



ETHICAL CULTURE

M O N T H L Y

VOLUME 28 NUMBER 7

Visit our web site: www.essexethical.org

MARCH 2009

SUNDAY MORNING PLATFORMS

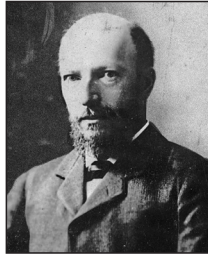
March 1 Leader Barbara (Boe) Meyerson, "Felix Adler Returns: An Instructive Fantasy"

It is traditional for Leaders to reserve their May platform date for presentations on the topic of our founder, Felix Adler only because the first Platform Meeting of the New York Society for Ethical Culture occurred on May 15, 1876 when Adler delivered his founding address. There is good reason to honor this tradition just as there is good reason to celebrate the Fourth of July on the 4th of July. Yet that practice is not (nor should it be) exclusive to a particular date. Any day is good enough to celebrate the founding of something good and beneficial when the spirit moves us. What good reason could anyone give for not celebrating a good thing more than once occasionally? And so therefore my platform topic this month will be an attempt to construct what our founder's response would be were he miraculously able to reappear one Sunday morning among us.

Boe is the Leader of the Ethical Culture Society of Essex County. She is also the Humanist Chaplain at Columbia University.

March 8 Dean Sluyter, "Buddhas in the Classroom"

Can the highest spiritual wisdom — the vision of Christ and Buddha, Shan-



karacharya and Socrates — find a place in ordinary American classrooms? Yes it can, says Dean Sluyter. For over 30 years, he has taught Literature of Enlightenment at The Pingry School. There he leads meditative "lab work" and explores writers such as Shakespeare, Beckett, Kerouac and Dickinson, as well as haiku, gospels and sutras, with the emphasis on revealing the sublime region of the transcendent where they all converge. In this talk, Dean will discuss his experience of seeing competitive, sometimes highly-stressed prep school students unfold their capacity for self knowledge and inner silence. He'll share the "natural meditation" approach that even restless seventeen-year-olds find easy to do and he'll suggest its profound implications for our educational system.

Dean Sluyter has led workshops throughout the U.S. since 1970. He has studied and practiced extensively in the Buddhist and Advaita traditions, completed numerous lengthy retreats and made pilgrimages to India, Nepal and Tibet. The author of several books and audio programs, including *The Zen Commandments* and *Cinema Nirvana: Enlightenment Lessons from the Movies*, Dean is also a volunteer prison chaplain for the New Jersey Department of Corrections. His web site is deansluyter.com.



March 15 Seth Kaplan, "The Challenges of State Building"

State Building is much in the news these days. From Iraq and Afghanistan to Somalia and the Congo, the United

States and the rest of the international community seek to stabilize fragile regimes and foster economic growth. Yet, fractured societies and weak governments combine to frustrate these efforts.

Why is state building so difficult? Is there anything in our approach that might be improved?

Fixing Fragile States lays bare the fatal flaws in current policies and explains why the only way to give these places a chance at peace and prosperity is to rethink how development really works. Flawed governance systems, not corrupt bureaucrats or armed militias, are the cancers that devour weak states. The cure, therefore, is not to send more aid or more peacekeepers but to redesign political, economic, and legal structures — to refashion them so they can leverage local traditions, overcome political fragmentation, expand governance capacities, and catalyze corporate investment.



Seth D. Kaplan is a business consultant to companies in developing countries as well as a foreign policy analyst.

His book, *Fixing Fragile States: A New Paradigm for Development* (Praeger, 2008), critiques current Western policies in fragile states and lays out a new approach to overcoming the problems they face — an approach that gives due weight to sociopolitical conditions, governance systems, human resource constraints, and investment environments. His articles on countries as varied as the Democratic Republic of Congo, Bolivia, and China have appeared in a *(continued)*

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 EIGHTH 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 (gilman.howard@gmail.com). 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.

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

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wide variety of journals and newspapers, including *the Washington Quarterly*, *Orbis*, *the Journal of Democracy*, *Policy Review*, *the New York Times*, *the International Herald Tribune*, *the Wall Street Journal*, *the Jerusalem Post*, and *China Business Review*.

A Wharton MBA, Kaplan has worked with several large multinational corporations, including Procter & Gamble and Compaq Computers. During his seven years in Shanghai, he founded four companies. As CEO of the largest of these, China College Management, Inc., he developed a chain of proprietary universities in east China.

Kaplan has lived and worked in Nigeria, Turkey, Japan, China, Taiwan, Israel, France, and the United States. He speaks fluent Mandarin Chinese and Japanese. He resides in New York.

March 22 Joe Gluck, "Music — Teacher and Students". A morning of discussion and performing, with Joe Gluck and some pupils.



Joe will be exploring the process of teaching/learning about music and how to play it; with talk and demonstration.

Joe Gluck, Music Director and Conductor of The New Jersey Intergenerational Orchestra, is a former member of the New Jersey Symphony, the Detroit Symphony and the St. Louis Symphony. He currently serves as concertmaster for numerous New Jersey organizations and conductor of the Stirling Chamber Orchestra.

Joe was often called upon to moderate and/or lecture at the pre-concert "Classical Conversations" with the New Jersey Symphony and now at Adult Schools and other Adult Learning facilities.

Joe has taught violin for more than 30 years and lectured extensively throughout the state. Besides his private teaching studio, he has coached for all the Youth Orchestras in the area. He is also Founder and Music Director of The Stirling Duo Amateur Chamber Music Workshop.

Associated with the NJIO since its incep-

tion, he has appeared as soloist, served as an advisor and presently is on the Board of Trustees.

March 29 Betty Levin, MA, CCMHC, "Quiet Miracles: My life as a therapist and the connection with Ethical Culture."

Levin will discuss the interaction between therapy and Ethical Culture, and how the two approaches have fed and enriched one another in her life, providing her passions with focus and meaningfulness.

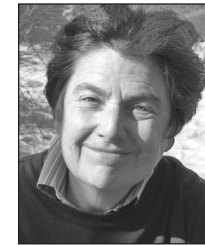


Betty Levin has been a member of the Ethical Culture Society of Essex County for 49 years and is its immediate past president. Her grandchildren are fourth generation Ethical Culturalists. Professionally, she has practiced humanistic therapy for 35 years. She is founder and one of the first presidents of the New Jersey Association of Women Therapists.

LEADER'S ARTICLE

More on Darwin and Lincoln

Since delivering my Platform Address on the subject of Lincoln and Darwin, I have continued reading on the subject which I find intriguing and believe to be well worth sharing with you all. It turns out that Darwin as well as both his parents and his maternal grandparents (Erasmus and Mary Darwin, and Jo-



siah and Sarah Wedgwood), were also opposed to slavery which was so prevalent in the British West Indies at the time. In fact, Josiah Wedgwood designed and manufactured an antislavery medallion that was used in the campaigns against slavery in both England and America. Benjamin Franklin, who was acquainted with both Erasmus Darwin and Josiah Wedgwood through his 'corresponding membership' in the Lunar Society, was given a medallion while he was in England and when he returned to Philadelphia received a shipment of these medal-

lions for use in the American antislavery movement.

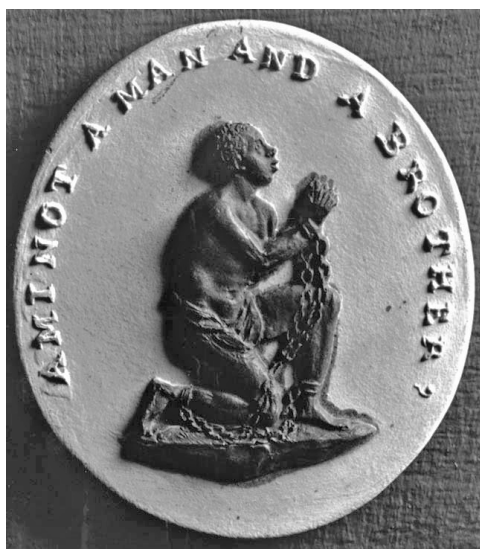
The medallion showed the image of a male slave. It bore the following inscription written by Erasmus Darwin (grandfather of Charles Darwin):

“E’en now in Afric’s groves with hideous yell

Fierce Slavery stalks, and slips the dogs of hell;

Hear him, ye Senates! Hear this truth sublime,

‘HE WHO ALLOWS OPPRESSION, SHARES THE CRIME’



SOCIAL ACTION COMMITTEE

Committee Makes Plans for Spring 2009

The Social Action Committee of the Ethical Culture Society of Essex County is preparing its second platform of the 2008-2009 season. Barry Zack is taking the lead on this one, with the whole Committee's participation. The platform will be on **April 19**, and the focus will be on Renewable Energy, especially how to help our audience members figure out how to reduce their carbon footprint. We decided on a rough format of ten minutes of overview on Global Warming followed by practical ways each individual can change in daily life, and

“YES WE CAN” CONCERT AND ART EXHIBITION

Date Change: Please note the new date for Concert previously scheduled for March 7th is March 21st, Saturday, at 2 p.m.

Please join us on Saturday, March 21st at 2 p.m. at the Society for a community gathering of musicians, an intergenerational audience, to honor and thank Jack Tiner for the donation to the society of a Baldwin piano, an ebony grand built in 1977. An exhibit of the art work of Marie Tiner, Jack's wife, will add to the beauty of the day.

The concert — “Yes We Can Jam” — will feature local professional jazz musicians like Jim Buchanan, bass, and his musical friends; Dave Shields, piano; Richard Alston (a great pianist that lives in Maplewood and is a professor of music at Essex County College). Others to be announced. Also our own Janet Mangano, (our Sunday morning guest pianist), Lisa Novemsky, folk guitarist, and Jeanine Rosh will offer musical tributes.

In order to open this event to everyone, as a community venture, there will be no charge for the concert. (Donations cheerfully accepted). Refreshments will be served. Take this chance to invite someone you know from the community to the society for an afternoon of fun. For information call Lisa Novemsky, 973-763-8293, or Jeanine Rosh, 973-258-9395. — *Jeanine*

finally to offer an opportunity for cards and letters to our legislators.

If you can't wait for the platform — check out the web sites Barry keeps for the Essex County Greens and South Orange Village at <http://www.essex-countygreens.org/> and <http://www.southorange.org/Environment/index.html>.

The group also discussed follow-up on our donation of writing materials to imprisoned immigrants at The Elizabeth Detention Center. We had a thank you from the group that organizes this, First Friends. Our Committee agreed that we should continue to collect supplies from the Society at large to send to the detainees.

Committee Chair Sue Willis also reported that we heard back from platform speaker Kal Wagenheim. Mr. Wagenheim is producing a book of writings by prisoners at Trenton State and we have offered to do something to help publicize the book — to give a book party or perhaps create and finance a post card or otherwise help with publicity. Wagenheim replied: “Many thanks! I am starting the publishing process and expect to have

the book out no later than February–March 2009. I will keep you posted!”

Please consider joining us — there is so much to do! Our next meeting is **Sunday, March 29, 2009**, after platform.

FROM THE UN

Women and The Millennium Goals

In the year 2000, in the historic moment we call the Millennium, the UN undertook an ambitious program. All the member states agreed to a challenge to meet the basic needs of the globe. They narrowed this vision of the world's wellbeing to a reduction of poverty, hunger and disease, increased education overall, increased opportunities for women, and increased survival for children and women.

The plan was designed to be affordable, measurable, and doable, with a target date of 2015 — both visionary and pragmatic. In the work of drafting these goals, it became clear that not only is there considerable overlap, but women play a very considerable role in development. (*continued*)

ETHICAL CULTURE SOCIETY OF ESSEX COUNTY

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ETHICAL CULTURE SOCIETY OF ESSEX COUNTY NEWSLETTER · MARCH 2009

Much progress depends on the status of women.

Women are over half the world's population. In many parts of the world they grow and harvest the food. They raise children, tend to the ill and aged as primary caretakers. Yet 2/3 of the world's uneducated children are girls, and 2/3 of the world's poorest people are female.

The future depends on children. The condition of children is inextricably connected to the status of women. Not surprisingly, the status of women is a reliable indicator of the wellbeing of a country. Their disempowerment reduces the ability of a country to progress. In the many parts of the world where they can not participate in public life, they are an untapped source of enterprise and creativity, and their absence shows.

Goal 3 of the Millennium goals is to promote gender equality and empower women. Goal 4 is to reduce child mortality. Goal 5 is to improve maternal health. UNICEF in its 2009 report focuses on the health of newborns and their mothers. Although many developing countries have made good progress in improving child survival rates, still millions of children die before the age of 5 from preventable causes. A child born in an undeveloped country is over 13 times more

likely to die in the first five years of life than one in a developed country.

In the past decade, concerted intervention has shown improved survival of young children, but sadly this progress has definitely not been true for mothers in the undeveloped world. Having a child is among the most serious health risk for women. Every year more than half a million women die as a result of pregnancy or childbirth complications. They are 300 times more likely to die during pregnancy or in childbirth than if they lived in rich countries. What is required is prenatal care by skilled attendants, adequate nutrition and postpartum care.

Women are over half the world's population. In many parts of the world they grow and harvest the food ... raise children, tend to the ill and aged ... Yet 2/3 of the world's uneducated children are girls, and 2/3 of the world's poorest people are female.

Ensuring access to reproductive health and family planning services for all could help to avert up to 35% of maternal deaths. Globally, some 200 million women and men who say they would like to use family planning

do not have adequate access to good quality contraception.

Since the election of President Obama, US policy has completely changed. Access to safe and effective family planning is one of the best methods to prevent unintended pregnancies. He will restore US funding to UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund — an agency whose support was cut back by the previous administration because it promoted family planning over the “abstinence only” agenda. Further, Obama has lifted the “global gag rule” which refused US money to any organization that provides or even discusses abortion.

The difference in pregnancy risk between women in developing countries and the industrial world is a silent tragedy and often termed the greatest health divide in the world. It is a moral outrage that millions die when they could be saved by proven cost-effective interventions. Saving these lives is the smart thing to do. It is also an issue of human rights and justice. If you want to help see UNFPA (www.unfpa.org) and UNICEF (www.unicef.org).

— *Phyllis Ehrenfeld President National Service Conference of the American Ethical Union and representative to the UN. Dr Sylvain Ehrenfeld, International Humanist Ethical Union representative to the UN*