

AMERICAN ETHICAL UNION

Dialogue Winter 2017

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AEU Rapid Response Team

At the November 2016 American Ethical Union board meeting, a plan was proposed to develop the AEU’s capacity to respond quickly and effectively to important events. The proposal called for a Rapid Response Team that would collect information about active concerns regarding important events and how to respond to them. The Team would be responsible for developing communications for distribution via email, website, social media, and press releases.

The Rapid Response Team is now in operation and welcomes your participation! If you have a concern about a current event or issue of importance, send an email message to our new Collaborative Inbox, concerns@aeu.org. Team members will review your messages and

develop timely statements to send out with recommended action steps to respond to the concerns.

The Rapid Response Team is part of the AEU Ethical Action Committee and will have close coordination with the AEU Communications Committee. Our goal is to develop and disseminate statements quickly so that the AEU, our members, and the public can take action right away. In addition, to strengthen our ability to take meaningful action on a large scale, the Ethical Action Committee would like to keep in touch with our most active members. If you or a member you know are highly involved in the areas of Climate, Racial Justice, Economic Justice, or World Peace and Development, please get in touch with Kate LaClair (klaclair@aeu.org).

Bmorethical 2017: Communities Confronting Systemic Racism

*American Ethical Union’s 102nd Annual Assembly, June 8-11
Holiday Inn 301 W. Lombard St, Baltimore, MD 21201*

At this year’s American Ethical Union Assembly come learn about growing our local Ethical Societies while promoting racial justice. We will focus on effective ways of working for racial justice in communities and between communities, through the distinguishing characteristic of Ethical Culture: the nurturing of ethical relationships and conversations that lead to action. We will work with external partners, including humanist groups and grassroots organizations with first-hand knowledge of systemic racism.

**Get ready for #bmorethical2017 and join [Facebook event](#).
Registration will be available on aeu.org in April.**

Letter from Executive Director Bart Worden

What would you recommend doing to press for social justice?



I doubt anyone reading this is looking back on 2016 with fondness. It was pretty rough at the start, tumultuous all the way through, and does not appear headed toward a happy ending. As I write this, our nation is faced with an incoming president and administration that are dedicated to dismantling important national governmental programs and removing safeguards that have promoted health and safety for all. President-elect Donald Trump's picks for cabinet secretaries for the Departments of Education, Energy, Environmental Protection, Housing and Urban Development, Justice, and Labor are all antagonistic to what their respective departments have been striving to accomplish.

Additionally, the administration appears poised to impose new restrictions on civil rights, especially for immigrants and people who identify as Muslim, and to ease limits upon the conduct of police and military toward suspects and adversaries.

These are dark times for those of us who have been striving to create and maintain a society that is fair and compassionate, that protects the vulnerable, and supports the flourishing of every person. For that to happen, we need a leveled playing field and a government that provides a framework for social justice. What we have had instead is a field tilted heavily in favor of the

already successful at the expense of those who most struggle to make ends meet, and a justice system that has been extraordinarily punitive, especially toward people of color.

It was my hope that a new administration would at least make efforts to realize incremental movement toward social justice. I felt encouraged by the growing number of people who expressed concern with how unfair the status quo has been. I was confident that the American people would get on board and would reject the blatant racism, misogyny, and religious bigotry that so characterized the Trump campaign. And I was right—the majority of voters *did* vote for another candidate. But, alas, some votes count more than others, so we have Donald Trump as President-elect.

I actually do agree with a few things Mr. Trump said in his victory speech on November 9th: “Now it’s time for America to bind the wounds of division... To all Republicans and Democrats and Independents across this nation, I say it is time for us to come together as one united people.” I couldn’t agree more! Of course, to do that, Mr. Trump will need to come to terms with having the lowest approval rating of an incoming president in decades rather than pretend that few are in opposition to his plans.

He also said, “I’m reaching out to you for your guidance and your help so that we can work together and unify our great country.” Now, if Mr. Trump would listen to the views of the majority, perhaps we could make some headway toward becoming a more united people. But so far, that is clearly not happening so the majority needs to speak with a lot more volume in order to be heard.

So the question now is, how do we respond to an administration that does not reflect the will of the majority yet behaves as if it did?

Here’s my list:

- Don’t go quietly. This is no time to hide opinions or back off on demands for justice.
- Be persistent and don’t let setbacks derail campaigns. Stand up, dust off, and get back to work.
- Work from your points of greatest influence—you’ll have most impact on your local elected officials so start there with calls, letters, and visits.
- Gather your friends, get organized, and stand together.
- Join coalitions or form some of your own.
- Tell your friends what you care about and what you are doing about it.

I’m sure you have been thinking (and worrying) over these matters—what is your take on our situation? What would you recommend doing to press for social justice? If you’d like to express your point of view or recommend some actions, send a message to concerns@aeu.org. We are listening and value what you have to say!

Thank You, Donna Pang!

*Law'nence Miller, AEU
Administrative Director*



I have had the privilege to work as the Director of Administration of the AEU since the beginning of 2007 and have seen our organization go through many challenging times but we always find ourselves coming through on a positive note. This is due to the dedication of our members and the tireless efforts of the AEU staff. Most do not know that the AEU's complete staff is comprised of just seven dedicated persons (two full-time employees and five part-time employees), and one of our favorites is leaving us.

AEU Administrative Assistant Donna Pang, my left and right hand, is retiring as of January 13, 2017 after 11 years of unwavering commitment, support, and care to not only the AEU and all its members over the years but also, selfishly, me!

Donna cannot be talked into staying—I have tried for over the last year! She is ready to tackle all those little projects that we all have but are unable to find the time to dig into and get done. But life always surprises you and I have a feeling that she will have little interest in going through boxes and sorting 30-year old pictures, as she is to become a first-time grandmother! Her daughter, Dr. Kim Pang, is expecting a baby boy in June. What perfect timing! Congratulations to the whole family.

Please feel free to share your thoughts and well wishes to Donna directly. Her email address (dang.aeu@gmail.com) will continue to be accessible by her for the next 3 months.

Donna, thank you for your support, dedication, and friendship over the last decade. May your life going forward bring you the joy that you have given to the Ethical Culture Movement, member-by-member, Society-by-Society and especially to me. Never-ending warmth and compassion from us to you.

Welcome, Larissa Perez!



We are thrilled to introduce you all to Larissa Perez, our new Administrative Assistant. Larissa has previously worked as a sales professional and web-series producer. We're especially excited to have her share her skills in social media management and training. Make sure to introduce yourself next time you call the AEU office and come meet Larissa in person at our 102nd Assembly in Baltimore June 8-11.

Save These Dates

For details visit www.aeu.org

AEU Board Meetings
Individual members of Societies are welcome to attend. (Usually held at New York Society for Ethical Culture)
Sat. January 21 – NYSEC
Sat. March 18 – NYSEC
Sat. May 6 – NYSEC
Thu. June 8 & Sun. June 11 – Assembly in Baltimore

Future of Ethical Societies Conference
Theme TBA

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

[See aeu.org for more info](http://www.aeu.org)

AEU 102nd Annual Assembly
Theme TBA

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

[See aeu.org for more info](http://www.aeu.org)

Special United Nations Days

[\(Click here for details\)](#)

Feb 20 - World Day of Social Justice

March 3 - World Wildlife Day

March 8 - International Women's Day

March 20 - International Day of Happiness

March 22 - World Water Day

April 7 - World Health Day

Ethical Action Feature: Climate Justice Moves Ahead on Divestment

Jim White, Leader Emeritus

Ellen Post, of the Washington Ethical Society (WES), serves as a member of the steering committee of Maryland's *Montgomery County 350.org* affiliate (www.350MoCo.org). After almost three years effort, they may succeed in convincing the County Council to divest its pension fund from the two hundred largest fossil fuel companies in its portfolio. Discussions and letter-writing campaigns at WES coffee hours have helped to move this work along.

After repeated meetings with the nine council members, 350.org has recently celebrated a breakthrough. Accompanying one member who previously affirmed a pro-divestment position, another member just declared that he would sponsor the draft divestment legislation (Bill 44-16) and get a third council member on board as well. The three co-sponsors were able to introduce the bill for deliberation. On December 6th, Ellen and several other 350MoCo members testified in its support. It is hoped that it will pass in a final vote in February.

This news is spurring Riverdale-Yonkers Society for Ethical Culture members active in Bronx Climate Justice North to join with other Ethical congregations in pro-

divestment action in New York City and State. We are going to intensify contact with the elected officials who sponsored a Baruch College forum on pension fund divestment on October 28th, and mount pressure on Scott Stringer, NYC Comptroller, who recently refused to allow any testimony for divestment from the NYC pension portfolio. Together, state and municipal pension funds total \$345 billion. What a victory divestment here would be! And with the Trump presidency taking shape, climate action on the local and state level is more important than ever.

Visit 350.org to learn how to help your local chapter and read the AEU 2014 [resolution on divesting from fossil fuels](#).

National Leaders Council Joins Humanist Clergy Collaboratory

*Hugh Taft-Morales,
NLC President*

Note from author: Officers of the National Leaders Council from the Fall of 2016-2018 include Hugh Taft-Morales (President), Randy Best (Vice-President), and Richard Koral (Treasurer). An election for a new Secretary will occur in the next couple of months.

In the wake of one of the most divisive presidential campaigns in history, many Ethical Culture Leaders have been working hard to both adapt to new political realities themselves, and to channel the fear and frustration of Ethical Society members and other humanists in a constructive direction.* A great opportunity to share ways to do

both more effectively is coming in the form of a collaborative meeting with other humanist clergy.

Rather than meeting only with other Ethical Culture Leaders this Spring, the NLC is participating in a "Humanist Clergy Collaboratory" with other Humanist clergy. The purpose of this gathering on March 27-28 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." This will offer us a time to connect, learn about each other's traditions, and talk about the future of humanism both broadly and specifically.

The Collaboratory is being organized by Amanda Poppei, Senior Leader of the Washington Ethical Society, David Breedon,

Senior Minister of First Unitarian Society in Minneapolis, and humanist Rabbi Jeffrey Falick. Given the foreboding political times in which we find ourselves, this kind of progressive networking seems particularly appropriate.

Members of the National Leaders Council will stay in Washington an extra day for a retreat, some visioning work, and to reflect on the interfaith dialogue of the Collaboratory. Many thanks to Amanda and the Washington Ethical Society for arranging much of this and for providing home hospitality for our Ethical Culture Leaders. May we all stand stronger because we are more united!



AEU Using “G Suite for Nonprofits”

The work of the American Ethical Union is a largely volunteer effort that relies heavily on the dedication of committed individuals from across the country. We are continually seeking ways to improve communication and enhance our capacity to work collaboratively in our efforts to support our member organizations and be a strong and persistent voice for social justice in the public arena.

To improve our work, we recently received a gift that will provide us with a simple, sensible, and usable

platform for communications, project management, and documentation. The gift is called G Suite for Nonprofits—an ad-free and fully-featured platform and collection of applications that has been provided free of charge to the AEU by Google. G Suite is a cloud-based system that uses email addresses to provide access to files and email work groups. The suite includes Gmail, Google Calendar, Google Drive (i.e. Google Docs, Google Sheets, and Google Forms), and other applications—all accessed through our aeu.org email addresses. We set up team space for each committee and an Intranet site to make it easier for users to find the applications, messages, and

documents their team uses. And that is not all! G Suite enables us to develop a semi-private website for member organizations to access resources such as Visiting Leaders Bureau, AEU Program Exchange, Preferred Speaker Database, Ethics for Children curricula, webinars, videos, organizational development tools, etc. We are also creating public Google Groups (discussion forums like our current Presidents’ and Ethical Action groups) that will allow Societies to connect with our national committees on ideas and questions. These features will make it exceptionally easy to find resources for your Ethical Society and should be available by the end of January 2017.

Wall of Remembrance *Compiled from Societies’ newsletters and websites, and newspaper obituaries*

Paul Berman (New York) – Paul was a former member of New York Society and an active member of the Social Service Board. He bequeathed \$20,000 to the AEU (to be received in 2017).

Dick Bohn (Essex) – Dick, 86, passed away peacefully in his sleep on October 1, after a recent diagnosis of pancreatic cancer. Dick graduated from Georgetown University before going on to work for Ford Motor Company for 33 years. He was also a proud Army veteran, having served during the Korean War. Dick loved traveling, both for work and for pleasure. Dick and wife Nancy were longtime members of the Ethical Culture Society in Maplewood. As expressed by Martha Gallahue, “we shall never forget Nancy’s and Dick’s devoted service to our Society, where they spent many years; their legacy is long here and we are grateful.”

Florence Falk-Dickler (New York) – Florence died in December at the age of 85. She was a longtime member of the Bergen Society before moving and joining the New York Society. She enjoyed participating in the Great Books discussions. Florence was also a founder and former chair of the Bergen County chapter of NOW (National Organization of Women).

Judy Finamore (Westchester) – Long-time and dear member of our Ethical Society, Judy Finamore died on November 28, at the age of 85. As many of her friends know, she had been afflicted with progressive dementia, which gradually deprived her of her abilities, and she was in assisted-living facilities since 2012.

Virginia Scherer (New York) – Virginia died in December at the age of 91. She joined the New York Society in 1962. Virginia was a Sunday greeter for many years, a volunteer at the homeless shelter, and recently was head of the caring committee.

Warren Allen Smith (New York) – Warren died on January 8th at the age

of 95. Warren was a teacher, editor, businessman, personal agent, and author. He founded Variety Recording Studio and created Philosopedia, the free online search engine.

Fran Solomon (St. Louis) – Long-time member, Fran Solomon, died peacefully in California on December 7. Her son Ron says she enjoyed a wonderful year surrounded by her children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren.

Rhoda Weill (Long Island) – Rhoda, a founder of the Long Island Society, died on December 1. She and her late husband threw wonderful fundraising and pool parties at their home and generously supported social welfare activities of the Society, including the Young Activist Grant.

Phil Wolfe (Northern Westchester) – Philip S. Wolfe died on December 29 after a brief illness. He earned his Ph.D. in Mathematics at the University of California at Berkeley, and went on to become one of the founding fathers of the field of optimization, the mathematics that underlies modern operations research.

New Exciting Way to Share Ethical Education Lessons

Melissa Sinclair, National Director of Ethical Education



Big things are in progress for Ethical Education at the AEU. We had a great turnout for the joint conference with Ethical Education and Membership in November that brought up a lot of interesting topics and ideas. What became abundantly clear is that we have a lot of talent, a lot of passion, and a lot of ideas around Ethical Education programming. We needed to find a way to share these ideas and lessons with each other in a simple way.

After that workshop weekend, the idea started to take off. We had created a backbone at the conference, now we needed to build the rest. In the last month, we have created a form, a spreadsheet, and a search function website. Next step was to test it with the Ethical Education Committee to see if we got it right. We are just finishing this stage and plan to go live by the beginning of February!

What is this new form? How does it differ from other attempts to organize our vast number of lesson ideas? The form is very simple. We realized at the Ethical Education workshops that sharing a complete lesson specifically tailored for one Society wasn't overly useful for sharing with other Societies, as is. Details bog down the broader topic and then it gets hard to tease out what is actually the main point of the lesson. We don't actually need or want lessons spelled out for us, but we do need to share ideas for lesson plans so we aren't all

recreating the wheel and so we can spark further creativity to enrich our lessons and programs.

So that is what we created. The form asks for your name, your email, and your Society. This information is gathered in case anyone wants to contact the contributor to get further details. We then ask the person contributing the lesson idea to select a theme for the lesson. We currently have 10 themes and 1 miscellaneous entry that we will use to create additional themes if needed. They are:

- Comparative Religions/Faiths
- Death and Dying
- Ethical History/Leaders
- Fairness/Bullying
- Holidays
- Love/Friendship
- Peace/Mindfulness
- Service projects
- Social Justice
- Taking care of our planet Earth
- Miscellaneous

We then ask the contributor to select age groups for which the lesson is best suited. Those age groups are preschool, lower elementary, upper elementary, middle school, and high school.

Lastly the form asks basic questions to be answered in one sentence each:

- What is the name of the lesson?
- What is the objective of the lesson?

- Is there a book/website for the lesson? Please list book title and author and/or provide links to websites.
- Is there a discussion topic for the lesson? Please briefly describe. Provide links to websites if any.
- Do you have an activity for the lesson? Please describe briefly. If you used an activity from the Internet, please provide the link.

As the form was being created and tested, Melissa Sinclair put in several lessons she has created for the Washington Ethical Society. It took less than 5 minutes to fill in the form for each of the 14 initial test lessons and most of them had several links to copy and paste. It is that simple and easy to use!

The tricky part, however, is not contributing lessons. We have shared lessons with each other before. The difficult part is sharing them in a way that makes it easy to find and use lessons on specific topics.

This is where Melissa asked for her son Adrian's expertise in writing code to create a search page. In just a couple hours, he was able to tailor a search page that worked! It's simple to use and easy to view. You can search by theme, age group, or a combo of both. If you want to do a lesson on say, Martin Luther King, Jr., for elementary aged students, you could do a search for Social Justice and/or lower/upper elementary. You will get a list of all lessons listed for that age that deal with the topic of social justice and you can see if there is a discussion, book, website, or activity already created on Martin Luther King, Jr.

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There is a lot of enthusiasm about using this easy to share, easy-to-search database, but for it to work, we have to commit to populating the database! Right now there are exactly 16 lessons that were added for testing purposes. We will also go to Podio (which we no longer plan to use for communication and sharing as the AEU goes to G Suite) to take what we can from there and

plug those lesson ideas into the form so they will populate the database to make them searchable.

The big push will have to come from the individual Societies. Every week, Melissa will send the form to all the Societies with Sunday School programs to have them fill out lesson ideas. If only half our Sunday School programs contributed their lessons for the week every week, that would lead to over 500 lesson

ideas contributed over the course of one year. Melissa will keep the spreadsheet clean and organized so that it stays as easy a resource to use as it was designed to be.

It's a very exciting development, so look for it soon! Our hope is that we have finally found the best approach to working collaboratively in sharing of ideas for our children and youth programming for Ethical Culture.

Why Humanist Education is Needed Now

Emily Newman

Note: This article is from [The Humanist Institute \(THI\)](#), an education center founded by leaders in Ethical Culture, Humanistic Judaism, UU Humanism, and the Council for Secular Humanism in the 1980s. THI has helped train many of our Ethical Culture Leaders and members.

Elections expose and sow a lot of hate—hate towards people who are different, hate for the policies and systems that have failed us, and hate born of fear. It becomes easy to hate political figures and their supporters when we believe they are morally wrong. The Bible instructs Christians to “love thy neighbor” and “love your enemies,” and ethicists argue that we have a duty to act lovingly toward others, but it's difficult to move from hate to love.

South African writer and activist Breyten Breytenbach warns us that if we don't want to be fragmented by the world's evils, we must recognize the humanity of our enemies, a more sensible goal than forcing ourselves to love them. Desmond Tutu reminds us “all of our humanity is dependent upon recognizing the humanity in others.” Humanism teaches us to

see the goodness of human beings, emphasize common human needs, and seek rational ways of solving human problems. Mending our divided country will be challenging,



and it will take critical thinking, analytic discussions, and a willingness to develop. All of these are part of a Humanist education.

The [Humanist Institute \(THI\)](#) provides a unique educational experience for individuals committed to learning about and advocating for a humanist worldview. THI offers online courses, onsite training and seminars, and graduate certificate program.

The [Kochar Online Humanist Education \(KOHE\)](#) allows individuals to explore the principles and philosophy of humanism on their own time with various self-guided online courses. Courses and journal articles are continuously added and there's curriculum for children of all ages.

Onsite trainings and seminars offer continuing education and hands-on training that meet the

needs of professionals in a variety of careers, including humanist celebrants. These events also encourage individuals and groups to connect with other humanists in their area.

The [Humanist Studies Program](#) consists of graduate level courses preparing individuals to reach their own aspirations. Many graduates go on to become certified humanist professionals such as Chaplains, Lay Leaders, and board members of humanist organizations. After completing the required introductory course, *The Humanist Life Stance*, students have the freedom to choose from eight additional courses offered to focus on aspects of humanism that most interest them and support their goals.

Humanism's core principles—compassion and responsibility—have been at the center of thriving communities throughout history and around the world. The Humanist Institute aims to provide educational opportunities that serve humanists and their communities in a world where humanism is a widely accepted and respected life stance. Together we can move from hate to humanism.

Teens Learn about Ethics in Education

Miles Jack, YES President

The Youth in Ethical Societies (YES) conference is an annual meeting held in New York, D.C., and St. Louis on constant rotation. All youths high school age (13-18) travel to the conference to discuss the year's topic and how it relates to ethics. This year the conference was held in Washington D.C. and the topic was *Ethics in Education*.

Thursday, November 10, all the teens, as well as their chaperones, arrived and settled into the Washington Ethical Society building with icebreakers and introductions. Friday, November 11, was the day for sightseeing around D.C. to give all the teens who don't live in D.C. a chance to experience a different culture and explore the history of America's capital. In the evening, we gathered at the 4-H center to check in and eat dinner. We received themed t-shirts for the conference and the officers reviewed the code of conduct to ensure everyone would be safe and behave appropriately. We then held a sharing circle where all the teens sit in a circle with a candle placed in the middle and the lights off. The teens then talk about anything that they feel like. They can talk about issues they are facing, the positive things that are happening in their lives, or the problems in the world. The other teens are there to listen, support each other, and create a network of people that can give advice judgment-free and anonymously.

Saturday, November 12, was the day for in-depth discussions about education and how it relates to Ethics. The teens all met in the Michigan room after breakfast

and broke off into 5 groups of 6. Each group discussed educational experiences involving private schools, public schools, testing, bullying, and how involved the government should be in schools. Then we all came together and discussed them as a large group. Each teen was able to share personal stories from their experiences in education and then everyone could suggest solutions to problems identified. There was a consensus on many issues. Everyone agreed that school and education have become too standardized and too focused on passing tests instead of actually learning. Too much emphasis on tests instead of creativity. Teachers are becoming too focused on getting their students ready for a huge cumulative test and losing sight of the real goal, which is to teach students.

The second small group breakout focused more on the safety within schools, including harassment, bullying, social media, and rape. The large group discussion centered a lot about the bullying and isolation that occurs in almost every school and how to prevent and address this issue. There were no clear-cut solutions, but the first step is always admitting there is a problem. We talked a lot about the Brock Turner case and his abhorrent punishment, and how even at the most prestigious schools bad things still happen. Additionally, many teens discussed Sex Ed in their schools and how Sex Ed should be more positive, informative, and LGBT-inclusive. After lunch, the group had a third discussion, but the officers and representatives decided to center this one more around politics because the election just occurred and the outcome was very disappointing for all of us. This talk was about Donald Trump's actions, words, character, and thoughts

about him being the new POTUS. This talk sparked many fears and questions about the education people must be getting for them to actually think he was a viable candidate.

After these lengthy and profound talks, the group got to relax with some fun activities. The teens broke into groups based on personal preference. The options were: t-shirt design for 2017; closing ceremony activity preparations; creating skits; or doing any creative outlet they wanted. The time before dinner was allotted for these activities and free time. After dinner, the group met back in Michigan and the skit was performed, which mocked the reputation sororities and fraternities can have, the t-shirt design was voted on, and elections were held. The officers for next year are as follows: President - Miles Jack; Vice President - Olias Bendian; Treasurer - Isabel Brieler; Secretary - Sascha Kaplan. The last event for Saturday night was Warm Fuzzies, when each teen is given a yarn necklace and pieces of yarn and they go around and place a piece of yarn on each person's necklace while saying something nice about them that they have learned over the time of the conference.

Sunday, November 13, was the last day of the conference, a sad day for most. After breakfast, the teens and chaperones met in Michigan, gave out superlatives, and performed the closing ceremony. Then we all said goodbye to the graduating seniors through a special recognition ceremony. The graduating seniors are: Hazel Henderson, Lanue Hibbert, Maia Pramuk, Ruby Drizin-Kahn, Ethan Myers, Devon Krimmel, Nathan Hoagland, Thomas Sylvester, and Julia Duncan. After that, pictures were taken and groups headed home.



In other News:

Meredith Sue Willis (Ethical Culture Society of Essex County member) and Abby Cotler (daughter of Essex members) were honored with the Beloved Community Award from the South Orange Civic Organization. Congratulations!

Left to right: Phylis Peterman (SOCO), Carol Barry-Austin (SOCO), Patricia Canning, Abby Cotler, Meredith Sue Willis, and Wilfredo Caraballo (speaker, former New Jersey Assemblyman)



Connect with American Ethical Union on Social Media



[/EthicalUnion](https://www.facebook.com/EthicalUnion)



[@EthicalUnion](https://twitter.com/EthicalUnion)



[/c/AeuOrgEthicalUnion](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...)



[Google+](https://www.google.com/+EthicalUnion)

And check out our Ethical Societies on Social Media!

From the United Nations: The World's Children

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>.

Children are our future. Our concern with their well-being is basic to our hopes.

Every day, on TV, we see the devastating images of the trauma of war. The barbaric bombing of civilians and hospitals in Aleppo is a nightmare. The nearly 50 million children worldwide that have migrated across borders or forcibly displaced by conflicts is staggering. Children account for about half of all refugees. How will their trauma affect their future?

The immediate need is humanitarian help for food, shelter, and medicines. Wartime stress in children can lead to long-term mental health problems. One study estimates that one out of three children could develop some form of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) psychological symptoms during their lifetime. Neurologically, toxic stress can lead to elevated levels of cortisol stress hormones in the brain. This impacts the brain's hippocampus and leads to children having learning difficulties, emotional self-control, and problems with short-term memory.

There are not many studies looking at the long-term consequences following traumatic experiences.

Some children are resilient and able to cope with stress. Some positive factors leading to ability to cope with stress are the capacity to recognize and avoid danger, use of adults for caretaking activities, the capacity to manage anxiety, devotion to a cause, and finding meaning in the experience.

An example is in Sarajevo, where thousands of children endured almost four years of siege by Bosnian Serbs in the 1990s. Many children helped and took their role very seriously. They stood in line for water and bread, collected firewood and took care of their siblings, mothers and relatives. They found meaning in their activities.

Many people believe the world is a mess, with wars, famine, poverty, and diseases. This view is daily reinforced with the shocking scenes on TV. This results in a feeling of helplessness and undermines helping many humanitarian organizations. This viewpoint is totally wrong! In fact, the last 20 years has seen a remarkable historic improvement in the condition of the world's people.

Worldwide, a child born in 1955 had an average life expectancy of only 48 years. By 2015 it has increased to 72 years. There is variation in life expectancy: in France it is 82 years, in the US it is 79 years. Even in the poorest countries it has also increased—as in Angola to 53 years and in Kenya to 62 years. In Cuba life expectancy is 80 years showing that serious progress can be made in poor countries.

Furthermore, the number of people living in extreme poverty has been reduced by half. As recently as 1981,

44% of the world's population was extremely poor. Currently, it is less than 10%. Over the 20 years from 1993 to 2013, the number of poor people fell by over one billion from about 1 in 3 to 1 in 10.

The likelihood of a child dying before age 5 has been nearly cut in half over the last two decades. Vaccines, breast-feeding promotion, pneumonia medicines, and diarrhea treatment save six million lives a year (see Kristof Sept 22, 2016 article in the *NY Times*).

Another major need is education, jobs and opportunity for young people. There are still 150 million child laborers in the world working on the cocoa farms in Cote D'Ivoire, selling flowers in Columbia, sewing footballs in Pakistan, working in Mica Mines and brick kilns in India. About 15 million girls under 18 are still forced to marry each year. And still, 1,600 children die each day mostly from preventable or treatable diseases.

We should support the many organizations that are doing the practical work to keep this important trend going. For example, UNICEF, WHO, Oxfam, Doctors Without Borders, Save the Children, the UN Refugee Agency (UNCHR), etc. The job is not finished. It needs our help.

From the United Nations: Water and Sanitation—An Update

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

Dr. Reba Goodman, Ethical Culture Society of Bergen County

Amazingly, more people in the world have cellphones than access to a toilet. Inadequate water and sanitation do not make headlines but claim many lives through disease. This is a “silent disaster” with major health consequences.

How much water is there? Most of our planet is covered by water but very little of that water is available for humans to drink. Most of the water is in oceans that are composed of saltwater. In fact, 97% of the earth’s water is ocean. Less than 3% consists of fresh water from rivers, lakes and aquifers. Also, water is not distributed equally around the globe. Less than 10 countries possess 60% of the world’s freshwater. Eighty-five percent of the world’s population lives in the driest half of the planet. About two-thirds of the earth’s population experience severe water scarcity at some point during the year.

What is the current situation? Currently, about 800 million people worldwide do not have access to clean water and one in three (2.5 billion) does not have access to adequate sanitation. About a billion people defecate in the open, raising the risk that reservoirs and wells will be contaminated. Worldwide, 1 out of every 5 deaths of children under five years is due to water related disease. Having children dying from preventable and treatable disease is totally unacceptable. Poor sanitation is linked to the transmission of diseases such as cholera, diarrhea, dysentery and typhoid.

Has there been progress? The water situation has improved. Since 1990, 2.5 billion people have gained access

to improved drinking water. This is a real achievement but about 700 million are still using unsafe drinking water. However, progress on sanitation has been marginal and unsatisfactory. Currently, only 68 percent of the world’s population uses an improved sanitation facility.

Is water a source of conflict or cooperation? Water resources often cross political boundaries in the form of lakes, rivers and aquifers. This hydrological interdependence raises issues of conflict and cooperation. Pollution knows no boundaries either. Much sewage in developing countries flows untreated into rivers and lakes. There are numerous examples where trans-boundary waters have proved to be a source of cooperation rather than conflict. Nearly 450 agreements on international waters were signed between 1820 and 2007. One example, a treaty on water sharing during two wars between India and Pakistan, has survived.

What is the experience from European history? Lack of sanitation during the European Middle Ages and early Renaissance was widespread. During this time, towns all across Europe were dirty, crowded, and full of feces-contaminated water and virtually no tradition of keeping personal hygiene. Diseases like TB, cholera, and typhoid spread and caused a rapid decline of life expectancy of Europeans (average life span was under 30 years of age). All this resulted in the disastrous epidemic of the Black Death.

The movement for sanitary improvement started in the early 19th Century with sweeping reforms. Adequate funds were raised for building and maintaining effective sewage systems as well as infrastructure for clean water. The sanitary revolution was accompanied with improvement in personal hygiene.

Is Desalination a solution? Israel is one of the driest countries. In 2008, it

was seriously short of water. A decade long drought had scourged the Middle East and the water level of Israel’s largest source of fresh water, the Sea of Galilee’s, was seriously reduced. Now, Israel has more water than it needs. Israel has pioneered in the technology of desalination and has built several plants.

Israel and the West Bank share an aquifer. The Oslo agreement stipulates that Israel can use 80% and Palestinians 20%, which is very unfair. Israel supplies the West Bank with water as required by Oslo but the West Bank still receives far less than they need. Also, the Palestinians are not connected to Israel’s water grid.

Desalination plants are expensive, use a lot of energy, and have to be near a body of water. It may not be the answer for many countries.

What must be done? What is needed is a worldwide sanitation movement. That is one of the UN’s goals. They have pushed the agenda but more progress is needed.

UNICEF has been active with their WASH initiative (water, sanitation, hygiene). The WASH team has provided nearly 14 million people with clean water and over 11 million with basic toilets. In India, where 48% of its population still relieve themselves outdoors, UNICEF launched a campaign with videos, talks, and slogans to end the practice of open defecation. In one video, they have a slogan: “Take the poo to the loo.”

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation launched a “Reinvent the Toilet” campaign. They offered \$42 million to researchers, asking them to build the toilet of tomorrow—one that is safe, hygienic, uses little water and is easy to install. Prototypes have been built and are being tested. To support the important sanitation movement go to UNICEF.org.

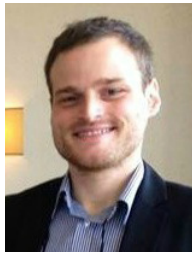
Adding Science and Reason to Ethical Education

**Paulo Ribeiro,
Ethical Culture Society of
Bergen County**

Since Ethical Culture's founding, science and reason have been important foundations for the Movement. The Workingman's School, founded by the members of the New York Society, placed an emphasis on technical education that in today's knowledge economy would be referred to as STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics). But Adler's conception of this kind of education saw it as a means for "spiritual" growth that is largely absent from discussions around STEM education.

While STEM has become an incredibly important area of education, it is almost exclusively from the perspective of producing skilled workers to serve the economy. For students, STEM offers a path to be a high-income earner, but it provides little in the way of becoming a better citizen. Science and technology are often presented as "values-free," but they frequently work to concentrate wealth and power in the hands of a few and reinforce prevailing norms. We have an opportunity, in our own ethical education programs, to offer a more justice-oriented teaching of STEM fields.

At a minimum, ethical education should place a strong emphasis on critical thinking to challenge assumptions and claims of truth. Instilling a habit of inquiry in children is often neglected in education, but it is vastly more important than simply imparting facts. In the abstract, a scientific mindset is crucial to addressing ethical problems. Being a truly ethical person involves not only using objective facts to shape our values but also being cognizant of how our values shape how we gather and evaluate facts.



Beyond just the mindset, scientific knowledge can also be very relevant to what we are teaching in our Sunday Schools. Some background into the workings of the brain would be a

great addition to teaching emotional intelligence and moral reasoning. This would be quite valuable for developing metacognition (thinking about thinking). As humans, we are susceptible to many different kinds of biases and fallacies that not only hurt our personal relationships but also hamper our ability to be good citizens. The more we become aware of these blind spots, the more we can do to avoid mindlessly following destructive paths.

In the bigger picture, scientific literacy can be an invaluable tool for solving pressing social problems. The subject where we most often think of science and technology entering a politically contentious arena is around the subject of climate change, but there are many different areas where scientific literacy is important to the cause of justice.

Consider an example like Hurricane Katrina, where uneven distribution of mental and financial resources left poor, black communities vulnerable to levee breeches while wealthier white neighborhoods were protected with better infrastructure.

The history of science and technology also demonstrates how science can be misused. People have been made test subjects against their will. Bad science has been used to enforce racist and sexist worldviews and justify policies like imperialism and genocide. Architecture and the built environment have been used as forms of social control, and great engineering feats have often been built in total disregard of the people living on the land they have been built on. Much of that history is not going to be covered in a conventional science or math class.

A history of science should also include a discussion of intellectual freedom, a subject of great importance to Humanism and the free-thought movement. There are many important figures in the history of science that also serve as cautionary tales. One great example is that of Hypatia, a female mathematician from 4th century Alexandria, who was killed by Christians during ongoing religious conflicts in the city. For many historians, her death marks the closing of the Western mind that would not begin to be significantly opened again until the arrival of the Renaissance a thousand years later. Stories like Hypatia's are also a great opportunity to celebrate the contributions of women, people of color, and LGBTQ people to the sciences. For younger students, multicultural mathematics and science would dovetail nicely with early comparative religious studies.

The last area to consider is that of media literacy. We saw in the 2016 elections how fake news and disinformation played a disastrous role. Media literacy teaches children how to scrutinize the content of the messages presented to them as well as the possible motivations of the presenters. While young people may be digital natives, they are just as likely to fall victim to misinformation because they don't do even the basic level of scrutiny of the content they see online. Metacognition would be very valuable here since humans tend to uncritically accept messages that reinforce existing beliefs.

At a time when skills in math, science, technology, and engineering are in high demand, Ethical Culture is uniquely positioned to teach students valuable ethical lessons while practicing and reinforcing those valuable skills. If we want to attract new parents and their children to the Movement, we will need to make sure that our ethical education is as relevant to their children's futures as possible.

Dear Friends and Members of Ethical Culture:

The Ethical Culture Movement, 140 years old this year, began with the founding of the Ethical Society of New York by Felix Adler in 1876. Similar Societies followed in Chicago, Philadelphia and St. Louis, and in 1889 became a federation under the American Ethical Union.

The purpose of the AEU was clearly stated back then, “to coordinate the affairs and promote the activities of the Movement among its Societies and to the individuals in and beyond our Movement.”

In following that mission, the AEU has been instrumental in the establishment of Ethical Culture groups in many cities throughout the country—currently numbering 23. We are excited to tell you that there are several more in formation—one in Susquehanna Valley, PA; another in Atlanta, GA; a third in Edmonton, Alberta (yes, Canada!) and also in several other cities.

As you know, the AEU fosters intra-societal conferences on ethical education, youth and young adult programming, membership development strategies, and the special annual event for everybody, the AEU Assembly. You should also know that programs are being developed to instruct through interactive webinars and training videos. These will inform participants on topics such as fundraising, ethical action, internal and external communications, membership development and ethical education.

Another new program is the Visiting Leaders Bureau that, on request, schedules Leaders’ visits to bring platforms and workshops to Societies, all subsidized by the AEU. We already have 11 such visits scheduled for the upcoming year!

Given the current political climate in our country, our Ethical communities are needed more than ever as vital sanctuaries of compassion and reason. We joined this year with organizations such as Secular Students Alliance, Foundation Beyond Belief, and the Equal Rights Amendment Coalition to increase the power of our messages of peace and equality so greatly needed at this time. We have helped to organize the participation of members in events such as the Reason Rally and Democracy Spring, both in Washington DC.

IN THIS HOUSE, WE BELIEVE:
BLACK LIVES MATTER
WOMEN’S RIGHTS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS
NO HUMAN IS ILLEGAL
SCIENCE IS REAL
LOVE IS LOVE
KINDNESS IS EVERYTHING

We know you value all these programs the AEU makes available for your Societies. You also know that your Society’s annual apportionment provides for the basic administrative expenses of the AEU.

But as the work of the AEU increases to meet the needs of yours and new Societies, we ask that you make an additional personal contribution—a gift to acknowledge your commitment to the expansion of the Ethical Culture Movement and bring the values we cherish to our communities and beyond. Please click here to donate online or make a check out to American Ethical Union and mail it to us at 2 West 64th Street, New York, NY 10023.

Thanks for being an important part of the Ethical Culture Movement.

Yours in Ethical Community,

Andra Miller
 AEU Board President

Jan Broughton
 Fundraising Committee

Write for the Dialogue
We are accepting submissions for Spring 2017!

Send submissions to communications@aeu.org
 by Saturday, March 25, 2017.

Please include a headshot and relative images with your submission.

Humanism: An Ethical World View

Event with multiple dates

Immerse yourself in the theories of humanism through lectures and discussions exploring the roots and modern day applications of this ancient philosophical belief. Join a 6-day adventure filled with lectures, conversations, field trips, and performances in West Dover, Vermont.

Many people know humanism only for what it rejects—religious dogma and the supernatural. But what is this world view with roots reaching back to Ancient Greece really all about? Discuss issues and ideas both historic and modern as you examine the great questions of life and the answers humanism provides. Find out what humanism has to say when it comes to civil liberties, religious freedom, feminism, racism and more.

Sharon Stanley (Ethical Humanist Society of Long Island) will be joining Fred Edwards (American Humanist Association) in leading the May 7-12 trip. Visit www.roadscholar.org/find-an-adventure/17895/humanism-an-ethical-world-view for more details and to register.



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