



ETHICAL CULTURE

M O N T H L Y

VOLUME 26 NUMBER 4

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DECEMBER 2006

LEADER'S MESSAGE

Good news is hard to come by

These days with the war in Iraq, the dominance of the religious right domestically and internationally, the dangerous national debt etc, etc...,



Boe Meyerson

good news is hard to come by. The recent exception was the New Jersey Supreme Court ruling on equal legal rights for gay, lesbian, and bisexual couples.

The court ruled that such couples are entitled to all the legal rights enjoyed by heterosexual couples. It gave the legislature 180 days to devise legislation consistent with its ruling. In doing so, it refrained from ruling on whether the word "marriage" need be used in defining equal rights and left the issue to the legislature. So far, so good — not ideal (from my point of view) but definitely good and much better than the status quo.

Now for the down side. It seems that the legislature is planning to act hastily on the issue. It will act so speedily, that there will be no opportunity for public hearings. Those in favor of full marriage rights for gays and lesbians as well as those opposed will have no opportunity to present their views to the legislature. Obviously this puts the gay-lesbian community at a distinct disadvantage since its position for full marriage rights as opposed to a separate category of civil union is far less popular and less well understood by either the public or the legislature on the whole. Furthermore the legislature itself is thereby depriving itself of important information to consider in making its decisions.

In the interest of fairness and good government, I would urge you all to ask your state legislators to allow public hearings on the matter.

— *Boe Meyerson, Leader*

p.s. Many of you may recall Steve Goldstein's excellent platform address at our Society. He is chair of Garden State Equality. Their web site is a good source of information on this topic: www.GardenStateEquality.org.

WHAT IS E.C. HUMANISM?

Recently the issue of defining our version of humanism has come up among leaders. I wish to share with you my suggestion. I would be interested in your comments.

A Defining Statement of Ethical Humanism

"We strenuously affirm that human beings are capable of consecrating their lives to ethical practice without belief in or dependence upon divine assistance. Similarly we do not disparage those who feel such dependence and welcome into fellowship all those who share our ethical vision founded on irrevocable respect for human dignity and the natural world." — *Boe*

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Congratulations to Elaine Norstein, our program chair and her team who have consistently arranged our outstanding Sunday morning programs — one gut-stirrer after another: (1) what to do about our environment, presented by member Dr. Jim



Betty Levin

Quigley; (2) the new voting machine era combined with a teach-in; (3) how a Department of Peace would function at the international level and also the community level (the latter performed by our audience in an improvisational skit; and (4) Living Ethically, presented by Bob Greenwell, leader at newly-formed Missouri Ethical Society. If you weren't present at these outstanding Sunday mornings, you missed some stellar moments. Come join us for stimulating programs and communal sharing. We would like to know you better and you to know us. I look forward. If you missed receiving our newsletter, call our office and let us know — 973-763-1905 — and leave your name and address. I'll see you! — *Betty Levin*

BOARD MEETING

The Board of Trustees of our Ethical Society will meet on December 19, 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.

FUNDRAISER EVENTS

January

Real Home Cookin' Jan. 20, Saturday, 7 p.m. until ? at the Ol' Ethical Ranch — you know where. Just sign up and pay your \$20. Come chow down on real country fare: roasted chicken done to a turn in Gramma's beehive oven, southern style creamed (y'all call it mashed) potatoes, tiny baby peas and good ol' apple pie, warm from the oven with vanilla ice cream and real coffee. Country attire, please: flannel shirts, suspenders on your pressed
(continues)

Ethical Culture Society of Essex County



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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 \$15/year or \$7.50/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 web site: www.essexethical.org

**...act so
as to elicit
the best
in others
and in
ourselves**

jeans (it's Saturday night, for gosh sakes!) or purty skirts and Saturday night party blouse (according to your preference). Park your boots and hats at the door and get ready for a FEED. Please come sober. Hosts Rosalie, Jeanine & Nancy, 973-763-1905.

February

There's not a serious bone in our bodies when we meet the **Trivial Pursuits challenge** at Jeanine Rosh's, on February 23 at 7 p.m. We begin with some hot cider and crunchies then play for laughs, and end with dessert and drinks. Donation is \$15. Limited to 10 people. Snow date is March 2.

Coming in April

Marjorie Berg returns for a Saturday evening performance. This will be a fascinating, enjoyable program. Details coming next month.

The Merry Month of May

May 6 at 2 p.m. **Soup and Strollers.** The Maplewood Strollers present *The Violet Hour*. It's that time — that wonderful New York hour when the evening's about to reward you for that day. Denis (Denny) McCleary explaining the title for his colossus of a novel to his friend John Pace Seaverling — and by extension, the title for Richard Greenberg's play about a fateful day in their lives. Mark the date on your calendar.

White Elephant Sale. As the days get shorter along with tempers, spend some time tearing up your closets looking for articles for the May White Elephant Sale. We will begin collecting soon, so get ready to create lots of extra space at home by passing along those unused treasures to bring happiness to someone else (you know, just buying can make one happy) and bring funds to the society. See you in the closet.

Call the office or Jeanine (973-258-9395) for information and reservations.

— *Jeanine Rosh*

HOLIDAY CARDS

We are selling attractive holiday cards that copy squares of a quilt made by children of the Ethical Society of Northern Westchester. The cards are boxed in sets of twelve designs. Each card is illustrated with a charming child's drawing and a unique message such

as "Ethics Is My Religion," "Every Person Is Important and Unique," and "I Am Part of This Earth; I Cherish It and All The Life Upon It," on the outside cover. The inside pages are blank. The boxes sell for \$15.00 each. To purchase, please call Barbara Lipton, 973-763-4007. — *Barbara Lipton*

MEMBERSHIP

We have had many new people coming to our platforms this fall and we have invited them all to join us as members. In November we had a get-together with newcomers, something we want to continue when needed. There are a few things you can do as a member to help us get more members:

- If you have a friend or a neighbor who would be interested in a special platform, invite her or him! (That is one reason why it is good to read about the upcoming platforms and be informed.)
- Tell the membership people if you know somebody who would be interested in getting info about our activities.
- Be creative, promote our Society in your own special way! If you want to join our small committee you are very welcome.

Looking for other members!

I am a great fan of all of you and I would like to spend more time together. I am gone in January, but after that I would like to "organize" some more informal get-togethers.

We could: have dinner together; go to the Newark Museum; tour Port Newark and Port Elizabeth; this is a guided tour that we learned about from Charles Rawling in a Platform this fall; help each other with any project we find worthwhile; learn something new from each-other; discuss urgent issues we are interested in; see a movie. You can make the list as long as you want to; give me a call if you are interested.

Thanks

Thanks to Sue Willis, we had a really fun platform about the Department of Peace Bill. She gave almost all of us different roles to play in the big dramas of international and local conflicts. Only Sue could pull something like that off with success —bravo!

— *Anja Moen, co-chair 973-763-2211*

FROM THE UN

Intergenerational Transmission of Hate

The transmission of hate from one generation to another is a major cause of violence and wars. The UN has undertaken to study the process and work to create approaches for prevention. The Director of the Group Project for Holocaust Survivors and their Children, the American Red Cross's Senior Partner for International Services, and the President of the International Psychoanalytical Association, joined in a panel discussion to share their perspectives on this fundamental problem.

Dr. Eizirik, President of the Psychoanalytic Association emphasized the early upbringing of an individual in fostering either love or aggression which can be directed against groups. The environment outside the family also plays an important role. Social division between groups promotes contempt, dislike and fear. Given the existence of this conditioning, the task of listening to others becomes difficult. As an interesting example, research to promote the listening experience with Israeli and Palestinian children has found that music works well as an instrument in teaching children how to listen and play with each other.

Dr. Danieli, whose work focuses on studying concentration camp survivors, prisoners of war, and the terminally ill, identified the so-called "conspiracy of silence," as powerful transmitters of trauma created by violence. Everyone involved, the perpetrators, their families, the victims and their families suffered from the tensions created by inability to voice — and release — their pain. Dr. Danieli believes that the first step in preventing the transmission of a traumatic experience was to identify how it was transmitted, and recognize that silence was the main agent in the process. The effect of the silence on the children of those involved was to act out the emotions their parents did not express. He also pointed out that culture should not always be idealized

Higher education for women in India was discussed in a platform at the Society (Nov. 12) and was accompanied by a photographic exhibition, "Village Life in Rajasthan," on display through Thanksgiving. The photos were taken by students and staff of the Mrs. Helena Kaushik College for Women in Rajasthan, India.



or identified as a healing force. Culture can also promote or transmit hate through hate talk. Patriarchal cultures, public schools and religion are all in danger of relying on the idealization of religion as a healer.

The International Services Program Manager of the Red Cross, Mr. Lobry-Boulanger, identified different areas of child suffering created by conflict; children lost or separated from family members, abuses of all kinds, children forced into labor or violence, and homeless and displaced children. Statistics show that 20 million children were refugees or displaced persons, two million have died in the past 20 years because of war or conflict, one million are separated from their families, and six million were handicapped for life. The Red Cross works to assist and protect these children by different means, including reuniting children with their families, protecting minors and children in places of detention, and restoring and protecting dignity.

During the question-and-answer period Dr. Eizirik stated that the use of insult instead of violence might actually lead to dialogue. Giving voice to the "the silenced inner child in an unhealed adult," can be beneficial, and can be promoted by programs and group settings that create dialogue. As an example, the silence of prisoners in solitary confinement is expressive of their isolation. Visiting individuals in solitary confinement is a painful experience for the prisoner, but the breaking of that silence is necessary for the process of recovery. Denial of a painful

trauma is equivalent to literal silence. The anger and pain felt by generations of Armenians who were victimized by the planned slaughter of their people after World War 1 is now emerging into public discussion. Demands that the Turkish government acknowledge the killing of at least 1 million Armenians have been systematically denied. Bringing this information into public knowledge is a criminal offense in Turkey. Several European governments have indicated that they will oppose Turkey's bid for membership in the European Economic Community until it acknowledges the crimes committed against the Armenians. All that is asked is simply an end to silence on a well-documented crime against humanity.

For many reasons this is psychologically difficult as well as a politically complex problem. Bringing these issues into public debate is a useful beginning. An emotionally neutralized, or at least a non-adversarial manner of presentation is both extremely difficult and necessary for the process to carry out healing and the prevention of transmission of hatred from one generation to another.

A first attempt at a trial for the Armenian genocide — the first in the 20th century, directly after World War I — could not take place because of the threat of retaliation. This is an indication of the need for an International Criminal Court, which the American Ethical Union strongly supports.

— Phyllis Ehrenfeld (AEU's Nat'l Ser. Conf. Rep. to the UN); Sylvain Ehrenfeld (IHEU Rep. to the UN)

ETHICAL CULTURE SOCIETY OF ESSEX COUNTY

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ETHICAL CULTURE

SUNDAY MORNING PLATFORMS

December, 2006

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.

Dec. 3 Boe Meyerson: *Marriage Equality — Complete and Undiluted*

The case for full marriage equality for gays and lesbians as opposed to civil union rights is poorly understood by the general public. Boe will discuss the reasons why civil union rights, though technically offering the same privileges, in actuality are not equal and are discriminatory.

Boe Meyerson is leader of our Ethical Society and humanist chaplain at Columbia University.

Dec. 10 Dr. Sylvain Ehrenfeld: *Ethical Dilemmas of Globalization*

Rich countries are experiencing fallout from massive economic change. Is globalization a disaster or a new hope for the future? Some think that globalization benefits the world because it greatly increases wealth and everyone's life is improved. Critics say that the existing inequalities in the world order merely make the rich richer and the poor poorer. What are the facts? What are the ethical issues?



Dr. Sylvain Ehrenfeld is retired from his position as Professor of Statistics at City University of New York. He has taught at Columbia University, New York University and the University of California at Berkeley. He has given courses at the New School for Social

Research in New York City on Population, Technology and Future Studies. He received his Ph.D. at Columbia University. He has been a visiting professor at a number of universities including the Technion where he helped to establish a Department of Industrial Engineering. He is currently involved at the United Nations as AEU Representative of the IHEU (International Humanist Ethical Union), one of numerous accredited non-governmental organizations at the UN. He is particularly interested in issues relating to population, poverty, sustainable development and health.

Dec. 17 Michael Lally: *Politics, Poetry and Passion*

"I'd like to discuss the connections between political activism and poetry in my life, and the influence growing up in South Orange in the 1940s and '50s had on that, especially the racism, anti-Semitism, and class and ethnic consciousness."

Born in Orange, New Jersey in 1942, youngest of seven in an Irish-American family of cops, priests, and politicians, Michael David Lally started out playing piano and reading his poetry in coffeehouses and bars in 1959. In 1962 he joined the Air Force. After more than four years as an enlisted man, he later used the G.I. Bill to attend the University of Iowa Writers Workshop. During

those years he wrote the autobiographical *South Orange Sonnets*, which led to a New York Poetry Center Discovery Award in 1972.



Lally's first book was published in 1970. By 1980 there were twenty, including the 1974 poetry collection *Rocky Dies Yellow*, and the 1978 collection of prose and poetry *Catch My Breath*. In 1974 he received a National Endowment for the Arts Poetry Award, the same year he wrote a long autobiographical poem, *My Life*, which, on his receiving his second National Endowment for the Arts Poetry Award in 1981, was denounced as pornography on the floor of Congress by politicians out to discredit and dismantle the NEA.

Lally moved to L.A. in 1982 to find work acting in movies and TV, while his writing found its way into several movies.

Lally's *Cant Be Wrong*, a collection of poems, won a PEN Oakland Josephine Miles Excellence in Literature Award; and his *It's Not Nostalgia*, a collection of poetry and prose, won an American Book Award.

Dec. 24 Holiday music — discussion and sing-along (*details to come*).

Dec. 30 Colloquy on the year behind and the year ahead (*details to come*).