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Christian Hayden's [full Mossler Report](#): "Reconciling Two Approaches to Social Justice, Education, and Reflection"



For his 2016 [Mossler Fellowship](#), Christian Hayden aimed to change the traditional Colloquy to help more people form deeper connections with themselves and others. "Reflection remains the main goal...as well as fodder for dialogue, but incorporating movement and theatre exercises to expand and forge greater bonds within the community, as well as another dimension that could have a greater impact on how we act."

In his final report, Christian shares his experiences participating in, and running Colloquies with, different groups both inside and outside the Ethical Culture Movement. He and others experimented with sound, movement, literature, questions, and humor in these programs. His work with Theatre of the Oppressed encouraged him to incorporate games and exercises, creating a playful environment and lasting impressions. [Read full report](#) to follow his journey and understand his recommendations to developing programming that create living ethical spaces and meaningful experiences for all.

Save the Date for FES Conference

The 2018 FES Conference will be held in St. Louis over Memorial Day weekend, May 25-28. An extension of the 2017 conference theme of "Resonance," the 2018 conference theme will be "Dialogue," how to bridge divides through conversation. Participants will have a chance to do service work locally, practice dialoguing with other participants, deliver a platform to the Ethical Society of St. Louis, and enjoy the company of other passionate young people. This is open to anyone between the ages of 18 and 35. Stay tuned for more details about registration: aeu.org/event/fes-conference-in-st-louis.



Letter from AEU Board President John McCormick



Since last summer, the American Ethical Union Board has been working with marketing and graphic design professionals to study our “branding.” The goal is to strengthen the message and presentation of the AEU by developing a consistent unified brand that could then be offered in a “plug and play” brand kit to member Societies, which could be especially useful to new or smaller Societies. Adoption of that unified brand would remain at the discretion of each Society.

At the start of the process, we invited all Society members to participate in a survey that garnered almost 500 responses. We also got input from key individuals in other organizations such as the American Humanist Association, the Unitarian Universalist Humanists, the Secular Coalition for American, the Sunday Assembly, and the Society for Humanistic Judaism. We found that our beloved Ethical Human logo had more than a few detractors. Some saw a cross in the logo, some said it looked “too hippie.” Our tagline, “Inspiring Ethical Communities,” also met resistance with some saying they didn’t know what it meant. The survey did enable the Branding Team to propose four brand pillars: non-theism/ethics, community building, education, and ethical action.

In late November, the Board sent a letter to the Presidents Council seeking Society input (ideas, sketches, comments) for both the logo and the tagline. For the logo, we are looking for a design that is simple, easily recognizable from a distance, and reproducible in a single color. We favor sticking with a refreshed clean modern version of Ethical Human but are open to other ideas. As for the tagline, the shorter the better, 2 or 3 words being ideal. Both the logo and the tagline should be consistent with the brand pillars noted above. Members are encouraged to email logoideas@aeu.org with their ideas by 2/10.

Once we have your feedback, the Board will identify the 2 or 3 most promising ideas for further refinement. The refined versions will then be referred back to the Societies for further review. The final logo and tagline will be decided by vote at the AEU Assembly in Albuquerque this coming June.

I encourage all of you to bring out your inner graphic designer and dust off that old sketchpad. Thank you in advance for your help with this endeavor.

103rd AEU Assembly



Seeds for
the Future:
Environmental
Justice and
Ethical Culture

June 7-10
Albuquerque,
New Mexico
#ethicalseeds2018

Ethical Culture holds sacred, and strives to protect and nurture, the web of interrelations between each other and our environment. Climate change adversely affects everyone, but especially marginalized populations in this country and around the world who bear the brunt of polluted air, water, and soil. We must help stop the environmental degradation of inner cities, poor rural areas, and places where many indigenous people live. Come learn more about environmental justice so we can plant seeds that grow into effective activism for the benefit of everyone now and in the future.

Curt Collier, Leader Emeritus of New York Society for Ethical Culture will speak at our Sunday, June 10 Assembly Platform. There will also be workshops on best practices for growing our movement.

[You can book hotel now and register in February. More details coming soon.](#)

News from the National Leaders Council

NLC Officers: Hugh Taft-Morales, President; Randy Best, Vice-President; Kate Lovelady, Secretary; Richard Koral, Treasurer; Martha Gallabue, Dean

The National Leaders Council met for three days at the Murray Grove Retreat Center from October 22-25. We spent some time deepening our relationships with each other, taking advantage of the mild fall weather for walks through the woods and marshlands.

One highlight of our meeting was when we were treated to presentations by Melissa Sinclair, AEU National Director of Ethical Education, and Bailey Whiteman, Music Director at the Washington Ethical Society. Leaders discussed with Melissa how to make our platforms more welcoming of families, which is particularly important for small Societies that are yet to develop a separate childrens' education program. Bailey promoted more use of music, and answered questions about practical, legal, and aesthetic issues that arise from adding more music to our Sunday mornings.

We spent much of our time working on the theme and workshop possibilities for the 2018 Assembly in Albuquerque. Titled "Seeds for the Future: Environmental Justice and Ethical Culture," the Assembly will be supplemented by contacts Leaders make with various groups active in environmentalism in New Mexico, including the New Mexico Solar Energy Association, the New Mexico Environmental Law Center, New Mexico Interfaith Power and Light, the Central New Mexico chapter of Sierra Club, and the First Unitarian Church of Albuquerque. We hope many of you can attend (June 7-10)!

The NLC also worked on streamlining the process of offering rapid responses to important national or regional issues, in support of Executive Director Bart Worden's role as spokesperson for the Ethical Culture Movement. On the national scene, it's hard to keep up with our tweeting President, but we will try!



Leaders during Fall 2017 retreat

Standing: Randy Best, Hugh Taft-Morales, Joe Chuman, Richard Koral

Kneeling: Anne Klaeyen, Kate Lovelady, Amanda Poppei, Bart Worden, James Croft

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. March 10 – NYSEC
Sat. April 28 – NYSEC
Thu. June 7 & Sun. June 10 – Assembly in Albuquerque

Future of Ethical Societies Conference

Fri. May 25 - Sun. May 28
St. Louis, MO

AEU 103rd Annual Assembly on Environmental Justice

Thu. June 7 - Sun. June 10
Albuquerque, NM

Skills Summit 2018

Saturday, September 29
Washington, D.C.

Special United Nations Days ([Click here for details](#))

Feb 11 - International Day of Women & Girls in Science
 Feb 20 - World Day of Social Justice
 March 8 - International Women's Day
 March 10 - International Day of Happiness
 March 22 - World Water Day
 April 7 - World Health Day

Letter from Executive Director Bart Worden



A key word for the future of the American Ethical Union is “expand.” Time and again I am asked, “How are we doing?” and know the person who is asking is wondering about the AEU’s numbers: how many Ethical Societies with how many members? Once the Financial and Statistical Reports come in we’ll be able to say more about what happened with our Movement in 2017, though I expect we’ll be looking at overall numbers that are pretty consistent with those of 2016 (and 2015, 2014, 2013...).

At a time when religious organizations are shrinking fast we might take some comfort in the AEU’s resilience, but just holding our numbers steady has required a great deal of effort on the part of our member Societies. These are challenging times for a movement based upon people gathering regularly for group activity; we offer community in a world that promotes individualism, face-to-face encounters in a world that prefers virtual connections, ongoing engagement in a world that resists commitment.

On the other hand, our movement is, I believe, well positioned to meet the needs and interests of a growing number of people who are looking for meaningful connection and interested in working to make the world a better place. A special characteristic of Ethical Culture

is the combination of aspirational idealism and commitment to progressive evolution. This combination is, in my opinion, wonderfully suited to success in a changeable environment. Our ideals of realizing the worth and dignity of all and attaining a sustainable culture that is both caring and just provide direction. Our expectation that we will grow in understanding and ability promotes a confident yet flexible approach to life that inspires hope and weathers adversity.

And now the AEU is working to expand the ways we assist member Societies to thrive and grow by making available a wider and deeper range of programs and activities, extending training to many more people, and raising our public profile through public relations activities.

The Visiting Leaders Bureau is an example of direct assistance to Ethical Societies, and will be responsible for 27 visits by 11 Leaders to 14 Ethical Societies this year—a significant increase from 2016—and many of these visits will include workshops for the requesting Society. The AEU Resources website offers a range of resources for Ethical Societies to access, with numerous program ideas and materials as well as links to many more. Our Assembly in Albuquerque (which will focus on Environmental Justice concerns) will also offer presentations and

workshops to provide attendees with resources they can bring home to their Societies. Planning for this year’s Skills Summit, hosted by the Washington Ethical Society, is already underway, our Communications Committee continues to help our core committees produce webinars on a range of topics, and our group email lists for Communication, Ethical Action, Ethical Education, Membership, and Presidents Council are very active.

Two new initiatives for Society support are in development: First is a major overhaul of leadership training and lifespan education resources. Kate Lovelady, the chair of the Leadership Training Committee, is leading the effort to expand access to the existing Leadership Training modules so that people who are not enrolled in the formal Leadership Training program can take courses through the program. Those who want to pursue professional certification can build credits toward that end. Adding more kinds of training to the mix is also an aim of the overhaul so that the program can offer classes to help people prepare less traditional Leadership roles.

Another initiative in development is a companion to the Visiting Leaders Bureau that will aim to provide on-site and distance consultations to Societies who are seeking to expand their demographic base. Consultants will work with Societies to better connect with people we would like to have as members of our Ethical Societies but have been difficult to engage, and will assist Societies in developing effective programs and

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services that meet their needs and interests.

We would really like to see an expansion of the number of Ethical Societies and a reduction in the number of areas of the country that do not have Ethical Societies. Our Outreach Team currently responds to the many queries from individuals who are eager to have an Ethical Society in their neighborhood, and we offer a number of supports that aim to help people organize Ethical Culture groups. We would like to expand this operation with a more scientific approach to starting new groups. By identifying promising locales, getting organizers on the ground in these areas, and developing campaigns to attract prospective members we hope to launch a full-service Ethical Society in the relatively near future. And if all goes well enough, we'll also have the knowledge, skills, and resources to start more in similar fashion.

And, of course, expansion of program offerings needs to be accompanied by publicizing what we are doing. Even the best programs will fail to thrive if the people who would benefit from them are unaware of their existence. The AEU Board is reviewing proposals for public relations campaigns to greatly raise our visibility locally, regionally, and nationally.

So look for updates about these expansion efforts in the months ahead and if you'd like to improve our chances for success, feel free to contribute to our cause—your money, your time, and your talents will be happily put to use!

Teens had successful #resist Conference

Trish Cowan, YES Conference Coordinator

Forty-four teens and adults from eight Ethical Societies came together in New York from November 9-12 for the 2017 Youth of Ethical Societies (YES) conference. Officers Miles, Olias, Isabel, and Sascha had met during several months beforehand to develop the theme of **#resist**, bringing in representatives from each Society in the early fall to fine-tune the plans.

The teens loved getting to tour the New York Society for Ethical Culture building and see the birthplace of the Movement as they caught up with old friends and became familiar with new attendees. On Friday, we visited different parts of New York City before heading to Frost Valley in the afternoon, where we stayed for the rest of the weekend.

Officers and reps led discussion groups on pop culture, politics, and systems of oppression and resistance. Teens could choose which breakout groups to attend within each sub-topic and there were many deep conversations surrounding such subjects as social media, fake news, art, world economy, protests, the Trump presidency, immigration, privilege, various minority issues, and mental health. YES is always teen-led and adults remain on the sidelines for support only as needed. This year, for the first time, chaperones were invited to also contribute to discussions, which led to a wide breadth of experiences and wisdom being shared.

YES packs a lot into just a few days. In addition to small- and large-group discussions there are campfires, warm fuzzies, elections, skits, hearty meals, group games, free time, and ceremonies. Everybody leaves feeling both rejuvenated and exhausted—and much more in touch with Ethical Culture and our impact on the world.

We would like to thank the AEU, NYSEC, L Miller, Favio Apollon, Rich Hibbert, Sarah Vehige, Sarah Henry, Charlotte D'Alfonso, Dennis Roach, and Ellen Wright for all of the time and support given to YES 2017. In 2018, YES will be in St. Louis and the officers will be Sascha, Charlotte, Miette, and Devon—a dynamite group!

Congratulations 2017 YES officers and reps for an incredible conference!



Notes from Your AEU Board

Jill Aul, Board Secretary

Your board has been hard at work striving to make Ethical Culture a stronger and more vibrant movement.

After a productive retreat weekend in late September, working on long range planning and team building on Long Island, the Board met for its regularly scheduled meeting on Saturday, November 18, 2017 in New York City.

Shortly before each board meeting throughout the year, various teams and committees within the American Ethical Union (AEU) are each asked to submit a report for review. This is an excellent way to inform the board about what has taken place within the committees (as well as the National Leaders Council) and to keep everyone accountable. The board receives reports from the Finance, Communications, Leadership, Membership, Ethical Education, Ethical Action, and

Fundraising committees. Are you interested in any of these areas? If so, please contact the AEU office for more information and become involved!

Highlights of these reports included discussions about funding the National Leaders Council, the recent branding campaign, two-way communication strategies, website support for smaller Societies, using social media campaigns, making our Platforms more child-friendly in Societies where there is no Ethical Education program, redesigning leadership training for professional and lay leaders, and continuing to support our commitment to last year's Assembly resolution that addresses repairing the harm of racism.

This summer's Assembly will be held in Albuquerque, NM from June 7-10, 2018. The theme is "Seeds for the Future: Environmental Justice and Ethical Culture" (#ethicalseeds2018). A team is working diligently to make next year's Assembly the best ever! More information is available online,

but mark your calendar now, and make your summer plans to include attending the 2018 Assembly.

The board will be taking a closer look this year at these three topics: Fundraising, Communications, and Collaboration. We would like to see stronger financial support of the AEU from its members. In addition, steps are being taken to unite Societies that share specific concerns related to such attributes as having (or not having) a Leader, maintaining buildings, having a smaller (or larger) membership, etc. The Board also continues to discuss and plan for accommodating "Members At Large" who may wish to be affiliated with our Movement, outside of a physical Society that meets in a particular city. Ideas were shared about ways to start new Societies and how to make general improvements in the way that the AEU operates. In that vein, our January meeting will be conducted virtually, via the Internet, in order to save funds and avoid traveling in winter weather.

Thank you Voices at the Table Fund Supporters

"I am so grateful for your love and support this season," said Michele Stanback, a teacher at the Brooklyn Society for Ethical Culture who received support from the AEU's [Voices at the Table Fund](#). "Your generous contribution to my academic endeavors made it possible for my research around an ethic of love for each other and Earth to be heard and discussed with individuals of various backgrounds

at the National Women's Studies Association 2017 Conference, *40 YEARS AFTER COMBAHEE: Feminist Scholars and Activists Engage the Movement for Black Lives*.

This conference focused on the voices of women of color who began the movement of Combahee 40 years ago, a loving manifesto that was written by women who believed that one-day, feminist dialogue would be inclusive of those who are women of color, queer, trans and non-binary. The attendees were reflective of this—I have never

presented or attended a conference with so much diversity and space for independent scholars to be heard."



Humanitas: A Conscious Coloring of Kindness

RevolutionaryLuv Jé Exodus Hooper, 2017 Mossler Fellow

In the fall of 2018, FrequencyHouse will present a 45-minute feature film premiering in New York City: *Humanitas: A Conscious Coloring of Kindness*. Felix Adler (played by Ritchie Szoke, bottom left), the founder and philosopher of the Ethical Culture Movement, and W.E.B. DuBois (played by Joe Tolbert Jr, bottom right), the author of “the Souls of Black Folk” and activist-scholar, are re-imagined in a histo-contemporary retrospective. [Read about [The First Pan-African Conference of July 1900.](#)]

Adler and DuBois are expected to turn their theory into fury by addressing the United States and the imperial European Nations to “acknowledge and protect the rights of people of African descent” while preserving the freedom-rights of “Negro States” that are early identified as Abyssinia, Liberia, and Haiti. Advantageously, DuBois and Adler join forces together in spiritual-intellectualism that chastises the heart of humanity, only to realize that the struggle against racism and colonialism starts with new rules of engagement between themselves.

In this silent film, we journey with Adler and DuBois through a series of thoughts of poetic justice, choreo-movements of contentious equity, and a holy gaze of curiosity to understand each other for a greater cause. DuBois, after completing a variety of lectures and books, is endowed by spirit of rightness that stirs up a new love for the intersectionality of Africaniety; where all lives can’t matter until black lives matter. As a result, his

passion becomes contagious to anyone who comes in contact with this conscious-kindness.

While traveling, Adler becomes a minority of early ethical-humanist ideological practitioners who are actively challenged by a dehumanized people, whose primary ideals are to be recognized as human. He is also conflicted by other intellectuals, who reveal a hidden unethical-racist agenda for scholastic fame more than justice.

Through a constant uncanny moment of DuBois’s acquaintance, Adler ‘weighs the soul’ of the young Negro leader and establishes a life-changing relationship that is solidified at the first Pan-African Conference at the Westminster Hall in London.

Throughout 2018, please be on the lookout for updates about cast, production members, and more. This work is not easy and requires so much support, time, research, and energy beyond just one creator. We are grateful to the production team and welcome further creative love-workers. This project has gained legs due the creative-scholastic efforts of *RevolutionaryLuv Jé Exodus Hooper*, a recipient of the Mossler Fellowship of the American Ethical Union.

You can support the *Humanitas* film by donating [online](#) (select *Humanitas* Film Fund and/or mention it in Note section) or making a check out to American Ethical Union and putting “*Humanitas* Film” in memo section. All donations are tax-deductible and greatly appreciated.



Ethical Action Feature: Fighting for Racial Justice in the Bronx *James White, Ethical Action Committee*

[Riverdale-Yonkers Society for Ethical Culture](#) members are trying to carry out our American Ethical Union resolution on Reparations in several ways. Our Leader, Jone Johnson Lewis, along with Mary Hemings, Bill Lewis, Jennifer Scarlott and Jim White have joined with local clergy and lay people in forming the North Bronx Racial Justice Coalition. We are organizing around several vital issues. Through Op Ed pieces, letters, and public testimony we are countering the overtly racist response of some sadly bigoted people to the placement of a homeless shelter in the community, and we are continually finding ways to welcome our new neighbors.

Horrifically, on October 6th, a NYPD officer was filmed battering the head (thirteen times!) of a sixteen-year-old youth accused of stealing a bicycle. The commander of the local precinct commended the action as “awful but lawful.” He stated to a community meeting that “You saw police work in action” and opined that the young man would “...continue to fail to comply” so some officer “will probably have to shoot him!” In outrage, we drafted a position paper demanding the prosecution of the offending officer and the firing of the commanding officer. We have spoken at public policy forums and with several public officials, including the NYC Public Advocate’s office, to demand that action be taken in response to this escalation of police violence.

Finally, we are preparing a screening and in-depth discussion of the moving and deeply disturbing film “Rikers” for our Martin Luther King Jr Day observance. The event is taking place at a neighboring United Methodist Church—largely African American—whose pastor is an inspiring leader of our coalition. Representatives of the Fortune Society and the Close Rikers Now movement will both help lead the discussion and recruit more volunteers in the critical work of resistance to mass incarceration and torture.

Jim White’s Congregations for Justice and Peace coalition is working to bring its Manhattan members up to the Bronx “Rikers” program which will inform and move forward its Harlem-based work that is focused on fundamental police reform. In particular, we are concentrating on the ongoing tragedy of the deaths of people in mental crisis when friends or family call the NYPD to get help for them.



A year ago on October 18th, neighbors of Deborah Danner called police to intervene to bring her to a psychiatric emergency room to treat her psychotic episode. Only uniformed, armed officers arrived—no civilian mental health personnel—and the commanding sergeant shot her to death in her bedroom with no attempt to use non-lethal force. This breach of protocol was so egregious that both

the mayor and police commissioner deplored the officer’s action, and an indictment is pending for his prosecution.

A killing almost identical to Ms. Danner’s occurred in Harlem five years ago when Mohamed Bah’s mother realized that her son’s mental condition had deteriorated and came from Guinea to get him help. Police ordered her out of the apartment as she tried to encourage her son to go with them. Their belligerence provoked a hostile but not dangerous response and he too was shot to death. Year after year our Harlem coalition demonstrated with Ms. Bah demanding first a NYC prosecution, then federal action, to no avail. Finally we prevailed in a civil suit in which the evidence credited by the jury proved that there had been no justification at all for NYPD’s lethal force.

Since Ms. Danner’s death, at least six more such NYPD killings have occurred—all of people in mental distress. And all were people of color, as were Mohamed Bah and Deborah Danner.

We are working with NYSEC member Robert Gangi to build a citywide coalition for fundamental reform that would shift resources from the NYPD to community mental health agencies that would thereby be funded and empowered as first responders to prevent deadly results in these cases. Bob Gangi was honored in the American Ethical Union’s Albany, NY Assembly with the Elliott-Black award for his work founding the Police Reform Organizing Project (PROP). We are in good company, indeed, to advance this vital work in the New Year!

Review of Racial Justice Webinar

Kate LaClair, AEU Ethical Action Chair

To increase Society connections as we move forward in our action work together, especially following up on the [2017 AEU Resolution on Repairing the Harms of Racism](#), the AEU Ethical Action Committee organized a webinar on “Doing Racial Justice Work in Ethical Culture.” Hugh Taft-Morales (Baltimore/Philadelphia) and Kate LaClair (Baltimore/AEU Ethical Action) interviewed five Society members and were joined online by 40 members from around the country. Our panelists offered concrete steps for Societies and individuals to take to support racial justice.

In the struggle against White Supremacy, start with Ethical Culture.

Jé Hooper (Riverdale-Yonkers), Carolyn Parker (Austin), and Jone Lewis (Brooklyn/Riverdale-Yonkers) reminded us that working against White Supremacy begins with our own interpersonal relationships in our Societies and out in our other communities. Jé emphasized the importance of recognizing that Ethical Societies are still white spaces—places where white culture is predominant and implicitly considered the norm against which all else is measured. Examine the reasons why our Ethical Societies remain predominantly white spaces, and how to expand our culture so that it truly includes, welcomes, and represents all our members. Many white members may not even be aware that this is the case! Begin the change in Ethical communities, and

move outward from there. Carolyn, Jone, and Joy McConnell (Asheville) offered details about some of the programming they have been doing at platforms and other events to help members expand this aspect of their ethical lives.

Have someone at the door at all gatherings to welcome people. Get a “people-person” who is comfortable engaging with those they’ve never met before and isn’t shy to welcome a newcomer.

As we work toward transforming our internal culture, we should be especially mindful that it is important to greet people of color when they come to our gatherings, with respect that honors who they are. Jé observed: “Once you’ve caught me at the threshold, anybody else who welcomes me is an addition to sanctuary...We don’t want to step on the toes of those who we see as oppressed, but we are also so scared to welcome that we don’t know how to just be genuine.” Individuals and Societies can declare through their interactions their sincere intention to create that sanctuary, a safe place for people of color where they are accepted for their full humanity—indeed the primary goal of Ethical Culture.

Have Platforms, do Colloquies, and hold other events that address the reality of White Supremacy and systemic racism.

Argentine Craig (Baltimore) and many other panelists shared print and video resources they have used for discussion. We added them to the AEU Resources website and encourage you to share more resources you know of by emailing klaclair@aeu.org. You can also invite platform speakers from local groups

who have expertise on the topic. Use the programming methods you have—platforms or Colloquies for example—to address racial justice and White Supremacy. Small groups can be ideal for effecting personal and cultural change within the Society.

Societies can also leverage the work they are already doing in an area that intersects with racism and racial justice, for example working on Criminal Justice and understanding the disproportionate effects that the system has on people of color. Societies can also work with service organizations who already have infrastructure and networks in place, and add their time, talent, or monetary assistance to help them address a gap in service.

To hear all the details and tips from our panelists, watch the webinar here: <https://youtu.be/EScCR--PQ2I>. Your Society can also be part of the conversation by hosting a viewing and discussion on the issues that are relevant to you.

This webinar is just the beginning, and is expanding into quarterly conference calls on Racial Justice where we can continue to share tips, support each other, and move forward in this crucial work. Sign up at <https://goo.gl/forms/mDQmx0OEY7LeyM6C2>.

Thanks to the other members of the Ethical Action Committee Jim White (Riverdale-Yonkers) and Bob Gordon (Bergen) for assisting with planning, and to Bart Worden (AEU) for contributing his technological skills. And thanks to Amanda Poppei (Washington DC) for speaking up to ensure that the webinar reflects its goals in action, and the ideals of Ethical Culture.

From United Nations: 2017 World Happiness Report

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

*Dr. Reba Goodman, Ethical
Culture Society of Bergen County
Special thanks to Charlene Nicole
Fulmore*

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

Should nations be judged by how happy their population is? Should government policy aim at increasing the nation's happiness? Currently, most countries aim to increase the wealth of the nation—generally measured by the Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Does the happiness of a people rise over time with rising affluence? Many surveys and studies have shown that this is not the case. For example, America's average buying power has almost tripled since the 1950's while self reported happiness has remained almost unchanged. Similar results prevail in other affluent countries. Affluent countries have not gotten much happier as they have grown richer.

Psychologists, economists, and the emerging science of happiness have investigated this surprising phenomenon. One explanation is that humans are adept at turning what were once luxuries into necessities. For example, radios, TVs, refrigerators, electricity indoor toilets etc are now commonplace. Another persistent phenomenon is the constant creation of new material "wants" by advertising which is now a business of around \$500 billion a year.

As people become richer, extra money has a decreasing value. In the language of economists this is known as the 'diminishing marginal utility of income.' In plain English, \$1,000 for a poor person means much more than \$1,000 for a millionaire.

For an impoverished society, the focused quest for material gain makes a lot of sense. Higher household income generally results in improvements in the life conditions of the poor. It means more adequate food, access to health care, safe water, and sanitation. As incomes rise from very low levels human well-being improves. The poor report rising satisfaction with their lives as their meager income increase.

Many people agree that societies should increase the happiness of their citizens. Yet, many believe that happiness is too subjective to be objectively measured. Psychological, economic, public polls, and sociological studies conclude that while happiness is subjective it can be objectively measured, assessed, and correlated with observable brain function. Physically, happiness is created by four different brain chemicals: endomorphin, dopamine, oxytocin, and serotonin.

In 1972 the King of Bhutan, a tiny and poor Himalayan kingdom grew tired of countries being measured by their GDP and introduced the term Gross National Happiness (GNH) as a guide for public policy. Efforts to put this idea on the global agenda ultimately led to the UN declaring 20 March the International Day of Happiness. Further, it initiated the yearly World Happiness reports ranking countries as to the happiness of their population. The rankings are based first on asking respondents to rate their own lives on a scale from 0 to 10 where 0 is the worst and 10 the best. Then, each country score is broken down into 6 factors-level of GDP, healthy life expectancy, generosity, social support, freedom and absence of corruption in government and business. Among the top 2017 rankings are: Norway, Denmark, Iceland, Switzerland, Finland, Netherlands, and Canada. Some other rankings are (11) Israel, (14) USA, (49) Russia, (51) Japan, and (79) China.

Human relationships are the most important external factor affecting happiness. The extent to which the country's inhabitants trust each other turns out to be very important.

Some have critiqued the happiness agenda claiming that it encourages the idea that happiness is mostly an internal psychological state, something we are responsible for creating for ourselves, as opposed to something that emerges from the objective conditions of our lives. Happiness is thus not seen as about the society we live in. However, in fact the 2017 UN report does emphasize the social foundation of happiness.

A more serious critique about the concentration on happiness is that there is more to life than being happy. One researcher has said is that what sets human beings apart from other animals is not the pursuit of happiness, which occurs all across the natural world, but the pursuit of meaning which is unique to humans.

According to the Center for Disease Control, about 4 out of 10 Americans have not discovered a satisfying life purpose or a sense of what makes their life meaningful.

While this critique is powerful it raises serious questions. It fails to consider the morality of what is found to be meaningful. Some people's meaningful goals are to our view a moral disaster. The Nazis had a goal meaningful to them but monstrous to us. The talk about meaning to have meaning must involve ethics.

How to live—to find purpose—has been a quest going back to ancient times. That conversation will go on. From our point of view seeking social policies that make peoples lives happier is a worthwhile goal.

References:
UN 2017 World Happiness Report
Happiness by Richard Layard

From United Nations: Human Trafficking

More than 40 million people were victims of modern slavery in 2016. This amazing figure comes from the UN's International Labor Organization (ILO) and the Walk Free Foundation. This includes 25 million trapped in forced labor—many of them in debt bondage, especially working in farming, fishing, and construction. About 15 million are in forced marriage and 5 million in sexual exploitation.

We are talking big business here. Human trafficking earns profits of roughly \$150 billion a year for traffickers. The most profitable is \$100 billion from commercial sexual exploitation.

In 2000, the US Congress mandated the US State Department to put out an annual trafficking Report (TIP) to review world trafficking activity. This report also includes victims' stories, which show the ugly reality behind the numbers. The stories are shocking, heartbreaking and infuriating. Some examples:

- Maria Elena was 13 years old when a family acquaintance told her she could make ten times as much money waiting tables in the US than she could in her small Mexican village. She and several other girls were driven to the border. They then continued the rest of the way on foot. They traveled four days and nights through the desert into Texas, then crossing east into Florida. Finally they arrived at a rundown trailer where they were forced into prostitution.

- At a carpet factory in Nepal, Nayantara met a labor broker who promised a good job as a domestic worker in Lebanon. The broker convinced her to take the job but instead he took her to India, confiscated her passport and sold her to a brothel where she was forced to have sex with at least 35 men each day.

New York Times columnist Nicolas Kristof tells a poignant story of Poonam Thapa, a teenage girl he met in Nepal. Poonam was poor and uneducated when a woman offered an escape in the form of a well paying job, telling her "You can have a better life." So Poonam then, aged 12, ran off with the woman who eventually deposited her in a brothel in Mumbai, India. The brothel owner, a woman, dressed her up in a skimpy dress, equipped her with falsies and gave her heels. The owner sold Poonam's virginity to an older man.

Poonam thus became one of about 40 million people worldwide—a quarter of them children subjected to forced labor. In the US, tens of thousands of children are trafficked into the sex trade each year. Some of the victims manage to escape but are traumatized and need serious rehabilitation.

Nicolas Kristof and his wife Sheryl Wundun wrote a powerful book, *Half the Sky*, promoting awareness of this worldwide shocking reality. The title comes from a Chinese proverb "Women hold up half the sky." The book also has a list of organizations where one can help.

This unbelievable reality is under-reported. According to the 2017 TIP Report the number of convictions is very low. In 2016 there were about 15,000 prosecutions and only 9000 convictions.

Recently, more attention has been paid to forced marriages resulting from abductions. Around the world some 15 million people are living in marriages into which they were forced, including some who were abducted according to the ILO. In China the trafficking of women is particularly acute, in part because of preferences for sons has left the country with a severely unbalanced sex ratio. The Chinese Academy of Social Sciences has estimated that by 2020 there will be 30-40 million Chinese men who will be unable to find wives in their own country. This is clearly a temptation for criminal activity.

Human trafficking is a global problem with regards to law enforcement and human rights. It is a multi-billion dollar industry trapping millions. It is a major moral problem that needs to be solved.

Support American Ethical Union

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

Donate [online](#), or send a check to the AEU at 2 West 64th St, Ste 406, New York, NY, 10023, or call 212-873-6500 with your credit card information. All contributions to the AEU are tax-deductible.

NES Supports SDGs

Carolyn A. Parker, PhD,
NES Executive Committee

The [National Ethical Service](#) endorsed the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#) for 2030 and has made initial efforts to increase awareness of the goals throughout the American Ethical Union. Posts on the NES [website](#) and [Facebook page](#) have introduced the SDGs. A brief address in June at the 102nd Assembly encouraged representatives of local Societies to familiarize themselves with the SDGs and to consider how their local ethical actions already fell within the scope of the SDGs. Doing so would help the Societies connect their local activities with the larger global efforts to address major world issues such as poverty, climate change, and gender equality

among others.

The NES is embarked on a more direct effort to encourage and support local action that coordinates with the SDGs.

First, The NES SDG Resource Project will provide information about easy-to-access resources for learning more about each of the SDGs, for finding related activities that are being undertaken around the world (and might be adapted for local ethical action), and for identifying potential partners for ethical action and adult education. The project will begin with a series of Facebook posts, starting in January. Plans for future expansion of the NES website are under consideration.

Second, NES SDG Seed Grants for Ethical Societies through the Rose L. Walker Fund will soon be announced. The grants will provide start-up funds for projects that advance efforts to meet local

(or other) targets for the SDGs.

Developing these projects takes time and human resources. Making them work at the local level will require even more time and human resources—from the local Societies. NES is seeking interested members to serve as liaisons between NES and their home Societies. Any member of the AEU is automatically a member of the NES and, therefore, eligible to volunteer to serve as liaison. In that role, volunteers will receive direct information from NES regarding the resource and educational programs and participate in conference calls. Serving as a link between NES and the local Society, the NES Liaison will work with local leadership to help integrate SDGs into ethical actions and educational programs and report progress to the NES. To volunteer (or for more information), contact Kay Dunderf, President, at info@nationalserviceaeu.org.

Wall of Remembrance

Compiled from Societies' and newspaper obituaries

Lane Berk (*Baltimore*) died on November 7 at the age of 89. Petite in stature, Lane was a gigantic figure to those of us who valued her many decades of activism, community service, charitable support, philosophical vigor, impishness, mentorship, arts advocacy, intellectual curiosity, kindness, stubbornness, and all the rest. She laughed with Albert Einstein, gave refuge to Cesar Chavez, corresponded for years with Nelson Mandela, was in the room with JFK when the Peace Corps was forming, participated in the de-Nazification of post-World War II Germany, walked across the Edmund Pettus Bridge with Martin Luther King, Jr., and met Pete Seeger and Felix Adler.

Roland Dumont (*Bergen*) passed away on December 12 at the age of 94. He was a devoted member since the 1950s that frequently attended our Sunday platforms, was very supportive of our

Skills Auctions, participated in the Men's Lunch Group, and had served as the chair of our Commemorative Fund Committee and in many other ways that sustained our community. A life-long resident of northern New Jersey, Roland was an educator who worked as a principal of a middle school in West Orange. He was a modest, humble, and eminently decent and kind man who retained his dignity and independence throughout his long life.

Suzanne Hagan (*St Louis*) died on October 18.

Pamela McGhee (*New York*) chose the New York Society for Ethical Culture to be both her community and her family. Although confined to a scooter due to MS, she handily navigated our ramp and fully participated on several committees. Pamela lit up every room she entered and inspired everyone she met. As an African-American professional, she broke barriers in the IT world; as a member, she held us responsible for our social justice mission. We grieve our loss and celebrate her life.

Bertha Stovall Waters (*Philadelphia*), 95, died from a sudden stomach ailment on January 6. Bertha graduated summa cum laude with a bachelor's degree from Temple University, at the age of 54 followed by her MSS degree from Bryn Mawr College at age 56 (in 2009 they awarded her a Lifetime Achievement Award). Bertha spent much of her professional career as she was the equity coordinator at the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

Renee Zeff Sullivan (*Chicago*), 92, charter member of the Chicago Ethical Humanist Circle and long time member of the Chicago Society died on December 18th. Renee was a retired Chicago social worker and a fervent supporter of causes (attending various women's rights marches including one in March 2017) before her declining health prevented her continued participation. She was also an avid tennis and ping-pong player.

When Progress is Unethical

Abe Markman, MSW,
long-term community center director and social justice activist,
member of New York Society for Ethical Culture

To avoid a harmful reaction to a progressive initiative, a plan to prevent backlash should be required. Here are some examples to illustrate my point:

Issue: Progress is unethical when clean energy enthusiasts do not plan adequately for displaced coal miners and oil drillers.

Plan: When coal mining is going to be shut down, have available a mix of possible alternative sources of income such as a civilian G.I. Bill. Even without ready-to-hire job alternatives, families could be offered a base line income or higher unemployment insurance and health care benefits.

Issue: When robots replace humans in the work force without addressing the consequences.

Plan: As robotics advance, we should be looking at shorter workweeks and government sponsored substitute jobs.

Issue: Unions overprotect poorly functioning workers.

Plan: Teacher union members should face the fact that overprotecting failing teachers has been a driving force behind the charter/private schools movement. Let's allow more leeway for principals to replace teachers who are failing to educate children.

With a watchdog infrastructure against arbitrary/unfounded dismissal of workers, such a process should apply to all work places, private or governmental. As my professor stated in my social work administration class, "Unless those in charge of work places can hire and fire they cannot be held accountable."

Issue: The Occupy Wall Street movement was incapable of exerting discipline. An example was the inability to stop the drumming when residents living near Zuccotti Park in downtown Manhattan came home from work. This gave the mayor the excuse to order the police to remove the occupiers. A movement that made a powerful and important impact was cut short across the country, often by overuse of police clubs, kicking, and spraying that could have been avoided or mitigated.

Plan: Well-intentioned, powerfully impactful movements like OWS should build an infrastructure of leadership, decision-making, and self-imposed discipline.

Issue: "Peaceful protests" against police brutality that does not fully embrace and self-enforce non-violent, civil disobedience may give license to some who are prone to violence. For example, during a large protest in New York City that I attended, there were no calls for non-violence and no volunteer marshals to enforce peaceful protesting. Toward the end of the march there was damage to property and the next day two police officers were killed. I believe these and the other killings of police at otherwise peaceful protests contributed to the Giuliani/Trump call for a "Law and

Order" presidency.

Ta-Nehisi Coates, in his article, "The Near Certainty of Anti-Police Violence," in *The Atlantic*, July 12, 2016, explains why tensions get so high among blacks that retributive killings of police are inevitable. But he does not mention that such killings of innocent officers can provide a rationale for increased and extended mistreatment, particularly of black men in the judicial system. During my days of activism during the Mayor Giuliani era in New York City, we were able to convince juries to convict police officers with large marches and rallies that were disciplined and non-violent. Juries are chosen from among the public and we convinced many in the public that some officers killed or brutalized innocent men of color without just cause. We were on the streets for about a decade and there was no violence accompanying or following our actions, even when:

- Well over 1,000 of us were arrested after Amadou Diallo was shot at 41 times; or when
- Anthony Baez was choked to death; or when
- Abner Louima was tortured in the bathroom of a Brooklyn precinct station.

The secret was non-violent protests, civil disobedience, crucial testimony from by-standers, our attendance at court sessions, and taking our protests to the U.S. Justice Department when necessary.

Plan: To better insure that some protest participants who may be prone to violence receive a clear message that shooting of cops or any other violent acts to persons or property is not called for, protest leaders should fully embrace, promote, and implement

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Write for the Dialogue
We are accepting submissions for Spring 2018!

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 by Sunday, March 25, 2018.

Please include a headshot and related images with your submission.

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self-disciplined non-violent/civil disobedience. Marshals and captains should be stationed in key spots at rallies and marches at protests.

Issue: The rapid change in attitudes toward homosexuality and women's issues is seen as wonderful without considering those who were unprepared for the change.

Plan: It is true that great progress has been made and it is assumed that progressive candidates will pursue an aggressive program on behalf of all those treated unjustly. Nevertheless, it can be counter-productive to repeat the candidate's support forcefully and endlessly without showing any sensitivity to those who might feel unprepared, misunderstood, and ignored. It is hard to do but it is essential.

Issue: The call to leave Afghanistan and Iraq without taking full responsibility for what has been wrought upon these countries and their neighbors.

Plan: Victory may not be possible but continued shared responsibility is necessary as long as NATO forces are welcome and as long as the governments of these countries struggle against corruption and highly destructive ethnic and religious rivalries.

Some Remedies, Politically Correct and Incorrect:

In brief, when progress results in unintended consequences or if progressives proceed without taking into consideration likely negative reactions, we may unwittingly enhance neo-fascistic regimes, here at home, and in a growing number of places around the world.

We must carefully consider the positive and negative effects of what we as progressives propose and then fight for what we believe in with all the courage and humanity in our beings for what we believe in.

If you would like to respond to or discuss this article, feel free to call Abe Markman at 212-204-0656.

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