



ETHICAL CULTURE

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JANUARY 2005

Leaders Message

For my New Year's message, I generally like to speak about my hopes for the coming year. I have been struggling to uncover glimmers of hope, searching for the penumbral light at the edge of the eclipse. As I look at the national and world scene, however, it has been difficult to formulate such a message. Our nation's efforts to counter international terrorism has led us into an unprovoked and unjustified war in Iraq which has succeeded only in motivating and renewing those very "extremists" we aimed to subdue. The forces heralded with "shock and awe" have produced misery, chaos, and relentless rebellion. At home we struggle with unemployment and a rising national debt which cannot but threaten our economic stability. Liberties which we have taken for granted



for over two centuries are threatened with challenges not seen since the McCarthy era. The principal of separation of church and state which was designed to give us freedom for religion as well as freedom from unwanted religious domination now stands in the docket like a criminal under barrages of invective and calumny. Lastly, after the Presidential election, we remain a deeply divided nation with little hope of finding common ground.

Yet my friends have sought to remind me that our nation has gone through many prior periods of strife and repression and survived them. We are resilient and have weathered many political storms in the past. There is no reason the pendulum will not swing back again. I can take some solace in this but to do so I must at the same time remember that the pendulum of history does not swing without our effort. And so despite the dimness

of the horizon ahead, I nevertheless believe that with renewed and vigorous efforts we can turn the tide and shift the winds. Let us not so much look for signs or reasons for hope but rather let us draw out our courage and determination, our commitment, and dedication to change the facts and work together to build a better world.

Some other thoughts on another subject. Over the past year I have seen our new members become active in our Society, taking leadership roles and bringing their enthusiasm and commitment. Our building, thanks to our caretaker, is looking healthier both inside and outside. By the time you read this article, we will have completed our first Civic Honoring Diner for Paul Surovell. At least at the most local level, we have reason to rejoice and to look forward to building and deepening our communal life together. *Happy New Year —Boe*

From the Poetry Workshop

AL'S GOSPEL by Al Levin

Yes, we are all vulnerable. Our brains are zappable, precarious, pilloried by the Mad Av. Mind Mashers, plagued with Pressures to Possess — Capitalism's Curse!

Buy!!! ordains the Behemoth Above
Our Promised Land, the Maul.

Consciousness is a catalogue of consumption,
the Credit Card a Shield and Saviour.

Let the Debt Pile Up, join the Flock,
Soul in Hock.

Life, a loan down to the bone, hang tough,
if you must, go bust, have trust,
our cause is just.

The Almighty TV ads force us to kneel
at the altar of avarice, consuming, gorging,
fattening.

House, Honda, Rolex, DDV, Intel, Cardin,
Cartier, Cashmere, condo, kids college,
pedigreed mutt, lap top, Danish Modern,
medical high tech specialists, closets full,

freezer jammed, 96 inch screen, bonus plus,
gardener, mirrored walls, Tiffany lamps,
tax free, walk-in closets, DVD-cell, gadget
galaxy, stuff galore, more, more, MORE!

The first battle-scarred human Brute roared
and thumped his chest signaling the cave
was his, and his alone! Nobody dare enter.
That started it all. This hairy lout was the
first dictator. He whacked all invaders. A
Neanderthal Nero!

With His thick skull and boulder fist, it was
like trying to fight Goliath with a feather.

So began private property, the Curse of
Civilization. Next hunger, hurt and
constant combat for control. It's called
history. Our predatory passions are built-in,
for the last 100,000 years our species has
been pounding each other.

Yet we're also gene-pooled for Peace,
Love, Art — and no more war. We're
yin-yanged and love-hated. HELP!
Save the Planet — We're terrorist
and terrified. It's tragicomical!

Fortunately, Evolution also produced
a Primitive Momma Earth programmed to
feed and love — to find and collect food
for the young, and the tribe. She also sang
and danced in praise of the bounteous land.
The Force of the Feminine nourishes
the Life her belly brings forth.

She is the Mother Goddess!
Greening our Souls!!!

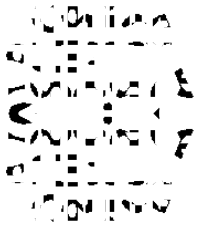
In the Beginning Nobody Owned Anything.
Everybody Owned Everything.

Then, the snake of private property
evicted us from Eden. We embraced
possession and were Cursed.

Now in global combat we slurp up oil,
grid-lock the globe, and command Nature
to toe the bottom line — as we big-brained,
99% apes, flounder in our own waste —
soiled earth, polluted seas, filthy air.

We search for Salvation,
while only the Call of the Mall of the Me,
Mine, Macho, Mucho is heard in the Land.

We must LEARN or BURN! ■



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 e-mail 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.,
Maplewood, NJ 07040.

Visit our website: www.essexethical.org

Courtesy Call Request

Marshall Norstein, our caretaker, has requested that anyone entering the building after 10 pm to please call him in advance so that he does not mistakenly assume that there is a security problem. His phone number is in the directory.

Fundraisers Calendar

January 14 Trivial Pursuits Party at Jeanine Rosh's. Seating for 10.

February 13 Stirling Duo Concert 2 pm, Ethical Society building. "the Stirling Duo offer an intimate style, highlighted by anecdotal explanations of the works they play... Again they will welcome the dulcet tones of Margie Berg, soprano... A fabulous concert and after the performance, hors d'oeuvres, beverages, great dialogue and a chance to make a difference in our financial health."

March Strollers' play *Psychopathia Sexualis*. A mid-March date will be announced.

From now until May, bring clean reusable articles for the White Elephant Sale to be held in May. Everything but books or clothing can be dropped off at the Society. Bring a bag or two every Sunday!

For information or reservations call the society office at 973-763-1905 or Jeanine Rosh at 973-258-9395. —*Jeanine M. Rosh*

Congratulations to Susan Kennedy on becoming a first-time grandmother to grandson Timothy, son of Ben and Erin Kennedy. *Love, Betty Levin*

AEU Thanks Boe

The AEU Board presented a certificate of appreciation to Leader Boe Meyerson, gratefully acknowledging Boe's "many years of dedicated and committed service as a Director of the Board from 1994 to 2004."

New Advocacy Mission for IHN

Interfaith Hospitality Network has for over 20 years housed and fed homeless families in Essex County. Guests spend a week at a time in rotating churches and synagogues. (Do they get dizzy?) Various social services are offered regarding jobs, housing, etc. Ethical has been an Assisting Congregation. Recently, IHN has teamed up with Family Promise. We are called Interfaith Advocacy Program (IAP). We are now a social justice ministry to advocate for policies and programs that help homeless families. IAP seeks Volunteer Advocates to participate in federal, state and local initiatives by writing letters and other things to raise awareness. If you are interested

in this highly active advocacy effort which requires 12 hours/year, call Sister Barbara Howard, 973-992-1382. —*Rosalie Sussman, IHN-IAP Coordinator for Essex Ethical*

Corrections

At the end of page 1 of the December newsletter, referral is made to the Social Action Committee. Please note that Patty Bender is not and never has been its co-chair. That misinformation was in the Member Directory, but should be corrected. Also, referrals should not be made to the SAC as it is not functioning. —*Bob Bender*

Please also make the following corrections to your Directory: **Add** to the first page Jim Quigley (Board of Trustees) and Terri Suss (Secretary). **Change** Jim White's business telephone from 212-369-0500 to 646-672-6186, and Pat Thompson's e-mail to aptpat2243@yahoo.com —*Nancy Bohn*

From the UN —

Effort to Ban Landmines

by Sylvain Ehrenfeld, IHEU representative to the UN, and Phyllis Ehrenfeld, AEU's National Service Conference representative to the UN

In this ever more troubled world, the effort to ban landmines is a rare success story of international cooperation. UN-built networks of nations and non-governmental organizations have had their energies fuelled by grassroots activism and attention from celebrities. Jody Williams, originally from Vermont, and 1992 founding coordinator of ICBL, International Campaign To Ban Landmines, became a winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1997. Grassroots efforts can work! www.mineaction.org (ADOPT A MINEFIELD sponsored by UNA-USA www.landmines.org is excellent for information and action).

Anti-personnel weapons are victim-activated, making them what may be the cruelest weapons ever invented. Designed to be invisible until they explode, they continue with their maiming and killing long after the hostilities that inspired their use have ended. The UN's Mine Action Service coordinates with other UN agencies, member states, and outside partners in

mine clearance programs. Thanks to the UN's work, 143 states have joined in the landmine treaty banning both their use and production. 37 million mines have been destroyed. Globally, the number of victims yearly has dropped from hundreds of thousands to between ten and twenty thousand, still far too many. Equally important, trade has dropped to the point where none of it is legal. All NATO countries have decided that they can pursue their military goals without using mines. It remains to persuade countries to destroy their stockpiles. Even peaceful countries like Finland, remembering their fears of Russian attacks, cling to their mined borders.

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights works with a coalition of non-governmental organizations in partnerships to promote a comprehensive ban on all anti-personnel weapons. The US has been in compliance about their employment since 1992, and is the single largest contributor to land mine clearance. Obviously public attention have had results. However the US has still not signed the treaty, and reserves the right to use these weapons, including the development of "smart" self-exploding mines, though there is little evidence that they are safer. The US cites the needs for mines in the border between North and South Korea. However that border is so heavily armed most critics maintain the mines remain only as a menace to soldiers on both sides whether or not hostilities take place.

Thanks to cooperation by the Red Cross with support from UNICEF, Cambodia has one of the most advanced and comprehensive systems working to promote community-based land mine reduction. Half of the deaths from mines are children. Education for both adults and children has contributed to a significant reduction in deaths and injuries. This

program is the first line of defense for communities that may still have a long time to wait before their land is cleared. Rehabilitation of victims is a principal and extremely expensive project of UNICEF.

There's substantial fallout to the problems caused by uncleared landmines. They are a major aspect of environmental pollution. They prevent farmers from using their land to grow food. Hunger follows. International investment will not enter unsafe areas limiting hopes for development as a healing force for war-wounded countries. The costs of clearing these countries varies enormously. Estimates for Afghanistan are 100 million dollars over the next few years. The costs for Iraq are unestimated.

The United Nations is sponsoring a conference in Nairobi, Kenya, the *Nairobi Summit for a Mine-Free World*. The goal is to consolidate their work and create a moral impetus for continued progress. UN-promoted partnerships have created results unachievable otherwise. This process is in itself a moral activity translating global consciousness into action.

Resolution Before Membership

A resolution adopted by an *ad hoc* social action committee will be discussed December 19 at a general membership meeting. The resolution urges our representatives to support a call for a congressional investigation of the 2004 presidential election. Widespread reports of voter suppression, balloting irregularities, and vote tabulation practices demand public accounting. For further information, there are a number of important websites (which follow). Most impressive is the letter by 12 Democratic members of the House Judiciary Committee addressed to Ohio's Secretary of State requesting answers to vital questions concerning the fairness of the November 2 election in Ohio.

Draft Resolution on 2004 Elections

Whereas, extensive irregularities concerning the November 2, 2004 elections have been widely reported around the country; and

Whereas, these irregularities appear to call into question the validity of the results; and

Whereas, these questions severely shake our faith in the fairness of our voting processes while undermining the legitimacy of our entire democracy; and

Whereas, the Ethical Culture Society of Essex County New Jersey that has made Maplewood, New Jersey its home for more than 50 years, holds the principles of a free and open democratic society among its highest values; Therefore

Be it resolved, that we urge our elected representatives at the state and federal level to conduct public hearings to examine the practices of recording, tabulating and reporting election results so as to assure as best as is humanly possible that those who represent us are doing so under the fairest of practices.

To get additional information:

US House of Representatives, Committee on the Judiciary, Dec 2 letter to Kenneth Blackwell, Ohio Secretary of State
http://www.house.gov/judiciary_democrats/ohblackwelltr12204.pdf

NJ Office of the Attorney General
Division of Elections
<http://www.state.nj.us/lps/elections/electionshome.html>

Votergate TV
<http://www.votergate.tv>

Hack The Vote
<http://www.chuckherrin.com/hackthevote.htm>

Black Box Voting
<http://www.blackboxvoting.org/>
<http://www.blackboxvoting.com/>

—Jim Quigley

ETHICAL CULTURE SOCIETY OF ESSEX COUNTY

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ETHICAL CULTURE

SUNDAY MORNING PLATFORMS

January, 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.

January 2 Boe Meyerson: “Religion and Ethics, What is the Connection?": The relation between theological beliefs and rules of conduct among some of the major religions of the world. Attention will be given to Arthur Dobrin’s new book, *Religious Ethics: A Sourcebook*. Boe Meyerson is the Leader of the Ethical Culture Society of Essex and also serves as the Humanist Chaplain at Columbia University.

January 9 Charles Horwitz: *What are the prospects for and the obstacles to peace in Israel and Palestine? What does the peace camp look like and what are human rights activists doing? What are American groups doing to support the peace camp in Israel and Palestine?*

Charles Horwitz has been a member of the Ethical Movement since the 1980’s, is an attorney with the New York State Department of Labor and previously worked with a Legal Services Corporation funded national back-up center for migrant farm workers in Washington, DC. He worked in the Mississippi civil rights movement for ten years in the 1960’s and 1970’s. He and his wife Carol traveled to the Mid-East last January with a Jewish-American civil rights delegation where they met with human rights leaders in Israel and Palestine. Mr. Horwitz is a member of Dialogue, an interreligious group of Muslims, Jews, Christians

and humanists that meets monthly with representatives of Israeli and Palestinian organizations.

January 16 Jim White: “Nonviolence and Revolution.” Jim, leader emeritus of our society, will be sharing the reformulation of his ideas following a recent trip to Atlanta where he visited the Ebenezer Baptist Church and the Dr. Martin Luther King Center.

January 23 Peter Savastano: “Non-theistic Spirituality”. The word “God” and what it evokes in the Western mind is seen by many contemporary thinkers on human spirituality as an obstacle to cultivating its growth. Humanistic and atheistic philosophies, and mystic schools of the Hindu, Taoist, Buddhist and Sufi traditions, acknowledge that there is a dimension to being human that is “spiritual” without requiring a “God”, although they may not agree on the meaning of “spiritual”. Based on the work of philosopher and mystic Ken Wilber, psychoanalyst and mystic A.H. Almaas and the “Non-theist Quaker Discussion Group,” the lecture will explore what is meant by “Non-theistic Spirituality” and the integral practices which enhance and expand spiritual experience.

Dr. Savastano’s scholarship engages the intersection of religion with sexuality, gender, race and ethnicity. He is

a practicing Quaker and recently a Mureed (initiate) in the Sufi Ruhaniat International based on the teachings of Pir-o-Murshid Hazrat Inayat Khan and Murshid Samuel Lewis.

January 30 Anne Klaeyesen, Leader of the Long Island Ethical Humanist Society, is a graduate of the Humanist Institute and the Pastoral Counseling Program at the Postgraduate Center for Mental Health and has completed study in the Doctor of Ministry program at Hebrew Union College.

Mark Your Calendars...

January 9 & 23 Philosophy 9:30–10:30 am every 2nd and 4th Sunday Leader **Boe Meyerson** conducts sessions in group philosophical inquiry into personal and public ethical problems. We learn philosophy by doing it together.

January 14 Folk singing with **Lisa Novemsky**, 7:30 pm every 2nd Friday of the month. Please call the office or email lnovemsky@comcast.net to check in advance.

January 17 Poetry 7:30 pm every third Monday, workshop and readings. Poetry workshop is led by **Sylvia Kramer**. All can learn to write poems. There is also the opportunity for participants to read their own poems to the group. ■