

AMERICAN ETHICAL UNION

Dialogue Spring 2016

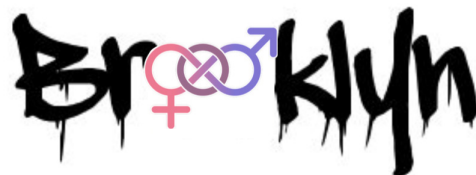
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FES Conference Explores Gender, Sex, and Inequality

Join young Humanists (ages 18-35) in NY this May for the 13th Future of Ethical Societies Conference! The conference fee of \$55 covers meals, activities, and materials. Register by May 6th (scholarships due May 1)!

FESXIII - "Gender Equality & Sexuality"
May 27-30, 2016 in Brooklyn, NY



Future of Ethical Societies is created and run by the Ethical Culture Movement's young adult members. With our theme of "Gender Equality & Sexuality," we will explore LGBTQ rights, comprehensive sexual education, gender inequalities, and how we can be strong allies and activists. We also have two service projects with LGBTQ youth homeless shelters.

See event webpage for details on Schedule, Housing, and Scholarships at: aeu.org/event/fes-conference-in-brooklyn & **Register Now!**

Attendees need to be 18-35 years old. They do not need to be members of an Ethical Society or currently a FES member. Unable to attend but still want to join or support FES? Awesome! Check us out [online](#), on [Facebook](#), or [email](#) us.

AEU at Democracy Spring

At a Liberty Bell rally on April 2, Hugh Taft-Morales (Philadelphia) prepared Democracy Spring marchers (including Dan Hanson of the New York Society) for their journey to Washington, DC, and helped serve them breakfast when they rested at the Baltimore Society. In DC from April 11-18, the marchers were joined by thousands to demand that our government guarantee "one person, one vote". Over 1,200 people (including Dan, our Executive Director Bart Worden, and Washington Society members Amanda Poppei and Sue Jacobson) were arrested for refusing to leave the Capitol steps. Each day was accorded a theme (Elders, Racial Justice, Labor and Unions, Youth, and Climate Change) to emphasize that we must end corruption together in order to address the many issues we face as a nation. Democracy Spring has finished its activities but has not given up on its mission. Those who were there are returning to their communities to share their stories. Those who are still in DC are meeting with politicians to support the aforementioned bills. Those who organized or spoke at events are holding interviews on why it was important. And all of you who support the need for free and fair elections should call your representative at (202) 225-3121 and tell them so. Together we will save our democracy.



Letter from Executive Director Bart Worden



As an organization dedicated to “Deed before Creed,” the American Ethical Union supports an activist approach to bringing good to life. While we appreciate lip service and certainly enjoy the spoken word, “getting out there” and actually doing something about our concerns is essential. Social media has made it much easier to share our interests and opinions, but that activity, on its own, lacks the depth of experience we are more likely to realize when face-to-face with others and when out in public giving voice to our points of view. And with spring upon us (and summer not far behind) opportunities for public activism abound.

As I write this, organizers are ramping up preparations for the Democracy Spring campaign that launches in Philadelphia on April 2 and, after a nine-day march, arrives in Washington DC on April 11. There we will hold a variety of protests and demonstrations—all to promote pro-democracy and anti-corruption reforms. This is an excellent opportunity to speak out for democracy. Aren’t you dismayed by the tenor and content of the discourse that has dominated the media during the pre-election circus? Aren’t you outraged by the ramped up injection of corporate dollars into the political system? Aren’t you incensed by state efforts to restrict access to the polls, deny services to people who identify as LGBTQ, and refuse to limit access to firearms? Come out and be seen and heard!

Perhaps you would rather pursue a less riotous form of advocacy with elected

officials. No worries. You can make your concerns known to your legislators when the Secular Coalition for America hosts an Advocacy Day at Capitol Hill on June 2nd. Join with other humanists, atheists, agnostics, and freethinkers to visit the offices of your representatives and get your agenda on their agendas!

Getting out there doesn’t only mean protests and demonstrations. Join the 2016 Reason Rally (also in Washington, DC) beginning June 3rd to strike a positive note with thousands of fellow humanists, atheists, agnostics and freethinkers. This year’s speakers include Bill Nye, Carolyn Porco, Penn Jillette, Eugenie Scott, Johnny Depp, Leighann Lord, and many others. Expect big crowds and high energy—and, hopefully, less rainy weather than the last Reason Rally.

More inclined toward lending a helping hand than shouting from the ramparts? Come early to the 2016 Assembly in St. Louis and participate in some direct aid work with a local food bank, then stay and participate in workshops and training sessions. We are looking to “Bend the Arc of History Toward Justice” and to do that we’ll need lots of hands applying the pressure for change.

Or you could focus your attention on getting a deeper connection with Ethical Humanism while honing your leadership skills by attending the American Ethical Union Lay Leadership Summer School in August—a weeklong opportunity to learn, share, grow, and have fun with other Ethical Society people from all over.

Not quite ready to join these activities in person? You can still participate by contributing dollars to build our Union’s capacity. The Union’s 100 x 100 Campaign was launched last year, and you can help us reach our target of 100 individuals contributing \$100 per month for 3 years. The influx of cash resources will allow us to offer additional programs and services for Ethical Societies, establish a higher public profile, and expand our outreach efforts to individuals and groups across the country. If you are not able to do the full \$100 per month, find a person or two to share the opportunity with you!

It’s also possible to bring the action to you at your Society. The Visiting Leaders Bureau is fully operational, and a representative of your Society can contact the AEU office to request a visit from participating Leaders (there’s a request form online: aeu.org/our-community/national-leaders-council/visiting-leaders-bureau.) A fund is in place to support the effort (including travel costs), and for \$75 per day plus hospitality your Society can enjoy workshops and platform addresses from our growing list of presenters.

And that’s not all! We also have a new National Director for Ethical Education! Melissa Sinclair has accepted the director position and has hit the ground running. If you are on Podio’s Ethical Education worksite you are already getting notifications, and that’s just the beginning. Melissa has wonderful ideas, a tremendous track record, and lots of energy to inspire great additions to our ethics for children programs.

So don’t hold back, get involved and help us realize our vision for a more Ethical and Humanist future!

Greetings from New National Director of Ethical Education

Melissa Sinclair

I am so thrilled to now be serving as the National Director for Ethical Education of the American Ethical Union. I have high hopes and wishes for Ethical Education for the near future and long term and I look forward to working with people inside and outside of the Ethical Education committee to help our programs grow.

My husband and I discovered Ethical Culture when we wanted to have a secular wedding over 22 years ago, and while we opted for a courthouse ceremony at the time, we never forgot the idea of Ethical Culture. When our first son was born three years later, we started to attend the Ethical Humanist Society of Chicago. Education took us away, but we never forgot about Ethical Culture and what we felt it could offer our family. When we settled into what we hoped was our forever community, the first thing we looked up in the area was where the nearest Ethical Society was located. That is when we discovered the Northern Virginia Ethical Society (NoVES).

Since joining NoVES eleven years ago, I was active in volunteer work and later became employed as their Director of Ethical Education, which I held for three years. I maintain my membership with NoVES, but began working for the Washington Ethical Society as their Director of Lifelong Learning where I have been for the last 20 months. With each passing year and with each new role, my commitment and passion for Ethical Culture grows.

There is so much talent, skills, and desires in Ethical Culture and within Ethical Education. Each Society has something to offer and experience to share, and I honor every single one of our Societies.

My hope for the near future is to get all Ethical Education programs connected to each other and to build structure that will make it easy for us to maintain those connections. As small as we are as a Movement, our roots are strong and deep and with today's technologies, we can come together to build great things if we dig in and do it. We can have instantaneous communications through phone, email, Podio, and video conferencing and then we can meet at least yearly, hopefully twice yearly (Ethical Education Weekend and the Assembly). We also can share resources, ideas, and other information more easily than ever before, and that is my goal—to help us get there.

That is what I want to provide to all of you initially, the means to get connected. I will call you, email you, Facebook chat with you, video chat with you, and will use whatever form of communication you want so that I can learn about your Societies, your goals, and your needs. I also want you to call me, email me, Facebook chat with me, and video chat with me. I will make myself available to you because Ethical Culture matters to me.

That is step one—getting connected with each of you and each of you getting connected to each other. I'm excited about the possibilities and am honored to be serving you all.

Save These Dates

For details visit www.aeu.org

Ethical Culture's 140th Anniversary (Founder's Day)
Sun. May 15

AEU Board Meetings
Individual members of Societies are welcome to attend. (Usually held at New York Society for Ethical Culture)
Sat. May 21 – NYSEC
Thu. July 14 – Sun. July 17 – Assembly in St. Louis

Future of Ethical Societies Conference
Fri. May 27 – Mon. May 30 – Brooklyn, NY

Reason Rally
Thu. June 2 – Sun. June 5 – Washington DC

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

Melissa Sinclair, new National Ethical Education Director



Letter from AEU Board President *Jan Broughton*



As the business of the 2016 Assembly draws closer, many new issues come before the Board for consideration and discussion. One such issue is how we define and interact with the many organizations that have intersecting goals with the American Ethical Union, especially in the areas of social justice and separation of church and state. We find ourselves concerned with what our obligations to each other are and whether there are significant differences that would preclude an association.

Read through the descriptions of the voting members of the Secular Coalition for America (SCA) and see the strong correlation between the expressed intent of each organization. Each echoes aspects of our own vision and mission. Having a position on the SCA website brings attention to us. Participating in events with similar organizations draws people who will find much in common with us and perhaps eventually find a home with us. In addition to the work being done, our presence helps shape the language used by some of the more secular organizations we choose to support, for example, using the term non-theist in their description rather than atheist to be more inclusive of those groups who represent a broader spectrum of humanism.

Democracy Spring and Reason Rally are examples of events the AEU is endorsing and sponsoring, respectively. The resolutions passed at Assembly frequently mirror these actions. At my own Ethical Humanist Society of the Triangle (EHST) we have allied with many of the local secular groups: North Carolina Americans United, Triangle Freethought, and North Carolina SCA. We have held joint programs and accessed each other through MeetUp. This has resulted in platform programs and many repeat visitors.

Along with the secular path, another avenue for linkage is within the faith community. They are often among the first to react to injustice within their locale or to have longstanding social justice programs. I have done most of my outreach through the faith communities. I serve on the Orange County Peace Coalition as our representative. We put on events and protests to support peace and social justice causes. Our Memorial Day program honors the victims of war, both civilians and veterans. Many Society members participate as readers or performers in this annual affair that brings out local officials and community leaders.

The Inter-Faith Council for Social Services operates many of the

programs for the homeless and poor in Orange County. EHST has regular collections of groceries for their food pantry. They have a residency program to help homeless transition to housing while dealing with problems of addiction, lack of education, and health problems. We volunteer once a month to cook and serve a meal at the community kitchen. Our presence at congregational liaison meetings has raised our profile in the community and broadened the views of the faith community to include our brand of religious humanism. This stood out when I saw that a form I was filling out referring to the organization one belonged to now included the choice of 'Leader' among the descriptions of clergy title. The opportunity to explain who we are and what we do is one of the biggest rewards of these connections.

Across the Union, our member Societies, large and small, join with other groups to have more impact than we can have on our own. We learn new techniques of organization and presentation; we enlarge our network of allies; and create interest in those who might align with our programs and practice. Through outreach we bring our Ethical Humanist philosophy to the larger world—Inspiring Ethical Communities.

Reason Rally 2016 Shows Broad Reach of Secular Movement

In an election year that rings with declarations about religion, the nonreligious voter is ignored. Reason Rally 2016 will get them noticed.

What do Bill Nye, Andrés Roemer, Johnny Depp and Amber Heard, Maryam Namazie, and Killah Priest have in common? Two things: They all want reason—not religion—to guide public policy and they will all be speaking at Reason Rally 2016. What a broad base the Rally has! The man who made science cool to generations of kids, the Mexican consul in San Francisco, in-demand Hollywood celebrities, an Iranian civil rights activist, a rapper—and more—are headed to Reason Rally 2016 on June 4. Obviously, people caring about reason in civil discourse cross all demographic lines. Being nonreligious is no longer

something that has to be kept secret. In fact, 56 million people identify as “nones,” just a shade fewer than those who identify as evangelicals and more than those who identify as Catholic or mainline Protestant. Yet the media focuses on how evangelicals voted and campaign strategists still court them.

Reason Rally 2016 is a Voting Bloc Party to celebrate both the growing number of “nones” and the power they can wield if they speak up and vote, not just in the presidential election but in the local elections that give politicians their first step up. “No longer hiding their lack of religion, ‘nones,’ atheists, and secular voters are demanding that their voices be heard and their votes sought,” says Lyz Liddell, executive director of Reason Rally 2016. “And those votes will go to candidates who base their policies on science and facts.”

Joining the “nones” at Reason Rally 2016 will be a stellar list, including Lizz Winstead (co-creator of the Daily

Show), John De Lancie (Q of Star Trek), Penn Jillette (Penn & Teller), Margaret Cho, Baba Brinkman, Julia Sweeney, Carolyn Porco (planetary scientist), Lawrence Krauss (physicist)... and many more.

Come to the Rally to demonstrate, as physicist Krauss says, “that people who care about reason, rationality, and empirical evidence as the basis of public policy are not alone. We are far more prevalent than the media makes out.

It’s our opportunity to show the world that secular humanists are a force to be reckoned with. The more people who speak up on June 4, the more the media and politicians will listen.

For more about the speakers and the schedule of events, visit the website, [Reason Rally 2016](#). Check out the American Ethical Union table at the After-Party on June 4 and the Mini-Conference on June 5.

Get Ready for AEU’s 101st Assembly

This year’s theme, “Bending the Arc of History Toward Justice,” uses the iconic St. Louis arch as a symbol of the arc of ethical progress, while acknowledging that creation of the more just world Dr. King and others have envisioned will rely on human action and activism. The Ethical Society of St. Louis, the Ethical Society Mid Rivers, and the American Ethical Union are preparing a wonderful weekend (Thursday, July 14 to Sunday, July 17) full of inspiring workshops, entertaining performances, and engaging activities with Ethical Humanists from around the country.

Thursday will begin with an Ethical Action Project at the St. Louis Area Foodbank. Together, we will help box donated food items to be distributed to families in Missouri and Illinois. Later

join us for our opening reception and dinner at the City Center Hotel.

In Friday’s activities and workshops, participants will learn information and skills to strengthen their Ethical Societies as welcoming and flourishing communities. For Friday night’s entertainment we will travel to a nearby church partnering with the Ethical Society of St. Louis to present “Black and Blue,” a powerful and thought-provoking play including spoken word performance, which attempts to create a fuller, more varied and nuanced understanding of racial conflict, not only in St. Louis but across America. A panel discussion afterward will facilitate dialogue across many viewpoints.

Saturday’s speakers and workshops will address overlapping issues of justice for marginalized people in America, and how we can more effectively engage in helping to actively bend the future arc

of history. In the evening, we will honor Millennial Activists United with the Elliott-Black award for their dedication to end racial injustice and police brutality in America.

The City Center Hotel is within walking distance of major St. Louis attractions and across the street from the light rail system, which connects directly with the airport. You can book your rooms now and receive the AEU discount:

The St. Louis City Center Hotel
400 South 14th Street
St. Louis, MO 63103
Phone: 855-537-4770
Group Code: AEU ASSEMBLY/
Ethical Conference
or Tel: 314-231-5007
www.stlouiscitycenterhotel.com

Assembly Registration will open in May 2016. Visit event webpage at aeu.org/event/aeu-101st-annual-assembly.

Notes from Your AEU Board

Karen Elliott, AEU Board Member

The American Ethical Union Board met on January 16 and March 19, both meetings at the New York Society for Ethical Culture.

The AEU is preparing to participate in two significant national events—Democracy Spring (a series of actions in support of election reform) in April and the Reason Rally (described as “a four-day rally to promote reason in public discourse”) in June. Members from various Ethical Societies and the National Leaders Council are helping to organize Democracy Spring, which includes a march from Philadelphia to Washington D.C. from April 2-11 followed by non-violent sit-ins and legal protests April 11-18 in D.C. The AEU is a sponsor of the Reason Rally this year, so along with being active at the Rally on June 4 we will have a table at both the After-Party (June 4, 8pm-1am) and the Mini-Conference (June 5, 10am-4pm). The line-up of speakers and entertainers is impressive and ranges from comedians such as Margaret Cho to scientists including Bill Nye to Mark White, the bass player for the Spin Doctors. The audience will be filled with people who identify as secular, freethinker, atheist, and humanist.

The Board was brought up to date on planning for the upcoming 2016 Assembly, July 14-17 in St. Louis, which will continue the practice of programming internally oriented workshops (relating to how to keep your Society running well, etc.) on Friday and workshops related to the social justice theme of the Assembly

on Saturday, in hopes of attracting people from the larger community.

Hank Gassner, representing the task force working on revisions to the AEU Bylaws, presented several of their proposed changes to the Board. They are breaking each change or set of related changes into discrete parts so that delegates to the Assembly will be able to vote for or against each individually. Some changes are being made to reflect the way things are actually being done at present or to allow proposed changes to be implemented, while others are updates to create more clarity. The Board expects to review additional proposed changes at its May meeting.

Many Societies have lay members who are trained and certified as Officiants by the AEU. Carol Bartell, chair of the Leadership Committee, reported that the Committee is working on creating a library of sample weddings for use by officiants.

AEU Executive Director Bart Worden reported that the Outreach Team is trying some different things to create (or help others to create) new Ethical groups, including using Meetup.com, which has been used successfully by some existing Societies. They continue to talk with individuals who are interested in starting Societies in unserved locations, but are also looking at other groups they can support in becoming more robust humanist communities.

In March, AEU Treasurer Tom Weishaar led the Board in the work of creating a balanced and realistic budget for the next fiscal year, which begins October 1, 2016. We had

to rein in our optimism about the effects of changes in our fundraising tactics in order to not potentially overstate income, which meant that we also needed to have some intense discussion of where the money we felt reasonably sure of receiving should best be spent in order to fulfill our duty of support for the individual Societies that make up our Union and for the Movement as a whole. This painful but very necessary process will continue at the May Board meeting, so that we will have a solid and realistic budget to be reviewed and voted upon by delegates from our member Societies at the Assembly in July.

Board President Jan Broughton has been spear-heading work to formalize the process and funding for representation from the AEU to the International Humanist and Ethical Union (IHEU). The IHEU holds annual organizational meetings (called General Assemblies) around the globe, with larger meetings (the World Humanist Congress) held every third year. The most recent representative of the AEU at these meetings has been Randy Best, Leader of the Ethical Humanist Society of the Triangle (North Carolina). The Board talked through a process that can be used to solicit and select an AEU representative to the IHEU and also discussed what funding should be made consistently available for our representative, as none has been budgeted in recent years.

The next AEU Board meeting will be held on Saturday, May 21, 2016 starting at 9 am at the New York Society for Ethical Culture. Members of member Societies are always welcome to attend.

Lay Leadership Summer School 2016 is Almost Here!

Make your plans to be a part of this incredible experience August 13-20 at The Mountain Retreat and Learning Center near Highlands, NC. Come to help be a part of an experience to help create, nurture, and inspire ethical relationships and build ethical communities!



Our weeklong journey offers presentations and activities that will:

- Build connections and a shared sense of purpose with other Ethical Humanists
- Expand your understanding of Ethical Culture history, philosophy, and future
- Explore life's potential and how you can take risks to connect to experience yours
- Stimulate reflection on our communication practices
- Improve each of us as a leader, decision maker, problem solver, and celebrations creator

The talented and fun loving 2016 LLSS staff includes Diane Kirschner, Jan Broughton, Mary Herman, Paulo Ribeiro, Ken Novak, and Hugh Taft-Morales. To receive information and registration materials, please contact L Miller in the AEU Office, 212-873-6500 or lmiller@aeu.org. If you can't attend yourself, talk to others who you think would grow from the LLSS experience and who might in turn help your Ethical Society flourish! Speak to your Board about sponsoring one or more attendees! Now is the time!



National Leaders Council Chills Out

The National Leaders Council (NLC)—the professional group of all Ethical Culture clergy Leaders—traditionally meets three times a year for multi-day meetings that address continuing education, collegiality, and the business of the wider Movement. These meetings support the Leaders' individual work in Societies and also include updates on the work of the AEU Board and Committees.

This spring, the NLC tried something different: they chilled out. Meeting in mid-March for three days, the Leaders focused on connection, mindfulness, and their hopes for their own leadership. They also played games, sang together, and cooked as a group. This different style of gathering (which still included a short business meeting to prepare for the AEU Assembly in July) was met with enthusiasm. The retreat helped renew their energies and deepen their relationships with each other. Several Leaders commented that there was a sense of “we” at the retreat, an experience of shared commitment and shared hope.

The NLC hopes to repeat this model for spring gatherings in the future, while focusing on their own continuing education at the summer gatherings and their work for the broader Movement at fall gatherings.

Ethical Action Feature: Anti-Racism Activism in Ethical Culture *Hugh Taft-Morales*

The Black Lives Matter movement—regardless of whether you embrace it, are suspicious of it, or just don't know enough about it to judge it—indicates that racism still infects our hearts, our institutions, and our ways of thinking. It's a part of our lives, whether we know it or not. It challenges us all. It's everyone's work. It's our work. It's my work.

I have approached this work through history. I read history. I've taught history. And I have learned from history that one of the most powerful tools available to the dominant class is to control the cultural narrative—much of history is, after all, written by the winners.

So as I share with you my sincere but limited perspective, you should be suspicious. My view is affected by unearned privilege given to me due to my gender, race, and class. Long dead white men wrote much of the history I have learned. At some point I'll be a dead white male—I won't change that. My voice is just my voice—it's just one part of a larger dialogue.

I have been lucky, however, to have been given books to read that offer an analysis of racism from the perspective of the oppressed—from slaves and soldiers, scholars and revolutionaries, poets and politicians...who happen to be black. I've read the words of Sojourner Truth and Frederick Douglass, Maya Angelou and Malcolm X, W. E. B. Du Bois and

Langston Hughes, Huey Newton and bell hooks. And I want to read more—it helps me grow. It helps me speak of difficult things. It has made me more committed.

Most Ethical Culturists know that race as a social category is fundamentally a social construction. It's not a fundamental, determined, and fixed quality of individuals. Biology may underlie our definitions, but race is fluid, a matter of degree, and the product of selected emphasis of a tiny part of our genetic code. Forcing on anyone an essentialist or ridged race identity violates integrity, freedom and respect. It violates the essence of Ethical Humanism. But how good are we really at being anti-racism activists?

Certainly our humanist history urges us to take risks for the sake of justice. Felix Adler, the founder of Ethical Culture, took risks for the sake of racial understanding. In his book *An Ethical Philosophy of Life* (EPL), he spoke out for the "victims of a cruel race prejudice, such as is entertained against the colored people of the south by the more brutal whites" (236). A century ago he visited black colleges and built mutual understanding. He was one of four Ethical Culture Leaders who signed the NAACP founding charter. He and W. E. B. Du Bois were the two American delegates to the 1911 London Conference on Race.

Through his work, Adler deepened his empathy across racial lines: "I remember a long evening which I once spent in the company of a leader among the colored people, and one of the best men I have ever known. I looked that night

deep into a suffering, sensitive human soul, and I tried to put myself in his place. I realized the hardships of his lot, the anguish that I myself should suffer if I were in his position" (EPL 236).

Many Ethical Culture Leaders nurtured such empathy, communication, and activism, such as Al Black who worked on a host of issues including fair housing and police bias. In the sixties, Walter Lawton poured energy into the AEU's Southern Project on Race. More recently, Lisel Burns raised our consciousness about the many social and economic roadblocks to integration. And Arthur Dobrin, from his late 1960's workshops through sensitivity training and forums on race and student violence, has been a consistent anti-racism activist. There are others as well.

Ethical Culture must also, however, admit our inconsistencies and shortcomings. For example, Adler did not escape the racism and ugliness of his time. We have to admit this to move forward. For example, we must acknowledge that Adler claimed that whites were superior in that "his family life is purer on the average than that of a large number of colored people" and he believed whites were better in their ability "to distinguish between criminal and innocent" (EPL 236). With a nod to historical context, Adler wrote of blacks that, "In consequence of the long centuries of slavery their family relations are often unstable, while they are apt to shield the colored criminal from the arm of the law" (EPL 236).

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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.

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We must be honest about the roots of racism if we are going to pull them out one by one. It humbles me and reminds me of the work before us. It challenges Ethical Humanists to listen carefully to many diverse voices. When we invite African Americans to share their stories, we must appreciate that this is asking a lot. It is not surprising that Blacks may be wary of such an invitation. They might wonder, “Why am I being asked? How will my words be interpreted? Will I be accused of ‘playing the race card?’”

This is just one of the many reasons why sometimes blacks prefer to remain silent. For Paul Laurence Dunbar it was easier just to smile, like wearing a mask that conceals suffering:

We wear the mask that grins
and lies,
It hides our cheeks and shades
our eyes,
This debt we pay to human guile;
With torn and bleeding hearts
we smile,
And mouth with myriad subtleties.
Why should the world
be over-wise,
In counting all our tears and sighs?
Nay, let them only see us, while
We wear the mask.

How many African-Americans who walk through our doors, or the doors of other Ethical Societies, wear masks due to history, expectations, and fears? For how many are the wounds of racism still deep and raw?

Racism is a wound in human history, and wounds are ugly—we want to ignore them. Ignoring a wound, however, can kill. In his Letter from the Birmingham City Jail, Martin Luther King Jr. speaks of racism as an infected boil festering in our civic body. It needs to be exposed to air and to the healing “light of the human conscience.” Activism lances the boil so the infected pus oozes out allowing healing to begin. This metaphor, like the reality behind it, is difficult to consider, but we must, for this wound still hurts.

Ethical Humanists need to continue engaging in anti-racism activism. This does not just mean recruiting more people of color or diversifying our committees and programs, although those things could help. Anti-racism activism requires that all of us—me included—choose continual education about multiculturalism activism.

There will be opportunities to learn this summer at our AEU Assembly in St. Louis. They are

offered so that we can move forward in our commitment to anti-racism activism, not to induce more unproductive “white guilt.” We need to learn to accept responsibility for deconstructing racism without getting bogged down in self-recrimination. As James Baldwin says,

I’m not interested in anybody’s guilt. Guilt is a luxury that we can no longer afford. I know you didn’t do it, and I didn’t do it either, but I am responsible for it because I am a man and a citizen of this country and you are responsible for it too, for the very same reason...Anyone who is trying to be conscious must begin...to dismiss the vocabulary which we’ve used so long to cover it up, to lie about the way things are. [Wise, p. 15 quoting James Baldwin, from “Words of a Native Son”, 1964]

Anti-racism activism—all multicultural work—we do better if we carry deep inside us faith in human goodness and in community. If you can find energy and courage working with others in Ethical Humanism, you may find yourself transcending fear or apathy in ways that surprise you. It has surprised me.

My Year as a Mossler Fellow

Sandi Sacks, New York Society for Ethical Culture

My Mossler Fellowship winds down in the next few months and I would like to share some of the highlights. I learned that there is a lot of passion and enthusiasm running through the veins of the AEU organization but what seemed to be a weak spot were our limited outreach procedures. We were not responsive and organized enough in our efforts partly due to limited staffing. I knew I could not handle this alone and thought it would be advantageous to assemble a team with more history and knowledge of the AEU and Ethical Humanism. Thus, the Outreach Task Force was formed. It is composed of Bart Warden, AEU Executive Director; Emily Newman, AEU Communications Coordinator; Richard Koral, Leader Intern; and me. (During the initial months, Laura Steele, who had been chair of the Membership Committee, was also part of the team.)

The team communicated and met regularly, prioritized and delegated responsibilities. We put systems in place to respond to the approximately 25 inquiries received regarding Society locations and questions on how to start an Ethical Culture Society. The people inquiring have been very appreciative of our responsive efforts.

We realized the need for and created a “Starter Packet” to mail to individuals and groups interested in learning more about getting a regional group started. We also saw

that groups are continually searching for ways to keep their programs fresh, relevant, and exciting in order to attract new people of diverse experience and demographics while also maintaining current membership. Realizing that there was no need to reinvent the wheel—we have so many fabulous existing programs—I created a “program exchange” system, which allows Societies to share their best practices and programs. These “Program Exchange” resources will be available for all to share in the near future. For those of you who have not yet had the opportunity to share your best programs in the exchange, it is not too late. Please email me at sandisacks@gmail.com. I will send you the easy-to-complete format.

The development of new programs is always important. The renowned organization, Moth.org (Peabody Award winner, NPR Radio Show and host of Storyslams nationwide), accepted the proposal that I submitted to them and conducted an intensive 12-hour, two-day “art of storytelling” workshop at the New York Society for Ethical Culture for 12 participants. These trainees have begun to develop programs in their respective Societies and we anticipate great interest in and success for these programs.

Where can AEU and our members go from here?

- AEU intends to increase its focus on outreach to existing Humanist Groups to share our “Featured” programs, which will give us greater visibility and hopefully attract more members. Ethical Culture members and Leaders can be part of these outreach efforts in their

communities by getting involved with other groups and coalitions and sharing the resources that AEU will soon make available for these purposes.

- AEU will be experimenting with posting on Meetup.com our intent to start a group in a region not presently served by AEU. If people respond with an expression of interest we can then provide them with support to start a group through the “Exploratory” model.
- AEU realizes the need for developing special packets for high school and college groups and the importance of working more collaboratively with the Secular Student Alliance and their members.
- Facilitators and Leaders are encouraged to share their best practices through an ongoing, updated “Program Exchange” which will be made available to AEU members online.

In closing, I would like to emphasize the need to continue to respond to all incoming inquiries in a timely manner with the necessary ongoing follow-up. Relationship building takes time and commitment. All outreach efforts to connect and share with individuals and groups are essential components for the growth and flourishing of Ethical Culture. There must always be appropriate staffing during designated hours with know-how to make this a reality. With continued dedication and effort we can make a positive change within our organization and beyond. We can learn from all our efforts and must continually seek to refine our approaches to meet the needs of the day.

I wish to thank the Outreach Task Force, AEU Staff, and each of you who let me pick your brain and who provided me with support. I am also grateful for the Mossler Fellowship and Andra Miller, who alerted me to this rewarding opportunity.

Apply Now for Mossler Fellowship

Do you have a project idea to help us expand the Movement? Apply now for the Mossler Fellowship so we can help you get started.

The American Ethical Union's Board of Directors determines Fellowship awards based on:

- A project proposal for work that would contribute to the spread of the Ethical Culture Movement nationally
- Extent of volunteer efforts on behalf of Ethical Culture Society or AEU
- Recommendation by an Ethical Culture Society member

Mossler Fellowship applications are due to the AEU by Friday, May 6, 5PM. Awards and amounts will be determined at the AEU's May board meeting. All applicants will be notified of their status by June 1. Applications are available online at www.aeu.org or by contacting the AEU at office@aeu.org.

Wall of Remembrance

Compiled from Societies' newsletters and websites, and newspaper obituaries

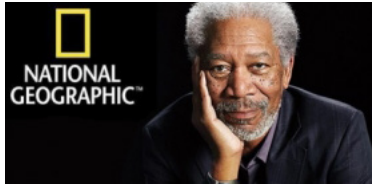
Ruth Haynes (*Bergen*) – Long-standing and devoted member Ruth Haynes died on January 10th at 85 years old. Having joined the Bergen (New Jersey) Society in the 1970s, she became an active and very gregarious member of our community. Ruth was a continuous presence at Sunday platforms and supported the Society through her engagement in our twice-annual Membership Meetings. Ruth served as our board secretary years ago and was often seen at our social affairs. Ruth maintained a life-affirming and upbeat disposition throughout a life that confronted her with significant hardships. She had lost a son and struggled with cancer and heart ailments. Through it all, Ruth's positive outlook served as an inspiration to all of us. Ruth had worked in earlier years for JC Penney. She played the piano and derived joy from art and from gardening, about which she was very knowledgeable.

Lou Sapir (*New York & Riverdale-Yonkers*) – Louis Sapir, a resident at Kendal of Hanover, formerly of Riverdale, N.Y., died peacefully at age 95 on March 14, with his daughters at his bedside. A graduate of DeWitt Clinton High School, CCNY, and Columbia University (Mass., Economics), Mr. Sapir was a securities analyst, until recently as First VP of Oppenheimer & Co in N.Y. He served as Chair at the New York Society for Ethical Culture, and as board member of the Ethical Culture Fieldston School, Riverdale-Yonkers Society for Ethical Culture, Mt. Pleasant Cemetery, Riverdale Mental Health Association, and Weis Ecology Center. He was also an Adjunct Professor at Manhattan College School of Business, and recently served on the Finance and Investment Committees at Kendal, where he resided since 2001 with Carolyn, his wife, until her death in Nov 2014.

Ken Schwartzman (*Long Island*) – Our dear friend died peacefully on March 16. Ken was a long-time and dedicated member of our Society, known for his wit and playful attitude toward life. He was especially known for being our resident director of plays, not only bringing out the best in us as individuals, but the best in us as actors. Ken assumed the responsibility of conducting the Colloquies, and then of being in charge of the additional three people who would each lead one Colloquy a month. Ken has been so passionate and devoted, especially within the past year, that every time he persevered and overcame an additional health crisis, he managed to once more return on a Sunday morning for another stint at leading a colloquy.

Claire Zerkin (*Chicago*) – Longtime member of the Chicago Society, Claire Zerkin died in January at the age of 91—sadly following husband Milt's death in June. Claire grew up in New York and served in the Women's Army Corps in World War II. She lived for a while in New Jersey, where she and Milt joined the Bergen Society. She studied art at Cooper Union and then at Northeastern Illinois University after moving in 1966 to Chicago, where she and Milt became members of our Society. As our unofficial photographer, Claire chronicled our people and events, including the building of our auditorium. She was a skilled weaver, teaching at the Kagan Home for the Blind in Chicago.

Morgan Freeman's *The Story of God: An Exploration of Belief* Anne Klaeysen, New York Society for Ethical Culture



“Today, for better or worse, the power of religion touches all our lives, no matter what our faith. This is Morgan Freeman’s journey to discover how our beliefs connect us all. This is the quest of our generation. This is the story of God.” (From the [National Geographic Channel](#))

On March 21, I attended the premiere screening of the National Geographic Channel’s new series, *The Story of God*, narrated by legendary actor Morgan Freeman, at the Frederick P. Rose Hall of Jazz at Lincoln Center in New York City. The opportunity to see and hear Freeman himself (who played God in the films *Bruce Almighty* [2003] and *Evan Almighty* [2007]) was extraordinary, as was the reception overlooking Columbus Circle, replete with chandeliers, champagne, and celebrities. But I was disappointed by the episode “Beyond Death,” the first in a six-part series that explores ancient and modern faiths, as well as science, looking for commonalities.

One thing to bear in mind while watching this series is that it is essentially Freeman’s “personal journey,” a point emphasized in the resource material provided on the website. He declares himself a seeker—not necessarily a believer—who has always been fascinated by the origins and practices of the world’s religions. His interest is in how human beings, given the reality of their mortality, find and create meaning in their lives. This “meaning-making,”

he believes, is what, in spite of our differences, connects us all. To this end, he takes us on a whirlwind tour around the globe to visit artifacts, observe rituals, and interview experts who include priests, rabbis, swamis, lamas, archaeologists, and scientists.

National Geographic is well suited to the task; the sweeping vistas of deserts, mountain tops and rivers are worthy of an IMAX production and sometimes threaten to overshadow Freeman’s goal. Shot over the course of “forty days and forty nights” (said with a wink that elicited a knowing laugh from his audience), Freeman flew over 100,000 miles, visiting thirty cities in seven countries. For this first episode, he visited pyramids in Egypt and Guatemala, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem (where Jesus’s tomb is purported to be), a library in the Vatican, and a spot near the Ganges River in India where Hindus believe they can be cremated and end the cycle of reincarnation. He also chats with a neuroscientist in Central Park and offers himself as a test subject in a scientific lab to examine how neuroscience intersects with religion.

A welcome and recurring theme of uncertainty is prevalent. Freeman approaches his subject and conducts his interviews with an intellectual humility. He wants to learn—and share what he learns with viewers. “In some places I found answers, and others led to more questions. The constant through it all is that we’re all looking to be part of something bigger than us. If there’s one thing I’ve learned, it’s that we certainly are.” The good news for humanist viewers is that he rarely makes pronouncements about belief or unbelief. Rather, he invites us to explore with him and enter into a conversation. The “something bigger” need not be God; it could be the universe.

What I found disappointing was the “big picture” aspect that generalized religious experience. Representative

clergy talked about their religions in definitive terms: “This is what Christians, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, etc. believe and do”—with no appreciation for the differences within religions, the proliferation of often competing theologies, denominations, and sects. Perhaps that is too much to ask of a television show following someone on an idiosyncratic trek. Nonetheless, some mention of this could prevent viewers from making harmful generalizations.

I also felt uneasy about the interview with a former research diver who shares his near-death experience (NDE) story in a Christian cathedral. “I noticed this light,” he says. “It was millions upon millions of fragments of light, in all different colors, and they were all dancing and swirling, kind of like they were of one mind. And it was infinite. I knew I wasn’t in Kansas anymore.” Medical advancements have made it possible for more people to experience NDEs. Neurosurgeon Eben Alexander has built a new career selling his book and giving lectures proving that heaven exists. Although Freeman treats this subject subtly, the setting belies his intent.

I can recommend this series with this caveat: Enjoy the scenery, but beware its limitations. Morgan Freeman is an engaging narrator, interviewer, and storyteller. This project is clearly very personal. In the first episode, he travels to his birthplace in Mississippi and recalls the deaths of his grandmother and brother before he was eighteen years old. “Everybody grieves,” he says. “But some people have a certainty that helps them cope with grief—they are certain they will see their loved ones again in heaven. For some of us, it’s not quite that simple. In fact, it’s the greatest question we ask ourselves: What happens when we die?” Personally, I don’t believe that anything more happens than that our atoms are returned to the universe, that we once again become stardust. That is enough for me.

From the United Nations: World Health Emergencies

**Dr. Sylvain Ehrenfeld, IHEU
and National Ethical Service**

representative to the UN

Dr. Reba Goodman, Ethical

Culture Society of Bergen County

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

Microbes have no respect for borders. In our increasingly interconnected world there are increasing opportunities for the rapid spread of infections. More than ever global public health security depends on international cooperation.

The World Health Organization (WHO) was founded in 1948 to coordinate these efforts. Its accomplishments include overseeing the eradication of smallpox and yellow fever, and pioneering the programs that now immunize most of the world's children against measles, polio, and yellow fever.

In recent years serious medical emergencies have increasingly appeared. Diseases like HIV, Ebola, SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome), and now Zika have challenged the world community. They pose a threat through a combination of factors like genetic mutations, rising resistance to anti-microbial medicines and weak health systems. These outbreaks are not solely medical problems but also social problems as well. Diseases are much more prevalent where malnutrition, unclean water, and inadequate sanitation exist.

The World Health Organization has been severely criticized for its handling of the Ebola disease. The disease spread for months before being detected because much of the work of spotting outbreaks was left to desperately poor countries ill-prepared for the task. Unfortunately, this tragic scenario is being repeated with the current outbreak of Zika.

Why is this happening? Why wasn't WHO on the job?

The most important reason is that WHO has been badly weakened by budget cuts in recent years, making it difficult to respond in parts of the world that need it most. Its outbreak and emergency response unit has

been slashed. Veterans who have led fights against diseases have left, and scores of positions have been eliminated.

In the past WHO received about 50 percent of its money as 'assessed contributions' from member states. WHO could mostly do what it wanted with this money. Because of the global financial crisis member states drastically reduced their assessed contributions which are currently down to about 20 percent and partly responsible for its slow response to the Ebola outbreak. About 80 percent is now made up by "voluntary contributions." Almost all these donations come with stipulations that the money must be used for certain projects and diseases. WHO has lost its ability to set its own priorities. Only about 15 percent of its budget is used for outbreak and crisis response, in effect crippling that program. In 2011 a \$300 million budget shortfall forced WHO to lay off a quarter of its employees.

A second reason for WHO's difficulties is its unwieldy structure which includes six regional offices, each with its own director elected by regional member states. Beneath them is a sprawling network of around 150 country offices. Such a structure is an invitation for trouble, politicking, and makes communication very difficult.

Overseeing WHO is the World Health Assembly, which meets periodically in Geneva and is attended by the nations of the world. Many executive board members of WHO spoke forcefully of the need for reform at their annual meeting in January. There is a strong need to streamline its complex structure, governance, and financing to make it more efficient and responsive. The world needs a strong WHO. It is particularly important to have a strong surveillance program to spot potential health emergencies. Richer countries should be particularly interested in funding such programs as diseases could spread to developed countries. It is reminiscent of what happened during the Industrial Revolution. The major cities of London and New York experienced Typhoid and Cholera traveling from the slums to the residential area of the wealthy. Only then were sewer systems built and clean water supplied for the whole population.

One lesson learned from the Ebola epidemic is the importance of listening to the local people affected. Sensitivity to local concerns and local practices is vital. One example is the traditional practices of burial rites, which were a major source of infections. In Sierra Leone, for example, unsafe burials stopped when aid workers joined forces with communities to develop alternative burial approaches that were both safe and appropriate.

The current concern is the epidemic of mosquitoes carrying the Zika virus. WHO expects the Zika outbreak to spread to almost every country in the Americas. The Zika virus has links with birth defects in newborns. The Zika epidemic started in Brazil. It is concentrated among young, poor, black and brown women, a vast majority living in the country's least developed regions. They live in substandard crowded housing in neighborhoods where stagnant water is the breeding ground of disease. Health ministers in Brazil, Columbia and El Salvador have recommended that women postpone pregnancy. This is offensive to many women and ridiculous in the context of strict abortion laws, high levels of sexual violence against girls and women, and the lack of contraceptives.

An intriguing technological fix is being considered. The threat of the Zika virus, which is running rampant in Latin America and threatens the US, has spurred the US Food and Drug Administration to approve field trials of genetically modified mosquitoes. The GMO male mosquitoes are released into the wild and don't produce viable offspring. When females mate with the GMO males, they lay eggs that hatch but the larvae die before adulthood. Trials in Brazil and Panama have been successful. The FDA approved trials in the Florida Keys. Many local residents have expressed concerns about the consequences of releasing these GMO mosquitoes into the environment.

The world needs a well-funded, streamlined WHO and a strong outbreak and surveillance team that can be immediately sent to contain an outbreak before it can spread and cause havoc. Learn more about WHO and how to support their work at www.who.int/en.

National Ethical Service in Action

Kay Dundorf, President of NES

The National Ethical Service (NES) is providing a seed grant from the Rose L. Walker Fund for a program on evolution, consciousness, and altruism titled “Steering Toward the Omega Point.” The event will be held on April 12 at the New York Society for Ethical Culture and video recordings will be available on the NES website, www.nationalserviceacu.org.

The program is focused on the ethical and global changes becoming mainstreamed into evolutionary biology. Panels consisting of 12-15 well-known experts from sacred and secular roots (including New York Society Leader Dr. Anne Klaeysen) will strike a balance between spirituality, ethics, environment, science, sustainability, governance, social justice, arts, economics, and more.

The program will be moderated by Drs. David Sloan Wilson, Kurt Johnson (NES Vice President), Rick Clugston, Tanja-Andrejasic Wechsler, and Yanni Maniates. The audience will include a selection of progressive thinkers across diverse arenas and disciplines—specifically, economics, ethics, spirituality, and ecology—and those who are committed to and interested in building a more humane and enlightened society through their work. Event co-sponsors include the National Ethical Service, the New York Society for Ethical Culture, The Center for Earth Ethics at Union Theological Seminary, Forum 21 Institute, The Interspiritual Network, Friends of the Institute

of Noetic Sciences, Our Humanity Matters, and Presence International.

Kay Dundorf (NES President) and Martha Gallahue (NES Leader & Treasurer) have been panelists at various United Nations related events. Martha spoke about Love on February 14, Culture of Peace on February 25, and Climate Change’s impact on women on March 16 during the meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women. Kay spoke on April 7 at “Peace, Justice, Harmony: Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals—Moving Forward through Assertive Actions.” Jone Johnson Lewis (Leader of Brooklyn & Riverdale-Yonkers Societies) represented worldwide humanism during the UN celebration on Inter-Faith harmony on February 3. On behalf of NES, Martha accepted the annual Peace Award from Brooklyn Society for Ethical Culture in May 2015 and spoke to a full house at their Platform meeting.

Martha Gallahue will be retiring from NES in June, after 19 years of service. Over the years she has served as Main Representative, President, Secretary, and Treasurer in addition to her clergy role. Jone Johnson Lewis has agreed to replace Martha in the Leader role. Martha stated:

“It is a good thing to retire when the organization is at a high point and I am still healthy. We have a strong President in my friend Kay Dundorf of Riverdale-Yonkers, whose devotion to Ethical Culture is extraordinary. My friendship and working relationship with Kurt Johnson (Humanist Institute), Vice-President and

worldwide coalition builder has grown over the years. He is serving as a most effective Main Representative promoting eco-spirituality and increasing our stature throughout the world. His work in evolutionary biology lends an articulate voice to 21st century Ethical Culture. I have been honored and generously supported in my efforts to build the organization. In that capacity, I offer special thanks to Sylvain Ehrenfeld, Jackie and Sharon Pope, and Emily Newman. NES is well received at the UN now in many sectors and the Rose L Walker Fund is off to a good start. My heart is full of appreciation for our much needed contributors. We could not exist without your support. Our gifts to the Movement are many. I believe now that others can tell that story better.”

All of us in NES are very appreciative of Martha’s tireless service and are glad that she agreed to continue on the Finance Committee. Thank you Martha.



L-R: Kay Dundorf, Emily Newman, Martha Gallahue

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

Send submissions to communications@aeu.org
 by Saturday, June 25, 2016.

Please include a headshot and relative images with your submission.

Honor Thy Mother, Father, Grandparent, and Sibling (on Their Day)

In the United States, Mother's Day began as an anti-war, progressive political movement. Julia Ward Howe called for a "Mother's Day for Peace" to organize pacifist mothers:

"Our husbands shall not come to us, reeking with carnage, for caresses and applause. Our sons shall not be taken from us to unlearn all that we have been able to teach them of charity, mercy and patience. We, women of one country, will be too tender of those of another country, to allow our sons to be trained to injure theirs."
 Mother's Day Proclamation (excerpt), Julia Ward Howe, 1870

Anna Jarvis campaigned to make Mother's Day a recognized holiday in the US in 1905, the year her mother died, although the holiday wasn't accepted until 1908. Her mother was a peace activist who cared for wounded soldiers on both sides of the American Civil War, and created Mother's Day Work Clubs on public health issues. **Mother's Day 2016 is Sunday, May 8.**

The idea of Father's Day in the US began in 1908, inspired by the Mother's Day campaign, when Grace Golden Clayton mourned the loss of her father. Later Sonora Smart Dodd, who also wanted to honor her deceased father, pushed for it to become an established holiday. She faced great difficulty as many were concerned it was only going to replicate the commercial success of Mother's Day. Jane Addams was also turned down in 1911 when she tried to make it a city-wide holiday in Chicago. Despite support from Presidents Woodrow Wilson and Calvin Coolidge, Congress opposed the holiday until 1966. **Father's Day 2016 is Sunday, June 19.**

National Grandparent Day began in 1978 only about only five years after the initial resolution was made. The day is to honor grandparents and to help children become aware of strength, information, and guidance older people can offer. **Grandparent's Day 2016 is Sunday, September 11.**

Starting in 1998, we also have **Sibling's Day on April 10** in the US, although it is not currently federally recognized. Claudia Evart developed the Sibling Day Foundation to honor the memory of her brother and sister, both of whom passed away at early ages.

How do you honor your family members? How do they honor you? How important is it that these days be nationally recognized holidays?

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