



ETHICAL CULTURE

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Visit our web site: www.essexethical.org

OCTOBER 2003

LEADER'S MESSAGE

Dear Members and Friends,

In rereading my last month's newsletter article, I realized how much more there was to be said on



this topic [*Concerns about the policies and conduct of the current administration*].

If you may recall, at one point I was discussing a New York

Times (8/3/03 p.1) article dealing with cases being brought before the Federal Courts under the Alien Tort Claims act of 1789 and the Torture Victims Act of 1992 which give

aliens the right to bring suit in U.S. Courts against Americans who have violated their rights. The Bush administration objects to these laws on the grounds that they could compromise

the War on Terrorism. One human rights case involved a suit against Mobil Oil for its alleged complicity in abuses against Indonesian citizens committed by official Indonesian security forces. An attorney for the State Department made that claim (the administration's) regarding that case. He claimed that investigation into the Indonesian governments security operations could disrupt the cooperation needed to fight terrorism in that country where there was a major terrorist attack in the past. Another case involved charges against the Unocal Oil Company for similar types of collaboration with the Myanmar government. Both govern-

ments have a long and gory history of violent abuse of their citizens. The N.Y. Times article indicated that "American business interests and the Bush administration have filed briefs urging the Court to reinterpret the law to forbid most human rights suits."

In regard to these cases, the article quotes one law professor who defends the government position: "A court sees only the discrete case before it... It can't and it is not allowed to see the totality of the facts. Courts aren't good at measuring the costs and benefits of anything. They're good at right and wrong, not

"...right and wrong, not costs and benefits."

costs and benefits." What is remarkable is that this argument could have been advanced at all, and by a law professor no less. The "benefits" of "right" prevailing over

"wrong" do not appear to have entered into the calculations of this legal mind. If the "costs" of justice are high, is that a reason not to pay them? Is not justice and fairness priceless? If in fact Mobil Corporation was conspiring with Indonesian security forces against a protesting local civilian population, and if in fact there were significant human rights violations involved (torture, killings, maimings, threats to kill, etc.) and if in fact the Indonesian victims did sue in our Courts and win their case, and if in fact there were significant likelihood that the Indonesian government might retali-

(Continued on page 2)

Family Night: Friday, Oct. 3 at 7:30 pm (and continuing every 1st Friday)

The Sunday School Committee has initiated this program for Sunday School Parents and their children. Each session will have two parts: the first will be social, inter-generational and recreational. During the second part, children and parents will separate. Children will be involved with creative play. Parents will be involved in a Lecture/Discussion program on the subject of "Raising A Moral Child." Arthur Dobrin's book, *Teaching Right from Wrong: 40 Things You Can Do to Raise a Moral Child*, will be used. (Dr. Arthur Dobrin is an Ethical Culture Leader and a Professor of Humanities At Hofstra College.) Our Leader, Boe Meyerson, will conduct the course. (The text can be purchased from the American Ethical Union for \$13 by calling 212-873-6500 or by ordering it from our Office Manager, Gigi Goldstein.)

Arthur Dobrin Teaching Course On-Line

Dr. Arthur Dobrin has been asked to teach his online course again starting the second Wednesday in October. Anyone can register for this by going to the Barnes and Noble homepage and finding the link to Barnes and Noble University. The course is a premier course and costs \$15 for four weeks.

Dr. Dobrin has taught this course twice before with great success. Students who have registered come from

(Continued on page 3)

Ethical Culture Society of Essex County



Boe Meyerson, *Leader*

Ted Seagull, *Assistant Leader*

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 e-mail to the editor (howardgilman@netscape.net). Items can also be delivered to: Editor, Ethical Culture 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,
516 Prospect St.,
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Leader's Message, *cont'd from pg.1*

ate by either undermining U.S. business projects or by refusing to cooperate with U.S. anti-terrorist agents — if all this were so, would it not still be right and just and beneficial and good overall that an American firm was held accountable in an American court? Why should American lives placed at risk by terrorists be any the less valuable than those of Indonesians civilians placed at risk by the rapacious practices of our entrepreneurs? One might think that it would be more beneficial for the US to monitor the practices of its own companies abroad rather than rail against two of our most humane and principled laws.

Historians of the future from (hopefully) a more humane civilization might well marvel at the altruistic character of those U.S. laws, at the way in which they support justice over nationalism by holding their own citizens accountable for what they do abroad to alien victims. They might be equally appalled at the argument advanced against their continuance. I am not a historian of a future utopia. Yet I am appalled beyond all measure at the willingness of our government to hold justice so lightly and to justify their position with the language of profit (benefit) and loss (risk). The question is, "What are you willing to risk and sacrifice to live in a community governed by just and fair laws?" The answer this nation's founding fathers gave was life itself. And many paid that price with their blood. It appears that our leaders are more likely to ask "where's the percentage?"

Our new monthly Public Affairs Forum on Friday, October 17 at 7:30 pm will address this topic in greater depth. Bring your thoughts to this discussion.

Till then, —Boe

Dobrin, *cont'd from pg.1*

as far away as Hawaii, Kuwait and South Africa.

"This has been a terrific way to reach people who otherwise know nothing of our Movement." —*Arthur Dobrin*

International Conference — 'Empowering Women'

IHEU (International Humanist and Ethical Union) is arranging an International Women's Conference for Nov. 15 and 16, 2003, to be held in the Library of Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, in Central London. Deadline for registration is Oct. 10, 2003.

The conference aims to address several needs expressed by humanist women in Europe, Africa, Asia and in the Americas, and both men and women are invited to participate. Even though several pioneers of the Women's movement have been humanists, the present day humanist movement is not actively engaged in the women's movement. Within our own circles, those women who are active feel the need to clarify their role in order to have their voices and concerns heard, and to increase their participation in a way that is meaningful to them. In the light of this, we wish to examine the following questions:

- What are the main problems of women today on a global scale?
- How can the humanist movement become involved in solving these problems?
- In what way can the gender imbalance within the humanist movement be addressed?

Annie Laurie Gaylor from the U.S. will be the keynote speaker ("*No Gods, No Masters*"), but discussions and workshops will, we hope, dominate the weekend. An online Web-based conference as a warm up to the actual conference will soon be launched and can be accessed from www.ihcu.org.

—*Donna L. Roberts,*
American Ethical Union, Inc.

For comments or information, send e-mails to women@ihcu.org; copy also to Diana Rookeledge at dianarookeledge@talk21.com

Entertainment Books!

The 2004 Entertainment Books are here. They cost \$22 and can save you that and much, much more. The Entertainment Books contain discounts to many restaurants, fast food places, car washes, hotels, car rentals, dry cleaners and other establishments. Most of our books are for Essex and Union Counties, but we also have or can order books for businesses in New York, South Jersey, Pennsylvania and almost anywhere you wish. They make great gifts so please purchase one for yourself and sell some to your friends and neighbors. This was a successful fund raiser last year and we hope to make even more this year with your help.

Books will be available at the Society every Sunday this fall or contact Nancy Bohn (973) 762-0513 or Jill Fox (973) 762-1670.

Notice to Members

Volunteers are needed — there are vacancies on many committees and the Society needs the help of every member. If you feel there is anything you can do for our society, please call me at (973) 377-7172.

—Susan Kennedy

Quotations

“War is only a cowardly escape from the problems of peace.”

—Thomas Mann (1875-1955)

“The art of negotiation is perhaps what most deeply distinguishes man from the animals, and it is this art and this will to negotiate that has brought man forward, elevated him beyond the animals.”

—Harry Martinson (1904-1978),
Swedish Nobel Prize
Winner in Literature

Platform presenters, *cont'd from pg.4*

government surveillance, secret detentions and immigration hearings, free speech for people expressing dissenting views, military tribunals, national ID cards, the TIPS program, the USA Patriot Act and a myriad of other rights issues that have resulted from the government's war on terrorism.

Jacobs holds a B.A. in English Literature and an M.A. in Liberal Studies from Skidmore College in Saratoga Springs, NY. In 1990, she was awarded a Fulbright grant to study in Helsinki, Finland.

October 19 Jon and Michael Galluccio: Gay Parents and Adoption



and Michael Galluccio were the lead plaintiffs in a class action lawsuit against the state of NJ for not allowing gay couples to adopt children jointly. The state settled the case in their favor, and New Jersey is now the first state in the nation to allow gay couples to adopt jointly, equal to married couples. Their son Adam was one of the first children adopted jointly by a gay couple in NJ. They are also the authors of *An American Family*, which is available online at their website www.galluccio.com and at bookstores everywhere.

October 26 Jerry Kaplan: Confessions of a Liberal Jerry, a member of the Essex Ethical Culture Society, is a writer/editor/teacher. In the field of education, he has coauthored several elementary textbook series. His other publications include short fiction and articles that have appeared in *Commentary*, *The New York Times*, *The Jewish News*, *the News-Record*, and various journals.

Charlene

Black people, white
people, all join together
not matter what's the
weather

We talk about the war,
Is it fair or not?

We sit in the morning
breeze,

Us children are climbing
the trees.

They say, "We are glad
to be here where
we can be ourselves
and we can talk
about thing we
never could and
would tell other
people.

What ethical
Society is
and what
ethical society
will be I
do not know

Charlene's Poem to Boe

Black people, White people
All join together
No matter what's the weather.
We talk about the war,
Is it fair or not?
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Us children are climbing the trees.
They say, "We are glad to be here
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And we can talk about things
We never could and would
tell other people.
What Ethical Society is
And what Ethical Society will be
I do not know.

by Charlene Francois,
8 years old, June 2003

ETHICAL CULTURE SOCIETY OF ESSEX COUNTY

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ETHICAL CULTURE

M O N T H L Y

OCTOBER SUNDAY MORNING PLATFORMS

*Platforms begin 11 a.m. All are welcome. Platforms are subject to change without notice.
Sunday School 11 a.m.–12:15 p.m.*

October 5 Boe Meyerson:

Monotheism and Theocracy: What Is the Relationship?

October 12 Deborah Jacobs: A Civil Liberties Brief

October 19 Jon and Michael Galluccio: Gay Parents and Adoption

October 26 Jerry Kaplan: Confessions of a Liberal

October 5 Boe Meyerson: Monotheism and Theocracy: What Is the Relationship? The monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam will be discussed in their relationship to both theocracy and democracy.

October 12 Deborah Jacobs: A Civil Liberties Brief As Executive Director of the American Civil Liberties Union of New Jersey, Deborah Jacobs oversees a broad range of programs designed to protect and promote civil liberties principles through legal, legislative and public education activities.



Jacobs' career with the ACLU began in 1992 when she was hired as Legal Program Associate for the ACLU in her home state of Washington. After serving for more than

four years in that position, she moved to St. Louis to take the helm as Executive Director of the ACLU of Eastern Missouri. In September 1999, Jacobs accepted the position of Executive Director of the ACLU of New Jersey, one the largest ACLU affiliates in the country, with a membership of more than 10,000 New Jersey civil libertarians.

The ACLU addresses numerous civil liberties issues and Jacobs is regularly involved in advocacy activities related to freedom of speech, freedom of religion, privacy rights, access to government information, student rights, gay and lesbian rights, the death penalty, police practices, discrimination, reproductive freedom, drug policy reform, and much more.

Since the September 2001 terrorist attacks, the ACLU has been involved in numerous civil liberties concerns including *(continued on page 3)*

At Essex Ethical:

Family Night Friday, Oct. 3 at 7:30 pm (and continuing every 1st Friday). *See pg. 1 announcement.*

Philosophy Group Sundays Oct. 12 and 26, 9:30–10:30 a.m. (and continuing every 2nd and 4th Sunday)

Folk Music Friday, Oct. 10 at 7:30pm (and continuing every 2nd Friday). Lisa Novemsky will lead us in song.

Public Affairs Forum Starting Friday Oct. 17 at 7:30 pm (and continuing every 3rd Friday). Topic: "The Price of Justice?" Boe Meyerson will facilitate this open discussion.

Poetry Series Monday, Oct. 20 at 7:30 p.m. (and continuing every 3rd Monday). Contact: Tom Obrzut, (973) 275-0929.

Fundraiser Events:

Oct. 11 · Pasta and Politics · Jim White

Nov. 1 · Fall Supper · Jim Quigley

Dec. 13 · Pot Luck/Auction/Sing-along

Jan. · Theater Party · Strollers

Feb. 7 · Sterling Duo Concert

Mar. · Trivial Pursuit · Jeanine Rosh

Apr. · Dinner · Mira & Jerry Stillman

May · White Elephant Sale

If you would like to host a dinner or an event, please contact one of the Fund Raising Committee: Nancy Bohn, Jill Fox, Louisa Lubiak or Jeanine Rosh.