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Be Part of #Bmorethical2017: Communities Confronting Systemic Racism!

102nd AEU Assembly, June 8-11
 Holiday Inn Inner Harbor, Baltimore, Maryland
 Details & registration at aeu.org/event/aeu-102nd-assembly
 Early-bird discounts end May 8



Learn about growing Ethical Societies! Develop effective ways of confronting systemic racism through ethical relationships that lead to action! Enjoy inspiring speakers and lovely entertainment! With assistance from our partners, including humanist groups and grassroots organizations with first-hand knowledge of fighting systemic racism, we will advance more comprehensive strategies to spread Ethical Culture and to build racial justice within organizations, communities, and relationships.

Bmorethical2017 will explore:

- What assumptions and behavior patterns prevent us (as individuals and communities) from growing more inclusive and open in rethinking approaches to racial justice?
- How can humanist communities, such as Ethical Societies, collaborate with grassroots and interfaith groups to build coalitions that advance common objectives while respecting different perspectives?

- How can we incorporate the wisdom of those most oppressed by white supremacy while not creating frames that distort their voices?
- How do we become aware of and respond to the multiple, overlapping forms of oppression that people experience?

America's four hundred years of systematic racism make these questions and objectives particularly challenging. The current wave of intolerance and violence makes finding new approaches to confronting a racist culture even more pressing. To be more effective, contemporary Ethical Culture must go beyond the strategies of the past. Our actions must be guided by the wisdom of those with first-hand knowledge of the extent and power of systemic racism. Bmorethical2017 will offer opportunities to develop relationships with people and groups outside Ethical Culture. The future of Ethical Culture and the United States depend on it.

Letter from Executive Director Bart Worden



It's been a bit difficult to get the Borg out of my mind the last few months. For those who are not Star Trek fans, the Borg is a fictional collection of species that have been turned into mechanically altered beings. In the Star Trek "Next Generation" series the Borg, who have incredible facility with technology, spread across the galaxy "assimilating" creatures into their bizarre but effective collective as they go from star to star. When they come upon a species to assimilate they send the message "resistance is futile" before attacking, and either killing or adding the hapless beings to their cybernetic community. What makes the Borg so frightening to me is their heartless intelligence—they are really smart, having soaked up the knowledge of countless civilizations, and they are really ruthless in their single-minded pursuit of perfection.

"Resistance is futile" was ringing in my ears as I witnessed the chief executive of the United States sign poisonous decrees, and continued to ring as a parade of organizational predators marched to Washington to take charge of government agencies. One after another tearing at the foundations of education, healthcare, justice, housing... It's been a mind numbing onslaught, and just one catastrophe after another emanating from the White House. The heartlessness of the current administration and their ruthless determination to destroy all but a few prized bits of government are all too reminiscent of the Borg—though I must admit to being at a loss to understand for what kind of perfection this President is striving.

But fear and desperation can be highly motivating, and within days of the November election huge numbers of people were pouring into the streets—so many marches, protests, and vigils that one could easily spend day and night going from event to event. My inbox quickly filled with invitations to join organizing efforts and every day brings fresh invitations. If people were lulled into slumber before November, many have since awakened alert, energized, and ready for Resistance.

Resistance is futile? Perhaps not! While things continue to be extremely bleak at the federal level, there are many positive things happening at the local level. Previously sleepy town halls are crammed full of disquieted folk who are not just accepting what happens. There is a plethora of organizing meetings to press for protection of immigrants, combating racism, criminal justice reform, environmental protection, and other causes and concerns. Legislators are getting swamped with emails, letters, and phone calls. Bus companies are thriving with the many-chartered trips to state capitals.

And Ethical Society members are well represented in those efforts according to numerous reports I've received from our member Societies. Our Movement's membership has been primed for action and the current fear-inspiring climate is making a positive difference in the number of allies and accomplices available for partnerships.

I especially appreciate the heartfelt and compassionate nature of so many of the rallies and organizing meetings I have participated in these past several months. Our country may be politically

divided, and fear and suspicion are all too present. But I have seen more interest on the part of fellow activists in mending rifts and preserving civility than vanquishing opponents or humiliating those who favor what the new administration is doing.

Perhaps that comes from a sense of humility. Before the election, I expected a continuation of the trends toward liberal agendas of access to healthcare, reduced economic disparity, openness to the variety of sexual and gender identifications and expressions, protection of the environment... all things I would like to see our government support and encourage.

But for those who are wary of government, I can imagine them feeling afraid that personal autonomy would be lost and the culture they felt accustomed to destroyed. The liberal agenda from their vantage points is all too similar to the Borg assimilation campaign—pressing forward relentlessly and without consideration for their feelings and sensibilities. Their resistance was not futile in November and the success of that resistance, perhaps ironically, helps energize the efforts of our activist allies. If "they" can win, so can "we."

The trick is to find ways to break the cycle of conflict and competition and build solidarity toward promoting the commonweal. The vision of Ethical Humanism is apt for that effort. We aim "to foster a world that is democratic, compassionate, just, and sustainable" and we aim to do that through our engagement with one another.

And the goal cannot be assimilation. Whether friend or foe, every person's worth and dignity is to be appreciated and upheld—not an easy task in a time of discord and distrust. So we need to take the long view and travel toward our destination along the local paths and byways that will lead us there in time, side by side. There will be many opportunities along the way to act to elicit the best in others and so may we elicit the best of ourselves as well.

Connect to Exchange to Change: An Ethical Experience

Future of Ethical Societies Conference, May 26-29

Details and registration at aeu.org/event/fes-conference-in-asheville-nc

When we meet, are we aware of what we are taking? How each human interaction contains a wealth of knowledge and feeling? Are we aware of what we are giving? The Future of Ethical Societies (FES) Conference in Asheville, North Carolina will be exercise in intentionally sharing that which we have learned and reaching out with openness for what we seek to gain from another. Christian Hayden, as conference planner, and Joy McConnell, as Society point of contact, hope to create a lasting and moving experience.

The conference this year promises to be an intimate affair, and more global than ever. International Humanist and Ethical Youth Organization Reps from Canada, Peru, and Brazil are planning to come. FES hopes to attract young people from all Societies. Asheville's serene landscape, rich cultural and artistic attractions will make for an exciting conference!

The FES Conference this year hopes to leave its members with something to take home. From the people whose paths they cross, the words of their peers, and the things that inspire them; the hope is everyone will leave with a little more than with which they came.

New Leader & Leaders-in-Training

The Leadership Committee of the American Ethical Union is pleased to announce that Dr. Richard Koral has been certified as an Ethical Culture Leader. Join us in Baltimore at [102nd AEU Assembly](http://aeu.org/event/102nd-aeu-assembly) for his certification ceremony on Sunday, June 11.

There are also two new Leaders-in-Training:

- Laura Buzek of the Washington Ethical Society, and
- J  Hooper of the Riverdale-Yonkers Society for Ethical Culture.

The Committee is quite excited to have these two new trainees. They will introduce themselves in the Summer issue of *Dialogue*. You can also meet them in person at [102nd AEU Assembly](http://aeu.org/event/102nd-aeu-assembly).



Richard Koral



Laura Buzek



J  Hooper

Save These Dates

Details on [AEU Events Page](#)

AEU Board Meetings

Individual members of Societies are welcome to attend. (Usually held at New York Society for Ethical Culture)
Sat. May 6 – NYSEC
Thu. June 8 & Sun. June 11
 – Assembly in Baltimore

March for Science

Sat. April 22 (Earth Day)

People's Climate March

Sat. April 29

Founder's Day - 141st anniversary of Ethical Culture
Mon. May 15

Memorial Day Weekend Camping Trip

Sat. May 27 - Mon. May 29
Gifford Pinchot
Pennsylvania State Park

Future of Ethical Societies Conference

Connecting to Exchange to Change

Fri. May 26 - Mon. May 29
Asheville, NC

AEU 102nd Annual Assembly Bmorethical 2017:

Communities Confronting Systematic Racism

Thu. June 8 - Sun. June 11
Baltimore, MD

AEU 2017 Skills Summit

Sat. October 14 + Fri & Sat
Philadelphia, PA

Building Connections, Building Community— Together We Become Stronger and Better *Melissa Sinclair, National Director of Ethical Education, AEU*

I am very excited to share that things are moving—in building connections between Ethical Education programs and in bringing Societies together. The Lesson Plan Ideas database is functioning and is starting to be used, the Directors of Ethical Education (DEE) are beginning to meet online more, and an AEU-wide camping trip has been planned and registration is open!

The form and database that was discussed in the Winter 2017 Dialogue is working and running. Take a look at them! Here is the [form](#) and through the form, you get the link to the database, or you can find the database too. Every week the form used to populate the database is sent to the Society DEEs. This form can be shared with all teachers or basically anyone can submit ideas for lessons for Sunday School! I have received word that, even in its infancy, one Society has already used a lesson from it! Yay for sharing resources! It's super easy to use and fast to input lessons. I promise!

The Ethical Education program is starting to have monthly meetings for three purposes—to share what we are doing to spur ideas for other DEEs, to provide support for each other, and to build more connection between the DEEs so

that we want to help each other. It's much easier to share ideas and resources if you know with whom you are sharing them! I'm hoping we'll have a super database with lots of entries real soon as a result.



Lastly, the one thing I've been dreaming about and I'm super excited to share with all Societies is that we are having an AEU-wide camping trip in Pennsylvania over Memorial Day weekend. Read all about it in this [packet](#) and [register online here](#). The Washington Ethical Society has run a camping trip for many years, hosting around 100 campers. This year I asked the planning committee if we could open it up to everyone and the answer was yes! So far I have heard that the Baltimore Ethical Society, the Northern Virginia Ethical Society, the Philadelphia Society, and the Washington Ethical Society are making plans to go. And if you aren't into sleeping on the ground, there are hotel options! (If enough want to book in hotels, I will make recommendations for groups to gather together.)



Reflections: A Journal on Ethical Culture Ideas and Community Life

Enjoy our new online journal providing essays of opinion on the ideas animating Ethical Culture and the enrichment of its cultural life. The April 2017 theme is: **Given that respect for human dignity is arguably the central value of Ethical Culture, how do we express that dignity in concrete ways towards people whom we do not like or are socially destructive?** [Read the responses and comment online.](#)

Also in the works is the possibility of joining with Camp Quest to do a fall retreat weekend for families too. Again, building connections to build community. Does this sound interesting to you? Contact [Melissa](#) to share what you would like for such a family retreat weekend.

This builds on what we started in the fall when we merged Ethical Education Workshop with Membership Workshop to have a successful meeting in Stony Point, NY. Then in December, I hosted in my home a 3 Society-wide gingerbread decorating and ornament making party. It was so much fun and I challenge each of your Societies to think of more ways to connect with each other. It makes for great fun, great energy, and has the possibility to help build more collaboration. Together we can become stronger and better!

New Ethical Culture Societies? Why Not?

Richard Koral, Chair of AEU Membership Committee

In the history of Ethical Culture, almost all the new Societies that were created in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries grew from existing Societies. They were organized by people who had already been members of a Society who moved away and then took on the challenge of starting an Ethical community in their new locale. More recently formed Ethical Culture groups were the products of displaced longtime members. The Asheville Circle in North Carolina was organized by retirees from St. Louis and elsewhere and the new Chicago Circle was formed by a group of members who struck out on their own from the original Chicago Society.

But it was not always that way. It can happen that a group of folks may learn about the Ethical Culture Movement and strive to create a Society of their own. For example, the second established Society, the one formed in Chicago, was originally organized by a group of local people who had been impressed by a talk given by Felix Adler and who undertook to form a Society for themselves, under the welcome supervision of the Founder.

A couple of years ago, Sandi Sacks, of the New York Society, was a Mossler Fellow working on her fellowship project in the AEU office. She noticed that calls would come in from time to time from people all over the country asking if they could start their own Ethical Society. These calls went nowhere because, it appeared, there were no resources with which to handle them. Sandi undertook to create a procedure for responding to these callers. She prepared an information sheet and called back and interviewed all those who had made an inquiry over the prior two years. Where there was an interesting prospect, that is someone

who seemed serious and capable, she passed the information to the AEU Membership Committee and a “New Society Task Force” came into being.

People from all corners of the country were interviewed and encouraged. A special information packet was created to introduce newcomers to Ethical Culture and to encourage them to form their own groups, be they discussion circles with an Ethical Culture theme or a more ambitious intention. At this time the AEU’s “100x100 Campaign” funds were coming in and there was, thankfully, important financial support.

People called in from Florida, Utah, California, Kentucky, Pennsylvania, Georgia, Alberta, and Ohio to explain how they learned about Ethical Culture, how they had been following the website of one or another Society, and how they yearned to have a community such as that in their own area. Taking a “leap of faith,” the New Society Task Force encouraged people to do it themselves and organize their own Ethical Culture community. Maintaining a close supporting role while trusting people of good will, the Task Force offered as much help as was requested and as much as could be given without taking over.

These efforts are starting to bear fruit. Two groups have emerged and are actively operating so far. The first entirely new Circle to be certified in many years by the AEU, the Susquehanna Valley Ethical Society (SVES), officially affiliated with the AEU in January 2017. They began meeting formally in September 2016



and I was delighted to be present and say a few words to help inaugurate their very first platform. The SVES meets in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania twice a month, once for platform and once for Colloquy.

The second new group is in Atlanta, Georgia. It began as a discussion group meeting once a month and for additional activities that it organizes or collaborates in. They began meeting in October 2016 and our Executive Director Bart Worden joined them at their first formal meeting. Today, they are going strong and, hopefully, they will soon begin to build a structure that can give them organizational strength.

Other groups are in the early stages of dreaming, planning, organizing, and meeting and more may come to fruition. In Boulder, Colorado, the AEU was instrumental in putting together interested people who otherwise would not have known about each other. In Edmonton, Alberta, a humanist group is meeting and looking for organizational guidance. In California, a member of the Silicon Valley Circle planning relocation asked for help to form a Society in her new area. Starting a new Society takes devotion to the concept as well as organizational skills, tremendous effort, and perseverance. Not every attempt will succeed, of course, and not every person who undertakes it is the most suited to the task. But without faith in the people who want it and are willing to try, there will be no growth. There certainly are people across the country—even in the most unlikely, conservative places—who are yearning for a community that supports and celebrates freethought, progressive values, and an affirmatively ethical approach toward living. What we have is more unique and envied than we realize. With encouragement and support from afar, we can be sure that some devoted leaders and dedicated participants can create new Ethical Culture Societies of their own.

Notes from Your AEU Board

Karen Elliott, AEU Board Member

The American Ethical Union Board met on Saturday, January 21, 2017 and Saturday, March 18, 2017 at the New York Society for Ethical Culture.

The Board was very pleased to formally grant Circle status to the Susquehanna Valley Ethical Society. There was good news in the area of professional Leadership as well. Dr. Richard Koral, former President of the AEU and current Acting Leader at the New York Society for Ethical Culture, has been certified as an Ethical Culture Leader. A formal ceremony for Richard will be held during the Assembly this June in Baltimore. Two people are starting the journey towards becoming Leaders: Laura Buzek, who grew up in Washington Ethical Society, and Jé Hooper, who is a member of the Riverdale-Yonkers Society for Ethical Culture. Both are graduates of the AEU's Lay Leadership Summer School.

AEU Executive Director Bart Worden had the idea to form a "Rapid Response Team" in order to respond quickly to current events with public statements written from an Ethical Culture perspective. The Team will work with the Ethical Action and Communications Committees, with writers drawn from professional Leadership, including Bart.

The AEU is implementing the use of G Suite (by Google) and is working on two sites with different purposes. The AEU Intranet is a private site for AEU Committees and staff to use for planning and documentation. AEU Resources is a semi-public site (anyone with a link to it can view) that will house the Visiting Leaders Bureau, AEU Program Exchange, Preferred Speakers Database, Ethical Education for Children resources, and other resources for organizational

development. And even more work to provide better support to Societies is in the works. Bart Worden is putting together a task force to talk about education needs, inter-congregational connections, and reworking our Lay Leadership Summer School.

Hugh Taft-Morales, President of the National Leaders Council, reported to the Board that this spring the NLC is trying something different for their clergy gathering. Rather than meeting only with other Ethical Culture Leaders, the NLC is participating in a "Humanist Clergy Collaboratory." Its purpose is to "build relationships and unify a diverse and sometimes fractured group so that we can better attract and support Humanists (atheists, agnostics, etc.), freethinkers, and the non-traditionally religious." The Collaboratory was organized by Amanda Poppei, Senior Leader of the Washington Ethical Society, David Breeden, Senior Minister of First Unitarian Society in Minneapolis, and humanist Rabbi Jeffrey Falick.

AEU Director of Administration Lawrence Miller happily reported on behalf of the Assembly Committee that there were 27 workshop proposals for the 17 available slots. Assemblies just keep getting better and better as far as usable and interesting content is concerned, and this one seems to be continuing that trend. But no matter how good the programs we provide are, it doesn't matter if we don't get people to participate. A Board task force is working with a few Societies on how best to use Google Ads. Once some guidelines and best practices are developed, they will be shared throughout the Ethical Movement.

Another strategic goal for this year's Board is to foster communication between Societies, and out of that goal arose the idea for a New York Regional Barbeque. The barbeque, which will be held on June 17 at the Brooklyn Society

for Ethical Culture, promises to be a great networking event, as well as a good time in general.

The Board task force looking at how best to support those unaffiliated with a Society is developing questionnaires for members who are leaving Societies as well as for potential members who may not currently live near a Society. And the Board is beginning to refocus itself on how to cultivate generosity within the Ethical Movement in order to help the Movement grow. The AEU provides support for existing Societies as well as for those wanting to begin Societies, but we are hampered by relying primarily on the financial support of the Societies who themselves would often like to have more funding in order to accomplish their own goals—or to just allow for better functioning. The 100x100 campaign was a start for the AEU and provided funds that have helped to increase the support we have given to new and potential Ethical groups among other things, but it was just a start. There are many more people who would enjoy being part of a humanist community such as ours—if they only knew it existed. There are many who could benefit from the kinds of services we provide—from Ethical Education for all ages to Leaders and officiants for humanist ceremonies to embodying my favorite quote from Margaret Mead "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." We need to keep this in mind when we plan our charitable giving—it's good to help deal with today's problems, but working to inspire, invigorate, and support more people in working on solutions to those problems will have a bigger pay-off in the end.

The next AEU Board meeting will be on Saturday, May 6, 2017 starting at 9 am at The New York Society for Ethical Culture. Members of member Societies are always welcome to attend.

Wall of Remembrance

Compiled from Societies' newsletters and websites, and newspaper obituaries

Sharron Belson (*St. Louis*) – Sharron Belson died in January.

Marilyn Braveman (*New York*) – Marilyn was active in the Joy of Personal Writing classes and Sunday morning colloquies.

Enid Feldman (*Long Island*) – Enid and Larry have been members of the Long Island Society for decades and both served in leadership positions over the years. The Feldmans moved to Atlanta last year to an assisted living facility near their son, Matthew. Enid fell last week and had surgery for a broken hip but succumbed to a heart attack soon after the surgery. Enid was 86 years old.

Beth Greenblatt (*Bergen*) – Longtime member Beth Greenblatt died of emphysema on February 7 at the age of 82. Beth will be remembered for her warm, creative, and indomitable spirit. She was a dedicated art teacher in the Hackensack Public Schools, as well as a legendary painter, cook, baker, jewelry maker, and story writer. Through the years, she contributed her talents to the Bergen Society in many ways, including providing art history workshops for Adult Education and serving as tireless chair of the Social Affairs Committee. “Though she faced many challenges, we knew Beth for her laughter, frivolity, her friendship and creativity,” said Leader Joseph Chuman. “Beth was able to find humor and help others laugh.”

Dr. Phyllis Harrison-Ross (*New York*) – Phyllis died peacefully on January 16, in the company of dear friends. Her work as chair of the Social Service Board will be her living legacy. She was a dear friend and wise mentor to countless people, who will cherish her memory and carry her in their hearts always.

Thomas Jacobsen (*St. Louis*) – Thomas died peacefully at home on January 15. He was a jazz enthusiast who published several books on the subject.

Alice MacIntyre (*Brooklyn*) – Alice died at home with her family by her side. After graduating from Grinnell College, Alice became a modern dancer. She loved all forms of dance and enjoyed teaching; creating productions with public school teachers, professional dancers, theater artists and especially the original musicals of her own daughter, Zoe. She was also an avid gardener with a great love of the natural world.

Joe Marvel (*New York*) – Joe died peacefully this week surrounded by his family at a hospital in Arizona.

Sharon Pedersen (*St. Louis*) – Sharon died on January 15 of leukemia. She had been keeping an online journal since her diagnosis, published first on Caring Bridge and then on the Ethical Society of St. Louis website blog. We will remember Sharon's strength of mind and character, and many of us have seeds and cuttings from her beloved 100-species native garden—now growing in ours.

Stephanie Rosenblatt (*New York*) – Stephanie died peacefully in her sleep on April 12.

Renée Schlesinger (*Bergen*) – Much loved, longtime member and past president, Renée Schlesinger, died peacefully February 4 at the age of 91, after a long period of decline and illness. Renée obtained her teaching certificate while in Kenya in the late 1960s and for several years she taught math, science and typing at the American Community School (later known as Nairobi International School) while raising her family, dancing (folk, square and Scottish), and exploring Africa and Europe as much as possible. She and her family returned to Rutherford, N.J., in 1975, and Renée was active not only in the Ethical Culture Society but in the Junior Women's League, local Democratic politics, and the local B'nai Brith. In retirement, she volunteered at Planned Parenthood, was a board member of the Rutherford Community Chest, and drove the elderly/infirm for Starfish of Rutherford.

Fran Solomon (*St. Louis*) – Fran Solomon died in January.

Ethical Action Feature: Marching for Justice

The American Ethical Union is committed to the ongoing struggle toward justice. That's why we are endorsing [March for Science](#) (April 22nd) and [People's Climate March](#) (April 29th), taking place in Washington DC and marches throughout the country. Both aim to strengthen the awareness and action around climate change, the rights of indigenous and other frontline communities who are most impacted, and the role of science in making a more humane world. Marchers will come from all races, all religions, all gender identities, all sexual orientations, all abilities, all socioeconomic backgrounds, all political perspectives, and all nationalities. Scientists know that our diversity is our greatest strength: a wealth of opinions, perspectives, and ideas is critical for progress.

The mischaracterization of science as a partisan issue has made it increasingly easy for policymakers to reject overwhelming evidence on issues of health, public safety and climate change. It is time for people who support scientific research and evidence-based policies to take a public stand. The false pitting of religion against science has created problems we need to address together. That's why we are marching with interfaith contingents.

Come together on April 22nd and 29th as we march for our families, our communities, and our planet. Please take photos and share! On social media, you can tag the AEU (@EthicalUnion) and your local Society, and use the event hashtag (#ScienceMarch or #ClimateMarch).

AEU members may email Washington Ethical Society at wes2017wmw@gmail.com to request home hospitality if needed.

[March for Science](#)

Starts with 9am kick-off rally and teach-in by the Washington Monument, Constitution Avenue NW between 15th and 17th street, then march towards White House.



[People's Climate March](#)

Join Washington Ethical Society's Earth Ethics Team in DC by signing up for text message updates during the march: <https://www.remind.com/join/climate17>. Lineup on 3rd Street SW ([see lineup info here](#)), march up Pennsylvania Ave to encircle the White House for a collective action, then continue to Washington Monument.



Climate Justice with Bronx & Bergen James White, Leader Emeritus

On "Divest Day", March 18th, members of the Bergen and Riverdale-Yonkers Societies gave leadership in a vigorous demonstration in Teaneck, New Jersey against three multinational banks that are funding oil-gas pipeline construction.

Bank of America, Wells Fargo, and Chase are supporting Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) in various ways, including direct investments and credit lines issued to companies involved in the pipeline's construction. We began with a rally at Bank of America and chanted, "You can't drink money. You can't drink oil. Bank of America, keep it in the soil." Then we marched to demonstrate on a bridge that has been made vulnerable to possible explosions of Tar Sands oil-bearing trains that threaten thousands of New Jersey families daily. The march continued to form rallies at Wells Fargo and Chase banks where a number of speakers described their very public acts of divestment from these global predator institutions, and explained how community

banks and credit unions provide us with ethical alternatives that strengthen our local economies. A Fordham University student working with Riverdale-Yonkers Society members will show a film on our consistent activism in support of the Standing Rock resistance at the Bronx Climate Justice North (BCJN) meeting on April 2nd. Further action against pipeline construction will be planned then.

The Food Justice working group of BCJN (led by Riverdale-Yonkers Society members) has been working with Fordham students at the Dorothy Day Center to help them develop their yearlong project for food justice. Climate change especially victimizes frontline communities in making nutritious food both unavailable and unaffordable. Last November the Day Center presented an effective forum detailing how food activism can help communities become empowered to confront all other deprivations caused by structural racism. During the first week of April, five different campus events will highlight various facets of a nascent campaign against Bronx food insecurity including organizing support for New York State farm workers' rights.

A Guide to Calling Your Representatives

Liz Collier, Outreach Director, Riverdale-Yonkers Society for Ethical Culture

Why is calling so important?

“Calling is the most powerful ways to put pressure on your representatives – even more than social media, email, or snail mail. Why? It shows commitment to a cause. And representatives know that if they don’t hear the concerns of their constituents, it could impact their ability to get reelected.” [Read More](#)

“... a large volume of calls on an issue could bring an office to a halt, sometimes spurring the legislator to put out a statement on his or her position, Ms. Ellsworth said. She recommended the tactic in [a series of tweets](#) shared thousands of times. “It brings a legislative issue right to the top of the mind of a member,” she said. “It makes it impossible to ignore for the whole staff. You don’t get a whole lot else done.” [Read More](#)

Pick an issue for the focus of your call

“The [call] should be about a live issue – e.g., a vote that is coming up, a

chance to take a stand, or some other time sensitive opportunity. The next day or week, pick another issue, and call again on that.” [Read More](#)

For a town hall or in-person meeting, you can discuss several issues. But for a phone call, stick to one issue for clarity and brevity, and for the office’s record-keeping.

Find representatives’ local office

[Call My Congress](#): Enter street address and zip code for Member of Congress and Senators’ Washington DC phone numbers and government track record.

[5 Calls](#): Enter zip code and click on an issue. You will then see all of your representative’s local and national office numbers along with a description of the issue and a specific script for the call.

Use a script or make your own, personalized script

If you are new to making calls or are nervous about saying the right thing, use a script. However, calls that feature a personal story or message can make a bigger impact: “While scripts found on the internet can be useful for people uncomfortable talking on the

phone, [Emily Ellsworth, former Congressional staffer] suggested making the phone calls as personal as possible. In some cases, if she was moved by a call, she would pass on the comments to her district director, she said. “What representatives and staffers want to hear is the individual impact of your individual story,” she said. “I couldn’t listen to people’s stories for six to eight hours a day and not be profoundly impacted by them.” [Read More](#)

Work up to making 3-5 calls a day

[5 Calls](#): A handy tool that gives you suggested issues, descriptions of the issues, scripts and phone numbers

[Make Me Call](#): A service that will call YOU every day and will automatically connect you with one of your representative’s offices. Have your issue and script ready to go!

Resources

- [Shy Person’s Guide to Calling Representatives](#)
- [Here’s Why You Should Call, Not Email, Your Representatives](#)
- For advanced calling techniques: [Indivisible Guide, pp. 23-24](#)
- [Common Cause](#): Learn about important issues and find suggested actions

Seeking an Ethical Culture Member to be AEU Representative at the IHEU Conferences

If you are interested in representing the AEU at the International Humanist and Ethical Union conferences, please complete this [google form](#).



How Would You Spread Ethical Culture? [Apply for Mossler Fellowship to Get Started on Your Vision](#)

The Ethical Culture Movement is made up of dedicated and passionate Societies across the US supported by the AEU. Do you have a project idea to help us expand the Movement? Apply now for the Mossler Fellowship so we can help you get started. [Applications](#) are due by May 6, 5pm ET and the winner(s) will be notified by May 28. For more details on the Fellowship and a list of past winners, visit [aeu.org/what-we-do/awards](#).

What's New with NES

Kay Dundorf, President

The National Ethical Service (NES), Ethical Culture's voice at the United Nations, sponsored an official side event of the 61st session of the Commission on the Status of Women (which was held in New York from March 13-24, 2017). Our event was called "The Circle: Indigenous Ceremony to Lift Voices of Women Worldwide" and it was part of a Series called Bridging Humanity with Compassion (BHC).

Grandmothers Circle the Earth led the ceremony in which Indigenous women from Standing Rock participated. One of the emerging issues for CSW is empowerment of Indigenous women. In addition to NES, the BHC series partners included United Religions Initiative, One Million Circle, Earth Child Institute, Charter for Compassion, Circle Connections, and International Public Policy Institute.

Visit unwomen.org for more about the 61st session of CSW. Learn about National Ethical Service at nationalserviceacu.org and our [Facebook page](#).

From the United Nations: Press Freedom and Truth

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

Watch United Nations briefings online at <http://webtv.un.org>.

The world is increasingly dangerous for journalists. On average, more than 30 journalists are murdered every year, and the murderers go unpunished in nearly nine out of 10 cases. According to the Committee to protect journalists (CPJ) at least 81 journalists are currently imprisoned in Turkey. After Turkey, the worst offender is China with 38 in jail. The 259 journalists in jail worldwide is the highest number recorded since 1990.

According to Freedom House, press freedom declined to its lowest point in 12 years in 2015. Amazingly, only 13 percent of the world's population enjoys a free press, 46% have a partly free press, and sadly 46% live without any not free press.

Aside from jailing journalists, the fear of litigation, the pressure to reveal sources, and other forms of intimidation have inhibited

journalists and promoted self-censorship. Freedom of expression is a vital moral issue and a precious human right recognized in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The United Nations celebrates Press Freedom on May 3 every year. We need to make decisions and monitor what is going on because what we don't know can hurt us.

In the United States the recent election with candidate and now President Trump has raised serious issues for journalists. That politicians lie and spin the news is nothing new. What is new is the struggle to keep alive the notion of truth and objective facts. Traditionally and ideally journalists are committed to robust, fact-based reporting on the issues. President Trump has promoted the idea that the media is the enemy of the people and that unfavorable news is fake news. Calling real news fake news is an attempt to hide the truth.

Trump is a leading exponent of "Post-Truth" politics, a reliance on assertions that "feel true" but have no basis in fact. A consequence of Post-Truth politics is lying and the repetition of lies. PolitiFact, an organization that double checks facts, found that about 70% of Trump's factual statements actually

fall into the categories of "mostly false," "False," and "pants on fire untruth." We are far from it but it is reminiscent of the brilliant Nazi propagandist Joseph Goebbels, "If you tell the same lie enough times, people will believe it and the bigger the lie, the better."

The digital revolution has provided people access to an amazing amount of information but there is no accountability. Technology helps unfiltered and unchecked ideas to spread quickly. In this new technological and Post-Truth environment, reporting faces serious challenges due to what Social Scientists have called Confirmation Bias. That is when we are drawn to information that aligns with our worldview and leads us to hold these beliefs even in the face of compelling evidence to the contrary. There is a human tendency toward confirmation bias, rationalization, and self-deception. We have to acknowledge that we are all susceptible. Being aware of this bias can help us guard us against it.

What should reporters do in this Post-truth environment? We believe they should do their honorable professional work to pursue the truth and get the story.

From the United Nations: The UN—Where are We Going?

Dr. Sylvain Ehrenfeld, IHEU and National Ethical Service representative to the UN

Dr. Reba Goodman, Ethical Culture Society of Bergen County

The continuous debate over the pros and cons of the United Nations is baffling. This debate is especially lively during the change to new Secretary General Antonio Guterres and the dramatic ups and downs of US President Donald Trump. This is a good time to consider the upcoming prospects of the UN. We will focus on two important issues: media coverage of the UN and Trump's attacks on UN goals.

Many of us don't fully understand what the UN does. This is a result, in part, of inadequate media coverage. For example, how many people know that the UN provides food and housing for the staggering 65 million refugees in a variety of camps in Lebanon, Jordan, and the Sudan? Recently it was announced that the UN's World Food program (WFP) was running out of money and had to reduce food rations by half. The UN excels in providing clean water, sanitation, vaccines, and maternal health care (over 30 million women receive care). But the UN is chronically short of money for these vital humanitarian activities and the media mostly ignore these programs.

In recent years the world has been experiencing a remarkable historic transition. Every day about a quarter-million people worldwide move out of extreme poverty. In the 1980s, more than 40 percent of all people were living in extreme poverty. Now, less than 10 percent are. Since 1990, more than 100 million children's lives have been saved

through vaccinations, breastfeeding promotion, and diarrhea treatment. People are living much longer than they did 50 years ago and many more girls are getting an education. Again, the mainstream media largely ignore these historic trends.

Secretary General Antonio Guterres is an able and polished politician from Portugal. He was prime minister of Portugal from 1995 to 2002 and UN high Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for 10 years. He is acutely aware that funding for these UN operations is vital. He also recognizes that one of the great failures of the UN in recent years has been preventing conflict and maintaining security. Due to the veto power of the permanent members of the Security Council, the UN has been unable to prevent war crimes in Syria, South Sudan, and Yemen.

Guterres is in a tough spot. He needs to prevent a collision course between the UN and US President Trump, plus a Republican Congress that is mostly antagonistic to the UN. President Trump is considering serious cuts in the level of US funding for many UN programs. On the one hand, Guterres has to ensure that the US buys in to keep the UN running and relevant. On the other hand, he has to be a guardian and advocate of UN principles including human rights and the promotion of cooperation when possible.

President Trump, in his America First rhetoric, is mostly antagonistic to the UN and international cooperation. His comments on climate action, human rights, and UN funding run counter to UN positions. Trump has also reintroduced the "Gag rule" which denies US funding to any organization that provides reproductive information and mentions abortion. Vice President Mike Pence is a vocal critic of women's rights and abortion. The

UN Population Fund, which oversees maternal reproductive health programs, may therefore become a victim.

In his inaugural address, President Trump was insensitive to the historic background of the America First language. This concept was part of the isolationist movement in the United States before World War II, and appeared in the pro-Nazi language of Charles Lindbergh. In that speech, the president seemed to belittle international alliances and pursue only American interests as he sees them. In our increasingly globalized world the reality is that to achieve American interests you have to work cooperatively with other countries. His vision is counter to the UN's vision, which promotes human rights and cooperation. If he pursues this vision, he will most likely experience push back from other nations, as well as from liberal and progressive US citizens. If he doesn't learn from that experience and amend his position, the US, the UN, and the world may be in for a rough ride.

To help ensure that the important and necessary of the United Nations around the world can proceed and expand as needed, we must take action. In the short term we can contact our US Senators and Representatives to express our concern on this issue, and to urge them to secure sufficient funding for the United Nations. For the future, we can familiarize ourselves with the work of the UN, discover our own passion for some or all of it, and urge every media outlet we can reach to cover that work. Stress its importance to you, and why you want to see it covered. It won't be easy—this is "good" news so the media shy away from it—but we can make a difference over time.

Support the American Ethical Union

With your generous support we can learn, share, grow, and make a difference in our Societies and the world.

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Honoring the Past, Building for the Future *Excerpt from platform given by Kate Lovelady, Leader, to the Ethical Society of St. Louis, January 2017*

Recently the Ethical Society of St. Louis has seen a substantial growth in member involvement, with several other new important projects:

- A few years ago I hoped that we could support a boarding scholarship for a girl at a Uganda Humanist School. That first year we raised enough for 6 scholarships, plus extra equipment. Then the program grew to 12 scholarships plus reusable sanitary pads for every girl in both schools, and a new girls' dorm. This year we are supporting 20 scholarships for girls, along with sanitary pads and additional books and equipment, especially books for the reading for pleasure program, which is truly life changing.
- In September we started a new program using Senior Connections training to increase the number of members visiting other members and 30 people signed up. So far we've trained 19 and matched 12. That's a substantial increase in visiting. Two members who died this month, Tom Jacobsen and

Sharon Pedersen, were receiving regular visits from members through this program; visits that meant a great deal both to them, and to their visitors.

- In November we held our second Thanksgiving service Platform and, while the Coming of Age class made Stone Soup, over a hundred Ethical Society members and friends of all ages
 - sorted donated food; put together menstrual supply kits for the homeless;
 - packed books to send to deployed soldiers;
 - made treats for shelter dogs and wild birds, native seed balls, and re-usable bags out of old T-shirts;
 - sorted reclaimed materials for Habitat for Humanity;
 - made fleece blankets for first responders to give to traumatized children;
 - wrote letters of support and encouragement to new immigrants; and
 - weeded invasive species and cleared the trail in the ethical woods.
- You guys even do windows—specifically the ones in the foyer, which are a pain. All of this was done with great energy, good will, and humor. I think the Thanksgiving service Platform is my favorite new tradition.

- Also this fall, Concordance Academy came to us hoping we could find 4-6 members to support someone coming out of prison. Within a short time, 14 people had signed up, and the first team will meet their partner soon.
- We also have a growing relationship with the International Institute. Society members are collecting items downstairs for new immigrants and just a few days ago helped prepare and share a meal with some of the newest members of the St. Louis community. This partnership will be particularly important in the coming year, it seems.
- Our End Racism team continues to organize monthly Black Lives Matter vigils as well as Witnessing Whiteness classes, and to bring important topics and speakers to the Society, often working with Metropolitan Congregations United.

There are many wonderful things planned and in process here. I highlight these as examples of how this community is always stretching to do more, especially in partnership with the most vulnerable communities in our region.

Book Review of Kwame Teague's "Humanism vs. Racism: Ten Steps to Eradication"

Randy Best, Leader, Northern Virginia Ethical Society

The litmus test for Humanism is racism. There is no way around it and no other problem looks our principles so squarely in the eyes. Racism challenges us existentially, making mockery of everything we stand for.

These first lines from the book directly challenge humanism to confront American racism as an essential part of the humanist project. Humanists must address this problem to live up to the universal principles that humanism espouses. Kwame Teague not only defines the problem but also proposes steps that can be taken immediately to begin the process of eradicating racism.

Like Michelle Alexander's *The New Jim Crow*, this book starts out with a concise and powerful historical overview of racism in America—from slavery to the present day. In addition to expected stops along the way, the influence of the Union Movement, Hip Hop culture, Occupy Wall Street, the Tea Party, and Black Lives Matter are presented. This provides both context and insight into the author's perspective as an excellent prelude to the recommendations included at the end of the book. Briefly, here are the Ten Steps:

Step One: Making a Commitment

Conscious involvement in the process of addressing racism. It takes more than just not contributing to the problem.

Step Two: What is an American?

We are all Americans and our race is Human. Stop identifying yourself by race, especially in the 2020 census.

Step Three: Finding Our True Identity

Humanists should have DNA ancestry tests done as part of an organized campaign. This will reveal your personal, diverse in place and race, heritage. This knowledge will allow you to transcend your racial identity to move toward a more global human identity.

Step Four: Creating Bridges

It is time for Humanists to step up and create diverse forums to address problems that we face today. Humanists are uniquely situated to perform this task.

Step Five: Establishing Outlets

Cultivate media outlets from public access TV and radio to media with national reach. This is the next step in creating bridges.

Step Six: Digital Charity

Through use of existing sources and establishing an "eVolunteering App" connections would be furthered to increase voluntary actions to help address social problems.

Step Seven: Establishing and Revamping Holidays

- Revamp World Humanist Day to World Human Day
- Celebrate March 8th as International Women's Day
- Nationally recognize Crispus Attucks Day

Step Eight: Education, Reeducation, and Rehabilitation

Promote programs for conversations about race and racial justice. Support intentional integration in schools and day care. Start a prison

Humanist Awareness Campaign.

Step Nine: Political Mobilization

Expand voter outreach and voting rights for ex-offenders. Get Humanists to speak publicly on issues and run for office.

Step Ten: Add Anti-Racism Declaration to the Humanist Creed

'Nuff said.

My summaries do not do full justice to Kwame Teague's proposals. Although I may not agree with all of his suggestions, his ten steps provide an excellent starting point for further discussion. I highly recommend reading this book to benefit from Kwame's unique perspective.

Copies of this book will be for sale at the AEU Assembly in June. Jé Hooper and I will be joining Kwame Teague to present a workshop, **Hip Hop Humanism**, at the Assembly.

About the Author: It has been my pleasure to get to know Kwame Teague over the past several years. Kwame is incarcerated in North Carolina where he has been working with the AHA Appignani Humanist Legal Center to have Humanism recognized as a religious life stance in the NC Prison system. He is the author of several well-known books in the Urban Fiction genre.

Note:

The Innocence Project, 2000 winner of the AEU Elliott-Black Award, celebrates its 25th anniversary this year. [Read about it and co-founder Peter Neufeld \(son of longtime NY member Muriel Neufeld\) here.](#)

Write for Summer 2017 Dialogue!
Send submissions to communications@aeu.org
by Sunday, June 25, 2017.

Please include a headshot and relative images with your submission.

Natural Burial for the Sake of Animals & Earth

Janet Glass, President, Ethical Culture Society of Bergen County

I believe in natural burial. By natural burial I mean that we stop cutting down trees to make coffins, that we refrain from destroying rock face to make headstones, and that we don't poison the earth with the formaldehyde in embalming fluid. Natural burial means we don't contaminate the air with mercury that results from cremation. Cremation also consumes energy and doesn't replenish the land. In my idea of natural cemeteries we don't create gardens that require the use of pesticides and herbicides, and we certainly don't mine the land for mausoleums of marble and granite. Just put my body in the ground to decompose, let the nutrients nourish the earth for the plants that sustain wild animals.

I love the idea of providing habitat for wildlife by my death. The way we organize ourselves in cemeteries now is by religious groups, families, municipalities, and military service. Not by habitat preservation. At least, not yet. In order to sustain eagles, bears, and other animals that need a wide range to survive, we need large tracts of land. If I want to plant myself to save habitats, a natural section in a conventional cemetery won't provide enough land. So, in order for this to work, I need lots of company. A few years ago I looked around for natural cemeteries, like one I had imagined, and bought a plot

near Ithaca, New York. At that time there were only three like this in the country.

Our connection to animals
So why do I like to imagine my body helping to nourish a bush which might provide some berries for a squirrel which could feed an eagle? I feel related to all of it and, at heart, I think we all do. Last weekend I was at the computer when I noticed that a mourning dove had landed on the fire escape very close to my bedroom window. I felt my heart actually flutter a little bit and I watched its movements, riveted until it flew away. What is that connection about? And it's not just me. Babies are always drawn to the sight of an animal, and stroking a dog or cat soothes the elderly. Our instinctive connection to animals seems to be hard-wired, yet we've betrayed them in so many ways. We have cut ourselves off from their pain in factory farming, laboratory experiments, circus life, military uses, and habitat destruction.

In my own life, I haven't been able to rid myself of animal products successfully enough and, as a culture, we're still working out how to coexist. But in my death, I might help a bit to restore the balance. Laws still protect burial grounds as sacred. We could make them even more sacred by giving some of the earth back to the other beings among us. As green awareness becomes trendier, maybe it's a chance at collective redemption for the animal suffering we've caused. I believe in natural burial as habitat restoration. Let's push up some daisies. This I believe.

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