



ETHICAL CULTURE

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JANUARY 2009

SUNDAY MORNING PLATFORMS

Jan 4 Leader **Barbara (Boe) Meyerson**, *"Israel's Progress Toward Peace With Palestinians"*

Israel's struggle to establish a peaceful relationship with the Palestinians has been a long and bitter one. After WWII, when Great Britain sectioned off and gave Jewish settlers the land that would become Israel, it gave away a portion of its empire, land that it had conquered and that was then occupied by Palestinians. This act was at one and the same time an injustice to the Palestinians and a rightful and needed humanitarian act which was motivated by the moral recognition that after the Holocaust, Jews needed a place on this planet that was their own and historically that was Israel. The irony here is that it was Nazi Germany that committed the atrocities against the Jews, but it was the Palestinians who lost control of their land. This has remained an ongoing tragedy since then with minimal progress towards resolution. However, recently, there have been significant changes which give reason to be hopeful. Boe will discuss those changes and their prospects.

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

Jan 11 **Dr. Martin Luther King Panel**, *"The Many Rooms of the Mansion"*

A group of people who took part in study series on Dr. King's speeches co-sponsored by the ECS Social Action Committee and the South Orange/

Maplewood Community Coalition on Race will describe the new insights they gained from his words and from the group interaction. They studied three speeches: "Pilgrimage to Nonviolence;" "Letter from the Birmingham Jail;" and "Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence."

ECS members Betty Levin, Lisa Novemsky, Gladys Smith, and Terri Sues were among those who took part. They and other guests will lead the discussion.

Jan 18 **Tom Allibone**, *"The Digital TV Time Bomb: Is your TV going to go dark on Feb 17, 2009?"*

The much-heralded switch to all digital television broadcasting next February promises vastly improved service — but the truth is that millions of Americans forced to lay out money for a digital TV (DTV) converter box may still be left with no service or TV signals at all. Tom Allibone presents evidence and warns that those who choose to enjoy free TV via the public airwaves which broadcasters are required to provide, may be left without service after Feb. 17 and with DTV converter boxes that don't pick up signals. Tom will address the real picture, what we are not being told, who *is* at fault and who is at risk.

Tom Allibone, President of LTC Consulting, is the Director of Teletruth's Auditing Division and Chairman of the TeleTruth New Jersey Chapter. He has been a telecommunications professional with over 30 years experience.

Over the last decade, Tom has been recognized as one of the leaders in the field of telecommunications auditing. In 2003, Tom was appointed to serve on the FCC Consumer Advisory Committee where he championed changes to the truth-in-billing regulations.

Tom is often quoted in the New Jersey Press for his views and insights on telecommunications issues affecting New Jersey consumers.

Tom is an active member of the community and lives in West Amwell Township with his wife Pat and two children. He is past president and served as a member of the Board of Directors for the Lambertville-New Hope Rotary Club. Tom was cited by the US Congress and state and local government representatives for his outstanding achievements and volunteer work with Rotary.

Jan 25 **Ed Madara**, *"Building Mutual Help Communities"*

To learn how to better deal with a chronic illness, overcome an unhealthy addiction, or cope with any one of hundreds of other stressful life problems, well over a hundred thousand people in New Jersey are currently involved in helping themselves and others within over 5,000 community support groups across the state. For the most part, these mutual help groups, which are available at little or no cost, continue to be initially started by ordinary people with no special training or funding, except *(continued)*



Please help us help those in need

You are invited to bring canned or boxed food items for the food pantry box in our front hall. Donations go to the Hillside Pantry Program.

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.

Ethical Culture Society of Essex County



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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 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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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 ethicalessex@netscape.com to receive newsletter and other special event notices.

for their personal experience with the problem and their dedication to helping "others in the same boat." Once a specific new type of self-help group is started, just the knowledge of it can inspire others to replicate the effort, and another national or international group is born.

Ed Madara, Director of the NJ & American Self-Help Group Clearinghouses, will share stories and insights into how these volunteer-run organizations are created, develop and help their members, as well as how anyone can tap their value and potential to the benefit of families and friends by simply learning more about them.

Ed received a BA in Sociology (Fordham College '69), and after military service that included a year in Vietnam, obtained an MS in Community Development (University of Missouri '72). He initially worked as a community organizer in the South Bronx, NY. As community consultant with St. Clare's Hospital's behavioral health services in Denville, NJ, he founded the NJ Self-Help Group Clearinghouse in 1980, and the American Self-Help Group Clearinghouse in 1990. Details on services available from both Clearinghouses are at: www.selfhelpgroups.org.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Inauguration Party & Ball

Come celebrate the historic event on Inauguration Day. We will watch the Presidential Inauguration live on our large screen TV at the Society on Tuesday, January 20, at 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. (pending actual broadcast time).



Then join us for the festivities, food, dancing and re-broadcast of the inauguration in the evening. January 20, starting at 7:15 p.m. **Please bring food, refreshments and spirits to share.** Free — Donations requested. See web site (www.essexethical.org) for more details or call coordinator Betty Levin, 973-763-1903.

Ethical Culture Society of Essex County
516 Prospect St. (corner of Parker Ave)
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ethicalessex@netscape.com

"Thank You, Jack" Fund Raiser Concert

March 7 is the date to reserve on your calendars! We are saying thank you to Jack Tiner for the donation of his Baldwin piano in a gala we call "Yes We Can, Jam!" 2 p.m. is the time we get it on with this exciting gathering of local professional musicians (to be announced) as well as own "amateurs" in a afternoon of music for all ages.



The piano — *Yes It Can* — a Baldwin ebony grand piano built in 1977.

The music — *Yes It Does* — jazz, Broadway, classical and who knows what else!

The venue — *Yes We Can* — at the society on March 7 at 2 p.m. We want everyone to hear this great instrument. Refreshments will be served. For information, call Lisa Novemsky, Jeanine Rosh or the office. We can't wait to see you there!

Ethical Philosophy — lecture/discussions led by Boe Meyerson (M.A. in Philosophy from Columbia Univ.), 2nd and 4th Sundays of the month 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, 1st and 3rd Sundays 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 e-mail the office (ethicalessex@netscape.net) to register for the course. Just give your name and phone number or e-mail address and state which course(s) you wish to attend. Non-members and friends are welcome as well as members. There is no fee.

T'ai Chi Classes — Our classes were successfully launched and will be continued into the new year, Mondays at 10 a.m. — January

12, 19 and 26; February 2 and 9 — 5 sessions for \$75. We are fortunate to have an outstanding certified teacher, Daniel Pienciak. Intermediate level sessions can be arranged. For further information, or for information about at our Society, call registrar Betty Levin, 973-763-1033. Also, consult the Ethical Culture Web site, www.essexethical.org/TaiChi.

Veterans Welcome Home Project

The “Welcome Home Project” for veterans of the Vietnam, Iraq and other wars, was launched with our first meeting on Saturday, November 29. Two vets attended as well as Ethical Culture members Dr. Ed Bokert (organizer), his wife Karen, Fred Sebastian and Betty Levin. We discussed reentry issues, peer support as well as actions contributing to growth and support and how to encourage family support.

For January meeting date, call Ed Bokert 973-762-6036 or email ethicalessex@netscape.com; also for information, contact Betty Levin 973-763-1033 or go to the society’s web site, www.essexethical.org.

The Welcome Home Project is a program for helping veterans and families of veterans transform and transcend the effects of war, before, during or after deployment. We offer a safe space for veterans and families to come together and share their stories, struggles, accomplishments and solutions. And the help of others. (Note: This is a support group, not formal therapy.) Meetings are held at the Ethical Culture Society, the program is free and confidential (donations welcome).

LEADER’S ARTICLE

On December 5th, there was a front page article in the NY Times about the horrors of the drug trade in Mexico. The illegal drug trade and the violent competition among drug trading groups has escalated to the point that hospitals are no



longer safe. Following street fights among competing drug gangs, gang members will pursue wounded members of other drug selling gangs into hospitals to finish their deadly work. In the course of these violent acts, hospital staff have been wounded or killed. This is an ongoing outrageous business that continues to invade the heart and soul of the peace loving people of Mexico. But Mexico is not the only victim of the vicious drug trade. Americans are also attacked in the streets of cities and robbed at gun point by penniless addicts too poor to buy their “fix” from their drug dealer. This is a deplorable situation. But the answer is not more law enforcement. The answer is less enforcement and more intelligent options. The only reason the drug trade is so violent is that non-prescribed narcotics are illegal. Those who are addicted to them are at the mercy of a market which can and does inflate the cost of its merchandise because the sellers know they are the only source. The price is obviously inflated because it is illegal and because the exploitative sellers are out to get whatever they can. Consequently, illegal drug users who are not financially well off and cannot afford the market’s prices will resort to crime in order to get their fix. They may have begun drug usage as a recreation, but soon it becomes a necessity since withdrawal is extremely painful without medical assistance. Desperate drug addicts will then resort to crime to meet the imperious demands of their addiction. Were the price of co-

caine less high, it would be another matter. The high cost drives the violent street crime committed by addicts.

The answer is not more law enforcement. The answer is legalization. That would reduce crime and end the profitable and lucrative business of the sellers. The only reason the price is high is because the drugs are illegal. If street drugs were legalized, drugs would be affordable and street crime such as muggings would cease.

If tobacco were illegal, imagine the number of criminals we would create overnight!

The violence in the drug dealing is an artificial result of its illegality which interferes with the natural functions of the market. The crimes we abhor would be eliminated overnight by allowing the market to function as it should — i.e. regulated by the laws of supply and demand rather than government. Recall the nasty period of prohibition — it’s the same story but a different substance. And by the way, note that the one drug known to contribute to violence more than any other is the legally sold legal drug alcohol. However, as we have learned from the past, prohibition is not the answer. All it gave us was bad liquor and the Mafia.

— Boe Meyerson

FROM THE UN World Mental Health Day

In its commitment to human rights and the dignity of the person, the United Nations has focused on the underserved needs for mental health. The message of October 10, Mental Health Day, has made it clear that mental disorders are truly universal. Mental and behavioral disorders are found in all regions, all countries and all societies, among rich and poor, in both urban and rural areas. The overall prevalence is the same among men and women. The prevalence of the severe mental disorders, schizophrenia and bipolar disorder, is also the same. But depres-

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sion is more common among women, and substance abuse disorder is more common among men.

Rare is the family that is free from an encounter with mental disorders. One out of four people around the world, about 1.7 billion, experience some kind of passing mental illness in their lifetime. In fact, one in four families is likely to have at least one member with a behavioral or mental disorder. 12% of the world's population, about 800 million people, have a mental disorder. These numbers are staggering. Such illnesses create

a particularly heavy burden on individuals, families, and communities.

The UN is concerned about the disparities in resources available for treatment and care. The mentally ill are some of the most neglected people in the world. In many communities mental illness is not considered a real medical condition but viewed as a weakness of character, or as punishment for immoral behavior. Victim blaming! More than 75% of people suffering from mental disorders in the developing world receive no treatment or care. The UN message states: "Health care systems around the world face enormous challenges in deliver-

ing and protecting the human rights of people with severe disorders."

Scaling up services should be a priority. The extra cost is modest. A study conducted by WHO revealed that in low-income countries the scaling up for 3 disorders, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, depression, and for the risk factor, hazardous alcohol use, requires an additional investment of \$0.20 per person per year. Astounding that help

could be forthcoming at such a small extra cost!

In the past, in some societies, sufferers have been given high social

status in the belief they could mediate with gods and the dead. In medieval Europe and elsewhere, these ill people have been burned at the stake. They have been locked into large mental institutions where they have been often beaten or abused.

Significant progress in psychopharmacology, the neuroleptic drugs and antidepressants have helped. But even in the U.S, society has a long way to go to achieve basic human rights. According to Human Rights Watch, half of the prison population, somewhat over one million, have a mental health problem. Many, if not most, are not receiving needed services.

New approaches put forth in a recent UN report highlight the need for changing attitudes — replacing psychiatric institutions with community care and increasing investment in mental health research and care. WHO provides support to countries in developing mental health laws. It also provides assistance through technical information, regional and national training workshops. In this area the UN is guided by three principles. The first is that there should be no discrimination simply on the grounds of mental illness. Decisions should be job related. Another is that as far as possible, every patient has the right to be treated and cared for in their own community. A third is that treatment should be humane.

Many organizations are working to help. The World Federation For Mental Health (www.wfmh.org) is a good source for information and suggestions for action.

The dignity of every person is one of the credos of ethical humanism. Mental health is central to human dignity.

Phyllis Ehrenfeld, President, National Service Conference of the American Ethical Union and NSC Representative to the UN; Dr. Sylvain Ehrenfeld, IHEU Representative to the UN.