade.

From Annan's speech: "It is shameful that last year's summit outcome contains not one word [of either non-proliferation or disarmament] because the states could not agree which should be given priority."

The climate of fear and suspicion fomented by internal conflicts and terrorism is constantly fuelled by violence in the Middle East — particularly the Arab-Israeli conflict.

"No other conflict carries such a powerful symbolic and emotional charge among people far removed from the battlefield."

In the last weeks of Annan's administration, the fears of a spreading conflagration from the war between Hezbollah and Israel were stopped because the UN produced a ceasefire, demonstrating how powerful the UN can be when everyone wants it to succeed.

"The third challenge: The challenge of the rule of law and our rights and dignity as human beings."

Underlying this commitment is the basically revolutionary idea that the abilities of half the human race are being wasted and the

"...to ensure that globalization benefits the human race as a whole...to heal the disorder of the post-war world with peace and freedom, ...the rule of law and our rights and dignity as human beings..."

real improvement in the quality of life comes both efficiently and inexpensively when women are freed to contribute.

Women have been particularly successful in renewing negotiations in long-lasting civil wars in Africa. Another important symbol of the UN commitment to this principle is the election of the new Presi-

dent of the Assembly, Rashid Al-Khalifa, a woman from an Islamic country.

The moral and non-autocratic leadership of Annan has helped to create an enormous growth in what the UN calls "non-state actors", non-governmental organizations. Annan has an idealistic vision of these groups offering more and more concrete assistance and creative thinking in the future. He sees these groups "participating in a multi-lateral world order with a renewed and dynamic United Nations as its centre".

The next Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, presently the Foreign Minister of South Korea, is very popular with the American administration. He has said, "I have many friends in the United States, and I think this can be a great asset for me, instead of a point of concern. The countries of the third world, in Africa, the Middle East, southeast Asia, and Latin America, they know that I am their friend too."

Ban's strength seems to be in quiet negotiations with the powerful at the highest levels. This could be a good opportunity for him to offer seasoned advice. It is not necessarily conducive to the growth of varied and representative non-governmental organizations both within and outside the UN. Shashi Tharoor, Under Secretary-General for Public Information, is obviously an insider, a trusted partner for Kofi Annan, known in the UN as a "lifer." He ran close second to Ban in the voting, and was excluded only by a single secret vote in the Security Council, most likely from the United States. He is very young for this post, only 50, and if he continues in an important post at the UN, can afford to wait 5 or 10 years. He is a person to be watched for the future.

The conflict between the Security Council's control and the desire of the Assembly for more input and powers will certainly continue. There is reason to hope that Ban wishes to reduce this basic tension. He presents himself as a harmonizer and a bridge builder who will lead by example. He has said he will focus on human rights, responsibility to the developing world, and strengthen management in terms of efficiency, transparency, and accountability. The world needs the UN more than ever. Ban's arrival comes at an important moment.

— Phyllis Ehrenfeld, AEU's National Service Conference Representative to the UN; Sylvain Ehrenfeld, IHEU Representative to the UN



November Platforms

(continued from page 4)

organizations whose members believe detaining noncriminal asylum seekers and undocumented laborers is morally wrong, legally suspect and a waste of taxpayers' money. We believe an educated and involved community will support individuals fleeing dire conditions once their plight is understood. To bring about this understanding and end unnecessary detention we develop alternatives through the Temporary Sanctuary Community Alliance; train visitors for detainees through First Friends; and create direct action through the Interfaith Refugee Action Team-Elizabeth.

Nov. 26 Boe Meyerson will lead a discussion on gratitude and sharing, "because it was the sharing and support of the Native Americans that enabled the pilgrims to be successful."

A community discussion/colloquy on gratitude, ingratitude and how they sometimes reverse themselves.

NOTE

The office receives monthly and some weekly newsletters from other Ethical Culture societies around the country. Current copies are available for anyone to peruse and are located on the book rack in the front hall in the upper left hand corner. Older copies are in a box in the pantry.

LETTER

"You Can Now Make Contributions from Your IRA"

A new amendment to federal income tax law permits one owning an IRA (Individual Retirement Account) to make a charitable contribution directedly from his or her IRA account to the charity.

This would be particularly beneficial to those who do not "itemize" but claim the standard deduction — and who thus do not get charitable deductions (which must be "itemized"). As the 2006 tax year for most of us is drawing to a close, it would be a good idea to consider this approach.

For those contemplating a bequest to the Society after their death, it might be better to utilize your IRA. If an IRA is directed to a family member as beneficiary, he or she will pay income taxes on it, while the Society, like any charity, will receive the entire stipulated amount tax-free.

To use this, the "donor" must be at least 70-1/2 yrs. old. And it is a temporary provision, currently just for 2006 and 2007 tax years.

— Win Theis

Editor's Note: Inasmuch as the editor is not a tax expert, and on behalf of the society, may we recommend that before acting on this advice, you should first consult a tax accountant.

ETHICAL CULTURE SOCIETY OF ESSEX COUNTY

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ETHICAL CULTURE SUNDAY MORNING PLATFORMS

November, 2006

Nov 5 Boe Meyerson: *Sacrificing Our Deer to Save Our Forest? A Painful Decision!*—An Interview

Boe Meyerson, Leader of the Ethical Society and Humanist Chaplain at Columbia University, will interview Michael Novemsky, M.S. Mr. Novemsky serves on the Environmental Advisory Committee of Maplewood. He also teaches Physics at Columbia High School.

Nov 12 Barbara Lipton and Dr. Surendra Kaushik, with a photo exhibition: *“Women’s Higher Education in India: The Example of the Mrs. Helena Kaushik Women’s College in a village in Rajasthan, India”*

Speakers will be Barbara Lipton, Ethical Culture Society member, and Dr. Surendra (Suren) Kaushik, who in 1999 founded Mrs. Helena Kaushik Women’s College in Malsisar, Rajasthan, his birthplace. It is a tuition-free, non-profit, non-government-aided day and resident college fi-

nanced by American private donations from individuals and foundations, and is fully accredited in the University of Rajasthan, Jaipur, system.

Dr. Kaushik obtained his Ph.D. in Economics from Boston University and is currently a professor at Pace University, White Plains, NY, and the director of the Institute of International Banking at the Pace University Lubin Graduate School of Business. His presentation will include a general discussion of women’s education in India, and a brief history, achievements, future programs and possibilities of support for this “American college in Rajasthan.”

Barbara Lipton, a member of the Ethical Culture Society, has been on the Advisory Board of the Indian College and has lectured there several times. She is an art historian, has been a museum director and curator and has taught many university courses on Indian and Tibetan art and religion.

The photographs on exhibition of Village Life in Rajasthan were taken by students and staff of the Mrs. Helena

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.

Kaushik Women’s College and were recently displayed in India at the August graduation of the college.

Nov 19 Geri and Charlie Mulligan, on the Elizabeth Detention Center: *“People on ICE” (that stands for the new title of the INS — Immigration and Customs Enforcement) — “Detention in our backyard.”*

We will discuss who is in the Elizabeth Detention Center (EDC), what it is like, and what the community can do about it.

Geri and Charlie Mulligan are among the founding members of the Interfaith Refugee Action Team, Elizabeth (IRATE!), an advocacy group, and First Friends, a group that promotes community visitors to asylum seekers held at EDC. They both spent many years in Latin America working in El Salvador and Chile, two countries who sent many asylum seekers to the USA.

This is from the IRATE website (www.irateweb.org): The Interfaith Refugee Action Team, Elizabeth (IRATE), is an alliance of grass-roots

(continued on page 3)

Photos below from the web site of Mrs. Helena Kaushik Women’s College.

