Teen YES Conference Will Be Feb 28-March 3

Trish Cowan, YES Conference Coordinator

The next Youth of Ethical Societies (YES) Conference will be held Thursday, February 28 - Sunday, March 3, 2019, in St. Louis, Missouri. All teens in 9th-12th grades are invited; teens need not be affiliated with a brick-and-mortar Ethical Society to attend.

YES officers and reps began planning and, with input from teens around the country, have decided the theme will be Prison Reform. It will be an intense weekend with a lot of deep thinking and, we hope, inspiration on how to improve the world in which we live.

If you know a teen who might enjoy meeting up with other like-minded teens, please encourage them to pursue the YES Conference. YES has the most impact when many concerned teens come together to share ideas and experiences! Developing information will also be available on the YES conference webpage.

Although we strive to keep YES affordable, not all teens have the means to cover the costs of travel and registration. If you, your committee, or your Society would like to make a donation to help sponsor a teen, it would be gratefully accepted. Designate YES when you donate online or by check.

If you are interested in learning more about registration (available soon), sponsorship, or fundraising ideas for your youth group to attend, please contact me, Trish Cowan AEU YES Advisor, at 314-680-3348 or trishhotze@sbcglobal.net.

We encourage Societies to share this information with your teen group, in your Society’s newsletter, and on your website. Thank you for your support of our caring and passionate teens!
Letter from AEU President John McCormick

It’s easy to become discouraged in these tumultuous times so full of bad news. Let us take a moment to celebrate a victory even if it is only the first small step in what could be a long struggle leading ultimately to the Supreme Court.

As you know, the First Amendment’s Establishment Clause prohibits government from favoring any religion over others or over nonreligious belief systems. The Supreme Court has applied this principle in the legislative-prayer context to hold that government officials must not discriminate based on religion in selecting guest chaplains.

Unfortunately, such discrimination persists.

Americans United for Separation of Church and State (AU) has taken the lead in two suits filed in federal court. In Pennsylvania, the Philadelphia Ethical Society and Leader Emeritus Richard Kiniry are among the plaintiffs in a suit to uphold the right of non-theists to give an opening invocation to the PA House of Representatives. And in the US Court of Appeals for the 11th Circuit, a group of atheists and humanists are demanding equal rights to present opening invocations at meetings of the Board of County Commissioners of Brevard County, Florida. In addition, in the US Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia, AU is supporting the appeal of atheist Dan Barker seeking the right to give an opening invocation to the US House of Representatives. The American Ethical Union has signed on to the amicus brief in that case.

In late August, US Middle District of Pennsylvania Judge Christopher Conner halted the policy of the PA House. In his decision, Judge Conner stated, “In light of this nation’s vastly diverse religious tapestry, there is no justification to sanction government’s establishment of a category of favored religions—like monotheistic or theistic faiths—through legislative prayer.” He further stated that it’s “the content of the prayers, rather than their theistic or nontheistic nature, that matters.”

The fact that Judge Conner “got it right” is indeed cause for celebration. But lest we get carried away, know that the PA House has already appealed the court’s decision and has filed a motion asking the district court to stay its ruling until after the appeal is decided. The House has also made it known that the guest chaplain program is on hold and House Members will give all pre-session prayers.

So the struggle continues. Stay tuned for further developments. In the meantime, take some comfort in knowing that Ethical Humanists are not standing on the sidelines, we are in the fight!

Wishing all of our readers a joyful fall, ever hopeful for more good news to celebrate.

Job Announcement: Ethical NYC Seeks New Leader!

As the current Leader Dr. Anne Klaeysen sets her sights on retirement next fall, the New York Society for Ethical Culture is seeking a Leader to serve as a spiritual, pastoral, and educational guide and advisor to the membership, and to perform outreach to increase our visibility, acting as the voice of the Society in New York City. The Leader will also develop collaborative relationships with groups that share our concerns so as to involve Society members in action-driven events.

The Society is a welcoming home for humanists that emphasizes “deed before creed.” Founded in 1876, NYSEC has spawned Ethical Societies across the United States and has played an active role in the community and region for more than 140 years. Details about the job and our Society can be found here: http://bit.ly/NYSECLeader.
Humanitas Film Premieres February 23, 2019 at New York Society for Ethical Culture

Mossler Fellow and Leader-in-Training Jé Hooper has completed his film about the inspiring relationship between Felix Adler and W.E.B. DuBois. All are invited to the premiere at the New York Society for Ethical Culture on Saturday, February 23, 2019. Join us to see Humanitas: A Conscious Coloring of Kindness. For more information, the trailer, and ticket link, see tinyurl.com/HumanitasFilm.

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. Jan 26, 10am phone
Sat. March 23, 9am NYSEC
Sat. May 18, 9am NYSEC
June 20 at AEU Assembly in Tampa, Florida

Humanitas Film Premiere
Saturday, February 23
New York City

Youth of Ethical Societies Conference
Thu. Feb 28 - Sun. March 3
St Louis, Missouri

Future of Ethical Societies Conference
Fri. May 24 - Sun. May 27
Baltimore, Maryland

AEU 104th Assembly
Thu. June 20 - Sun. June 23
Tampa, Florida

Notable Dates
Jan 1 New Year’s Day
Jan 1 Wall of Separation Day
(Jefferson letter on the Establishment Clause)
Jan 16 Religious Freedom Day
Jan 21 Martin Luther King Jr Day
Jan 22 Anniversary of Roe v Wade
Jan 29 Holocaust Remembrance Day
Jan 29 Thomas Paine Day

Ethical Culture in the News

The American Ethical Union has been working with Momentum Communications Group, a public relations firm in New York City, to get more publicity for the Ethical Culture Movement, the AEU, and our Ethical Societies. Our members and Leaders have been quoted, profiled, and published in print, on radio, and on television. We are thrilled to share Ethical Culture with a wider audience and grow our Movement. If your Ethical Society has an event or program that you feel is newsworthy, complete this PRHotline form to let us know. See Momentum’s March through November Report here and December report here.

Starting in 2019 Dialogue will be Monthly

Tired of waiting for quarterly newsletters from AEU to know what’s happening across our Movement? Love getting our monthly emails called “Happy New Month from AEU” that show what’s currently on AEU website and what events are coming up next?

Then you’ll love getting our updated Dialogue as mid-month emails with articles and timely news, also available on our website. We believe this new schedule and format will make it easier for members and friends to keep up with all of our action projects, educational programs, media campaigns, leadership opportunities, and community news. Happy 2019!
The American Ethical Union has a number of initiatives underway that we expect will be especially helpful for our member Ethical Societies. Here’s some information about two of them:

**Leadership Training**
An especially exciting project that is already underway is a reorganization of the Leadership Training Program offered by the AEU. In the past, we have provided a professional Leader track, a Healthcare Chaplaincy track, Ethical Humanist Officiant training, Lay Leadership Summer School, and a variety of workshops at Assemblies, Skills Summits, and other events. All of these trainings have been effective and helpful for the many people who have participated. Now we want to continue offering those opportunities and further expand the program to provide a wider array of training in a more flexible manner.

Up until now the AEU Leadership Training Program has been geared primarily toward training professional Leaders and Healthcare Chaplains and providing support for Ethical Humanist Officiants. In order to qualify for the training, individuals needed to engage in a formal application process to be accepted into the program. In the case of the Professional Leader training, the program requirements have demanded significant commitments of time and energy over a prolonged period. This has worked well for some but not for all.

The revised program will ease the way for participation by opening enrollment for many of the course offerings. Participants will be able to sign up for individual courses, similar to a college, and earn credits toward Professional Certification or toward other concentrations. So, for example, someone may enroll in a group facilitation course with a plan to use the skills they will develop to organize an activity at their Ethical Society. The same person may decide to go further with training in the same area or pursue another area of training. In the event they wish to pursue Professional Leader certification they can bring forward the credits for courses they have taken.

We also plan to offer courses to address a broader array of topics than we have traditionally addressed. Many of our current offerings are aimed at preparation for congregational leadership. As we step up efforts to expand the number and kinds of groups in the Ethical Movement, training aimed at community organizing, outreach, public relations, and new models of leadership will need to be developed.

We will also be looking to offer a wider variety of formats for training in the forms of webinars, independent studies, and regional workshops. Our most popular training offering by far has been Lay Leadership Summer School (LLSS). In order to make the most helpful elements of the LLSS available to more people, more often we are condensing the face-to-face time and securing venues in readily accessible areas. Those portions of the LLSS training program that can be addressed through Internet-based classes or independent studies can be offered as pre- and post- session training modules and thereby allow the face-to-face time to be devoted to those elements that are best engaged in through group experiences.

We are hoping to have our first new training module ready by the beginning of 2019—so stay tuned!

**Public Relations**
Public relations is another area where the AEU is providing support for our member Societies and getting the Ethical Movement in the news. Getting public awareness is critically important—especially when we are looking to expand into new areas of the country. At the beginning of this year the AEU board retained Momentum Communications Group as our public relations firm. Momentum was already working with the New York Society for Ethical Culture and was familiar with some of our Societies and activities.

Momentum was key in getting press for our Assembly in Albuquerque and is prepared to provide public relations support to any Society looking to publicize newsworthy activity. NYSEC, St. Louis, Washington, Mid-Rivers,

Continued on p. 5
Philadelphia, Brooklyn, Long Island, Austin, and Susquehanna Valley have all gotten in the news with Momentum’s help.

There is a monthly meeting with Momentum to discuss what’s been happening, what’s about to happen, and avenues to pursue in the future. Societies can send information to Momentum regarding their newsworthy activities via the PR Hotline form, and breaking news can be sent in to prhotline@aeu.org for immediate attention.

In the time that we have been working with Momentum, we have greatly expanded the number and range of mentions of Ethical Culture in public media and I’m happy to report that the AEU Board has agreed to continue our relationship with Momentum through the next year. We expect they will be especially helpful in generating interest in a group we are starting in the Tampa Bay area of Florida (where the 2019 Assembly will be held) as well as in Los Angeles, Atlanta, Albuquerque and (hopefully) many more new locations for Ethical Societies!

A Saturday Full of Ideas, Lessons, and Friendship at AEU Skills Summit

Thank you to the Washington Ethical Society for hosting the second AEU Skills Summit and thank you to all who attended. We were so happy to be able to eat outside on such a beautiful day in between workshop sessions on social media, programming, live-streaming, public relations, and anti-racism. It’s always wonderful to get a chance to meet Ethical Humanists from across the country and share stories of how to best support each other.

Although we haven’t scheduled the next Skills Summit, we hope you consider meeting us at Assembly in June 2019.

Ethical Humanists at 2018 Parliament of the World’s Religions

Ethical Culture has been represented at Parliament of the World’s Religions since the conference was founded in 1893. In 2018, we went to Toronto to learn and teach on the theme of “The Promise of Inclusion, the Power of Love.” storæe michele screened her film (The Listening Heart), Emily Newman and Anne Klaeysen presented workshops, and several members attended programs. We look forward to the next Parliament.
Notes from Your AEU Board

Jill Aul, Board Secretary

The Board of Directors for the American Ethical Union held its annual retreat in the middle of September. Thanks to the generous hospitality of our Vice President Tom Castelnuovo and his wife, Carolyn, the meeting took place at their summer home in Long Island. Our agenda for the long weekend, in addition to a full-day Board meeting, included some team building activities, goal setting, and talking about best practices in a number of areas. These areas include leadership training (for both lay leaders and professional clergy Leaders), how we structure and run our national committees, fundraising, the annual Assembly, and appropriate interventions for Societies who need AEU assistance.

Further discussion focused on the success of the public relations efforts that the Board has put forth, as the result of employing the Momentum Communications Group last spring, and how to continue to fund this effort going forward.

The Board devoted time talking about the best ways to communicate what happens in and around the American Ethical Union, with its various Societies and members, including how best to share information and resources all across the Movement.

Bill Aul, chair of the New Society Development Team, visited virtually to share all of the exciting news that is happening in various areas of the country where new Ethical Societies are in formation. These include Albuquerque, Atlanta, Los Angeles, and Tampa!

Between meetings, all of your representatives continue working with committees, on conference calls, via e-mail, etc. to make our Union the best that it can be.

Next summer, there will be several openings on the Board. I hope that YOU will consider representing your Ethical Society on the national AEU Board. It is a very rewarding experience!

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.

Hope you all had lovely Stone Soup / Stone Salad & Winter Festivals

Thank you to Riverdale-Yonkers Society for Ethical Culture for these photos. We love seeing photos of all the wonderful events our Ethical Societies run and sharing them with our online followers. Please keep them coming.
Zeb Green Headed to the Border for Immigration Justice

Here is an excerpt from the announcement Zeb Green, Washington Ethical Society’s Clergy Intern, sent to WES members.

Like many of you, I have been following the stories of asylum seekers coming to the US southern border. It is heartbreaking to see stories and struggles that these folk have gone through just to get here. It is infuriating to see the level of vitriol that they are being met with and is being perpetuated by many national leaders. I will spend at least the month of December to volunteer along the border, seeking to aid refugees and asylum seekers, and helping coordinate rallies and protests to hopefully change the narrative to how many Americans are seeking to welcome the stranger.

Two weeks ago I had the opportunity to attend a public Let Our Families Go: Pilgrimage, Protest, and Witness along the Mexico/Texas border. It was organized primarily by a coalition of rabbis. It was an inspiring but eye-opening experience. The lived reality of seeing hundreds of displaced people trying to find shelter and seeing how dehumanizing the administration is has been difficult to hold. One of the key parts of the public witness was holding a vigil outside of the children’s detention camp in Tornillo. I never thought that I’d see my country running a tent city for over 1300 kids; even now, they are expanding the operation to be able to house more people.

The communities on the ground in El Paso see extended families that have members in both the US and Mexico who now fear to visit one another, in case they won’t be let back across. Even the US citizens have concerns that they will be held simply because of their ethnic background. The border had been there before the administration that creates the crisis. When a call comes from shelters for volunteers or supplies, the local communities on the border respond with love and dedication. One message that I’ve been asked to bring back from the border is that there is no border crisis, as in there is nothing inherent about a border that provokes a crisis. The crisis that we are seeing is all due to decisions by the government, it is a humanitarian crisis. Prior to the last few administrations, the border communities felt love and connections to both countries. It is the current policies and harsh enforcement that are creating the crisis, not the border. We were told that the border is holy ground if we let it be.

While I was there, it was emphasized over and over that there is a desperate need for people to be involved. I’ve been connected to organizers and groups that need volunteers. I feel that I am in a place in my life where I can respond and having been asked I would always regret it if I said no. I’m currently in discernment about whether or not my calling is to full time parish/congregational ministry or if it is to devote my efforts to full time activism and community organizing. Having the chance to respond to this call will help me see what living and working in an entrenched struggle actually entails. Above all, I just continue to be haunted by seeing folks displaced and seeing the children’s detention camp. I can’t shake those memories or forget those people. I’ve been invited to act now and help build the response while the media is watching and people are energized to act. So many people that I’ve spoken to that want to be on the front lines can’t be there because of family or financial concerns; I’m in a stage in my life where those aren’t pressing concerns. I feel that I have both the passion and the ability to say yes to the invitation to do justice work on the border. We won’t end anything over December; we hope to build strength and energy for immigration justice efforts to keep going even after the press leaves.
Reflections on Change
Hugh Taft-Morales, NLC President

As my 2-year term as president of the National Leaders Council comes to an end, I would like to look to the future and offer some philosophical reflections on change. The future is unpredictable, that much we know. Regarding our planet, our nation, Ethical Culture, and the National Leaders Council, who knows what tomorrow will bring. What we do know is that change is going to come.

Change is inevitable. Living entities and organizations have to change or they rot. Leader Jone Johnson Lewis shared with me a metaphor that illustrates this: if you don’t believe that change is inevitable, put a banana in your purse for a week and see what happens. The question is, will we manage the change, or let it occur without intentionality, leaving us with a pretty messy purse?

Change is inevitable. Felix Adler knew that well. In creating Ethical Culture he urged us to adapt to the needs of the evolving world. In every season we must sort through what serves us and what is no longer useful. While he believed that some ideals—like respect for the unique worth of all, respect for ethical relationships, and respect for justice—were durable, he knew some expressions of this respect are provisional and circumstantial.

After all, Adler was reared in Reform Judaism that sought ways to make a faith tradition more relevant. Felix’s father Rabbi Samuel Adler tossed out antiquated kosher laws, the separation of the genders during service, and more, in an effort to focus on the ancient commitment to heal a broken world.

Change is inevitable. In every age and every harvest ethically minded people must separate the wheat from the chaff. In the United States of 1876, Adler saw less need for superstitious ritual, and more need for rational approaches to public policy. He saw less need for self-centered deferral to the impulses of individualism, and more need for compassionate cooperation. He saw less need for exclusionary tribal aspects of faith, and more need to address yearnings for universal connection.

I believe that we still need more rational approaches to public policy, more compassionate cooperation, and more ways to experience universal connection. I believe that the values behind a commitment to head, heart, and relationship will shine on brightly into the future.

But I also know that the light of the future comes not from me, but from new generations of leaders seeking new answers to changing problems. Appreciating this, I still often struggle to know how best to hand the torch to those that will continue our work in new and creative ways.

It may seem trite to say that Ethical Culture is at a crucial moment in history—we seem to say that so often. But today our political and social world is rife with hostility, injustice, racism, patriarchy, and greed. Today Ethical Culture continues to search for ways to bolster our congregations and grow the Movement. The words of Adler seem true today: “We have already transgressed the limit of safety, and the present disorders of our time are but precursors of other and imminent dangers. The rudder of our ship has ceased to move obedient to the helm.”

Change is inevitable, to our nation, and to our movement. Recently the AEU has sought new ways to teach our tradition and values. We’ve put Lay Leadership Summer School on hold, and created more regional “skill summits” to educate ourselves. We’ve become more intentional in our outreach by hiring a public relations firm and focused on creation of new Ethical Societies. We’ve sought to bring more voices to the table, and to make inclusivity more of a deep practice and not just a marketing strategy.

There is reason for hope. Some Ethical Societies are growing. New groups...
Ethical Action Feature:

Are You A Secular Values Voter?

Sarah Levin, Secular Coalition for America

Secular Values Voter is a campaign by the Secular Coalition for America to educate political candidates about the significant and rapidly growing secular constituency, the issues they care about, and the values they stand for. The nonreligious are the largest and fastest growing religious demographic in the country, comprising one-in-four of all Americans. Despite this, the nonreligious have yet to achieve a political influence on par with the size of our constituency. The goal of Secular Values Voter is to coalesce nonreligious voters around their shared secular values and mobilize them into an organized, recognized, and dependable voting bloc to achieve lasting political change.

Secular Values Voter is a multi-pronged campaign that works to affect change at every level of the political system. We’re helping grassroots secular activists get candidates on the record, organize secular caucuses within their political parties, register to vote, spread the word about their secular values, and so much more. Our goal is to empower secular activists in every state and in every political party with the resources they need to make an impact. Here are three ways you can get involved now:

- **Secular America Votes:** Sign up to register voters and get out the vote here.
- **Rapid Response Network:** Join your District Team and make your voice heard in your Congressional District! Rapid Responders build personal relationships with their lawmakers through direct actions like town halls, phone calls, letters to the editor, in-person district meetings, and more. Sign up here.
- **Party Crashers:** Already involved in a political party? Advocate for secular values within the party by starting a Secular Caucus, submitting proposals for the party platform, educating party members about secular voters, and more! Contact Sarah Frey to learn more (sfrey@secular.org).

“Nonreligious Americans are not just casting votes, they are running for office and they are winning in historic numbers. A preliminary analysis of candidates endorsed by the Freethought Equality Fund suggests that at least 36 openly nonreligious candidates, including atheists and agnostics, won their elections (and re-elections) for state and federal offices. Their victories point to a positive trend that, increasingly, voters no longer consider religion a prerequisite for public office.”

-- Larry Decker, Executive Director of SCA

American Ethical Union is one of three religious humanist groups who are members of Secular Coalition for America. Some AEU members identify as nonreligious.
Getting ready for Tampa and the 104th AEU Assembly
Carolyn A. Parker, PhD

Even as we work to apply the lessons learned at the 103rd AEU Assembly in Albuquerque this past June, your Assembly Planning Committee is already several months into planning the **104th Assembly** to be held in Tampa, FL. (Mark your calendars now for June 20-23, 2019, and save those dates.) Law'nence Miller and I have the honor of again co-chairing the Planning Committee, working with AEU staff and volunteers to bring you an Assembly with meaningful experiences and useful information.

After consulting with your AEU National Leaders Council and the Presidents Council, the Assembly Committee has selected the theme “Reclaiming Democracy for All.” The theme responds to the interests and concerns of Ethical Humanists on several levels. Our commitment to Ethical Humanism includes the statement that “Democratic process is central to our task.” Not only does this commitment tie us to working together democratically, it also inspires us to promote democracy at all levels of our community, whether local, national, or global. Now is certainly the time to lift our collective voice in support of democracy. As you are inspired by this theme, you are invited to submit proposals for workshops.

Behind the scenes, so to speak, the Assembly Committee is also looking at how we manage our expenses. The cost of the 2018 Assembly exceeded the amount budgeted for it. On the positive side, we can all agree that any expenditure that helps expand the Union with a new Ethical Culture Circle is desirable. We did just that by holding the Assembly in Albuquerque and helping to form a new Circle of Ethical Humanists there. (Welcome, ABQ folks!) With the help of the new Society Development Team we will be doing the same thing in Tampa.

As desirable as expansion is (and it is), we also want to find ways to reduce our costs. We’re going to try at least two changes to control expenses for 2019. These include tighter controls over meal service and clear deadlines for booking plane travel. Regarding meal service, we contract with our hotel for catering. We must guarantee a specific number of diners and pay for that number of meals. The hotel will prepare a small percentage of meals over that agreed amount, but the AEU must pay for the meals served. We’re hoping to reduce the cost of catering with a clearer system of tracking those who have signed up for meals. This may include actual tickets or name badge stickers or just more volunteers with clipboards, but this will save us quite a bit of money. Of course, attendees can purchase all meals as part of the registration package and save some money themselves.

To save money on air travel, we will require those whose travel is subsidized by AEU to make their travel plans early so that they can take advantage of the regular discounts offered by airlines for early booking. Flights booked later in the travel cycle will often be substantially more expensive, and the AEU is unable to pay for that expense. Indeed, all attendees can book their own travel early and more cheaply by taking advantage of the AEU’s arrangements with Bobette Spence (contact info on Assembly page).

One last change (at this point) has to do with reducing the amount of physical resources that we use for our meeting. We will, of course, work with the hotel to find as many ways as possible to reduce our carbon footprint, but one area in which we ourselves can reduce some waste is to eliminate unnecessary printouts. We have tried to eliminate printed programs and such in the past, but we also know that not everyone has electronic devices to keep up with the schedule. At the Tampa Assembly, we will print out a few programs for those who need them, but we will also assess a small carbon offset fee. The fees will be donated to an organization whose work will offset this use of resources.

The Committee welcomes your help in finding more ways to reduce costs as well as to make our carbon footprint smaller. Send your suggestions to me at cparker@aeu.org. We will consider every suggestion (even if I don’t respond right away).
An old acquaintance and I crossed paths today, and after the usual exchange of general pleasantries we found ourselves awkwardly out of words. Watching a group of upper-grade students with multi-colored hair, interesting thrift store wardrobe ensembles, and body art just having a fun day out, he mused with an eye roll, “Kids these days…what do you do?”

My answer came immediately and without filters. “Encourage them! They deserve our help and respect, not our judgment. You know, it’s up to kids these days, just like them, to put order to this messed up world we brought them into.” I could see on his face that now familiar look of someone who doesn’t want to “be political.” That listless way people look when they say things like, “I stayed home. Didn’t vote. They’re both awful,” and “It wouldn’t matter anyway.” He doesn’t want to be political, but what he hasn’t realized yet is that it is no longer an option to opt out—too much is at stake.

I went on, “Do you realize that these kids were born after Columbine and they’re too young to remember a life before 9/11. They have lived their entire lives with the reality of war, homelessness, security checks before they enter the movie theater, predatory Priests, diseases we didn’t know existed, in fear of killer cops, predatory Priests, diseases we didn’t know existed, in fear of killer cops, and just hoping that they survive the school shootings. Sadly, they’re wondering if they’ll get to go to college and/or find a meaningful job that lets them live life, and not struggle day to day just to survive.” He responded, “I never thought about it that way. Wow. Guess we had it pretty good…Well, it was nice seeing you…” and he walked away. I hope that I got him at least thinking charitable thoughts about “kids these days.” But in case it escaped him, I’m hoping he’ll read this.

Kids these days are fired up and ready to take back their country! They will not suffer a racist, or a homophobe, a misogynist, an Islamophobe, or a sexual predator. Likewise, they will not stand still for the dismantling of the protections which ensure their right to clean air and water, nor will they disregard the solid proof of over thirty years of climate science and simply stand by while vital ice caps melt and super storms rage and deadly droughts desecrate large parts of our earth.

Kids these days refuse to accept social injustice, mass incarceration, or homelessness in the wealthy first-world nation we are, they likewise condemn the continuous upward suction of the wealth of 99% of our populace by the obscenely rich, and the erosion of financial security once earned and enjoyed by the working class. They’ll not overlook seniors retiring in poverty, nor the debt abyss of higher education.

Kids these days will never fall into the apathy of their comfortable enough parents and grandparents, who sat out elections and ignored the disenfranchised even as corruption seeped into the hearts of powerful men in a government that no longer represents them. We, who “didn’t want to be political” let the American Dream be pilfered away by a pathologic sociopolitical order which kids these days are on a sure and steady trajectory to crush.

Kids these days will not ignore the vast numbers of mentally ill or veterans who all deserve better options than homelessness and poor access to the healthcare they need. They do not believe that healthcare is only for the fit and well off, or that other people don’t have a right to equal medical care for the simple fact that they’re humans, too.

Kids these days will amplify our voices at the ballot box, end wars they shouldn’t be fighting, ditch fossil fuels, and usher in the best clean energy options in the world. They will restore the sanctity of living, learning, singing, dancing, working, worshipping, ageing in comfort, raising children, and simply enjoying life in a safe, diverse nation where justice reigns.

Kids these days will not condone teachers taking up arms to protect them from the mass shootings that are now a daily occurrence. They will not permit our civilian citizenry to stalk the streets with weapons designed only for war. It was half a million of these oddly dressed, colorful and world-wise kids who stormed Washington DC in the March for Our Lives and shamed the NRA—and the politicians who accept their money—in memory of their slaughtered classmates.

Kids these days will not tolerate politicians kowtowing to the lobbyists and the uber-wealthy who buy them off, nor an unjustly stacked Supreme Court which will reverse hard-won equal rights and bodily autonomy in our society by fifty years. Nor will they allow the theft of our election process by Russian oligarchs who are intent on bringing our democracy to its knees.

Kids these days will not ignore other people’s money—in memory of their slaughtered classmates.

Respect them. Encourage them.
From United Nations: Journalists Under Fire

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

What is the appeal of the demagogues and the right-wing parties? Some of the reasons are well described by Kenneth Roth of Human Rights Watch.

The appeal of the populists has grown with mounting discontent over the status quo. Many people feel left behind by technological change, the global economy and growing inequality. Horrific incidents of terrorism generate fear. Some are uneasy with societies that have become more ethnically, religiously and racially diverse. There is an increasing sense that governments and the elite ignore public concerns.

We agree with some of the criticisms of the status quo—but electing demagogues is not the answer and is dangerous.

Media independence is under pressure and journalism is under siege worldwide. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) the number of journalists imprisoned around the globe hit a record high in 2017, with at least 262 reporters behind bars. They’re only “guilty” of doing their jobs.

For a second year in a row, more than half of those detained are being held in three countries: China, Egypt and Turkey the world’s largest jailers of journalists. In an annual report CPJ said that 87 percent of those jailed journalists covered political news—a particularly dangerous beat in many parts of the world.

Sadly, only 13 percent of the world’s population enjoys a robust free press. The imprisonment and murder of journalists is the tip of the iceberg. Harassment and intimidation, legal statutes like criminal defamation and closure of offending outlets are also common. These realities have a chilling effect and lead to increasing self-censorship.

Aside from jail, in the past year 88 journalists were killed around the world. Of these, as many as 46 were killed in targeted attacks, in most cases because they were investigating and exposing corruption.

Freedom of the press is a vital moral issue intrinsically connected to human rights and is recognized in article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Press freedom is celebrated every year at the UN. In spite of this litany of bad news, reporters continue to persist in doing their professional work, reporting and getting the story.

For more information and to help release jailed reporters, see www.cpj.org and Reporters without Borders (www.rsf.org).

Philippines president Rodrigo Duerto has justified the killing of journalists. In 2016 he said “just because you’re a journalist you are not exempted from assassination, if you are a son of a bitch.”

Duerto is an extreme example of the ominous worldwide rise of demagogues and autocratic nationalists. Other countries with such leaders are Venezuela, Hungary, Poland, Turkey, Russia, India, China, Malaysia, and Myanmar. Their leaders tend to justify their actions as necessary for national security. They also claim to speak for the people. Where have we heard this before?

The press and the media are considered an enemy since the press, traditionally, throws a spotlight on governmental failure and is a check on power. US president Trump calls the press the enemy of the people. This could lead to legalized violence against journalists. Malaysian lawmakers recently passed a law that would impose prison sentences of up to six years on people found to be spreading “fake news.”

From United Nations: Sustainable Goals

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What is the state of the world? Are we going to hell?

Given the terrible news we read daily and the barbaric images we see on TV, we understand the feeling that we are on a downward path. There are, in fact, good reasons to believe that the world is a more dangerous place. There are the increasing effects of climate change resulting in more severe hurricanes, violent wildfires, flooding, and heat waves. There are the brutal civil wars in Yemen and Syria, and the genocide in Myanmar. The ominous rise of demagogues is very troubling, as well as the rise of hate groups and racism. Some of these events are triggered by the heartbreaking increase in the number of refugees.

At the same time, there is also good news and surprisingly good developments. Since the turn of the century, more than a billion people have been lifted out of extreme poverty. This is an historic achievement from the time when living on the margins was the norm. Another startling development in recent years is the unprecedented increase in life expectancy all over the world.

Since the UN has difficulties resolving civil wars and other political problems because of disagreements among major powers, it has concentrated more on humanitarian efforts. In 2000, at the annual gathering of the world’s leaders at the UN, they agreed on eight goals called the millennium development goals (MDG), which were to be achieved by 2015. Among the goals: reduce extreme poverty and hunger; achieve universal education; promote gender equality; reduce child and maternal deaths; combat HIV, malaria and other diseases. These goals were considered doable and, very importantly, measurable.

Aside from the reduction in the extreme poor and increasing life expectancy, there were other successes. More children are in school, fewer children are dying, and fewer women are dying during childbirth. The goal on combating HIV, malaria, and other diseases had only partial success. There was great improvement in that 2.6 billion people gained access to improved drinking water and 2.1 billion gained access to improved sanitation.

While there was remarkable progress, much suffering remains. One billion people still are extremely poor, more than 800 million do not have enough to eat; women are still fighting for their rights; and millions of women still die during childbirth.

In 2015, given the remaining problems, it was recognized that a further set of goals was needed. The new set of goals, the sustainable development goals (SDG), incorporate the old goals plus attention to urgent action on climate change and other environmental concerns, such as conservation and sustainability of the oceans.

The recent 2018 sustainability development report summarizes the current status of the SDG goals. There is some good news. In South East Asia, a girl’s risk of marrying in childhood declined significantly. In the least developed countries, the proportion of people with access to electricity has doubled. Births attended by skilled health personnel increased globally, a greater number of children are living past their fifth birthday. Some of the bad news is that the world is not on track to end malaria by 2030 and more than half of children and adolescents are not meeting minimum standards in reading and mathematics.

It is important to keep up the momentum as improvements can be reversed. One example is the surging in 2017 of acute hunger in 51 countries…much more than the previous year. This was driven largely by climate disasters and conflict. Wars, civil unrest, and the increasing number of refugees cannot be separated from efforts to increase human well-being.

The UN sustainable development goals and the increased investment in people are inspiring and to some extent effective but it is not enough. Humanitarian needs and political events are related.
Books by American Ethical Union Members

**The Color of Time: My Life on the Edge of Change** by Abe Markman
*Buy on [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)*

As an inner-city social worker and activist white man married to a brown-skinned woman, Markman explores changing perception of interracial marriage. Entering such a union was considered by many as an outrageous affront to their sensibilities and beyond acceptable behavior. What mattered most to Abe and his wife Charlotte was the devotion they had to each other, to the success of their marriage, and to their children and grandchildren.

**This Red Line** by Arthur Dobrin
*Buy on [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)*

The story captures two worlds: Kenya and in the United States of America. Many issues affecting these two countries in the 1980’s and 1990’s are well brought out. They are issues that revolve around real events. There is Sungusungu in Kisii, Junius George’s murder trial and death. The tribal killings in Kenya in 1992, witchcraft as presented in Kisii, the Tomkins park riot in which Kwamboka is involved in and many more events are real.

**I Hate Children and Other Humanist Stories** by Marv Friedlander
*Buy on [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)*

What happens when you try to behave ethically in the real world—not out of obedience to some higher power but because behaving decently toward others is the right thing to do? In *I Hate Children and Other Humanist Stories*, author Marv Friedlander answers that question while providing an entertaining introduction to the moral fabric of humanism.