



ETHICAL CULTURE

M O N T H L Y

VOLUME 28 NUMBER 2

Visit our web site: www.essexethical.org

OCTOBER 2008

SUNDAY MORNING PLATFORMS

Oct 5 Leader Barbara (Boe) Meyerson, "Repentance and Forgiveness"

Late September (29th) and early October (9th) are the dates of the Jewish High Holy Days: *Rosh Hashanah* (Day of Judgment) and *Yom Kippur* (Day of Atonement). Since Ethical Culture is concerned with ethics and our Founder, Felix Adler, had roots in Judaism, it seems fitting that we devote some time to discussion of these important themes that are not only a centerpiece of Judaism and Christianity but also of Ethical Culture. Our often glib and liberal orientation has discouraged discussion of such traditional topics. Yet, they remain essential aspects of the moral life. Unlike the traditional religions, we do not ask pardon or forgiveness from a God, but rather from each other, from those we have wronged. On Sunday Oct. 5th, I will discuss the Humanistic dimensions, importance, and relevance of these subjects for Ethical Humanists.

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



Oct 12 Lou Ledesma, "Are you creating the life you want? Who are we and what are we creating?"

Ledesma, the founder of Keep It Simple, extracts wisdom from a blend of philosophy and science. He will be presenting an exploration into the

world we co-create, including the five areas that bring us satisfaction, and five steps to make conscious choices on how to maximize that satisfaction. He says, "From the core of our being we choose our life experience to grow. We just are not always aware of conflicting thoughts that affect us every day."

Using the principals he teaches, Louis L. Ledesma cofounded Keep It Simple, LLC, authored the book *Simply Business*, and promoted/produced the DVD *Yoga For Warriors*; all within the period of one year.

His experience at the World Trade Center on 9/11 brought into focus the importance of living his life fully and a commitment to "Be Present Now". His passion is inspiring people to maximize their personal and professional potential by being fully engaged and approaching life/work tasks with inspiration, passion, ease, grace and joy.

Drawing from his past, his trainings are colored by a love for all things beautiful, developed while working as an architect in New York City for over 25 years, and the exuberant, playful style he learned through music and stage performance as a child. Being an ordained minister, married and a father of three has also allowed him to test and refine his concepts in the laboratory called *life*.

Through KeepItSimpleSeries.com and AskLouLedesma.com, Lou has offered his message to thousands on the web and continues to study and learn more about spirituality, quantum physics and its application to business and

everyday life. This mixture of spirituality and science and its application to physical experience has revealed new worlds of possibility which are as fascinating as they are practical.

Lou and his family live in South Orange.

Oct 19 Mary Beth Walsh, "Special Education and the No Child Left Behind battles"

Dr. Walsh will speak on the state of special education in the South Orange-Maplewood school district, the impact of special education costs on the annual school budget, and the relationship between educating students with special needs and our communal commitment to diversity.



Mary Beth Walsh, PhD, is the mother of a child with autism who has served on the Executive Committee of the South Orange Maplewood Special Education Parent Teacher Organization for the past three years. She is co-editor of the new resource, *Autism and Faith: A Journey into Community*.

Oct 26 Megan McWilliams (aka Green Diva Meg), "Ethics in the New Sustainable Vision"

The former publisher of *Relevant Times* magazine, a popular regional magazine about sustainable living and professional blogger on the topic of low-stress sustainable living will offer humorous and helpful insights into



Platforms begin at 11 a.m. All are welcome. Platforms are subject to change without notice. For information, contact the Society office, 973-763-1905.

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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 (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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Our web site: www.essexethical.org

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

Attention members! Please submit your email addresses to ethicalessessex@netscape.com to receive newsletter and other special event notices.

“going green” from her many years of experience as a busy single mother living in a suburban setting. She will discuss sustainable living, “Green Washing”, and Yes, you can be an ethical carnivore.

Megan McWilliams has worked with, interviewed and played with high profile celebrities and green gurus like Ed Begley, Jr., Willie Nelson, Woody Harrelson, Darryl Hanna, Marsha Mason and many less known, but wonderful forces in the movement to a healthier, more conscious way of living. She has three daughters, and lives in Boonton.

PLEASE MARK YOUR CALENDARS

T'ai Chi Chih class begins October 6

We are pleased to announce that T'ai Chi Chih classes are being offered at our Society starting Monday, October 6, for 5 sessions. The fee is \$75 with the first session being a sample session. The option of enrolling is after the first session.

The instructor is Daniel B. Pienciak, an accredited T'ai Chi Chih instructor and Certified Body Energy Practitioner.

For further information, and registration, call Betty Levin, registrar, at 973-763-1033. Also, consult the Ethical Culture Web site, www.essexethical.org/TaiChi.

Poetry Workshops led by Sylvia Kramer

to be held on the 1st Tuesday of each month at 7:30 p.m. starting in September.

Ethical Philosophy Lecture / Discussions

led by **Boe Meyerson** (M.A. in Philosophy from Columbia Univ.). Sessions will be held on the 2nd and 4th Sundays at 1 p.m. following the Social Hour after Platform Meetings. The focus will be on exploring different Ethical theories.

Public Affairs Forum led by Boe Meyerson.

This will meet on the 1st and 3rd Sundays of the Month at 1 p.m. following the Social Hour after Platform Meetings. The

focus of each discussion will be on current issues and events which raise ethical issues and/or are likely to have significant impact on our lives or the lives of others. Participants will be invited to make recommendations regarding the issues to be covered.

If you are interested in attending any of these programs, please call the office (973-763-1905) or email the office (ethicalessessex@netscape.net) to register for the course. Just give your name and phone number or email address and state which course(s) you wish to attend. Non-members and friends are welcome as well as members. There is no fee.

LEADER'S ARTICLE

Blindness of Misplaced Morality and Sexual/Reproductive Obsessions: The Religious Right and Its Broad Influence

Despite occasional lapses based on political proclivities, I have usually found the



New York Times to be reasonably rational and quite reliable. However, most recently I was appalled at the startling lack of focus in an article entitled “Palin Disclosures Spotlight McCain’s Screening Process” which appeared on page one, September 2, 2008.

This article clearly stated at the beginning that Ms. Palin, McCain’s choice for Vice President, was a member for two years of the Alaska Independence Party “which has at times sought a vote on whether the state should secede from the U.S.A.” However, after mentioning this astounding fact which calls into question Gov. Palin’s patriotism and commitment to this nation, the article goes on to discuss at far greater length the fact that Gov. Palin’s 17-year-old single daughter is pregnant and the attendant scandal this poses. I expect this behavior from the religious right and not from the *Times*.

I find it astounding that the fact that Ms. Palin supported the Alaska Independence

Party was given such short shrift as compared to the indiscretion of her daughter who was one year away from adulthood. Alas and alack, the good grey *Times* is getting slightly more grey than good.

— *Boe Meyerson*

FROM THE UN

Peacekeeping and the International Criminal Court (ICC)

Crimes against humanity continue. World opinion is less willing to tolerate these atrocities. Peacekeeping and the ICC are a first line of defense in the struggle against conflicts and impunity. This is evidenced by the rise in the use of UN peacekeepers and the development of limited-time war tribunals and the more vigorous activities of the ICC, thankfully now a permanent institution determined to pursue and prosecute criminals.

This intensifying consciousness promotes the mission of the UN to further international peace and security. Because of the cold war, in the first 40 years in the UN's history, only 13 peacekeeping operations were organized. In the 20 years since then 47 missions were developed. Over the past few years the demand for peacekeeping operations has greatly increased in part because of a greater willingness to use them.

Today there are more than 110,000 men and women — there is an increasing use of women — deployed in conflict zones. They come from nearly 120 countries, representing a sevenfold increase in UN peacekeeping since 1999.

The UN does not have its own military force and depends on contributions from member states. The UN's Security Council creates and

defines the details and clear rules of engagement of the peacekeeping missions. Peacekeeping troops, popularly known as blue helmets, participate under terms carefully negotiated by their governments and remain under overall authority of these governments, while serving under UN operational command. The authority to deploy peacekeepers remains with the governments that volunteered them, as does the responsibility for pay, discipline and personnel matters.

In May 2008, a wreath-laying ceremony at UN headquarters in New York honored the more than 2,400 peacekeepers who have given their lives in the cause of peace over the past 60 years. The number of peacekeepers recently killed in the Sudan testifies to the deadliness of the task. Studies show that generally as peacekeeping operations increase, casualties drop. The Rand Corporation has examined eight completed peacekeeping mis-

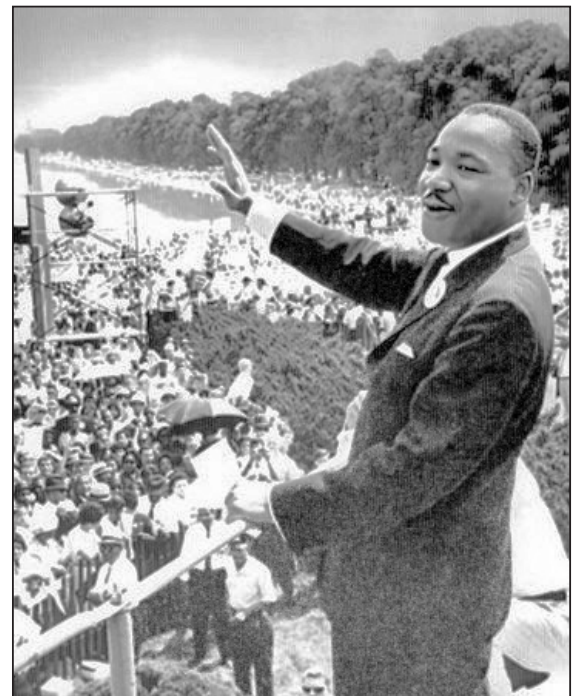
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MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DISCUSSION GROUPS START IN OCTOBER

Co-sponsored by the South Orange/Maplewood Community Coalition on Race and the Ethical Culture Society of Essex County, the Martin Luther King, Jr. groups are set to begin October 28.

The full schedule, as submitted by the Community Coalition at the last social action committee meeting, is below. All dates are from 7:30–9 p.m. at the Ethical Culture Society:

- Tues., Oct 28
- Wed., Oct 29
- Wed., Nov 5
- Tues., Nov 11
- Wed., Nov 12
- Tues., Nov 18
- Wed., Nov 19 –
Event Closing /
Community Night



October marks the CCR's annual observance of Coalition Month. There will be a wide variety of opportunities to get involved, starting with a social gathering/fundraiser and including sing-ins, study groups, the town-meeting-style Report to the Community and more.

Please check the CCR's web site at <http://www.twotowns.org> or call the Events Line at 973-761-6116, ext. 6, for more details and updates on times and locations of events.

ETHICAL CULTURE SOCIETY OF ESSEX COUNTY

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ETHICAL CULTURE SOCIETY OF ESSEX COUNTY

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“The rise in consciousness, in spite of the many political conflicts among nations, is a very exciting and welcome development. From an ethical standpoint, whatever we can do to contribute to this consciousness is a keystone of our effort.”



Nigerian soldiers riding through Genina with the hybrid peacekeeping force in Darfur sponsored by the United Nations and the African Union.

Photo: Lynsey Addario for The New York Times

From the UN (continued from page 3) sions and concluded that two-thirds of them were successful.

Recently, there have been allegations of abuse and sexual scandals among peacekeepers in the Congo and elsewhere. The UN is very concerned but is caught in a legal and administrative bind. It can and does investigate but has no jurisdiction over the alleged culprits. Only their home states have the authority to try and punish them. Some countries prefer to ignore these events. The UN can dismiss those involved and recommend their return. An entire Moroccan troop was suspended for discipline reasons. A police contingent in the Congo was sent home for conduct violations.

The UN has strengthened its procedures. A recently adopted Model Memorandum of Understanding (MMU) requires governments to

explicitly agree to strengthen legal proceedings, and training of troops before sending them into the field. This new arrangement was applied to alleged abuses by Sri Lankan peacekeepers in Haiti. Over 100 soldiers now face court martial.

The world's response to atrocities is changing. A further sign of this burgeoning mood is the recent confidence, independence and renewed vigor of the ICC and other tribunals to pursue accountability and impunity of criminal genocidal behavior. Witness the possible indictment of Sudanese president Bashir. This unprecedented move raises the moral dilemma of PEACE versus JUSTICE. Will it make peace efforts more difficult and jeopardize humanitarian efforts or will it bring pressure for accommodation? It remains to be seen.

A most wanted war criminal, Karadzic, former Bosnian Serb president

was recently arrested after a 13-year hunt for war crimes in Srebrenica. The cause — Serbia's wish to join the European Union, who demanded his arrest.

The time is coming when a country's leaders can no longer commit atrocities against their population and then peacefully retire in Switzerland.

With the aid of improved communications world opinion knows more about these abuses and are less willing to accept them. The rise in consciousness, in spite of the many political conflicts among nations, is a very exciting and welcome development. From an ethical standpoint, whatever we can do to contribute to this consciousness is a keystone of our effort. — *Phyllis Ehrenfeld, President of the National Service Conference of the AEU & NSC Representative to the UN; Dr Sylvain Ehrenfeld, IHEU Representative to the UN*