

AMERICAN ETHICAL UNION

DIALOGUE SPRING 2014

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REVITALIZING DEMOCRACY: MONEY, POWER, AND POLITICS *Join our 99th Assembly this May in Skokie!*

There is an undeniable growing divide in our country between the rich and the poor which is undermining our democracy. Democracy is founded on the right of free expression; however, the domination of the public forum by big money drowns out those voices that reflect broad constituencies. Political decision-making must be based on the premise of one citizen/one vote, not on who can round up the richest backer. We must challenge this influence by demanding transparency in campaign donations, increased voter registration, and equitable treatment of third party candidates. Together we can make a difference! Join our Assembly in Skokie May 1-4 at the *DoubleTree by Hilton, Chicago North Shore Conference Center* in Skokie to learn what we can do.

Keynote Speaker **Jack Altschuler** will show how we can move forward away from "a system that keeps participants entrenched in paralysis." Workshop presenters include **Ron Baiman**, who will lead a participatory exercise exploring the links between values and economics. **Dale McGowan**, our new Director of Ethical Education, will explain the connection between thinking well and doing good and encourage participants to do the same in their own lives and work. Alderman **Joe Moore** will discuss the successes and challenges of his innovative



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process that gives residents of his Chicago neighborhood the power to decide how his annual \$1 million discretionary capital budget is spent. **Michael Greenman** describes the secular and interfaith coalition that has united to support and pass a constitutional amendment to get corporate money out of politics.

Our program is full of various opportunities to connect with people from

across the country who want to restore democracy. We will share ideas on fighting the Citizens United ruling, attracting the "nones," developing strong ethical education programs for families, and promoting ethics with Social Media.

The American Ethical Union's 99th Assembly is co-sponsored by the Ethical Humanist Society of Chicago, based in Skokie. Come early on Thursday, May 1 to participate in a Pre-Conference Social Action Project with the Midwest Workers Association. We will be providing resources to low-income communities. At the Society's Coffeehouse www.ethicalhuman.org/Coffeehouse/coffeehouse.html Friday, May 2 they will host a special edition of their popular *Prairie State Companion* featuring Rachel Baiman, Nashville-based fiddler and recording artist.

We'll see you soon in Skokie!

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, BART WORDEN

Several developments since the beginning of 2014 bode well for the success of American Ethical Union in coming years. First of all is the long awaited new AEU website, www.aeu.org! Check it out and come back as it incorporates more updates. We think you'll be impressed. And if so, remember to comment about it on Facebook and Twitter. And while you are doing that make sure you Like our Facebook page (American Ethical Union) and follow us on Twitter (@AEUOffice), and share with your friends!

It's important to point out the processes we took in creating the new website to go from idea to product. Your AEU Board organized a taskforce, developed a request for proposals that resulted in several bids, added a new staff role of Communications Coordinator (filled by Emily Newman) to support the implementation and ongoing content management, and monitored the progress to ensure that we got an efficient and attractive website.

Another promising development has been an exercise in moving from challenge to opportunity. When Aimee Neumann, our long-time National Director for Religious Education, told me last fall that she wanted to retire from her position I wondered what we would do, as Aimee had long been the driving force for RE. She organized and ran annual conferences, built and maintained an online resource library, and communicated with religious education people across the Movement through the RE listserv.

Fortunately, Aimee appreciated the challenge of finding a replacement and offered not only to stay on while a plan was developed, but also to continue with the RE Committee after the new person came on board.

When I reported Aimee's intentions to the Board, Jone Johnson Lewis, Board member and President of the National Leaders Council, recommended reaching out to Dale McGowan. Dale is an author and educator who has presented at our RE conference and a number of Ethical Societies. He is well-known in humanist circles and runs a charitable organization, Foundation Beyond Belief, which provides direct aid and coordinates the social service efforts of humanist groups. Jone's husband, Bill, had a conversation with Dale a while ago during which Dale indicated that he would be interested in working with the AEU if the opportunity became available.

With less than two months in the role of National Director for Ethical Education, Dale already has a number of ideas that he and the Ethical Education Committee will be exploring. Dale will also be a presenter at the AEU Assembly in May and is working on the fall education conference. He is, in addition, very interested in visiting Ethical Societies and would appreciate invitations.

We are also deepening our connections with other humanist organizations and initiatives. Jone Johnson Lewis, Anne Klaeyen, and James Croft will be speaking at the American Humanist Association's Annual Conference in Philadelphia this June and a number of others from the AEU will be attending. I have joined the boards of the



Humanist Institute and the Institute for Humanist Studies, and the AEU has signed on as a Movement partner for an upcoming effort of the Dawkins Foundation, the "Out & Open Campaign." The mission of the campaign is to eliminate stereotypes and discrimination by getting atheist, freethinker, agnostic, humanist, and nonreligious people to be open about their beliefs. Fashioned along the lines of the "It Gets Better" project, Out & Open will use videos and publications to reach out far and wide.

Elizabeth Collier was awarded a Mossler Fund grant to research the needs and interests of young adult humanists and review what organizations do to meet those needs. Her excellent report is available through the AEU office and she has been awarded another grant for Phase II. She will work with two Ethical Societies to reach out to young adults based on her findings.

And that is *not* all. This summer we have the Lay Leadership Summer School in North Carolina from July 12-19. Our staff have been working hard to ensure that all will have an exceptionally rewarding experience at our "Ethical Society in the Clouds" where participants will be immersed in a rich schedule of learning and sharing opportunities. I hope you'll join us in Chicago this May, at the Mountain this July, and online anytime.

Save These Dates

Board Meetings

Individual members of member Societies are always welcome to attend meetings.
May 1-4 @ AEU Assembly

American Ethical Union Assembly 2014

May 1-4 Chicago, IL
Join us in May as we challenge the influence of money in politics. Registration is open. See article on front page.

Future of Ethical Societies (FES) Conference 2014

May 23-26 Philadelphia, PA
Connect with young adults across the Ethical Culture Movement for an awesome weekend full of discussion and action. This special conference will include workshops, an Ethical Career panel, and a social action with Cease Fire Philadelphia. See article on page 5 for more details or email us at fesconference@gmail.com.

Lay Leadership Summer School

July 12-19 The Mountain, NC
The week-long curriculum includes the religious, philosophical, and organizational history of Ethical Culture; leadership skills for groups, including conflict-management and compassionate communication; and personal development. There are many opportunities for participants to get to know one another, learn about other Societies and have fun! See article on page 6. Registration is open.

LETTER FROM AEU PRESIDENT, RICHARD KORAL

We Are Our Very Own 'Net.

What makes the Internet and all the myriad apps and functions that facilitate communication so wondrous and amazing is their promise to link the far corners of the world into an active web of relationships. Virtually anyone can reach out virtually anywhere to communicate, engage, transact business, or lodge a complaint. Whereas the proliferation of the billions of humans on earth could easily render everyone into an undifferentiated and amorphous mass, new technologies enable each individual to maintain his and her unique identity and to individually communicate to one and (more or less) to all.

In a recent book entitled "Writing on the Wall: Social Media – The First 2,000 Years," author Tom Standage recounts the history of mass communication and reminds us that we've actually been doing this for a long time. Each generation seems to have a technology that is appropriate to its needs and people always need to communicate. The method and manner of reporting news, passing on skills, and archiving histories is designed and performed with the latest technologies of the

age as people will adopt them and apply them for their own needs and convenience.

Which brings me to the Ethical Culture Movement. We are some 23 independently operating Societies located in different locales with a common project—to promote our vision of an ethics based value system that can elevate civilization and to foster communities of like-minded people that serve their highest aspirations, heart and intellect. Those who are active in the running of their Societies are mindful of the practical challenges that any organization faces, even those with a higher purpose, and are aware that skills and sensitivities must be brought to bear to make a community successful. To accomplish this, we have to share our news, pass along skills, and be mindful of our history.

So we need a network of communication between us, among our Societies, to encourage and facilitate this inter-Society communication and participation. It was for that reason that in 1889 the five Societies then in existence created a central network through which they all could

interact, the American Ethical Union, our own AEU.

Today, the AEU runs out of a small office with cheap rent in the New York Society's building with two paid staff members, a couple of part-timers, and several regular volunteers. It remains what it was always meant to be—a network for the Ethical Culture Movement, not an institution of its own. It is there someone will answer the telephone when the Youth of Ethical Societies Conference is being organized. There someone will collect the registrations and send the check to secure the meeting space. Someone's got to pull the pieces together for the Ethical Education Conference. Someone's got to start planning the Assembly for 2016. Someone has to arrange to keep Felix Adler's books in print. Someone's got to be there in the middle. It is this network that links us together.

The daily operations of the AEU are run on a shoestring budget supported by Society apportionments. However, the AEU also must organize Leader training and Officiant certification, manage the Lay Leadership Summer School, and prepare scholarships for some participants, as well as



handle the administrative costs associated with these activities. All that is way beyond what the Societies contribute. Funding is drawn from earnings on the endowments that our visionary forebears contributed to the Ethical Culture Movement many years ago. We are, in important respects, relying on the support of our ancestors in the Movement. We are not yet supporting ourselves.

When people complain and ask me "What does the AEU do for us?" I am puzzled by the question. The AEU is us—it's just that it is the "all of us." It is the telephone line that links us, the Assembly that joins us, the network that we buzz on... all the complaints and the encouragement, the sharing of news, the passing on of skills...the making of history.

I look forward to forming and renewing these network connections with you soon at the Assembly in Skokie!

BROOKLYN CONNECTS GENERATIONS

Lea Bender, Education Director at the Brooklyn Society for Ethical Culture, coordinated an enriching story sharing exchange with 5 women who live near the Society at the Prospect Park Residences and eleven of our kids. Ages in this lively round-table Q&A session ranged from 7 to 90 years old.

They covered a broad range of topics from what it was like living during segregation to new technology. Mary, a political activist who is turning 90 this year, told us about meeting Martin Luther King and marching for civil rights in Tennessee. Several women said that their generation never thought they'd see an African American president.

Ruth wanted to know how much time the kids spend in front of computers. In turn, the kids wanted to know what life was like without cell phones. How did people communicate? Ruth described sharing a phone line with a neighbor and having to knock on their wall whenever the call was for them; they knocked so much, that they made a hole!

This gathering was moving, meaningful, and a bit sad for everyone. After many years, the residents are all facing a sudden eviction. All the kids agreed that they want to do something to help the residents. In May they will team up with our Coming of Age group to do a service project to figure out what actions can best help one generation support another, be it protest, petitions or a more personalized individual approach.

NOTES FROM YOUR AEU BOARD

Karen Elliott, *AEU Board Member*

The AEU Board met on March 21 and 22 at the New York Society for Ethical Culture. It was a day and a half of work, concluding in an invitation to join NYSEC members at their annual appreciation dinner, where we enjoyed both the food and the conversation. Many thanks to NYSEC for their hospitality!

We began with a report from Executive Director Bart Worden. Bart is continuing his visits to Societies. He reported that many are focusing on growth via families, for example Mid-Rivers with a youth program and Silicon Valley by providing more services for young parents. Bart also continues developing and enhancing connections within the larger humanist community and will be attending the American Humanist Association's conference this June in Philadelphia. He has also worked with Leader-in-Training Paulo Ribeiro to create an organizational development workshop for Ethical Societies. Discussion of that workshop brought up additional ways the AEU can educate member Societies in developing higher functioning congregations. Options include workshops that are shorter or longer, depending on what the Society can afford, online courses, and other resources.

National Leaders Council President Jone Johnson Lewis noted that Bergen & NYSEC Leader Joe Chuman has a new book out titled "Speaking of Ethics: Living a Humanist Life." Visit aeu.org for details.

Preparations for the 2014 Assembly are in the final stages, reported AEU Administrative Director

Law'nence "L" Miller, with registrations coming in at a reasonable rate and materials for the delegates packets (reports from Societies and Committees) coming in slowly.

The Board Development Committee is charged with finding people to run for the Board as well as helping the Board to function better. Committee member "L" Miller reported that they are in the process of creating a handbook for Board members, which will be especially helpful to new members. Look for information about all AEU Committees at Assembly. If you are interested in supporting the Ethical Movement on the national level and can't attend Assembly, contact Board President Richard Koral for more information. The Board and AEU staff have been working on developing stronger, more effective AEU Committees within a framework of appropriate guidance by the Board.

The Communications Committee, replacing various taskforces and the IT Committee, reported that the sooner than anticipated launch of the AEU's new website was successful and content is still being added (i.e. the "library" section of the website has not yet been developed). The Board expressed its great appreciation for the work done by staff (and committee) members Emily Newman and "L" Miller. Explore the new site, and return frequently for updates. It is well worth it. The photo on the home page of the St. Louis Society has me ready to relocate. The site's so easy to navigate we're sure you'll enjoy and we hope you invite others.

The Board received four proposals for this year's Mossler Fellowship for the Spread of the Ethical Culture Movement. It was wonderful to have so many interesting and exciting ideas presented. Elizabeth Collier was selected for a second year. Elizabeth previously submitted to the Board a report of the research she'd undertaken last year on "the needs and wants of people under 40 years old in terms of religion and congregational community." (Her NYSEC platform on the subject is available on our website.) In this next phase, she will work with a Society to create a pilot program designed to better attract younger members by working on four key areas she determined to be critical in her prior research: identity clarification, branding and marketing, the Platform experience, and programs and events. Elizabeth noted that focusing on these areas will help attract members of all ages. Congratulations to Elizabeth!

The Board discussed a letter sent to Board President Richard Koral from a Society President, which expressed concern in part at the amount of apportionment requested of Societies. The letter was perfectly timed, as the Board is looking into ways to obtain additional funding other than raising apportionments so that the AEU can increase the support we provide to our member Societies. Half the day Saturday was devoted to meeting with Mark Ewert, a fundraising consultant. Mark talked with us about stewardship and led us in a focused discussion on who is the AEU, what kind of governance program do we have, what do we consider the qualities of a high-performing board, and (my personal

favorite) what is the role of money in Ethical Culture. Mark will present his final report to the Board in April via teleconference and print.

The Board also met with Dale McGowan, the AEU's new Director of Ethical Education. Dale talked with us about his ideas and plans for helping Societies in their efforts to create robust ethical education programs and in continuing their practices of sharing resources. He also spoke with us about what makes a successful and meaningful education program.

The Board reviewed and approved a budget to be presented to the delegates at the Assembly in May. The Personnel Committee did an annual review of Executive Director Bart Worden, based on interviews with multiple people within the Movement who have worked with him in different capacities. This led to a discussion of the membership cards the AEU sent to each Society for distribution to their members, which received mixed responses from Societies and individuals. Concerns expressed included the cost (which was very minimal both in money and effort) and the possibility of confusion for Society members thinking that they were members of the AEU as opposed to the Societies to which they belong being the AEU's members, as is the case.

The next scheduled Board meeting will be held on Thursday, May 1, 2014, at the AEU's Annual Assembly in Chicago. Individual members of member Societies are always welcome to attend.

FES CONFERENCE:
BUILDING AN
ETHICAL FUTURE
Christian Hayden, *Future of
Ethical Societies*



The Future of Ethical Societies (FES), a national group of young Ethical Culturalists, is holding our 11th annual conference in Philadelphia this May. Our aim is to realize the potential of an ethical future, while also building relationships based on the pursuit of social justice and expansion of self. We hope to deliver a transformative experience that will deepen attendees' connection to Ethical Culture and inspire them to do the work required to build an ethical future.

The FES conference will not only focus on building relationships inside of Ethical Culture but with communities that have historically been underserved and disenfranchised. We envision a

conference that aims to reconcile the damage caused by the social distance, racism, and economic oppression one relationship at a time. With partnerships including various organizations in North Philadelphia (including Cease Fire Philadelphia and Theater of the Oppressed), and a panel of individuals involved in "Ethical Careers," there will much to take away from our wonderful Memorial Day Weekend, May 23-26!

We will welcome 18-30 year olds throughout the country, whether or not they are members of an Ethical Society, to join us this May in Philadelphia. For more information and to register, visit us online at aeu.org/events/fes-conference.



MEET HUMANISTS FROM
AROUND THE WORLD

The World Humanist Congress, held every three years, is a unique event bringing together humanists from over forty countries under the auspices of the International Humanist and Ethical Union. In 2014 the British Humanist Association will host the World Humanist Congress in the beautiful and historic city of Oxford from 8-10th August. Register online at www.whc2014.org.uk.

Fun Fact: The American Ethical Union helped found the International Humanist and Ethical Union in 1952. We're the reason they included "Ethical Union" in the name.

ETHICAL EDUCATION:
NEW FOCUS BUILDS ON
CURRENT STRENGTHS
Dale McGowan, *National Director of
Ethical Education*

When Bart Worden invited me to join the American Ethical Union (AEU) staff as National Director of Ethical Education, I leapt at the opportunity. I've long admired the unique experiment in community represented by Ethical Culture, and ethical development has been a strong interest of mine and a large part of my work as a parent educator.

I am privileged to follow Aimee Neumann, whose decade of contributions has given a firm foundation on which to build, and enthusiastic about the potential for new directions as the program shifts from Religious Education to Ethical Education. It's a less dramatic shift than might be expected. A close look at the current program shows that existing curricula are already oriented more toward ethical development than worldview literacy. In a way, the name has caught up with the reality.

Religious education will continue to be an important part of the program, of course. It isn't possible or wise to teach



ethics without learning about the major ways in which humanity has framed its ethical understanding for millennia. But a new opportunity exists to strengthen and update the ethical development portion. To that end, the Ethical Education Committee is currently at work on a plan to develop a set of research-based ethical standards around which future curricular materials can be built. Such a well-grounded program would be a unique offering with strong appeal to the families who represent the ideal fit for Ethical Culture and the leading edge of our future growth.

More details will be forthcoming as the committee works with Leaders, teachers, and other stakeholders throughout the Movement. For now, I'll close by thanking you all for the warm welcome and confidence you have extended to me. It is an honor and a privilege to join you in this important work.

JOIN US ON THE MOUNTAIN FOR LAY LEADERSHIP SUMMER SCHOOL

Paulo Ribeiro, *Leader-in-Training*

I didn't really know what to expect from the Lay Leader Summer School. Members of the Bergen Society had raved about it and, as a Leader-in-training, I was strongly encouraged to go. The Mountain Resort is perched high in one of North America's few temperate rainforests in the Blue Ridge mountains of North Carolina, an absolutely breathtaking environment. The scenery alone would have been worth the price of tuition.

My experience with Summer School was so rewarding that I decided to join the faculty this year to help create a great week for you. I have the privilege of working with a great team of knowledgeable professional and lay leaders from across the Ethical Culture Movement. We are working tirelessly to

provide high-quality content to our attendees. The Summer School curriculum includes an in-depth look at Ethical Culture's history and mission; lessons and practice sessions for organizational development and communication skills; and opportunities for students to craft engaging and meaningful ceremonies that they can take with them back to their Societies. Whether you're just stepping into a leadership role or a longtime lay leader, Summer School will be an extremely valuable experience.

If this sounds like an adventure you'd like to take part in, register today. For registration materials and more information, contact the AEU office at 212-873-6500 or lmiller.aeu@gmail.com.

See you on the Mountain!



VISIT OUR NEW AMERICAN ETHICAL UNION WEBSITE

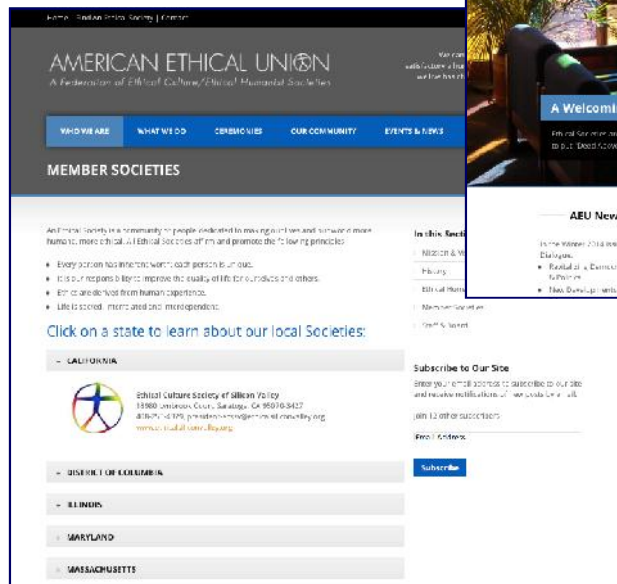
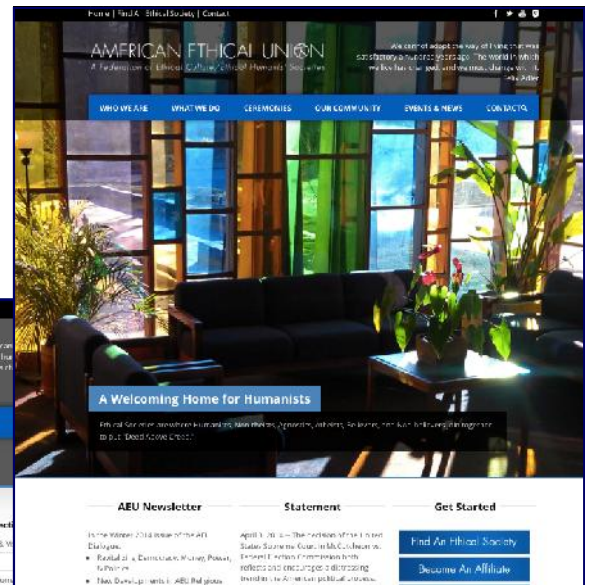
Emily Newman, *Communications Coordinator*

We are proud to welcome you back to the newly revamped American Ethical Union website. www.aeu.org!

From the homepage you can register for an upcoming event (i.e. AEU Assembly, FES Conference, and Lay Leadership Summer School), view AEU statements on current issues, read the latest issue of *Dialogue*, watch an inspiring Platform Talk, discover a Featured Ethical Society, see what we're doing on Facebook and Twitter, and sign up for more information. Inside pages include our History, Ethical Humanism, Ethical Education, Ethical Action, and details on our programs and affiliates. Plus lots of beautiful pictures!!

Send ideas on how to improve the website (good photos welcome) to me at communications@aeu.org.

Beautiful homepage with easy navigation and lots of interesting features



Makes AEU member Societies easy to find and contact



UPDATE FROM THE NATIONAL LEADERS COUNCIL Hugh Taft-Morales (with contributions from his Leader colleagues)

The National Leaders Council (NLC) comes together in a retreat setting for several days three times a year, with many Leaders paying their own way. It's a chance to exchange ideas, share common concerns, and plan coordinated events and actions. Because the meetings are private they provide a safe place for our professional clergy to struggle together on both personal and shared issues. In the spirit of sharing a sense of what goes on in the substantive parts of NLC meetings, here is a special report on our last meeting at the Murray Grove Retreat Center from February 19-22, 2014

Murray Grove is a hospitable, adequate venue for our gatherings, with no pools, spas, or mints-on-the-beds here. A simple fireside room and dining hall offer us space for meetings which run pretty much all day and evening until 9pm when we usually break for libations, conversation, an Ethical Culture trivia contest or a sing-along. Sometimes if we are efficient enough, we get some time off during the day and take walks around the grounds.

At our February meeting, we had updates on the national perspective from Executive Director Bart Worden; AEU Board news from President Jone Johnson Lewis and Vice President Anne Klaeyens; and our own business meeting. More wide ranging discussions occurred in three general areas: (1) strengthening our local Societies; (2) supporting our federate body, the

American Ethical Union; and (3) caring for ourselves and each other as clergy.

Regarding how best we can strengthen our local Societies, Anne Klaeyens facilitated a discussion of the meaning of "membership." What does it mean to join an Ethical Society? What are the expectations of members, and what is expected of members regarding their support for their local Society, the national Movement, and the values of Ethical Humanism? We discussed models of membership and the historical importance of appreciating that all people – in and out of Ethical Culture – are our stakeholders. We exist to try to make the world a better place, not just serve our own group.

Much of our time was put toward supporting our federate body, the American Ethical Union, which serves all Ethical Societies. In addition, we planned components for the AEU Assembly in Chicago, discussed ways to increase Leader visits to those Societies without professional Leaders, strategized about recruiting people to serve on AEU Committees, volunteered for creating text for the new AEU website, and educated ourselves about the corrupting influence money can have on elections and politics, which will be the social justice theme for the Ethical Culture Movement this upcoming year. Observing progress in national unity and coordination of our

Movement over the last couple of years, the NLC also crafted a motion urging the AEU Board to work towards making the position of Executive Director a permanent one with a secure funding stream.

Incredibly important, but often overlooked, is staying centered and balanced in work that often demands every part of our being. Many Ethical Culture Leaders are called on to be pastorally present to our members, and engaged with ethical issues in the broader society, all while "keeping the trains running on time" regarding day-to-day tasks. Other Leaders seek support on how best to contribute to the Movement while not serving as a Society Leader. How we manage the balance between our professional and personal lives, and how we interact with each other as colleagues, takes a level of care and attention rarely required in a normal workweek.

Towards the end of staying centered and fulfilled, Jone Johnson Lewis offered a segment of reflective discussion about "reverence." We fed our philosophical appetite with discussion of three papers by Leaders-in-Training Paulo Ribeiro, James Croft, and Richard Koral. Comic relief was offered by Lay Leadership Summer School staff who sang a parody of "YMCA" by the Village People about the importance of attending the "L...L...S...S!" accompanied by one un-named staffer in a full body gorilla suit (don't ask!). With that odd yet hilarious image in mind, I will sign off.

WALL OF REMEMBRANCE

Let us arise and take up the work they have left unfinished, and preserve the treasures they have won... – Felix Adler

Compiled from various sources including the Societies' newsletters



Steve Best (*St. Louis*) died on February 14 at age 87. Steve joined the St. Louis Society in 1959, contributing his time and considerable talents to almost every committee and the Board of Trustees throughout those 55 years. Steve was a therapist, an artist, and a philosopher. He was very active in many social causes and intellectual pursuits. Our condolences to his wife Joyce, son Randy (Leader of the Ethical Humanist Society of the Triangle), daughter Jaina, and their families. Steve donated his body to science.

Marion Morisse (*St. Louis*) passed away at age 97 on February 7. Marion joined the Society in 1949.

FROM THE UN: PROGRESS OF WOMEN?

Nearly 70 percent of the 1.2 billion people living in poverty are women.

Dr. Sylvain Ehrenfeld, *IHEU and the National Ethical Service, and representative to the UN*
 Dr. Reba Goodman, *Ethical Culture Society of Bergen County*

For women as a whole, inequalities still persist e.g., in access to education, health care, and political and economic opportunities. Nearly 70 percent of the 1.2 billion people living in poverty are women. Nearly 70 percent of the world's illiterates are women. Women contribute about two-thirds of the hours worked, but earn only one-tenth of the world's income—and yet own only one percent of the world's property. Women are paid an average of 30 percent less than men for comparable work.

The most devastating fact is that worldwide one in five women will be a victim of rape or attempted rape.

Recently, a major report from the UN Population Fund reported in detail the changes in the condition of women over the last 20 years. Some of the news is encouraging. Worldwide women have made great strides in literacy. Women now have fewer children due to the greater availability of contraception. Furthermore, they are less likely to die in childbirth and have an increasing life expectancy. In fact, in general both for women and men, the number of people living in extreme poverty has fallen dramatically from a stark 47 percent in 1990 to 22 percent in 2010.

The bad news is that this progress is not equally distributed. A closer look reveals large differences between so-called rich and poor countries with poor women in some richer countries not experiencing improvement in many aspects of their lives. Many of the one billion people living in the 50 plus

poorest countries will stagnate, even as the rest of the world gets richer. The UN report highlights the fact that the gains of the last 20 years cannot be sustained unless governments tackle the inequalities that have hurt the poorest and most marginalized people. The growing inequalities worldwide are staggering. It is estimated that less than 1 percent of adults worldwide control 40 percent of the wealth while more than two-thirds control only 3 percent of the wealth.

According to a Chinese proverb, “women hold up half the sky.”

Unfortunately, this fact is not reflected in the experience of many women.

While the wealth of a country is important there is significant variation in the condition of women, even among rich countries. The World's Economic Forum publishes an annual Global Gender Gap report. It ranks countries by a gender gap index. This index incorporates four key areas: Health, Access to education, Economic participation and Political participation. The top 5 in the 2013 ranking are Iceland (1), Finland (2), Norway (3), Sweden (4), and the Philippines (5). The Philippines among the poorest country in Asia, is a surprise. It ranks high because of education, health, and political empowerment.



Other facts about the gender gap also demonstrate that a country can be poor and still get a high ranking in some important areas, while a country can be rich and get a low ranking. For example Cuba is ranked 15th. Cuba has a dismal economy but Cuban women rank high in education and health as well as economic and political equality, filling professional and technical positions in ministries and government-run enterprises. In contrast, in the Arab world the gender gap is extremely wide. In spite of their wealth, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia rank very low. The United Arab Emirates ranks 109th and Saudi Arabia is way down at 127th.

The conclusion we draw is that the culture of a country and willingness to use resources for public policy really matter for their women.

Klaus Schwab, executive director of the World Economic Forum states, “A world where women make up less than 20 percent of the global decision makers is a world that is missing a huge opportunity for growth and ignores untapped reservoirs of potential.” Thus, despite progress in recent years, much improvement is still needed.

FROM THE UNITED NATIONS: REVISITING CLIMATE CHANGE AGAIN
In pushing other species to extinction, humanity is sawing off the limb on which it is perched.

Dr. Sylvain Ehrenfeld, *IHEU and the National Ethical Service, and representative to the UN*
 Dr. Reba Goodman, *Ethical Culture Society of Bergen County*

Harvard biologist E.O. Wilson warns that if current ecological trends continue, half of the earth's species could be extinct by 2100 at the rate they are disappearing right now. Among the hazards responsible are pollution, loss of habitat and deforestation. The rate at which humans use resources has put many species at risk. And, climate change has made the situation far worse.

The ongoing rate of species extinction coupled with the loss of genetic diversity within species, threaten the interdependent ecosystems and the complex web of life which are essential to our own well-being. In pushing other species to extinction, humanity is sawing off the limb on which it is perched. So the extinction of species is a warning of a serious problem—and that we are part of it. Miners once brought canaries into their dank workplaces to test whether the air was safe to breathe; if the canary died, it was time to get out. *Species extinction is our canary.*

Nearly 1,000 researchers around the world have contributed to a forthcoming report of the UN intergovernmental panel on climate change. They warn that another 15 years of failure to limit carbon emissions will escalate an already serious problem from using the current technologies. It is very important to take steps now, because delaying is bound to be much more expensive and dangerous. This report states that the world continues to spend more money subsidizing fossil fuels than it does in shifting to clean energy.

While there are increasing investments in clean energy, there are rising emissions in fast growing countries like China and India where cheap coal-powered energy is used to lift millions out of poverty. These countries are paying a heavy price in health damage consequences resulting from the enormous pollution. One possibility under consideration is planting bioenergy crops that take up carbon dioxide, burning the resulting fuel and injecting the emissions underground. However, such efforts, if they work, would compete with food production.

There is a long-standing argument advanced by the coal industry and others that policies to curb carbon emissions are more economically harmful than the impact of climate change. The good news is that many economists and business leaders are not buying this argument anymore. We have been experiencing more extreme weather, more droughts, more destructive storms and floods. These events have been costly and have seriously affected economic activity. There is an increasing awareness of the costs associated with climate change.

At the annual World Economic Forum in Davos Switzerland, Climate change was high on the agenda for the first time. Thirty heads of state or government and 1,500 business leaders attended. World Bank president Jim Young Kim urged financial leaders and investors to take responsibility to fight against climate change.

As an example of business concerns, Coca-Cola has experienced profit loss as global droughts dried up water needed to produce their soda. They

have also experienced problems with their supply of sugar cane, sugar beets, and fruit juices. The company has finally embraced the idea that climate change is a disruptive force. This is a growing view among business leaders.

Former New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg, former Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson, along with Robert Rubin and George Schultz, all hardly radicals or environmentalists, recently announced a sweeping assessment of the risks climate changes poses to the American economy. Their report is expected by the end of this year.

A number of foundations have united to promote a divestiture campaign for pulling money out of companies and institutions that do business in fossil fuels. Also, 22 cities, 20 religious organizations, as well as nine colleges and universities have already signed on to divest their of investments in fossil fuel companies.

Climate is one of many issues that cross national boundaries. Ultimately, what is needed is an international climate change treaty. The UN is trying to foster such a treaty by 2015. The ever-energetic US secretary of state John Kerry has set a goal to become a lead broker for such a treaty. It will be a difficult negotiation as developing countries, which suffer most from climate change, claim correctly that the rich countries are most responsible and should help them in mitigating its effects. The rich countries have balked at spending the money. Hopefully, everybody will recognize the seriousness of the situation and make the legally binding commitments.

MOSSLER FELLOWSHIP PROJECT: YOUNG ADULTS AND ETHICAL CULTURE

Elizabeth Collier, *Ethical Culture Society of Bergen County & Future of Ethical Societies*

For the past year, I conducted a research project for the American Ethical Union with a grant from the Mossler Fellowship. I researched the needs, wants, likes, and dislikes in regard to religion, humanism, and community among young adult humanists and young humanist families. I learned about and compared thriving young humanist groups as well as other religious congregations that have been successful at attracting young adults and families. My project consisted of reading current studies and observational research, interviewing researchers in the field, attending young humanist groups (including those at Ethical Societies) or information sessions, and learning about congregations of other faiths which have a large percentage of young adult members.



Young adults are settling into marriages and families later than previous generations have, and that, combined with their proclivity to experiment with different religious faiths has made it difficult for religious congregations to attract people in their twenties. Traditional organized religions have seen a large percentage of younger people leaving their congregations, which is reflected in the Pew Research Center's recent study of religion. According to this research, the number of people unaffiliated with any religion is the highest ever recorded, at 20% of the U.S. population, while a third of young adults under 30 years old are unaffiliated.

Although congregations across most religions have seen a decline in young adult attendees, there has been a lot of recent research pointing to what young adults are looking for in religious communities, and what those congregations that have been successful in attracting young adults have in common. These are commonly cited:

- **Identity** – With all the distractions and things we can choose to do with our time, people who are looking to join a new community need a simple, clear idea of why a congregation exists, who it serves, and what it is meant to do.
- **Welcoming young adults as they are** – Instead of assuming that young adults will assimilate into its culture and expectations, successful congregations incorporate young adults into their communities. These congregations show a willingness to make room for young adults and envision them fitting into the life of the community.
- **Discussion of shared values and relevant topics** – Younger adults want to explore big questions about the self and their individual place in the world. A common theme for discussion and inquiry amongst young adult humanists is, “How do I improve myself and as a result, create a better world?”
- **Diversity** – Younger people see diversity as an essential ingredient for meaningful and thorough discussions and a more vibrant religious community.
- **Religious education and children's programs** – Younger people are looking for a place to educate and raise their children according to their values.
- **Hands-on projects and events** – Besides the traditional sermon or platform model, most young people want to practice their beliefs by participating in social action projects, group discussions, and other interactive events. These experiences help them to learn about the important issues in their communities and world, and at the same time, explore what kind of adults they want to become.
- **Use of technology** – Successful congregations use the forms of technology that will best help in carrying out their missions of providing spiritual and community support in people's lives. Technology becomes an extension of what the congregation does, not a shiny add-on.

In my final report, I suggested action steps that individual Ethical Societies could take to become more attractive to young adults. These recommendations include: putting younger people in Society lay leadership roles, adding more platform topics that address young adults' phases of life, creating hands-on programs and young adult social groups, and improving the Sunday School program and doing more outreach to young families. However, based on my research and observations of our Movement, I believe that most of our Ethical Societies are not yet ready to implement my recommendations. We must first work to build a stronger foundation for our communities and organizations. The areas that I think we need to improve are: **Identity, Branding and Marketing, the Sunday Platform, and Programs and Events.**

The AEU Board supports my conclusion, as it recently voted to accept my proposal to continue my work and awarded me the Mossler Fellowship again. I will be working closely with two Ethical Societies on the foundational areas mentioned above as well as the recommendations I suggested that are directly related to young adult membership growth. By April 2015, I hope to have learned a great deal about how we all can make progress on these foundational issues at our Ethical Societies and become strong, recognized humanist communities for young adults and people of all ages.

Write for the *Dialogue*—We are accepting submissions for Summer 2014!

Send submissions to communications@aeu.org by Wednesday, June 25, 2014. Please include a headshot and relative images with your submission when possible.

If you are interested in writing but do not know what to write about, become a reporter for the *Dialogue* and get assigned a topic or event.

NEW YORK SOCIETY LAUNCHES SPEED DEED Audrey Kindred, NYSEC's *Ethics for Kids*

"Deed over creed" is an Ethical mantra. "Deed" is perhaps the only creed of Ethical Culture! At the New York Society for Ethical Culture (NYSEC), the leaders of the "Ethics For Teen" program put this treasured value to action through a new program titled Speed Deed. It is an activism fair where people to learn about and participate in various deeds while having fun and building friendships. In this forum, all people are invited to discover their activist leanings, through grassroots, creative, humanitarian and environmental projects.

The Speed Deed concept literally came to me in a dream, and I scrawled it on a scrap of paper as soon as I woke up. We had the inaugural session at NYSEC on Friday, March 28. NYSEC's next Speed Deed, scheduled to take place on Friday, May 30, 6-9pm, again invites all people, all ages. "The program is a model for the Movement," said Paulo Ribeiro, an AEU Leader-in-Training who attended the event. "Societies should replicate this." Murmurs from other Societies indicate they may well follow suit so I created a blog to document and guide the path of the project as it unfolds, www.speeddeed.blogspot.com/. Writings and reflections welcome.

While a diverse array of Ethical Culture members and leaders from various Societies attended the first Speed Deed, it was a

first taste of Ethical Culture for several participants. "This was a positive, surprisingly educational experience for our entire family... an ageless group for Ethical Culture," said Lina Gonzalez, a newcomer who attended with her husband and 12 year old daughter. Her husband, Juan Carlos, shared, "Speed Deed was a magnificent event. Met new friends, shared ideas, and expanded insight into contributing to the welfare of all. Time well spent!"



Sydney & Ali, Speed Deed participants

At NYSEC, the crowd shared a potluck dinner among portrait murals by NYSEC teens in a space that doubles as NYSEC's women's shelter. Once fed, with newly budding friendships, we embarked upon deeds. Tables arranged like rays of sun housed nine projects. In shifts of three at a time, each deed-leader offered wisdom about a cause, inviting participation in a doable deed. The first deed introduced was led by a very special teen, Aria Devlin, whom I had taught years earlier when directing children's programs at the Brooklyn Society. Aria and her friend Lena Gallager interviewed



Ishmael Islam & Amy Reid, Teen Advisors

people for a documentary about sexism and feminism. Lena commented, "Speed Deed was a really inspiring experience. This was my first time at NYSEC so to know there is a kind interesting group of people spreading Ethical Culture was great." Aria expressed that "It was amazing to get to interview such a diverse group of people about something that affected them all in different ways." Her coming-of-age advisor, Nirvani Bissessar, reflected, "I felt empowered and more powerful tonight. I was really impressed with the young people and their spirit for action. And really touched by the intergenerational experience and love."

NYSEC Teen Sydney Riemer, wrote an article reflecting on her experience for NYSEC's Outlook (visit the blog or NYSEC's website to read it in full). "Sending a letter to a government official, or even the act of signing a petition, like I did at various other booths, was pretty empowering. The idea that a small group of people of all ages and walks of life could get together and learn so much about important causes in such a short amount of time was

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remarkable. I even found myself changed in my opinions... this experience was new to me, but overall I found it eye-opening. I look forward going to the next Speed Deed and possibly having my own cause to share."

As the Speed Deed project continues, it invites activists of every age to create and lead doable deeds. See you May 30th in New York. RSVP to attend and/or lead a deed: ethicsforteens@nysec.org. Invite your friends and let's have some good fun!