



ETHICAL CULTURE

M O N T H L Y

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JANUARY 2007

LEADER'S MESSAGE

General Invitation: Fellowship Circles

I have felt for a long time that there has been something missing here at Essex. I have heard from many that there is a need for more active and participatory programs. Our Sunday platform meetings provide for some participation but it is admittedly limited and impersonal. I have also heard that many believe we should have more opportunities to foster fellowship. These are not goals that can be met in a group of 20-40 people. But they can be met within a group of about 10. For these reasons, I was immensely impressed to learn about the work on small group development being done by some Unitarian Universalists in Maine. At our the National Leaders Council



Boe Meyerson

held this past Spring, we were introduced to the work of Rev. Calvin Dame of Maine who was one of the two ministers who first utilized this participatory program developed by Rev. Frances Buckmaster called Small Group Ministries. It has been immensely successful in generating rich, meaningful discussions, personal growth, and friendship among those who participate.

I have since translated the group name into Ethical Humanist language and renamed it "Fellowship Circles." Starting January 14, I will be initiating a new program called Fellowship Circles. It will meet the second and fourth Sundays each month from 9:30 a.m. to 10:45 a.m. In the parlor. All are welcome.

— *Boe Meyerson*

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Community building continues. I conducted my first Colloquy in November in which three members attended. The topic was "personal strength" in which participants spoke freely. The discussion was lively and penetrating. Participants gathered in corners, relat-



Betty Levin

ing to one another, well after the Colloquy ended. During the month of December, both on the 24 and the 31, we are publicizing our platforms as "salons", a suggestion of Gus Lindquist, consisting of a discussion of themes associated with Christmas Eve, New Year's Eve and Kwanzaa. Our committee is excited. By the time you read

this, these occasions will have already passed. We hope they will have been joyous and successful — more community building. Come join us at the Society to partake of this new energy. The next Colloquy, the third Sunday of the month (Jan. 21), meets at 9:30 a.m. in the parlor. I hope you will be there. In the meantime, I send good wishes for the new year.

— *Betty Levin*

FUNDRAISER EVENTS

January

Real Home Cookin' Jan. 20, Saturday, 7 p.m. 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 jeans

(it's Saturday night, for gosh sakes!) or purty skirts and Saturday night 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

Are you ready for the **Trivial Pursuits challenge**? It's time to dethrone such winners as Pat Thompson, Win Thies, Mart Cotler, Susan Kennedy, Mary Babiars and others. We battle to the end but there is not a serious bone in our

bodies. We meet 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 drink. Donation is \$15. Limited to 10 people. Snow date is March 2.

Coming in April

Marjorie Berg returns April 14 with an all new, fascinating concert. The evening begins at 7:30 p.m. with crackers and conversation, then the concert, followed by dessert and discussion with the artists. What an evening of music and mingling! Donation

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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 the Ethical Culture Monthly by mail for a charge of \$15/year, call the office, 973-763-1905.

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**

Events

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is \$20. Complete 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 Seavering — and by extension, the title for Richard Greenberg's play about a fateful day in their lives. The greater the participation, the less it will cost. Help bring up participation. Come to the platform and stay for lunch and the show. Mark the date on your calendar.

Also coming in May — Betty Levin's

Amazing Azalea Afternoon — more information to follow.

June

White Elephant Sale — The date is set for Saturday June 2. It's our most lucrative event — an opportunity for everyone to recycle and reclaim some space for yourselves. Spend a little time going through drawers and closets to make room and make some money for the Society. We will be 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. Who knows what treasures you will uncover!

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

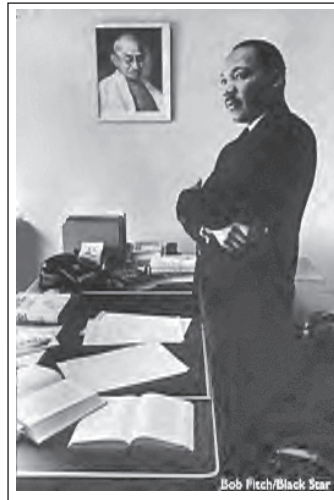
— *Jeanine Rosh*

JAN 15, MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY

“Everybody can be great, because everybody can serve. ... You only need a heart full of grace, a soul generated by love, and you can be that servant. ...”

“Yes, if you want to say that I was a drum major. Say that I was a drum major for justice. Say that I was a drum major for peace. Say that I was a drum major for righteousness.

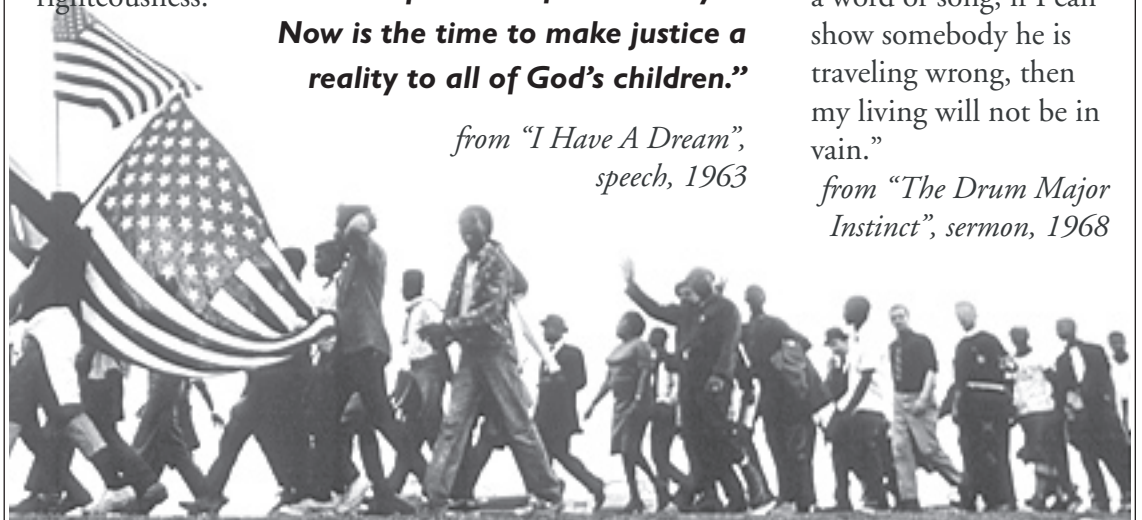
“Now is the time to make real the promise of democracy... Now is the time to make justice a reality to all of God's children.”



*from “I Have A Dream”,
speech, 1963*

And all of the other shallow things will not matter. I won't have any money to leave behind. I won't have the fine and luxurious things in life to leave behind. But I just want to leave a committed life behind. And that's all I want to say. If I can help somebody as I pass along, if I can cheer somebody with a word or song, if I can show somebody he is traveling wrong, then my living will not be in vain.”

from “The Drum Major Instinct”, sermon, 1968



Platforms

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vis and completed postdoctoral work at Virginia Tech in biology. She considers her scientific training excellent preparation for her work in the Bronx because it grounded her in a systems approach, gave her freedom and discipline to experiment and created the habit of rigorous quantitative analysis with respect to program development, management and results.

Jan 21 Win Thies:

“The Twisted Ethics of Today’s ‘System’ of Organ Donation.”

Every year some 10,000 Americans die for want of an organ that could be transplanted to continue their lives. At the same time we stuff several hundred thousand perfectly usable organs into the ground.

That, asserts Winthrop D. Thies, who will speak on this issue on Jan. 21, is the real ethical wrong. An ill-considered 1984 federal law criminalizes any economic incentive, however modest, that might reduce or even end the shortage of organs.

A graduate of Princeton University and the Harvard Law School, with a Master of Laws in Taxation from NYU Graduate School of Law, Mr. Thies was founder and decade-long president of the Hemlock Society of New Jersey, Inc., which advocated for freedom for the dying. He claims that the present American “system” for procuring organs conflicts with all major

ethical systems: whether utilitarian or rules-based.

Jan 28 Matthew and Paul La Clair:

Fighting Against Religious Repression in School; or “Matthew is making this class so exciting!”

Sixteen-year-old Matthew LaClair will tell the true tale of an intrepid young lad (himself) who faces down his high school history teacher and the school administration after catching the teacher (“conservative” Baptist fundamentalist and extreme right-winger) proselytizing in class. This is a story of courage and cowardice, lies and integrity, hypocrisy and self-sacrifice, arrogance and humility; and the trusty audio recorder that exposed the whole thing. It is a story about how one who stands up for what is right can expect

to be bullied, intimidated and threatened with physical violence and even death; a story of adults acting like children and one who is still officially considered a child acting like an adult. It is a story of international adulation and local contempt;

and of how little the youth in Kearny, at least, know about our Constitution or about the most basic tenets of science. Return with us, then, to Dayton, Tennessee in 1925, where our story seems to take place. Keep in mind, however, that the events you will hear

are real, because if you do not, you will not believe it could actually have happened like this.

Matthew LaClair, currently a junior at Kearny High School in Kearny, is a former Sunday school student at Essex Ethical. Matt has moved on in several areas since we last saw him. He began an acting career in the sixth grade, and two years later was performing Off-Broadway in “A Stoop On Orchard Street,” where he played the lead twice a week. He has performed mainly at Studio Players in Montclair,

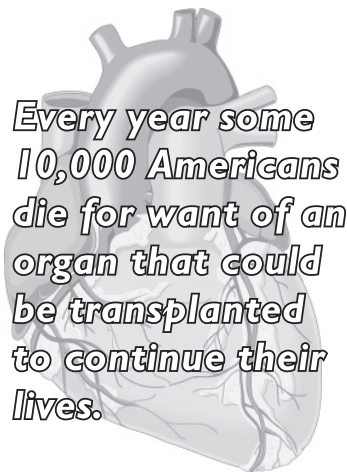


Matthew LaClair

where he has played Jack in “Jack and the Beanstalk,” Huckleberry Finn in “Tom Sawyer” and many other roles. He won the New Jersey Optimists’ Club State oratorical contest in eighth grade. He has also appeared in interview on “The New Yorkers,” a talk show that broadcasts in Manhattan. Matthew has previously won notoriety for his stance (or sits) regarding the pledge of allegiance (<http://barnson.org/node/640>). He is here to speak to us regarding his recent exposure of a proselytizing history teacher at his high school, which won him worldwide recognition on the blogs and major regional media coverage. (See for example, <http://lippard.blogspot.com/2006/11/public-school-teacher-tells-class-you.html> and links.)

Matthew’s father, Paul LaClair, former president at Essex Ethical, and New York attorney, will also be on hand to lend support and pick up any crumbs Matthew leaves behind, if any.

— *Paul LaClair*



Every year some 10,000 Americans die for want of an organ that could be transplanted to continue their lives.

EDITOR’S NOTE

The last day of each month (eg, Jan. 31) is the deadline for submissions for the issue *a whole month later* (eg, March). The reason for this is: It is sometimes a week before I receive all the articles, it takes 3–5 days to prepare the issue and get it to the printer and 4–6 days to get it printed and back to the office for mailing which can take 5–7 days, if all goes well. We then receive our newsletters in time for the events at the start of the new month.—HG

ETHICAL CULTURE SOCIETY OF ESSEX COUNTY

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ETHICAL CULTURE

SUNDAY MORNING PLATFORMS

January, 2007

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. 31 Boe Meyerson:

“Participant Discussion: Looking Backward, Looking Forward”

During this discussion participants will be invited to share their views of what was important to them during the past year. Topics can cover the entire range from personal, to familial, to congregational, public matters. We will then discuss what hopes are for the coming year. All participation is voluntary and those who wish only to listen are equally welcome.

Jan. 7 Boe Meyerson:

“Ethics and the Arts: the Connection?”

The questions to be discussed are: Is art moral? Is goodness beautiful?

Boe is the Leader of this Ethical Society and is also the Humanist Chaplain at Columbia University. She holds graduate degrees in Literature and Philosophy.

Jan 14 Lee Stuart:

*“The Bronx Renaissance:
A path to affordable housing.”*

As recently as the mid 1990’s, the South Bronx was known as the epitome of urban blight, intractable poverty, and generations of failed urban renewal policies in the United States. In 2006, the Bronx is celebrating a rebirth. The seeds of the Bronx Renaissance lie in faith based community organizing efforts starting in 1985. The talk will cover the early organizing efforts, first

internally as Catholic and Protestant churches came to a common understanding of a desirable future for their community that transcended their differences of creed, race, language and ethnicity, and then externally as with a united front, and organized as South Bronx Churches, they successfully negotiated with the City of New York, banks and private developers to create the policies and to make the massive investments that would eventually result in the rebirth of the South Bronx. Two signature projects, South Bronx Churches Nehemiah Housing which involved the construction of nearly 1,000 new homes and the Bronx Leadership Academy High School which sparked the small high school reform movement in New York City will be described.

Lee Stuart was trained as an ecologist, receiving her Ph.D. from the University of California at Davis and San Diego State University in 1983. She took what she thought was a six month break between post doctoral research appointments to set up a cooperative food assistance program in the South Bronx in 1985, but stayed for over 20 years. After the cooperative was established with a membership of over 10,000 families, Lee became the lead organizer for South Bronx Churches

as they began their work to transform the Bronx. Her primary focus as an organizer was on housing development and education reform. She now works in the Community Services and Adult Education programs at Bronx Community College.



Lee Stuart

“I come with a different way of looking at affordable housing than the typical developer,” explains Dr. Stuart. Nehemiah was primarily an organizing effort to reclaim a neighborhood that had been left vacant and abandoned since urban renewal efforts in the 1960’s and the City’s “planned shrinkage” policy of the 1970’s. The point was to reclaim the neighborhood by, for and with the people who had struggled through the abandonment.

Quoting from the chapter she co-wrote with John Heinemeier in the book, *Making Housing Happen: Faith-based Affordable Housing Models*, Dr. Stuart explains her successful partnership tripod approach, “When civil society is operating properly, the public, private and social sectors are mutually connected and the social sector has sufficient power to advance and protect the interest in the public arena.”

Dr. Stuart earned her Ph.D. in Ecology from San Diego State University and the University of California at Da-

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