



ETHICAL CULTURE

M O N T H L Y

VOLUME 25 NUMBER 6

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FEBRUARY 2006

LEADER'S MESSAGE

Dear Members & Friends

Ethical Culture's roots are deeply embedded in the core of the Enlightenment, in the depths of the movement which altered the course of Western history with the twin emerging powers of science and unfettered reason – reason released from the iron bonds of religious dogma. No longer held captive by the political powers of a universal European church supported by the state, reason and science went wherever the evidence led and created a new world. This world nurtured our new born religion. It gave it both the legitimacy and protection it needed to emerge as a passionate religion free of and freed from theological dogma, a religion consecrated to ethical action, human intellectual emancipation, and universal respect for human dignity. It was not anti-religion. It was rather for the right to think and decide for oneself, to choose, to be free to choose. And for this to occur the dominance of any one church or collection of churches, had to be severed from the immense, coercive power of the civil state. It is not surprising that we



then played a role in the formation of the American Civil Liberties Union and are well known as champions of civil liberties. It is also not surprising that we are well known as a community that has immense respect for the realms of reason, science and the Enlightenment as well as those (from Socrates to Galileo) who heroically created them with such risk to life and limb.

Unfortunately, in our time, there is an aspect of our origins that has been less understood and less well known. That has to do with our other dimension, a dimension rooted in the heart, in feeling, and in the depths of our emotional life with each other and nature. Walt Whitman (a great humanist with a little “h”) admonished us that after his death, we should seek to find him in the soil under our shoes. He said this reverently and not mockingly. Our founder encouraged us to seek to elicit the very best in those we meet, no matter how ignorant, how silly, how inept, how irritating, how misguided, or even how malevolent they might be. So great was his faith in the curative power of a truly open hearted human response.

Join me on February 5 at 11 a.m. when we explore this poorly understood aspect of our own heritage. — *Boe*

FUND RAISER NEWS

Trivial Pursuits February 10

Seriously, we do have fun at the Trivial Pursuits Challenge at Jeanine Rosh's. Good food, great company and lots of laughs, ending with dessert and drink. Donation is \$15. Limited to 10 people. Snow date is February 17.

Coming in the spring: Marjorie Berg is back **April 8** for an intimate concert at the home of Mira Stillman. All new material in a real cabaret setting (more details to follow). If you missed her December concert, you will definitely want to be there. Capacity is limited, so reserve early.

Marshall's Ribs — sometime this spring (we'll have a date soon). This is Marshall's secret recipe, sought worldwide by gourmet chefs. Unlike Adam, Marshall will not succumb to pressure

from serpents or chefs. Although he does not share his recipe, he sure can share those yummy ribs. Plan to be there for the treat.

White Elephant Sale May 21

Our most profitable fund raiser, this event needs your full support. Now is the time to bring your clean usable items. Don't wait for spring to dig into those cabinets and cubby holes and pull out those items you'll never use, but wish you had. It's too much for you perhaps, but just right for someone else. Donate early and often. Bring it all to the society now. We're accepting everything but clothes and linens at this time. If you have large items, call us. We'll try to arrange for a pickup. When in doubt, call the office. We're depending on you! — *Jeanine*

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Folk Singing Friday Feb. 10

7:30 p.m. second Friday of the month with Lisa Novemsky.

Friday Film Society Feb. 17

Cool Hand Luke, at 7:30 p.m. at the Society. The last film in the series “The Prison and Concentration Camp Experience in Film”. *Cool Hand Luke*, is, of course, the moniker for the rebellious character played by Paul Newman. And we recall the coda at the end: “What we have here is a failure to communicate”. The “sleeper” performance, however, is by George Kennedy who was awarded an Oscar as Best Supporting Actor.

As usual, we'll have popcorn and sodas. And discussion after the viewing. All free! So, come and bring your friends and neighbors. — *Win*

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

FROM THE UN

The 20th century has turned out to be one of the most violent periods of conflict in human history. An estimated 190 million people lost their lives directly or indirectly, with over half noncombatant civilians and millions of injured and disabled added to the terrible toll.

Aside from the communal violence of conflict, there is the less visible but widespread violence of everyday. No country, no city, no community is immune. It particularly strikes the most vulnerable — children, young people, women and the elderly. Violence against women is pervasive, regardless of income, religion, or culture. Violence by partners accounts for 70% of female murder victims in Canada, Australia, Israel and the US,

The traditional approach to violence is focused on the individual, offering therapy after the fact or preventively, trying to recognize the factors leading to violence or attempts at suicide. This approach is necessary and important.

However the World Health Organization examines the problem from a holistic perspective, including cultural and social causes. Studying and recording the fallout from different kinds of violence, a 2000 WHO report presents it as a major **public health issue**. To our surprise, half of the 1.6 million deaths from violence were suicides. Nearly one-third were homicides, and about one-fifth were casualties of armed conflict.

This report examined the extent, health and economic consequence of violence and injuries. In addition to death and disability, violence contributes to a variety of health problems, including depression, alcoholism, substance abuse, sleeping disorders, HIV/AIDS, infections and much more. The resulting health care costs can be enormous, including legal costs, absenteeism from work and lost productivity. An example from a US 1992 study found the yearly cost of treating gunshot wounds alone to be \$126 billion.

Outside of organized conflict, violent behavior is of two kinds: self-directed, as in suicide, and outwardly directed, as in homicide. The highest homicide rates are among males

aged 15-29 years declining with age, and three times the rate of females. Suicide rates increase with age, with the highest rate of men 60 years or older, more than double the rate of women of the same age. Rates of violent death vary according to country, income levels, with low to middle income more than twice that of high income countries. There is, however, wide geographical variations with Africa and the Americas much higher in homicide, nearly three times greater than suicide, while in the southeast and European regions suicide rates are more than double the homicide rates. There are also wide variations within countries between urban and rural, between rich and poor communities, and between different racial and ethnic groups.

Clearly cultural and social factors play an important role. Even if a tendency to violence is basic in human nature, our understanding of triggers and underlying causes can help through public policies and interventions.

The problem of collective violence has been studied by the **Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflicts**. It has identified a number of factors that bring states into risk of violent conflict.

1. **Unequal access to power**. This is especially severe when power stems from ethnic and religious identity, and when repressive leadership threatens human rights.

2. **Social inequality** marked by grossly unequal distribution of access to basic resources. Hate ideologies also play a role.

3. **Control of a single group of natural resources**, the "crown jewels" of a country, such as oil, timber, gems, and drugs.

4. **Rapid demographic change** that strips the capacity of a state to provide essential services and job opportunities.

Surely this study both explains and predicts many civil wars. The UN has agreed on a Peace Commission to anticipate and respond to those countries who are on the verge of reverting to, or in danger of beginning, a civil war.

WHO is currently in the final stages of a massive study of violence against children, scheduled to appear with recommendations in 2006. The unique feature of this report

(continued on page 3)

Platforms (continued from page 4)

New York City. He's been active in the peace movement since his high school days in the 1960s. He served as a medic in the Army from 1969 to 1971. He was active in the GI anti-war movement and in Vietnam Veterans Against the War. In recognition for his work with SMPA, Paul received the Sal Santaniello Humanitarian Award from the Ethical Culture Society of Essex County in 2004 and a Proclamation from the Maplewood Township Committee in February 2005.

Paul and his wife Judi Kramer, an attorney practicing in New York, have lived in Maplewood since 1977.

Cheryle Gittens-Bailey is the CEO of the Sentient Corporation, an international management consulting company in South Orange. Sentient administers a Leadership and Management Institute which honors the uniqueness of every individual.

Cheryle and her husband George Bailey have lived in South Orange since 1997.

From the UN (continued from page 2)

is that children have been participating actively in the study, through consultation with Save The Children, through studies of institutions with children in detention, studies of what happens to children in war, and the role of children in armed conflict.

WHO has organized a global campaign for violence prevention.

Thinking about all this material has reinforced our belief that societies which are more equitable and have less ethnic, racial and religious tension can reduce violence and show dramatic improvements in health. A humane society can help people to flourish. The facts are entirely in tune with the vision of humanism.

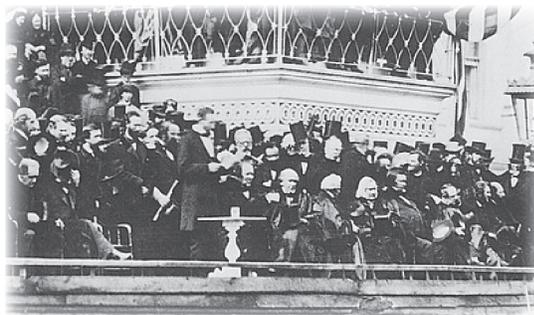
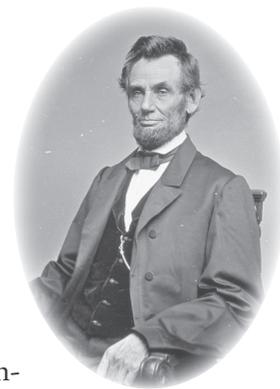
— *Phyllis Ehrenfeld (AEU's National Service Conference Rep. to UN); Sylvain Ehrenfeld (IHEU Rep. to UN)*

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

From the Second Inaugural Address, 4 March 1865

“On the occasion corresponding to this four years ago, all thoughts were anxiously directed to an impending civil-war...

One eighth of the whole population were colored slaves, not distributed generally over the Union, but localized in the Southern part of it. These slaves constituted a peculiar and powerful interest. All knew that this interest was, somehow, the cause of the war. To strengthen, perpetuate, and extend this interest was the object for which the insurgents would rend the Union, even by war; while the government claimed no right to do more than to restrict the territorial enlargement of it. Neither party expected for the war, the magnitude, or the duration, which it has already attained. Neither anticipated that the cause of the conflict might cease with, or even before, the conflict itself should cease. Each looked for an easier triumph and a result less fundamental and astounding. Both read the same Bible, and pray to the same God; and each invokes His aid against the other. It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask a just God's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces; but let us judge not that we be not judged. The prayers of both could not be answered; that of



neither has been answered fully. The Almighty has His own purposes. “Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!” If we shall suppose that American Slav-

ery is one of those offences which, in the providence of God, must needs come, but which, having continued through His appointed time, He now wills to remove, and that He gives to both North and South, this terrible war, as the woe due to those by whom the offence came, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a Living God always ascribe to Him? Fondly do we hope—fervently do we pray—that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue, until all the wealth piled by the bond-man's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash, shall be paid for by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said “the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.”

With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan—to do all which may achieve and cherish a just, and a lasting peace, among ourselves, and with all nations.”

ETHICAL CULTURE SOCIETY OF ESSEX COUNTY

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ETHICAL CULTURE

SUNDAY MORNING PLATFORMS

February, 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.

February 5 Boe Meyerson

The Heart of Ethical Culture

Ethical Humanism all too often presents a severe, rationalistic and cold face to the larger world. This is the committed face of those who struggle for justice and fairness in a harsh uncaring world. Yet, like the other great religions of the world, Ethical Humanism also has a softer and gentler, though no less powerful, dimension which has too often been poorly understood. In her monthly address, Boe will speak about this aspect of Humanism and its rich, enveloping and deeply compelling gentleness.

Boe is leader of the Ethical Culture Society of Essex County and Humanist Chaplain at Columbia University.

February 12 Shagufta Hassan

Women in Islam Today:

An International Perspective

“I would like to give my insights into the lives of women I have had the privilege of meeting in the Islamic countries that I have lived in or visited. I wish to bring out that their problems and concerns are similar in many respects to the situation which women face globally.”

Hassan has traveled extensively with her husband, Pakistani Ambassador Azmat Hassan.

She has studied and worked in New Jersey, Massachusetts, and New York;

Cambridge, England; Islamabad and Lahore, Pakistan; Damascus, Syria. She served as President of the School Board of the American School Rabat, Morocco .

She is currently enrolled in the Seton Hall University's Graduate Program in Marriage and Family Therapy.

February 19 Sue Willis

The Message Is the Adventure:

Thoughts on Writing for Children

Meredith Sue Willis, who writes primarily for adults, speaks about how her work with children led her to stories for children as well. She will explore the special relationship of children's writers and children and will read from and talk about her latest novel, *Billie of Fish House Lane*.



Willis, who lives in South Orange, is the author of fourteen books of fiction and nonfiction for children and adults. A Distinguished Teaching Artist of the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, she teaches writing workshops for children in elementary and secondary school through the New Jersey Writers Project. She also teaches novel writing at New York University's School of Continuing and Professional Studies where she created and still teaches “Beginning Your Novel” and “Making Your Novel Happen.”

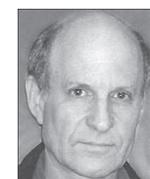
Her work with children has led her to give workshops for teachers around the country using her books about writing and the teaching of writing, including *Personal Fiction Writing*, *Deep Revision*, and *Blazing Pencils*. It has also led her to write books for children. Her first novel for children was called “exciting and thoughtful” by *The Hornbook*, and her second novel for children was an *Instructor Magazine* best book.

Willis is also a long time social activist, having been a VISTA volunteer and anti-war activist in her youth. She is the out-going chair of the local integration organization, The South Orange/Maplewood Community Coalition on Race, and a past president of the Ethical Culture Society of Essex County.

February 26 Paul Surovell and

Cheryle Gittens-Bailey

What's Right and What's Wrong with the Peace Movement



Paul Surovell is a peace activist in Maplewood and South Orange. Paul is chairperson of South Mountain Peace Action (SMPA) of Maplewood and South Orange, editor of SMPA's website, www.BeAboutPeace.com and is also an elected member of the WBAI Local Station Board. Paul teaches high school math in *(continued on page 3)*