



ETHICAL CULTURE

M O N T H L Y

VOLUME 32 NUMBER 3

Visit our web site: www.essexethical.org

NOVEMBER 2012

NOVEMBER PLATFORMS

Platforms begin at 11 a.m. All are welcome. Platforms are subject to change without notice. For information, call 973-763-1905. Visit our web site: www.essexethical.org



Shabbat Shalom, Y'all! by Jennifer Anne Moses

November 4 Jennifer Moses, “Word and Image: Channelling the World’s Creativity”

The writer and painter talks about her experiences working among full-Gospel African-American Christians in the Deep South, where she lived for years and how those experiences opened her up to her own best artistic intuitions.

Jennifer Anne Moses is the author, most recently, of *Visiting Hours* (Fomite Press), a novel in stories. Her earlier books are *Bagels And Grits: A Jew On The Bayou* and *Food and Whine*. She’s also a painter and her work has been widely shown in the South.



More info on her at <http://www.jenniferannemosesarts.com/>

November 11 Dr. Francesca Bremner, “The Conflict in Sri Lanka and How Americans Can Help End It”

The Government of Sri Lanka and the Tamil rebels in the north of Sri Lanka have engaged in a bloody war for a separate state for Tamils for the

past 30 years. The government of Sri Lanka ended the war in 2008 with a massacre of 40,000 civilians and the internment into camps of more than 200,000 civilians. The rebels on the other hand used the civilians as human shields in an effort to stop the rampaging army from destroying them.



The war is over, yet the toll on the civilians continues with militarization of the north in which the Tamil civilians have lost their voice. This talk explores the roots of the conflict and opens the discussion on how citizens in the USA could push for the rights of the civilians in the north of Sri Lanka. The US government has taken a stand on the human rights violations by bringing a resolution at the UN which holds the government responsible for processes of reconciliation. The talk will open the door to a discussion of the questions, how can we, as citizens of an organization interested in human rights, monitor the progress of this matter? And how could we activate the Department of State to hold the Sri Lankan government accountable for the rights of Tamil civilians in the north?

Dr. Francesca Bremner (Ph.D., Columbia University) is an independent international researcher for organizations and counts amongst her clients the Asian Development Bank, The United Nations, The US Department of State and the German Government. Francesca is Sri Lankan born and has lived in the USA for 25 years, and has over ten years of experience working in the war zones in the north of Sri Lanka. (*Postponed from June 10*)

November 18 Martha Gallahue, “Are We Who We Think We Are?”

Using her recent experience as a psychotherapist, Martha will share her perceptions of what is changing in the treatment room. She will, with the help of Dan Siegal, neuropsychiatrist, Donna Orange, psychoanalyst and Alison Bechtel, author and comic strip artist, identify how attachment theory and the hermeneutics of trust influence pop culture. In all of her talks, she shares her own discoveries of the relevant and meaningful message in ethical culture.



November 25 Annual Post-Thanksgiving Gratitude Colloquy

Details to be announced. Before the season of giving and getting, we plan to wallow in the pleasure of stuff we already have and love, with — where appropriate — pictures, examples, and samples brought along for show-and-tell-and-share.

Folk Arts Fridays at Ethical

Sing-along and jam with friends November 9, 7:30 p.m. (second Friday of each month, September through June) at the Ethical Culture Society, 516 Prospect St., Maplewood, NJ 07040. Bring acoustic string and rhythm instruments, join in playing, singing or listening with us. Bring some refreshments to share. Folk Fridays have expanded to invite all crafts people in the society to come and listen to music while doing crafts! Everyone is invited!

Contact: lnovemsky@comcast.net or (973) 763-8293

Ethical Culture Society of Essex County



Martha Gallahue, *Interim Leader*
Boe Meyerson, *Leader Emerita*

Andrew Weinberger, *President*
Zia Durrani, *Vice President*
Martin Cotler, *Treasurer*
Rosalie Sussman, *Secretary*

Trustees:
Karen Bokert
Betty Levin
Lisa Novemsky
Allen Parmet
Mira Stillman

EC Monthly Platforms Editor
Elaine Durbach
Editor/graphics: Howard Gilman

Editor's Note

Newsletter articles, announcements, etc., not to exceed 150 words in length, must be received by the FIRST of the month for inclusion in the following month's edition. Submit items to: Howard Gilman, newsletter editor, preferably via email at: gilman.howard@gmail.com. Items can also be dropped off at 15 So. Pierson Rd., Maplewood; or, if you put something for the newsletter in the EC office's mail slot or in the mail, please give me a call at (973) 763-3914 to be sure I know about it, especially if your item is time-sensitive. — *Editor*

Editor reserves right to edit for length, clarity and content. Opinions offered in this publication are those of the authors.

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Our web site:
www.essexethical.org

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

LEADER'S COLUMN

An Inspiring Surprise at Platform

Martha Gallahue

When, in October, our Platform speaker cancelled due to illness, Elaine Durbach, Platform Chair invited a friend of her son Gabe to fill in. Lucy Schmitz spoke about how teens are promoting inclusivity and preventing bullying at Columbia High School.



Lucy Schmitz

This vibrant and articulate Senior, aided by Elaine in an interview format, shared with us her connection with Garden State Equality and Spectrum, the Gay Straight Alliance in the High School. Steve Goldstein, State Chair described Columbia as a Model School for Equality.

With 107,500 members, Garden State Equality is the state's largest civil rights organization of any kind – not just the state's largest organization advocating for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender equality. Since Garden State Equality's founding in 2004, New Jersey has enacted 213 LGBT civil rights laws at the state, county and municipal levels. That's more LGBT civil rights laws enacted in less time than in any other state, ever in American history. And in February 2012, New Jersey became the third state in American history to pass a marriage equality bill under a Governor opposed to marriage equality. Our Governor pressured legislators to vote against the marriage equality bill right up until the final moment of the final vote.

Spectrum is the High School association of the Gay/Straight Alliance determined to create an inclusive community among the over 2000 students at Columbia High School. Gay Straight alliance is intended to provide a safe and supportive environment for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer/questioning (sexuality and gender) (LGBTQ) youth and their straight allies. As Lucy pointed out, however, these community based alliances become safe havens for all the designated minority students in the school.

She began her public service with the first

Presidential Campaign of Barack Obama when she was 13. "I love Campaigns," she stated. Her personal activism combined with a genuine desire to give voice to those experiencing marginalization was inspiring. Lucy is former Chair of the MLK Club in Maplewood. Lucy invited partnership with our Society and several suggestions around education and advocacy were raised.

As I report on her talk, enough cannot be said of Elaine's dedicated and creative service to the Society. And I am reminded as well of the many services members make regularly and perseveringly to bring out the best of ethical culture. It is a privilege and honor to be part of this open-hearted, generous and wonderfully connected Society.

Remember

We are continuing to collect children's books, canned and boxed foods, and toys for distribution to poor families by the Parenting Center in Maplewood.

— *Mira Stillman*

Social Action Committee Plans a Busy Fall

The Social Action Committee had its first fall meeting on September 30, 2012, with a visit from the Platform speaker Kathy O'Leary. She gave several ideas for ways to support the work of IRATE/First Friends on the immigration detention centers for Essex County, which include the county jail (800 immigrant detainees) and the privately managed Delaney Hall (400 immigrant detainees). She suggested visiting a Freeholders' meeting to express our views at the Public Speaks, and to get in touch personally with some of the Freeholders, especially the new one, Brendan W. Gill. The objective is to get changes made in how immigration detainees are treated. They need more visiting hours and family contract visits as well as no restrictions (for those detained in the jail) regarding attorney and clergy visits. Both immigration detention centers need better physical and mental health care.

The group decided to take a position opposing economic incentives to local govern-

(continues)

ments for imprisoning immigrants. We plan a carding on this issue, and hope to arrange more speakers.

We also had several reports: Lisa Novemsky and Zia Durrani reported that the Essex Time Exchange is up and running. Returning Vets Project liaison Myron Katz reported that the subcommittee has met and is working on permission to go into East Orange or Lyons Veterans' Hospital with programs. Martha Gallahue talked about her vision of a peace project from within the society, beginning with a steering committee/focus group to include Zia, Diane Beeny and Mira Stillman.

Upcoming projects include a continuing stationery collection that IRATE/First Friends provides to needy Immigrant Detainees and a winter coat collection that will send coats to the Valley Settlement House for distribution.

The next meeting has been set tentatively for November 11.

FROM THE UN

Measuring National Progress

Joseph Stiglitz put it well: "What you measure affects what you do ... if you don't measure the right thing you don't do the right thing."

So how should we judge the progress of a nation?

The much-quoted Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is a tally of goods and services bought and sold with no distinction between transactions that add to well-being and those that diminish it. A car accident that creates business for hospitals, insurers, lawyers and auto repair shops increases the GDP. So does economic activity that damages the environment. But household and volunteer work, which improve our well-being, aren't counted if no money is exchanged.

The man who created the GDP, New Deal economist Simon Kuznets

warned us not to use it as the sole measure of a nation's health. As he told Congress, "Distinctions must be kept in mind between quantity and quality of growth, between cost and returns and between the short and the long run. Goals for more growth should specify more growth of what for what." We would also add "for whom." The GDP includes no measure of income distribution. For example from 1973 to 1993 the GDP of the United States rose by over 50 percent while wages declined by almost 14.

So how should we judge the progress of a nation? ... It's time to measure what is most important — improvements in national well-being.

The GDP was better than no measure at all. During World War II, it allowed policy makers to track production for the war and it now gives us useful information on consumer purchases, which are linked to new jobs. But the GDP should not be our sole measure of progress.

The current economic crisis has spurred renewed interest in finding alternatives. Last year President Sarkozy of France created a **Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress**. Noble laureates Joseph Stiglitz and Amartya Sen, who serve on the commission, have both urged that new assessment tools incorporate a broader concern for human welfare than just economic growth.

Several new ways to measure national progress have been proposed:

The **Genuine Progress Indicator** adjusts the GDP for changes in income distribution, adds the value of household and volunteer work and subtracts for crime and pollution.

The **Gross National Happiness** measure includes subjective and objective indicators such as sustainable development, preservation of cultural values, conservation of the natural environment and good governance. This idea comes from King Wangchuck, the former ruler of Bhutan.

The **Happy Planet Index** combines subjective life satisfaction, based on surveys, life expectancy and environmental impact as measured by the ecological footprint which is based on a complicated formula relating to CO₂ emissions and the use of natural resources.

The trouble with these and other indexes is that they include data that requires interpretation.

The founding charter of the United Nations calls for the promotion of social progress and a better standard of life. The UN publishes a yearly Human Development Report, which tabulates each member country's GDP (Gross Domestic Product) — the dollar value of all the goods and services produced by a nation that year — as well as measures of life expectancy, education, health, nutrition, sanitation, the availability of clean water, gender discrimination and the distribution of income. The aim of the HDR is to track how development affects daily life. To measure progress, the United Nations frequently refers to the **Human Development Index** (HDI) which combines GDP, life expectancy, and educational level. As an example, Oman, which has a very high GDP per capita, but relatively low educational levels, ranks 58th, lower in HDI than Uruguay, which has about 60 percent of its GDP and has rank 46.

It's time to measure what is most important — improvements in national well-being.

Dr. Sylvain Ehrenfeld, representative to the UN from the International Humanist Ethical Union and the National Service Conference of the American Ethical Union and Temma Ehrenfeld

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ETHICAL CULTURE SOCIETY OF ESSEX COUNTY NEWSLETTER · NOVEMBER 2012

Place of Awakening*

Did you remain for coffee after my September 16th talk on “Living Well...”? You would have witnessed an extraordinary event in the living room where, just past the delicious goodies, a live butterfly was born.

Trina Paulus, a friend attending the talk, brought her caterpillar pupae with her, knowing butterflies were about to emerge. She is author of the parable, *Hope for the*



**A notable term for our Essex Ethical Culture Society respectfully designated by the leader of the Morristown Unitarian Fellowship.*

Flowers, a tale of caterpillars eventually renouncing the “rat race” of the competitive world to become the beautiful creatures they were meant to be. And there in our living room emerged this

lovely creature fulfilling its destiny. (See accompanying photograph.)

She left the remaining pupae with Elaine Durbach, who reports another butterfly emerged that evening. Can we say we are midwives to meaningful life here at our Essex Ethical Culture Society?

— E. Betty Levin

p.s. Trina donated a copy of her book *Hope for the Flowers* to our library. I make a gift of the book

often to children and others. You can purchase copies from Trina at (973) 746-8715. Incidentally, it has been translated into Chinese and soon in Thai by a Buddhist monk.