



# ETHICAL CULTURE

M O N T H L Y

VOLUME 39 NUMBER 6

Visit our website: [www.essexethical.org](http://www.essexethical.org)

JUNE 2019

## SUNDAY PROGRAMS

Programs are subject to change without notice. All are welcome. Programs begin at 11 a.m. 973-763-1905

### June 2 Brenda Wheeler Ehlers and Amelia Riekenberg, "Restorative Justice"

Restorative justice repairs the harm caused by crime. When victims, offenders and community members meet to decide how to do that, the results can be transformational. It emphasizes accountability, making amends, and — if they are interested — facilitated meetings between victims, offenders, and other persons. Restorative justice is an important contemporary expression of timeless standards of justice.

Rev. Ehlers began serving as Morrow Church's director of educational ministries in 2003. She was appointed associate pastor for children, youth and education ministries in 2006. Rev. Ehlers lives in Maplewood with her husband, Bill, and their three children.

Amelia Riekenberg, self-employed Mediator (Family Law) and self-described "Peacemaker, collaborator, worker bee for social justice," is a Morrow Church member, parent, and Seth Boyden Elementary School Parent-Teacher Association chair.

### June 9 "Personal Reflections after 25 years at Essex Ethical Culture Society" Interview with Meredith Sue Willis and Alice Robinson-Gilman

Sue will interview Alice about various issues facing Essex Ethical Culture. They will share their

thoughts about having a leaderless society; what does "ethical culture" mean in our current culture; is unanimity on this important and, if so, how do we get to that agreement. Various past and current leaders will be cited. Since one of the few tenets of Ethical Culture is that "no one speaks for Ethical Culture," how do we address some of these issues?



Meredith Sue Willis and Alice Robinson-Gilman are both long-

term members of the Essex Society. Both have served as trustees on the Board and Sue is a past-president of the Board. In 1995 they created the Family Issues Platforms which served for over 10 years to provide a forum for members and friends to participate in panel discussions. Topics ranged over a wide variety of issues involving parenthood, grandparenthood and children. Later, Alice and Sue continued the panel series with discussions on books dealing with, among others, genocide in Rwanda, mountain-top memoial in Appalachia, and *How Race is Lived in America*.

Sue is a professional writer who has published 22 books, most recently, *Their Houses*. She teaches novel writing at New York University's School of Professional Studies.

Alice is a retired social worker and office manager. She participated in the first AEU Summer School in 1996.

Sue's son, Joel Weinberger, and Alice's daughter, Molly Gilman, both graduated from the Ethical Culture Sunday School in 2002.

### June 16 Michael Frenchman, "ET, AI & EC: Exo-Ethics Redux (*Extraterrestrials, Artificial Intelligence and Ethical Culture*)"

Michael Frenchman will start with a short reprise of the address he gave as a 13-year-old as his "Eth-mitzvah" speech in June of 1960 here at the Maplewood ECS. The topic would now be called "Exo-ethics" as he, a sci-fi aficionado and actual science student, mused on the likelihood of extraterrestrial conscious beings and the kinds of ethical challenges they might confront, whatever their ET form. Fast forward to the present era wherein life on this planet has evolved to the startling condition of having one entity — Homo sapiens — being the first able to invent a whole new life form, namely, artificial intelligence.

What a human achievement, what a worry, what a responsibility! Michael will conclude with musings on the need for new — or at least renewed — human ethics in the age of artificial intelligence.

Born and raised in New Jersey, R. Michael Frenchman was enrolled around 1956 by his mother Sylvia in the Maplewood EC "Sunday School" until his graduation in 1960.

Michael's keen interest in science and curiosity about human belief systems fed by his EC experience led him to wonder how "we" came to be what we are — living entities conscious of and able to have agency in the cosmos. Michael started his current "AI & Us" project in 2015. His website, [vgraffive.org](http://vgraffive.org), discusses the mission and shows example of his work.



# Ethical Culture Society of Essex County

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Monday–Friday 8:15 to 9:45 am  
Sunday 9:30 am to 12 pm



## The Ethical Culture Society

is a religious and educational fellowship that seeks to achieve the ethical life without dogma; to develop the highest values in human relationships in ourselves, our families, and our community; and to elicit the best in others, thereby eliciting the best in ourselves.

Ethical Culture is a humanist religion.  
Come and visit!

## Newsletter

Opinions offered in this publication are those of the authors.

Newsletter items must be received by the eighth of the month for inclusion in the following month's edition, preferably via email: gilman.howard@gmail.com.

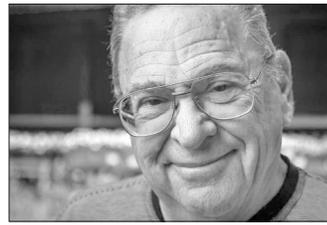
Editor may edit for length, clarity and content. Members submitting time-sensitive items for publication in the EC office's mail slot or in the mail, please also email or call Elaine Durbach or Howard Gilman.

BOB BENDER  
1939–2019

Bob Bender, longtime member and friend of the Ethical Culture Society, passed away on Sunday, April 21st at his home in Deerfield Beach, Florida. We remember Bob's time here at the society with great fondness. He served on the board and had acted as our office manager for many years. He and Patty have lived their ethical life as staunch social activists, spearheading so many causes in our area as well as at their current residence in Florida. Our days were brightened whenever he and Patty paid us a visit here. Bob had a smile and a good word for everyone. He sang his heart out in the Ethical Chorus here and his life was a hymn to social justice.

Our hearts reach out to his wife and our friend, Patty, as well as to his family.

— *Ethical Culture Society*



Dominique Sindayganza photo

## A Personal Note

Two of the reasons I joined Essex Ethical in 1992 were Bob and Patty Bender. Bob, Patty and I came to Ethical at virtually the same time and participated in an educational group with then-Leader Jim White on the perpetual question for Ethical Culturists, "What is Ethical Culture?" I have loved Bob since then as a good friend. His booming "Hello Alice" when I came into a room always caused me to light up inside. Howard and I were lucky enough last summer to be able to drive Bob and Patty up to the World Fellowship and spend a week together in that enchanting place. I will always be grateful for that week and for knowing Bob these many years.

My condolences to Patty, Dan and Nat.

— *Alice Robinson-Gilman*

## From the World Fellowship

Our hearts hurt in passing on the news that Bob Bender died, a few days short of his 80th birthday.

As I write, I hear Bob's rich baritone singing a gospel song with alternate lyrics: "Soon and very soon, we are going to change the

world..." You didn't need to know Bob for long to know that, for him, music and the struggle for social justice were, like rope strands, more powerful when twisted

together. At World Fellowship he always took the lead in recruiting for the "Ad Hoc People's Revolutionary Chorus" (or something like that) to perform at Fun Night. He loved to be part of any group of people singing at the top of their lungs for what's right, whether it was the Clearwater Walkabout Chorus or an impromptu group thrown together on short notice for a picket line or peace rally.

Originally from Philadelphia, after graduating from Temple University Bob went to work for Americans for Democratic Action, and moved to New Jersey to become ADA state director. Next he joined the Congress Of Racial Equality, where he met Patty Ganley. They were married in 1963, after what Bob described as "a picket line romance" complete with organizing buses to the March on Washington. Activism remained central to their marriage for their remaining 56 years together. Bob and Patty moved to south Florida in 2005, and began a rich new chapter of joyous, musical rabble-rousing.

We'll miss Bob's big personality and smile, and his searching discussions of the pressing issues of the day; he was just as liable to enter into a serious exchange of political opinions or a passionate explication of principles as he was to burst into song.

Soon and very soon, Bob.

Our heartfelt solidarity in grief go to Patty, sons Nat and Daniel, daughter-in-law Gita, and grandsons Deven and Reyen. In lieu of flowers the family has suggested donations to World Fellowship, Peace, Justice, Sustainability Florida, and Code Pink. — *Andy Davis*

## Living social activism

Bob and Patty moved to Plainfield while both were in graduate school at Rutgers and Patty directed the Greater Plainfield Senior Citizens Center. Bob completed his coursework in the graduate program, but left school to focus on anti-war and civil rights activism.

(Continued on page 3)

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
26 9 am - Tai Chi Chuan	27	28 11 am - Chair Yoga	29	30	31	1 June 2019
2 9 am - Tai Chi Chuan 11 am - Brenda Wheeler Ehlers and Amelia Riekenberg, "Restorative Justice" 12 pm - Social Action Committee Meeting	3	4 11 am - Chair Yoga	5	6	7	8
9 9 am - Tai Chi Chuan 11 am - "Reflections after 25 yrs at Essex Ethical Culture Soc.," Meredith Sue Willis and Alice Robinson-Gilman	10	11 11 am - Chair Yoga	12 1 pm - ECSEC Board 7:30pm - Grannie	13	14 No Folk Friday scheduled — please join us when we resume in October.	15
16 9 am - Tai Chi Chuan 11 am - Michael Frenchman, "ET, AI & EC: Exo-Ethics Redux"	17	18 11 am - Chair Yoga	19	20	21	22
23 9 am - Tai Chi Chuan	24	25 11 am - Chair Yoga	26	27	28	29
30 9 am - Tai Chi Chuan	1	2 11 am - Chair Yoga	3	4	5	6

Bob was a founding member of the Solidarity Singers of the Industrial Union Council, providing "street heat" for labor and social justice pickets and rallies.

In 1972 Bob and Patty helped found a progressive, community school — Children of the Rainbow — where they would send their children for several years. Professionally, Bob worked in anti-poverty non-profit community organizations including the New Jersey Puerto Rican Congress, the Spanish Community Organization of Plainfield and Model Cities. His last 14 years of work were as Executive Director of Accountants for the Public Interest New Jersey, providing non-profit accounting services to non-profit organizations and needy individuals. He had been an active member of many New Jersey groups including New Jersey Peace Action, the Ethical Culture Society of Maplewood, and the New Democrats of Plainfield. He served as the Democratic Third Ward leader in Plainfield.



After moving to Florida in 2005, Bob organized the labor outreach committee of Occupy Fort Lauderdale, then became active with Broward Black Lives Matter Alliance, most recently working to repeal Florida's racist stand-your-ground law.

He participated in the Unitarian Universalists Congregation of Fort Lauderdale and sang in the choir.

Bob started an email listserve with events for progressives in South Florida which he maintained for years before being blacklisted from Gmail for repeated violations of the spam policy. Google was not the only entity that found fault with Bob's activities. He was arrested in Los Alamos, New Mexico protesting against nuclear weapons (with Patty and actor Martin Sheen) in the 1990s and in Georgia (again with troublemaker Patty and comrade Ed Lewinson) calling for closure of the Fort Benning "school of assassins." — from the South Florida Sun-Sentinel

# ETHICAL CULTURE SOCIETY OF ESSEX COUNTY

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For information, call 973-763-1905; visit our web  
site: [www.essexethical.org](http://www.essexethical.org); email: [ecsec.nj@gmail.com](mailto:ecsec.nj@gmail.com)

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**Food Pantry** box in our front hall. Donations go to the NJ Food Bank.

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## ETHICAL CULTURE SOCIETY OF ESSEX COUNTY NEWSLETTER · JUNE 2019

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**June 2 June 2 Brenda Wheeler Ehlers and Amelia Riekenberg, “Restorative Justice”** · Restorative justice repairs the harm caused by crime. When victims, offenders and community members meet to decide how to do that, the results can be transformational. It emphasizes accountability, making amends, and — if they are interested — facilitated meetings between victims, offenders, and other persons. Restorative justice is an important contemporary expression of timeless standards of justice. (*see page 1*)



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### CALENDAR NOTES

- **Social Action Committee** meets June 2 after program.
- There will not be a **Folk Friday** scheduled in June. Join us when we resume in October.

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**Have a wonderful Summer. See you all in September when our Programs resume.**