



American Ethical Union

Inspiring Ethical Communities

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Annual Report - Brooklyn Society for Ethical Culture 2018-2019

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President(s): Janet Novet

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Ethical Action:

- Climate: Support of local organization: Brooklyn for Peace.
- Racial Justice: Participation in outside organizations: Get Organized Brooklyn
- Economic Justice:
- Development and Peace:
- Other: Primarily discussion/active community learning: earlier manifestations have proliferated into currently six (6) committees, five (5) of which are active. All are under their own chairs and are engaged in examining various aspects of American history, current and world events as briefly explained below.

Lucy's Children: Increasing understanding American racism plumbing the economic and social depths of pathology and historical pathways. Topics have included housing, world dynamics leading to the Atlantic Triangle Trade, the epistemology of racism and many related areas of inquiry.

Racial Justice Book Club: Monthly Readings

Issues and Action: Weekly gathering for discussion on domestic as well as international issues

Enhanced Discussion: Speakers for presentations on specific topics: past topics have included race and racism.

Ethical Action Committee: General administrative meetings were held quarterly.

Activities/Events that were planned and occurred are as follows:

- 1) The Annual Charley Horwitz Commemoration Platform.
- 2) Internal and external Collaboratives with BSEC.
 - a. Coming to the Table- This is housed with the NY Society of Friends and is a reconciliation dialogue between former enslavers and the formerly enslaved.
 - b. United Religions Initiative. This is an inter-religious gathering of various faith groups.
- 3) One project which EAC undertook was to provide gloves to migrants traveling north to Canada. This was in conjunction with a local effort in upstate NY.

The Knitting Group:

The Knitting Group began meeting in 2018, but is still working to continuously to establish itself with a regular gathering to produce knitted items for detainees held in Brooklyn jails.

New Developments: EAC 2019

Over the course of the year, the committee has taken on more challenging topics on the interface of Blacks in the development of America the United States and in selected South American countries: The persistence of racism in the Americas, maritime history; the effects of the Emancipation Proclamation on the Civil War and thereafter, the growth of American violence,

political leadership and its effect on social behaviors.

In the near future, there will be selected topics on human migration and various nations' responses; issues of health and well-being on the American landscape and public education and prisons.

Peace Site Award

There is on-going discussion regard the BSEC/EAC Peace Prize slated to be awarded.

Ethical Education (children 1 year olds to 12 year olds): We have grown our program to four (4) teachers and four (4) age groups this year to accommodate our growing number of students and age groups. Our current program includes monthly yoga and mindfulness to all our classes; even baby yoga for our 18 months to 3yrs group. Service to the community and a permaculture day every couple of months. We have also had many more combined classes with different ages working together. The topics we covered this year were broad and varied. We looked at our role in our communities and the environment, learned about composting, planted flowers, discussed the difference between Equity and Equality, read about social justice heroes, and looked at our own strengths and weaknesses.

Our class studies showed how we can complement each other by doing exercises that deal with our emotions and looked at strategies on how to use most effectively us them to help us and others. It is also important to practice Active Listening and to discuss differently abled people. We also learned some sign language from a guest and learned about service animals.

The Ethical Education co-sponsored a playback theater workshop; decorated the streets with messages of hope for those passing by; followed the older children's explorations on the personal nature of one's spiritual beliefs, religious wars/terrorism and unity vs. hierarchy. Sand Mandalas was done as an exercise to help one to let go and so much more. It is important to note that we have been intentional in planning intergenerational gatherings during our 11:00am Platform timeframe. These events are our annual festivals: Wampanoag Ceremony, Winter Solstice, and Spring Fest.

Ethical Living

The Ethical Living Committee (ELC) provides a foundation to allow growth within the community, by offering and developing programs that are attractive and of interest to BSEC's membership and the community at large.

The ELC uses the arts, culture, communication, complementary healing techniques and fun, as mechanisms to build our caring, connective tissue, so we can be catalysts of positive change both locally and globally.

Ethical Living Committee Programs' Aligned under the umbrella of the ELC are:

- 1) The Brooklyn Society Writers – a group of professional and novice authors and poets, who meet twice monthly and offer their work at platforms and colloquies. The Brooklyn Society Writers have contributed to the Society for over a decade, and serve both in-house and local writers by providing a venue for book signings, lectures and workshops.
- 2) Yoga – offered each Sunday morning for both members and non-members by a professional instructor with many years of experience.
- 3) Mindfulness – a form of meditation offered monthly by a certified professional in addition to intensive eight week programs.
- 4) Being Well – offered monthly as a venue for those desiring to share and heal by telling their stories. Topics are selected by the group at the time of the meeting, and allow participants a space to assist each other in personal growth, the grieving process and healing day-to-day circumstances.
- 5) Reiki – a complementary energy healing modality scheduled to roll out prior to 2nd quarter

2019. This gentle, non-invasive technique allows the body to de-stress, thereby allowing the body the ability to heal from many conditions including physical pain and depression. Sessions to be conducted by certified Reiki Masters.

6) Game Night – a collaboration with the Prospect Park Board Gaming Club. This activity which is open to members and non-members meets twice monthly and gives participants the opportunity to unwind and have fun playing board games.

7) Prospect Concerts – a collaboration with the Park Slope Food Co-op which showcases local talent several times per year.

8) Music and More – a group of professional and novice musicians and vocalists who meet and perform monthly at the Society. The group was established in late 2018 with performances commencing January 2019.

9) Tea Exchange – an educational fellowship founded around the commodity of tea. Participants discuss the histories of various teas consumed around the world, and partake in an afternoon of tea with light refreshments.

Building and Grounds:

Last year the community agreed to take the steps that can make the building and grounds accessible to an extent and repair our perimeter wall. A new architect has been selected and a new scope has been defined. This will be a multi-year project as the historic nature of our building means that the costs to take on such an endeavor are significant.

Finances:

In 2015, we embarked on a capital fundraising campaign to develop mobility access to the first/main floor of our building and to repair the historical fence around our property. Our member pledges are a small part of our income and rental income is the primary source of income that provides the financial resources to pay our staff, fund BSEC programming and covers the maintenance costs of our historical building.

Membership Development Committee:

The Membership Development Committee was resurrected in November of 2017. We meet on the first Friday of every month.

Events completed: Three newcomer dinners, one family game night with another planned, one Saturday workshop on increasing membership attended by the committee and several members

Ongoing: Greeting Card Program: care for members/friends, welcoming newcomers to platforms, nurturing new members with mentoring program

GOALS:

1. Complete referral list in order to assist members/friends with needs outside of our purview (ex., childcare, elder service organizations)
2. Revise and pass out optional forms to be filled out by members re: preferences in case of illness, etc. so the committee knows what to offer in assistance.
3. Eventually increase committee membership to include separate branch for caring/sharing which the current committee is now doing
4. Update CRM
5. A committee on communication with the public about our programs has been formed and will meet soon (Taty, Jone, and Kim)
6. Plan a workshop for committee members to assist us in knowing how much we can do (legally) for needs of members/friends in our community