



ETHICAL CULTURE

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OCTOBER, 2005

Leader's Message



As I write this article at the beginning of September, New Orleans and the gulf coast are suffering from hurricane Katrina, one of the greatest disasters in our nation's history, surely comparable to the horrendous San Francisco fire at the turn of the last century and to the tsunami that not long ago devoured thousands of lives in South East Asia. And yet though these events are comparable in the degree of devastation (loss of human life, livelihoods, and habitat), this catastrophe bares the imprint of older and more abiding wounds as well as more emergent troubles.

The more emergent problem is the lack of immediate assistance that could have been available for the Gulf states' National Guard units, which now are at only half or a third of their original strength. This is because so many of them have been sent to Iraq to fight a war that had no justification whatsoever.

Yet it is rather the persistence of those "more abiding wounds" which so painfully sharpen this already unbearable tragedy by adding anger to our nation's overwhelming grief. I am speaking about persistent failure to engage in solid environmental planning, persistently unacceptable levels of poverty in our wealthy nation and, lastly, the persistence of de facto racial inequality in the land of "freedom and justice for all."

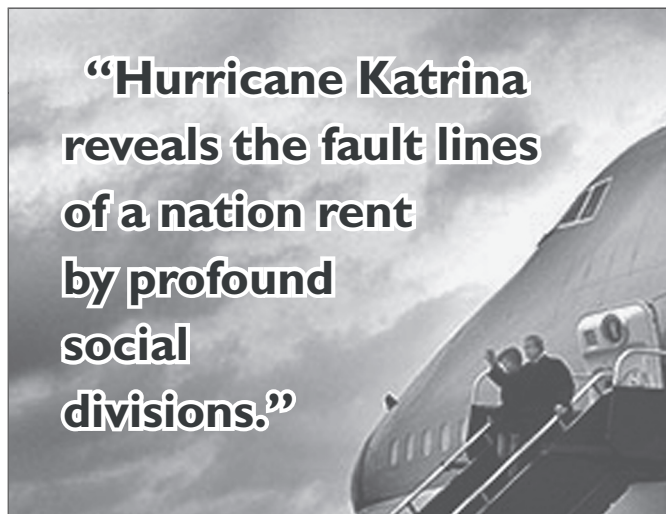
First, there is failure to follow the advice of sound environmental plan-

ners who have urged that the use of levees along the full length of the river to be discontinued and critical sections of the riverside be left open so the Mississippi would be able to deposit its silt, gradually enlarging its more northern banks which could absorb overflow during flood time and also depositing more silt into New Orleans' lowland banks, thereby permitting the height of the city to be built up naturally.

Second is the role of poverty in the current disaster. The mayor of New Orleans advised all citizens who were able to leave the city prior to the storm, knowing full well the scope of the possible damage. Those who had cars left. Others flew or took public

This is the cost of poverty: death, disease and waste of human life on a massive scale, so dramatically exhibited here. It is worth noting that the economy grew "in 2004 at the solid rate of 3.8 percent. But for the fifth straight year, median household income remained flat ... And 1.1 million more people fell into poverty in 2004, bringing the ranks of poor Americans to 37 million." (*NYTimes* 9/1/05) The figures would have been higher were it not for the enlarged military. There is no excuse for this when the government continues to give enormous tax breaks to the wealthiest Americans.

Third, please notice that in the newspaper photos and TV images, nearly all of the faces of trapped desperate people in New Orleans are people of color. The words of a white professor of African-American studies at Fordham University is quoted by the media and eloquently expressed my thoughts, saying: "Is this what the pioneers of the civil rights movement fought to achieve, a society where many black people are as trapped and isolated by their poverty as they were by



segregation laws? ... If September 11 showed the power of a nation united in response to a devastating attack, Hurricane Katrina reveals the fault lines of ... a nation rent by profound social divisions."

transportation to locations where they arranged to stay. Those with no cars or insufficient money stayed. In short, the poor stayed put. They were the ones you saw standing on their roofs or struggling within the overcrowded, underequipped Superdome, if they were lucky enough to survive. Others less fortunate (numbered in the thousands) were floating lifelessly on the great river, now polluted and contaminated with waste.

Let us continue to help the victims through the aiding organizations. But let us also work to remedy these egregious inequities so that we can be one nation, truly indivisible and not rent by savage inequalities.

— Boe

Ethical Culture Society of Essex County



Boe Meyerson, 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 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,
516 Prospect St.,
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Visit our web site: www.essexethical.org

"Pledge to the Planet:

I pledge allegiance to the web of life of which we're each a strand and to our planet earth on which we stand — one ecosystem, under the sun, interdependent, with diversity and respect for all."

[attr. to Jackson Gillman]

FUND RAISER NEWS

Autumn Walk in the Woods.

There is still time to make a reservation for the Autumn Walk in the Woods to be held Saturday, Oct. 8 at 11 a.m., meeting at Boe Meyerson's Place, followed by a picnic lunch. You can be brisk or leisurely in your approach to the pace of your excursion. There is something here for the hikers as well as the strollers. Plan to bring a friend (or a few) to share the view. You will not be alone as you explore the spectacular view of the season in a mountain lake setting. Reserve now, \$15 donation. Rain date is Saturday, Oct. 15.

Silent Auction

Going, going, gone. Don't be the one left out of our Silent Auction, an evening of fun, goodies and calculated investments (shall we say bargains?) on Saturday, Oct. 22 at 7:30 p.m. The committee is collecting items of interest, from art works to event tickets and everything in between. The trick is to capture the item you want by craftily outbidding your friends! Frankly, our problem in the past has been to convince enough people to come to these events, to really make the process come alive — the more participation, the more fun for all. Dessert and beverages will be served and admission is free! Save this evening for Ethical.

Survey

By the time you read this newsletter you should have received a survey on Fund Raising Activities sent out by the committee with the hope that your input will result in activities that are more enjoyable and profitable. Email was used if we have your address, Please respond either by postal mail or email if you prefer. Please don't hesitate to offer your suggestions. No idea will be rejected without consideration. Creativity will be appreciated. If for some reason we have missed sending you a survey, let us know and we'll get one out to you. If you've already returned it, we thank you.

For information on fund-raising activities, call the society or Jeanine Rosh at 973-258-9395.

LETTER

New Visions and Ideas

This is my 45th year as an Ethical Culture member. Its many traditions still serve to inspire me and motivate me to carry on our new efforts to "be Ethical".

In reading a recent program of the New York Ethical Society, I noticed the following review of our 100-year history:

"During the more than 100 years of our history, we have taken actions that are consistent with our commitment to further an ethical culture in personal, group and community life. The NY Society for Ethical Culture played a key role in the establishment of the first free kindergarten in New York, and the first settlement house in the United States. We were responsible for helping to found organizations that developed into the Legal Aid Society, the Child Study Association, the NAACP and the American Civil Liberties Union. In this era, we have identified personal integrity, public forums and global citizenship as major themes for our programs and service projects."

I hope our special community can devote itself to new visions and ideas that bring us cohesion and ideals to impact our society and pass along to new generations.

[A good start includes the Community Coalition, our Peace Site and our cultural offerings.]

— Betty Levin

P.S. Be sure to watch for the upcoming Conflict Resolution Workshop to be held Nov. 5. More details will follow by email etc. and in the next newsletter; or call Betty for information.

Folk Singing October 14

7:30 pm second Friday of the month with Lisa Novemsky. Check in advance by calling the office (973-763-1905) or email Lisa at lnovemsky@comcast.net.

Tribute

To Nancy and Dick Bohn on the occasion of their 50th Wedding Anniversary: Two of the nicest people you'll ever meet.

Affectionately,
Win Thies and Rosalie Sussman

PLATFORMS

(continued from page 4)

DTW's (Dance Theater Workshop's) Suitcase Fund.

An award-winning video cameraman, Bahati Adrian Best has twenty years of experience with a variety of television programming, including *The Super Bowl*, *The Indianapolis 500*, *Show Time at the Apollo*, *The Oprah Winfrey Show* and *Musica*, a documentary on latin music in New York City. Mr. Best earned a BFA from the Picker Film Institute—City College of New York and a Graduate Certificate from WNET Film and Television Training School.

Joe Gluck, along with his long tenure as a member of the First Violin Section of the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra, has served as Concertmaster and member of many other area orchestras. He and his wife, Mary Babiartz, as *the Stirling Duo*, give about

sixty performances a year at various venues. They also run an ongoing amateur chamber music workshop. He is a coach with the NJ Youth Symphony and the Essex Youth Orchestra. Mr. Gluck teaches privately at his home in South Orange and he and Mary are members of the Ethical Culture Society of Essex County.

Stroheim. (A film that the Nazis interrupted in Vienna at the time of the Anschluss.) The series will continue on the third Friday of each successive month with the following in order: "Bridge on the River Kwai", "Seven Beauties", "Shoeshine" and "Cool Hand Luke". Suggested donation for each film is \$2. Popcorn and drinks will be served. Mark your calendar.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Society Film Program

The "Friday Night Film Project" is back in business. Co-facilitators Boe Meyer-son and Win Thies announce that the first series will begin on Friday, Oct. 20, at 7:30 p.m. on the theme of "The Prison and Concentration Camp Experience in Film." The initial film will be the classic "Grand Illusion", with Jean Gabin, Pierre Fresnay and Erich von

The co-facilitators are persuaded that there is much of value in the communal and educational experience of film: an experience we are, alas, losing to a great extent with TV and DVDs. Each film will be followed by a guided discussion which will explore the themes and ideas and artistry of the films. The public is welcome: bring your friends.

The co-facilitators earnestly solicit ideas for more films. These need not be reflective of a common theme.

Faith & The Web

Your editor took an online quiz — "Belief-O-Matic" (on SelectSmart.com*) — and the following results (and explanation) were produced.

"Your Results:

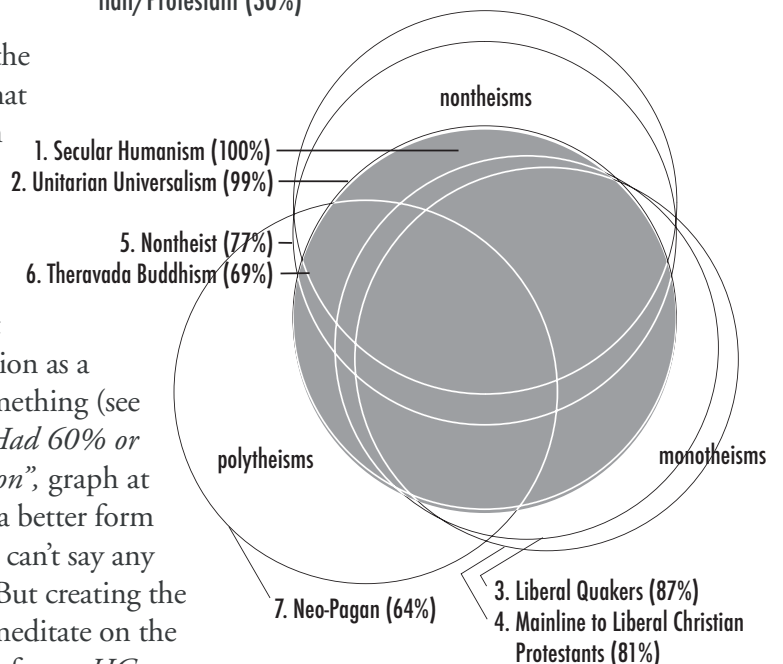
The top score on the list [above] represents the faith that Belief-O-Matic, in its less than infinite wisdom, thinks most closely matches your beliefs. However, even a score of 100% does not mean that your views are all shared by this faith, or vice versa.

Belief-O-Matic then lists another 26 faiths in order of how much they have in common with your professed beliefs. The higher a faith appears on this list, the more closely it aligns with your thinking." (See list, above).

- | | | |
|--|---|---------------------------------|
| 1. Secular Humanism (100%) | 10. New Age (48%) | 18. New Thought (30%) |
| 2. Unitarian Universalism (99%) | 11. Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) (43%) | 19. Sikhism (25%) |
| 3. Liberal Quakers (87%) | 12. Christian Science (Church of Christ, Scientist) (40%) | 20. Scientology (24%) |
| 4. Mainline to Liberal Christian Protestants (81%) | 13. Orthodox Quaker (38%) | 21. Jainism (24%) |
| 5. Nontheist (77%) | 14. Reform Judaism (38%) | 22. Seventh Day Adventist (17%) |
| 6. Theravada Buddhism (69%) | 15. Mahayana Buddhism (37%) | 23. Hinduism (12%) |
| 7. Neo-Pagan (64%) | 16. Jehovah's Witness (30%) | 24. Eastern Orthodox (10%) |
| 8. Taoism (50%) | 17. Mainline to Conservative Christian/Protestant (30%) | 25. Islam (10%) |
| 9. Bahá'í Faith (49%) | | 26. Orthodox Judaism (10%) |
| | | 27. Roman Catholic (10%) |

It surprised me to see the percentage of beliefs that I had in common with all kinds of believers, right to the bottom of the list.

Intriguing as this list was, I thought that recasting this information as a graph might reveal something (see "Faiths with Which I Had 60% or More Beliefs in Common", graph at right). Perhaps I need a better form of graphic display — I can't say any new insight emerged. But creating the graph did lead me to meditate on the puzzling nature of belief. — HG



*<http://www.selectsmart.com/PRO/beliefnet/index1.html>
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ETHICAL CULTURE

SUNDAY MORNING PLATFORMS

October, 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.

Oct. 2 Boe Meyerson, Leader. *“Extremism on the American Right”* will address a dangerous coalition regarding certain extremist approaches in the areas of religion, environmental/economic policy and world governance. Boe is the Leader of the Ethical Culture Society of Essex County and Humanist Chaplain of Columbia University.

Oct. 9 Frida Berrigan, *“The Weaponization of Space”*.

A graduate of Hampshire College in Amherst, Mass., Frida Berrigan joined the World Policy Institute in 1999. She is a Senior Research Associate at the Institute’s Arms Trade Resource Center. Her primary research areas with the project include nuclear weapons policy, war profiteering and corporate crimes, weapons sales to areas of conflict and military training programs. She is the author of a number of Institute reports, most recently *Weapons at War 2005: Promoting Freedom or Fueling Conflict*.

Ms. Berrigan is the editor of the project’s highly regarded email newsletter, *ATRC Update*, and serves as a principal spokesperson for the project in the media and in various public forums. She has had numerous articles published and also serves on the board of the War Resisters League.

Oct. 16 Win Thies, *“Freedom of Religion and the Right to Die”*, an essay-talk to show that for those sincerely

believing that their right to determine the time and manner of their dying is mandated by their religion, such right is Constitutionally protected by the “free exercise” clause of the First Amendment, as in effect incorporated (as against the several States) by the Fourteenth Amendment.

Win Thies’s efforts on right-to-die issues led, some ten years ago, to the founding of the Hemlock Society of New Jersey, Inc. and he served as its president until 2½ years ago. In such capacity he has appeared on radio and cable TV, and had opinion pieces published in local papers. Today renamed the End of Life Choices of NJ, Inc., the society has some 500 members throughout the state. A graduate of Princeton University and Harvard Law School, Mr. Thies also holds a Master of Laws from NYU Graduate School of Law. Mr. Thies is a resident of Maplewood, NJ.

Oct 23 Terri Seuss, *“Global Warming and Your CO₂ Footprint: What You Can Do to Reduce It”*. Where does the energy that powers our homes, schools and businesses, as well as our modes of transportation, come from and what hidden costs are associated with it? An overview of electricity and oil production will be provided. Then learn how to calculate your own CO₂ footprint. People will leave realizing what role we each play, personally, in creating global

warming and understanding what we, each, can do to reduce the pollution that is rapidly warming our planet.

Terri Seuss has a BA from the University of Washington in Seattle and a Master’s Degree in Urban Affairs from Hunter College, CUNY. Terri has published articles about micropower/distributed energy and about installing solar rooftops. She has chaired the NJ Peace Action Peace Energy Committee and currently serves on the Board of NJ Peace Action and is the President of the Ethical Culture Society of Essex County. She lives with her partner, Jeanne Fortin, in Newark, NJ.

Oct. 30 An Interview with Ahmondylia Best and Bahati Adrian Best by Joe Gluck.

Musician and artist Ahmondylia Best composes, sings and plays the flute and a number of African percussion and woodwind instruments. Her specialty is the shekere, a beaded gourd rattle, as played in Nigeria. She has performed in Africa, Europe, South America and across the US. She is currently a teaching artist with the Wolf Trap Program sponsored by the New Jersey Performing Arts Center. Ahmondylia is the founder of the performance group *Ahmondylia Best & Wogbledoe* and the presenting organization *Global Heritage Theater Arts Project*. Ahmondylia travelled to Ghana with the support of

(continued on page 3)