

AMERICAN ETHICAL UNION

Dialogue Fall 2015

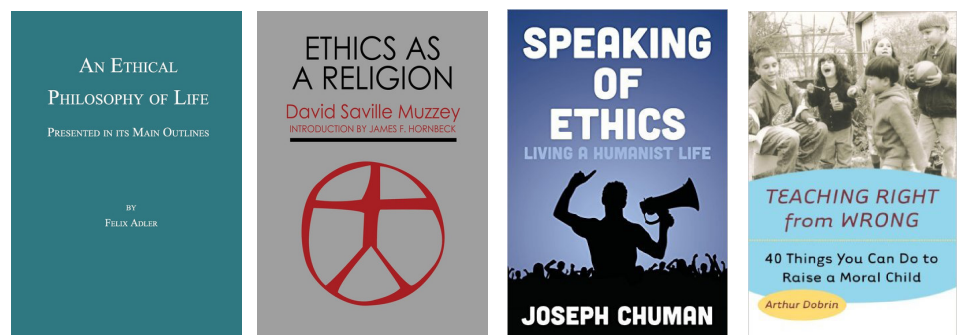
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Ethical Culture Books Available Online!

We are proud to announce that many Ethical Culture Books are available for purchase online! Check out some of our favorites: aeu.org/resources/books.

We will keep adding to the section as more are published. Currently you can find books by renowned Leaders such as Felix Adler, Arthur Dobrin, Joe Chuman, and Algernon Black. Enjoy reading them on your own or discuss with a friend.



It's Showtime at the Ethics Video Library!

Parents, educators, and humanists of all stripes, here's your one-stop free source for awesome educational ethics videos! The American Ethical Union and Camp Quest are proud to announce the Ethics Video Library, ethicsvideolibrary.com. Check it out and subscribe. We already have over 260 videos uploaded!

What is the Library? This collaborative project is a public, online resource for humanist educators and parents. The Library collects videos, curates them, and adds engaging discussion questions. Videos range across 13 categories, from psychology to religion and economics to philosophy. We have stories and fables for younger kids. We're developing a gender and sexuality section. Save time and energy while accessing quality materials. Use the Library when planning a lesson or skim through our archive with your kids to stimulate their imagination.

From where do you get the videos? From you! The material is “crowd sourced”—then volunteer curators, who donate just an hour a month, upload and log each video entry with a description and discussion questions. New content is uploaded daily.

Please consider becoming a curator! From the website you can read the volunteer position description then apply. For any questions please contact Paul Chiariello, a member of the Brooklyn Society for Ethical Culture and the American Ethical Union's Ethics Education Committee, at paul.chiariello@campquest.org.

Letter from Executive Director Bart Worden



At our last Assembly we presented a plan for organizational growth and for becoming more widely known and respected, especially among humanist organizations and other groups who have interests similar to ours. This plan is three-pronged and has begun with a fundraising campaign designed to provide increased resources for program development without having to raise apportionments for member Ethical Societies. We have also assembled an outreach team who will be in contact with individuals and groups who are interested in working with the American Ethical Union, and we have begun work on program content that can be used by new and forming groups as well as by existing Ethical Societies.

The fundraising efforts include the 100x100 Campaign and an invitation to major donors to join in supporting our new programs and projects. The 100x100 Campaign invites participants to contribute \$100 per month for three years and we are looking for 100 people to join the campaign. We have already received a good number of participants and expect more to join in the near future. If this campaign is fully successful, we will have available an additional \$120,000 per year for the next

three years that could be applied to expanding and improving our programs and services.

We are not waiting until all the contributions have been pledged before making some plans and commitments. The board has assembled a task force to clarify priorities and choose the first targets for receiving some of these new funds. We will also be approaching those who have been our larger contributors to share our plans and invite their contributions. This fundraising effort has allowed us to expand our base of contributors without adding pressure on existing Ethical Societies' contributions.

Our outreach team has developed a system for responding to requests for information about starting an Ethical Culture Exploratory group and team members have already been in contact with a number of people who have made inquiries. Interested people can sign up on our website, call the American Ethical Union office, or send a message via email, Facebook, or Twitter. Team members respond to the communication and arrange for conversations about the individuals' interests and readiness to begin organizing.

An initial "Starter Packet" has been developed to make it as easy as possible for individuals and small groups to organize and run an Ethical Humanist group. The materials include advice about finding people who would be interested in participating, hosting the first meeting, organizing a core leadership team, and arranging for ongoing meetings. Materials under development for Colloquy, Community Circles, Guided Discussion, and Platform programs will soon be available online.

We are also positioning ourselves to achieve a higher profile in the public arena. If you have visited our website recently you may have noticed under the "events and news" section is a new menu item, "Press Kit," that will make it easier for news and media people to connect with spokespeople for the Ethical Culture Movement. We are also looking into avenues for training our spokespeople in the art of public communication.

All of these initiatives work together toward building a stronger and more far-reaching Ethical Culture Movement. We are striving to ensure that what makes the Union strong will also strengthen local Societies. By connecting with more people in more places, by developing and disseminating more program materials and other resources, and by making whatever we develop available to our member Societies we are together creating a solid foundation for a successful future.

Outreach It Is!

Laura Steele, Membership Committee Chair

Our 100th Anniversary Assembly was inspiring. In response to some of our speakers' community organizing experience and tools, the AEU Membership Committee put together an impromptu "listening tree." A crude tree drawn large and tacked onto the wall outside our dinner venue invited lay leaders, Leaders, members, and staff to share their thoughts on what their own Society needs to know and/or do to grow more. On post-it notes you wrote your thoughts and comments. The answer overwhelmingly was outreach.

The Membership Committee extends huge appreciation and thanks to all who participated. We developed this year's Membership Growth Conference to bring you a whole day and a half looking at a number of ways to enhance how we promote membership growth in Ethical Societies. Join us on October 23-24 at the Ethical Society of Bergen County for an engaging and practical conference filled with workshops.

You'll learn how to:

- Communicate clearly and concisely what your Ethical Society is and stands for
- Reach people who don't know about your Ethical Society and turn their interest into a visit
- Welcome and follow up with first-time visitors so they have a great first impression and return
- Engage newcomers so they become active participants and members
- Address conflict creatively so that your Society maintains healthy relationships.

In addition to learning a lot, as always there will be food, good company, and the unique opportunity to share with each other, find new friends, and have fun.

Make sure you register at aeu.org/event/membership-growth-conference! Even if you're thinking you're too far away, we can help with that. Don't let distance stop you from joining us. See you soon!



Members at 2015 AEU Assembly business meeting

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. November 21 – NYSEC

Sat. January 16 – NYSEC

Sat. March 19 – NYSEC

Sat. May 21 – NYSEC

Thu. July 14 - Sun. July 17 – Assembly in St. Louis

Membership Growth Conference

Fri. October 23 - Sat.

**October 24 – Bergen Society
“Growing the Movement Together”**

Ethical Education Weekend

Fri. November 6 - Sun.

November 8 – Stony Point Center, Stony Point, NY

Youth of Ethical Societies Conference

Fri. November 13 - Sun.

November 15 – St. Louis, MO

Future of Ethical Societies Conference

**Fri. May 27 - Mon. May 30
– Brooklyn, NY**

AEU 101st Annual Assembly

Thu. July 14 - Sun. July 17 – St. Louis, MO

Lay Leadership Summer School

Sat. August 13 - Sat.

August 20 – The Mountain Retreat & Learning Center, Highlands, NC

Letter from AEU Board President Jan Broughton



Inspiring Ethical Communities.

Those three words appear on our website, our banner, our t-shirt, our brochure, and other publications. Three words that express the essence of what the American Ethical Union, as the umbrella organization for our member Ethical Societies, is all about.

Inspiring through the voices of Leaders that we train; inspiring through the resolutions passed to address the ills of our society and the world; inspiring by supporting actions to combat those ills; inspiring by offering materials and a framework for enriching the programs at the Societies.

Ethical principles guide everything that we do. We join together to explore the beliefs that lead us toward treating each other with respect and kindness. In turn we apply this ethical approach to our wider worlds.

Communities exist at every level. We work to enhance the health and vibrancy of each local Society. We encourage service both within our organization and into the neighborhoods with which we are connected—whether it is the city we are part of, a larger region, state, nation, or the world. We serve those communities by offering ethical education, bearing witness to our convictions through marching and protest, and contributions to those in

need because of disaster or poverty. At our recent fall retreat, the board brainstormed to determine what the AEU could best do at this time to further the ambitions expressed by the three words, “**Inspiring Ethical Communities.**” Executive Director Bart Worden, using a visioning process offered to our Societies during consultations, guided us through exercises designed to elicit specific ideas that we could put forward to provide support for Societies that would be beneficial to growth. The various aspects of internal development (or in-reach), outreach, and service were all covered.

As you can imagine the list that was developed was extensive and a task force is busy prioritizing the items to bring you the best ‘bang for the buck.’

How much we can do depends on the expanded fundraising efforts undertaken this past year. Last year’s annual appeal was successful and the 100x100 campaign got off to a good start but we have a ways to go before the ‘wish list’ is fully funded. Until then, we have to choose among many worthwhile activities. You will be hearing about those as they are implemented.

Coincidentally, my own Ethical Humanist Society of the Triangle is in the midst of a similar process of evaluation and setting new goals. After member surveys and a workshop led by Bart Worden and

Paulo Ribeiro, we have a new set of ideas to enhance our programming, attract new members, recharge our ethical action committee, and much more. I can feel a new energy and purpose as we set our goals and begin to implement new ideas. Already we can see changes with a new upright display banner for inside and outside use, and a new membership brochure. Soon we’ll be refreshing the website and introducing a new logo. Some of this is designed to make it clearer to visitors what we are all about. Our programming remains strong and one of our newest members is bringing new energy to our ethical action efforts.

It may be fall but it seems like a period of renewal. Or perhaps instead we are reaping the harvest of best practices—many of the techniques that have been used to reexamine our routines and procedures have been the subject of workshops or summer school sessions offered through the AEU. It is gratifying to put that information to use and realize positive outcomes. Each success builds on itself as people see results, become encouraged and energized to go further. We’ve been **inspired** to grow and better serve our **community** through **ethical** action and education.

The American Ethical Union is a stable institution with its financial house in order and a talented, dedicated staff. With the help of all our Societies and their members we are ready to strengthen the things we are currently doing well and to introduce new initiatives that will enable us to be of greater service to those Societies and the large community. We welcome everyone’s involvement in this special journey.

Support the American Ethical Union

With your generous support members are able to learn, share, grow, and make a difference in our Societies and the world. Donate [online](#), 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 financial contributions to the AEU are tax-deductible.

Join us for “Barn-Raising a Movement: How We Can Help Each Other” Dale McGowan, National Director of Ethical Education

Energy, expertise, and ideas are spread throughout the Movement. If each Society keeps to itself, both our individual “barns” and the larger community will fall short of their potential. This weekend aims to engender a new spirit of barn-raising in the Ethical Education program, connecting programs to each other and finding ways to share practical ideas and build structures of mutual support.

A fun and active children’s program will run parallel to the adult offerings, and the two will come together for meals, a scavenger hunt, and evening activities. Register now to join us at the beautiful Stony Point Conference Center for an inspiring weekend.

aeu.org/event/ethical-education-weekend/

Ethical Education News



Dale McGowan, our National Director of Ethical Education, will be stepping down following the Ethical Education Weekend November 6-8. Dale has been a tremendously positive force for humanist ethical education and has helped to revitalize a number of

ethics-for-children programs at Ethical Societies. Under Dale’s leadership, the Ethical Education Committee embarked upon a plan to establish national standards for ethical education and to develop an “Ethical Diploma” program for children and youth. The Ethical Education Committee will be continuing the work while we search for a new Director and we hope to see many of you at the Stony Point Conference Center in a few weeks.

YES Examines Race in Modern America Trish Cowan, YES Coordinator

The annual Youth of Ethical Societies (YES) conference will be held in St. Louis, MO, this year. YES brings together teens from all over the country to tackle big issues important to their lives. This year’s theme is “Race in Modern America.”

YES is unique in that the teens plan and facilitate the conference, themselves. This year, because there is so much to learn about the topic, the teens are welcoming guest speakers James Croft and Billie Teneau to share their experiences with major civil rights events surrounding race. James is very active in the wake of the Black Lives Matter movement and Billie has been active since the 40’s and 50’s when she organized sit-ins and helped African Americans acquire jobs and housing. We are already inspired by their wisdom and look forward to the discussions and activism that their talks will inspire.

YES will be November 12-15, 2015. We would like to have every Society represented at the conference. Teens need not be affiliated with an Ethical Society to participate. Please reach out to Trish Cowan, YES Advisor, at trishhotze@sbcglobal.net or 314-680-3348 for further information. Registration PDF online at aeu.org/event/yes-conference-in-stlouis-nov-2015.

Coming soon...FES Goes to Oslo

Anya Overmann, member of the Future of Ethical Societies (FES) and Ethical Society of St. Louis, is attending the International Humanist and Ethical Youth Organization General Assembly in Oslo, Norway. She will help us officially begin the IHEYO American Working Group. Learn more about IHEYO and its work at iheyo.org/iheyo.



Notes from Your AEU Board

Karen Elliott, AEU Board Member

The American Ethical Union Board met on Saturday September 19, 2015, at Pendle Hill for the Board's annual retreat. The Board and some AEU staff brainstormed about what the AEU could do to serve member Societies and what we could do to promote service among member Societies. The results of the brainstorming were grouped and categorized during the retreat and will be the seeds for further discussion, prioritization, and planning. Input from member Societies is always welcome; Society Presidents should contact their Board liaison:

Jan Broughton: Ethical Society of Essex County, Ethical Humanist Society of Asheville, and Ethical Humanist Society of the Triangle

Ken Novak: Ethical Society of Austin and Ethical Humanist Society of Chicago; also acting as the Board liaison to the Presidents Council

Tom Weishaar: New York Society for Ethical Culture and Riverdale-Yonkers Society for Ethical Culture

Karen Elliott: Baltimore Ethical Society, Brooklyn Society for Ethical Culture, and Ethical Culture Society of Silicon Valley

Carol Bartell: Ethical Society of St Louis and Ethical Society Mid Rivers

Hank Gassner: Ethical Culture Society of Rockland County, Northern Virginia Ethical Society, and Washington Ethical Society

Bob Gordon: Ethical Culture Society of Bergen County, Ethical Culture Society of Suffolk, and Ethical Humanist Society of Queens

John McCormick: Ethical Culture Society of Westchester and Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia

Linda Napoli: Ethical Society of Boston, Ethical Humanist Society of Long Island, and Ethical Society of Northern Westchester

AEU Director of Administration Law'nence Miller reported on the continuing effort to re-publish more Ethical Culture books, including possibly making an audio-book of

Edward L. Ericson's *The Humanist Way*. Electronic versions of many books are now available and many books may now be purchased from the AEU's website. Copies of the AEU songbook are still available for purchase by member Societies.

Emily Newman, Communications Coordinator for the AEU, reported on updates to the AEU's website as well as her continuing work to bring the various e-mail lists up to date and keep them that way. Did you know that the American Ethical Union has our own YouTube channel? Emily gave the Board an abridged version of a workshop on social media that she and Terri Karp will be presenting at the upcoming Membership Growth Conference. She is also working on ways to help member Societies better communicate with each other.

We have an AEU Outreach Task Force to work with those who are interested in forming new Societies or would like to affiliate with the AEU. Members include Bart Worden (AEU Executive Director), Richard Koral (past President of the AEU Board and current Leader-in-Training), Sandi Sacks (current Mossler fellow), Laura Steele (chair of the AEU Membership Committee), and Emily Newman (AEU Communications Coordinator). They have developed a preliminary process and will modify it based on experience. They are also collecting materials used by member Societies that will be helpful for new groups. Packets about how to setup and run Community Circles and Colloquies are now available. These are also available to member Societies—contact the AEU Office if your Society is interested in them.

The Board is continuing its work on not only ensuring that the AEU maintains a sound fiscal position but also ways to enhance fundraising so that we can offer more support to our Ethical Movement and to those who want to join it along with playing a more visible and active role in effecting social change, as we have historically done. The 100x100 campaign (100 donors agreeing to contribute \$100 per month

for three years) is still in progress and other initiatives will be done in the future.

AEU income for the fiscal year ending 9/30/15 is happily greater than expected, in part due to some bequests as well as to some fundraising monies being paid early. We are also mostly on target with expenses, according to Treasurer Tom Weishaar. Costs for the 2015 Assembly and YES were higher than anticipated, but we are still firmly in the black for the fiscal year.

There are quite a few changes going on in AEU Committees. Hugh Taft-Morales is now the Leader assigned to Ethical Action, which is chaired by Kate LaClair of the Baltimore Ethical Society. Laura Steele (Washington Ethical Society) is stepping down as co-chair of the Membership Committee, which is looking into how best to handle its very broad responsibilities. Ethical Education is planning to cover education through the teen years as well as the younger ages.

The AEU Leadership Committee, chaired by Carol Bartell, has decided to hold regular officiant training sessions so that those who have been designated as trainees by their local Society but where no local Leader is available to do the training can be trained in groups, most likely via teleconference, for greater efficiency. Welcome to new Leadership Committee members Liz Collier (Bergen) and Mel Haber (Long Island).

The Ethical Education Committee is busy planning its annual Ethical Education Weekend, being held November 6-8 in Stony Point, NY. The weekend includes activities for children as well as parents, teachers, and anyone else interested in sharing ideas and learning techniques for creating a great Ethical Education program at your Society. The theme this year is "Barn-Raising Our Movement: How We Can Help Each Other." The YES (Youth of Ethical Societies) Conference is also being held in November (13-15)

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in St. Louis with the theme of “Race in Modern America.” October 23-24 is the Membership Growth Conference “Opening Doors & Hearts: The Art of the Welcome.” A task force of the Membership Committee has used input from around the Movement, including attendees at the AEU Assembly in June, to design a conference that will provide information in the areas people said would help them the most.

Participating in our Movement on the national level is both interesting and rewarding and the AEU Board, Committee Chairs, and staff are working together on bringing more

transparency by developing a more well-defined infrastructure, including better defined committee and committee member responsibilities. There are openings on many AEU Committees and if you don’t want to commit to joining a committee, some may have work that can be done on an ad hoc basis. Contact a Committee Chair via the AEU Office if you’d like more information.

Xavier Mack reported that the Future of Ethical Societies (FES) is applying to join the International Humanist Ethical Youth Organization (IHEYO), part of the International Humanist and Ethical Union (IHEU) of which the

AEU is a member organization. FES is planning to send a representative to the IHEYO’s next General Assembly in Oslo, Norway. FES is also planning its next service trip with emphasis on community building and has resurrected its Facebook page. FES members are working on outreach to campuses and student groups such as the Secular Student Alliance.

The next AEU Board meeting will be held on Saturday, November 21, 2015 starting at 9 am at the New York Society for Ethical Culture. Members of member Societies are always welcome to attend.

Wall of Remembrance

Compiled from Societies’ newsletters and websites, and newspaper obituaries

Marlane Bernstein (*Bergen*) – Long-time member Marlane Bernstein passed away on September 5 from pancreatic cancer. During the period of her illness she finished more than 400 books. Marlane studied Home Economics at Cornell University and took many language and art classes. Marlane was an activist and her work with the homeless earned her the first Ethics in Action award given by the Westchester Ethical Society.

Bud Blake (*St. Louis*) – Long time member Bud Blake died in July. Condolences to Ginger Harris and the Blake family.

Linda Gerstmann-Chuman (*Bergen*) – Linda Gerstmann-Chuman, wife of Leader Dr. Joe Chuman, died at the age of 74 of pancreatic cancer. Linda received her BA from Kean College and her MSW from Rutgers University. She was certified as a family therapist by the Ackerman Institute. Linda was an activist who helped form a Union County Chapter of the ACLU. She was a draft counselor during the Vietnam War and was a participant in the 1995 Women’s Conference in Beijing. Linda was an active member of the Ethical Society of Essex County in the early 1970s and then the Ethical Culture Society of Bergen County. At Bergen, she served for years as a founding volunteer in B-RAY, a weekly program that provided a safe-space in support of LGBT teenagers, and many other activities in the communal life of the Ethical Society.

Barbara Henley (*St. Louis*) – Forty-year member Barbara Henley died in August following a long illness. Condolences to Dan Henley and family.

Elsa Javkin (*Long Island*) – Longtime member Elsa Javkin died suddenly August 20. Elsa loved to act and sing, appearing in many plays that the society produced and singing in our chorus. It was always memorable when she read our Sunday morning poem. She was a valuable member of our Amnesty International group and helped secure the release of many Prisoners of Conscience.

Anja Moen (*Essex*) – Anja Moen passed away on September 3 of cancer, after being ill for a few months. It’s a great loss to the community and the Ethical Culture Society of Essex County, of which she was a long standing member and a past President.

Ethical Action Feature: Racial Justice Work in Our Ethical Societies

Kate LaClair, Baltimore Ethical Society member and Chair of AEU Ethical Action Committee

Striving for racial justice has come into more urgent public focus in the last several years, as the routine killings of unarmed Black Americans by law enforcement are receiving unprecedented attention from news media. Now that national momentum is finally on the side of this critical and long-overlooked justice issue, Ethical Culturists have an opportunity to be more effective in promoting equality, justice, and a more humane society.

Opal Tometi, Patrisse Cullors, and Alicia Garza created the Black Lives Matter movement in 2013. It has galvanized mainstream understanding that, regardless of intention, American policy and societal norms often treat Black Americans as though they are worth less than others. In response, most Ethical Societies have held at least one platform exploring issues of racism during the last year. But it's a greater challenge to find ways to move beyond words toward effective and meaningful deeds. This article highlights some of the ways Ethical Societies are learning from activists of color, and contributing to dismantling systemic racism and its expressions in daily life.

The [Ethical Society of St. Louis](#) (ESSL) began Black Lives Matter work in their area after unarmed Black teenager Michael Brown was killed by a local police officer. ESSL participated in protests and vigils in Ferguson in the weeks following Brown's death and has continued to hold numerous events, including participating in interfaith demonstrations with Leader Kate Lovelady and Leader-in-Training James Croft. Members also volunteered

for jail support as countless peaceful protestors were arrested, often with excessive force from police.

James Croft, in a post from his blog at [Patheos.com](#) last year, wrote, "Last Thursday my friends were gassed by their own government, trapped in a designated sanctuary space while police filled it with tear gas and effectively prevented people from leaving... My faith in the human capacity to face down oppression—our ability to improve our situation—has been battered by what I have seen and heard in St. Louis."



James Croft with clergy in Ferguson

But among the painful experiences he also describes numerous positive ones, particularly in the relationships forged between people who may otherwise never have met each other. Speaking of working with other clergy in support of protesters, Croft wrote, "I have sat for hours with clergy as we planned to engage in civil disobedience. I have marched with them, in Ferguson, in Clayton, and in Downtown St. Louis. I have seen them risk arrest—even provoke their own arrest—multiple times. I have attended press conferences with them, written talking points with them, staffed jail support with them, spoken out with them, stopped traffic with them, sung freedom songs with them. I've been encouraged by them, inspired to live out my own values more fully."

ESSL members continue this work through their End Racism group that is forming connections with other

interfaith groups and reaching out to the local Chief of Police to build a productive relationship that supports justice. They are also organizing monthly Black Lives Matter vigils "to demonstrate that everyone is equal in worth and dignity and that each of us has a responsibility to work for positive change."

Last fall, the [Washington Ethical Society](#) (WES) began regular "Sidewalk Solidarity" actions on the busy road outside their Society during evening rush hour. They held signs expressing solidarity with Ferguson and with every community affected by systemic racist injustice as an affirmation "that this problem is larger than Ferguson, that #BlackLivesMatter and that justice is for all." WES also held a panel discussion on safe communities with groups like the ACLU, United Black Front, Metropolitan Police Dept. and Family and Friends of Incarcerated People, and involved their youth in a developmentally appropriate teach-in on racism.

WES has been offering anti-racism training for several years in partnership with All Souls Church, Unitarian, and this October a dozen members will engage in a month-long online course about race with in-person conversation at WES. Senior Leader Amanda Poppei, along with lay leaders, has attended conversations about police tactics in DC over the last year, including meeting with police Commanders in a group and one-on-one. This reflects WES's commitment to build relationships so that members can learn more and take action.

This year, WES continued their work with weekly Roadside Remembrances throughout September led by member Danna Pope. Participants again met outside WES during the evening commute holding signs with the names of someone killed by police, and shared with each other what they

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learned about the person they chose. WES is also preparing a ceremony on “What ‘Black Lives Matter’ Means to Me: An Evolving Conversation,” that will culminate in hanging a Black Lives Matter banner on the WES building.

The [Baltimore Ethical Society](#) (BES) has also deepened their long-standing commitment to racial justice. Many of the founders of BES were parents, and one of the key things that brought them together in 1951 was the desire to establish the first racially integrated Sunday School in Baltimore. One of the most conspicuous manifestations of systemic racism is in the criminal justice system. The BES Ethical Action Committee has been working actively in Criminal Justice reform for several years, led by Kate LaClair. With the guidance of local groups including the Campaign for the Fair Sentencing of Youth, BES testified before state and local officials asking for an end to racially biased incarceration and sentencing.



BES community conversation group

Through this work, BES also created the Resolution on Criminal Justice Reform adopted by the American Ethical Union (AEU) at the 2015 Assembly. Other BES members are also contributing their unique skills to the cause. Lane Berk is running a monthly discussion group exploring how we treat those we define as “other,” and reached out to include a film screening by a local artist and dialogues with local law enforcement. Charlie Shafer collaborated with local groups to

involve BES members in assisting people who have been arrested—but were later not charged or not convicted—in expunging their records.

Under the new Ethical Action leadership of Thomas Higdon, BES has also formed a partnership with Out For Justice, an ex-offender-led organization that affirms the worth and dignity of ex-offenders and advocates for policy changes that promote their successful re-entry into society. Together, BES and OFJ hosted two community conversations on ending systemic racism in criminal justice and policing. In September, BES Leader Hugh Taft-Morales organized a workshop led by local group Circle of Voices “exploring the concept of race and other differences that divide”, and how we can work towards a more equitable and just society.

Two Societies in the New York City area also held events in September that engaged their members in understanding racial injustice to cultivate future action among members. The [Brooklyn Society for Ethical Culture](#) (BSEC) hosted “BlackLivesMatter: Changing the (In) Justice System” as their annual Charley Horwitz Memorial Platform to honor work in peace and justice.

BSEC hosted two speakers for this event, selected for “their intellectual and artistic skills in empowering community action and participation.” The first, Kyung-Ji Rhee, is Deputy Director at the Center for NuLeadership, which works to reform socio-economic, criminal and youth-justice policy by providing research, advocacy and leadership training to formerly and currently incarcerated people, their families, allies, and criminal justice professionals. The second, Elsa Waithe, is an activist and comedian who was assaulted this year by a NYPD officer while peacefully demonstrating and filming police

activity as part of an “Anti-Police Brutality patrol unit.” The [New York Society for Ethical Culture](#) (NYSEC) also hosted an event called “The Blind Spot” developed by Russell G. Jones to foster personal growth in both intellectual and emotional understanding of racial inequities in America, and to make dialogue on these issues more commonplace. NYSEC hosted this event as a first step in their desire to become a more multi-racial community.

These examples from Ethical Societies around the country remind us that there are many ways to work for justice, and to support the development of a more humane society that recognizes the inherent worth of all people. We hope this will inspire further work throughout the American Ethical Union, and that Ethical Societies will continue to act for justice and dignity for all people.

As always, we want to hear about what YOU are doing to create a more humane society! Write to the Ethical Action Report Editor, Hugh Taft-Morales at hughtm@gmail.com or Ethical Action Committee Chair, Kate LaClair at katherine.laclair@gmail.com. And check out Ethical Action around the Movement at our website acu.org/what-we-do/ethical-action.



Leader Hugh Taft-Morales at rally

Are You a Racist?

Emily Newman, AEU Communications

Coordinator

In August 2015, Randy Best, Leader of the Ethical Humanist Society of the Triangle in North Carolina, wrote a post on the Society's site titled "[I am a Racist](#)." It listed statements that began as simple:

"I am a Racist. I am a person whom society labels as white. I am a person who thinks of myself as white. Society considers Black and Latino people to be 'not white.'"

It then continued into statements that tell a story about his background and experiences:

"As a person seen by society as white, I am free to see myself without limits while ignoring the underlying privileged position that I inhabit. I am free to be a passive beneficiary of a system that is stacked in my favor. I am free to be ignorant of my complicity in a racist system."

At times encouraged the reader to question a racist system:

"Are we approaching a paradigm shift—a point where a move toward greater equality and justice is possible?"

And concluded with reflection on the individual's responsibilities to cause change:

"I wish that I knew how to simply make racism go away. I believe that by working together we can shift our racist society toward greater justice for all. Yours in Ethical Struggle, Randy Best."

Understandably, the post incited a lot of ideas and discussion in the comments section and one member, James Coley, was moved to write a post titled "[Taking on the Sins of the Fathers](#)." In it he expresses frustration with how Randy's "claim of guilt is the obvious non sequitur from White privilege to racism." James argues that:

"All of us are responsible and culpable for any racist things we might say or do. But Randy did not create slavery, racism or Jim Crow in America. He did not turn the fire hose on the demonstrators in Birmingham. The slave trade started long before he was even born. He is not culpable for these things because he did not do them... this backward notion that the 'sins

of the fathers' project moral responsibility on subsequent generations is exactly what underlies the White Guilt discourse. This shame-based thinking is a shallow, irrational and self-indulgent approach to the moral evil of racism."

James' post also provoked a lot of opinions in the comments section and encouraged Randy Best to write a follow-up post titled "[Taking Responsibility for Racism](#)." Similar to the original post, Randy forms his ideas into a list of statements, this time beginning with

"I am not guilty of causing racism... I recognize that I am an inheritor of racism. With it, I have inherited a moral debt and, for me, this creates a moral obligation."

Before again signing off (this time "Yours in Continuing Ethical Struggle") he explains that

"In claiming responsibility for my part in perpetuating racism, I recognize the necessity for change—change in me and change in our society."

As expected, Randy's post too gained many comments from even more contributors. Randy succeeded in opening up dialog on race and privilege, raising people's awareness and concern. Which is exactly what we encourage you to do with this article. Take this piece and the original posts back to your Societies, groups, and friends to discuss. Here are some questions to ponder:

- Are you a racist?
- Are you privileged (by race, ability, gender, finances, etc.)?
- Do you feel an obligation to act due to your privilege (or lack thereof)?
- Can our racist system change? How? When?
- Will race always be a difficult issue to discuss?

You can visit the Ethical Humanist Society of the Triangle website (ncethicalsociety.org) for all the original posts and comments on their Ethical Blog.

Get Ready for Lay Leadership Summer School

It's time to begin thinking about Lay Leadership Summer School 2016. For the staff it means working on the programs and workshops we will be bringing you. For the Societies we're hoping you'll put an item in your budget to support sending your lay leaders to summer school. Over the years it has been shown that LLSS participants contribute a great deal to Society life and you will find any investment made will return to you many times over. When asked what summer school has meant to them we often hear "it's been a life altering experience." We invite you to join us in 2016.

-- Your Summer School Staff

Make your 2016 Summer Plans Now!!!

Ethical Culture Lay Leadership Summer School
sponsored by the American Ethical Union!



Saturday, August 13 - Saturday, August 20, 2016
Beautiful Highlands, North Carolina

By the end of your journey, you will:

- be able to create more meaningful and ethical patterns of living
- have a firm understanding of the history, ideas and development of Ethical Culture, and be able to express them clearly to others
- be able to build Ethical Societies faithful to our tradition yet flexible enough to meet the challenges of the present and future
- understand organizational dynamics and the stages of community development
- become more creative and effective agents for positive change
- demonstrate leadership skills in small-group settings
- experiment with creating authentic and inspiring ceremonies
- hone skills in decision-making, group facilitation, and discernment
- reflect on your ethical journey and nurture personal growth within Ethical Culture



Staff members Jan Broughton, Mary Herman, Diane Kirschner, Paulo Ribeiro, and Hugh Taft-Morales look forward to working with you to bring out our best.

From the United Nations: Dangers to Liberty of Expression

**Dr. Sylvain Ehrenfeld, the 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>.*

Most people, learning the news from public media, do not realize that freelancers are increasingly doing the news reporting. As a result of shrinking news budgets and changing technologies many of those covering conflicts—and often in danger—are freelancers without the supporting resources available to staff correspondents.

A notorious case is the beheading in 2014 in Syria of US freelancers James Foley and Steven Sotloff by militants of ISIS. There are countless other journalists that have been attacked, harassed, and kidnapped, imprisoned, or killed. The majority are freelancers.

It is the deadliest time ever for journalists. Local reporters especially face great danger. Very troubling is the news about Mexican reporters who report on organized crime and corrupt government officials. The justice system is incapable of prosecuting criminals and 90% of murders remain unsolved.

Ruben Espinosa, a Mexican photojournalist working in the State of Veracruz, fled to Mexico City after receiving death threats coming

most likely from local government. In July he was killed in an apartment along with four other people. Since 2000 dozens of journalists have been killed in Mexico and about 20 have disappeared. A great number of these crimes have never even been prosecuted.

The Committee to Protect Journalists (www.cpj.org) monitors the condition of journalists worldwide and helps those in trouble. Their yearly report for 2014 and their description of the situation for 2015 are devastating. The number of journalists in prison rose sharply.

Egypt has the highest number of journalists behind bars since CPJ began keeping records. The charge, as in many other countries, is anti-government activity. In one case six were sentenced to life in prison in a mass trial of 51 defendants. China is also a major jailer of journalists. Most were held on anti state charges. Turkey's very broad anti-terrorism laws have created a difficult environment for the media. Vague charges like religious defamation or insults to the Turkish people can be used to harass reporters.

In many countries journalists and bloggers face censorship in the name of religion. Countries most serious about blasphemy include Saudi Arabia and Iran. As an example Raif Badawi in Saudi Arabia who founded a website was sentenced to ten years in jail, 1000 lashes over time and a fine of 230,000 euros. In Iran, political criticism of the country's leaders and the Supreme Leader is considered sacrilege and can lead to very serious consequences.

According to Freedom House, in its 2015 report, global press freedom declined in 2014 to its lowest point in more than 10 years. Only one in seven of the world's inhabitants live in a country with a free press. The US was criticized for the police's detentions, harassment, and rough treatment of journalists during protests in Ferguson, Missouri.

Every year the UN commemorates World Press Freedom Day. Press freedom is enshrined in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It states that "everyone has the right of freedom of opinion and expression and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers".

Some governments have challenged the universality of press freedom maintaining that this right should be curtailed to accommodate culture, heritage and threats to national security. This point of has been much debated but has often been used by authoritarian regimes to bolster their power.

Free speech is an important right. We need it to make decisions and to monitor what is going on. What we don't know CAN hurt us. For more information and to help, see Committee to Protect Journalists (www.cpj.org) and Reporters Without Borders (www.rsf.org).

National Ethical Service (NES) Announcements

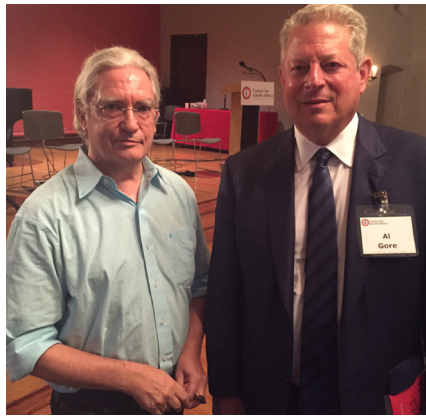
Planned 4th High Level Forum on Culture of Peace at UN

On September 9, twenty-eight countries stepped up to share how they have adopted strategies to promote the Culture of Peace on their national levels during the 4th Annual High Level Political Forum. The proceedings convened by the outgoing President of the General Assembly Sam Kutesa were held in the Trusteeship Council and were televised worldwide on live webcasts.

NES met with the Office of the President of the General Assembly and with Non-Governmental Liaison Service in the planning for this event. Last December, the annual Culture of Peace Resolution passed unanimously with nearly 100 countries co-sponsoring. The purpose of this initiative is to intensify governmental accountability for promoting cultures of peace, to interlink peace with all other priorities of the UN system especially this year with the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, and to create another opportunity for NGOs to collaborate directly with the Office of the President of the General Assembly.

Kurt Johnson Talks with Al Gore

On September 16, NES Vice President Dr. Kurt Johnson (co-author of *The Coming Interspiritual Age* with David Robert Ord) met with Al Gore, Nobel Peace Prize recipient regarding Climate Change at the Center for Earth Ethics conference at Union Theological Seminary in New York City.



Kurt Johnson with Al Gore

In the photo, former Vice President Gore's left hand holds a copy of Dr. David Sloan Wilson's book *Does Altruism Exist? Culture, Genes and the Welfare of Others*. It is a new book from Yale University Press's "Foundational Questions in Science" Series. Gore's daughter Karenna founded the Center for Earth Ethics. Among its principal collaborators are Kurt and Dr. Rick Clugston (an author of the Earth Charter), both active in the Interspiritual Network (www.interspirituality.com).

NES Demonstrates How Interspirituality Promotes the Culture of Peace

On September 19, an inspiring art/science/spiritual/presentation was held to commemorate International Day of Peace. Kurt Johnson, Vice President of NES, and Kay Dundorf, President, successfully incorporated a humanist spirituality mindset with inter-cooperating traditional and modern spiritual practices. The event, titled *Peace: The Overview Effect*, portrayed in ceremonial ways the fact that humanity has now moved past the 20th century "We the People" collective into an inter-planetary level of consciousness that began when Edgar Mitchell sent back the first pictures of earth from

outer space in 1968. The event was sponsored by FIONS in conjunction with Vistar Foundation, We the World, One Spirit Learning Alliance, ISKCON, New Realities TV, A Better World, Interspiritual Network, Academy of Future Science, Energy Matters, New Equations, Garden of Light, and Sri Ramanuja Mission.

Call for Climate Justice Now at the 2015 Parliament of the World's Religions and the Paris Climate Summit

Members of the Ethical Culture Movement participated in the Parliament held in Salt Lake City, Utah. We also prepared a display (photo below) where people could share materials and write on ribbons what they will miss if we don't act on climate change. This will be presented at Paris Climate Summit.

Did you know Ethical Culture has been represented by at least one woman in every Parliament since it began in 1893?



Upcoming UN Days promoted by the National Ethical Service

October 24 - United Nations Day

November 19 - World Philosophy Day

November 25 - International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women

December 10 - Human Rights Day

Write for the Dialogue
We are accepting submissions for Winter 2016!

Send submissions to communications@aeu.org
 by Friday, December 25, 2015.

Please include a headshot and relative images with your submission.

Northern Virginia Ethical Society is Looking to Hire a New Leader

The Northern Virginia Ethical Society, near Washington DC, is an 87 member non-theistic humanist community seeking a new Leader in a half-time position to be filled by June 2016. We have a dynamic and growing Ethical Education program with about 40 children. We are interested in a candidate who is trained in congregational leadership and is committed to the values of the Ethical Culture Movement. Duties would include Sunday morning platform talks, pastoral functions, assistance in community building and membership expansion and some adult education. Information about our organization can be found at www.noves.org. Applications will be treated with confidentiality.

For questions, full job description or to submit resume, please write to attention of: Ms. Iris Woodard, PO Box 984, Vienna, VA 22183 or via email at Leadersearch@noves.org.

Please include with your resume:

- Cover letter with a summary of your interest and competencies.
- An essay regarding your commitment to Ethical Humanism, the depth and scope of your preparation for leadership of our Society, and your vocational goals.
- A sample of your writing, platforms, or sermons. A recording of one presentation is requested if available. (Please do not provide more than 3 examples.)

References may be requested at a later date. Certification as an Ethical Leader is expected, either initially or through working with the AEU Leadership Committee.

Applications must be received by December 31, 2015.

Salary and compensation package will be negotiated in the range of USD 35,000 to 43,000 (including benefits) depending on experience and training. The Leader is an employee of the organization, reports to the Board, and collaborates with the Board, Committees, and members for program development and implementation.

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 our Dialogue Copy Editor!*

