

# AMERICAN ETHICAL UNION

## DIALOGUE

WINTER 2014

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

<i>Letter from the Executive Director, Bart Worden</i>	2
<i>Save These Dates</i>	2
<i>Letter from AEU President, Richard Koral</i>	3
<i>Notes From Your AEU Board</i>	4
<i>New Developments in AEU Religious Education</i>	5
<i>YES &amp; RE Conferences</i>	5
<i>Join us for Lay Leadership Summer School</i>	6
<i>Apply for Mossler Fellowship</i>	6
<i>Bergen Society Celebrated 60th Anniversary</i>	7
<i>New Home for Boston Society</i>	7
<i>From the United Nations</i>	8-9
<i>Wall of Remembrance</i>	10
<i>Write for Spring Dialogue</i>	11
<i>Sleepless in Solidarity</i>	11

### Support New AEU Website

The American Ethical Union is revamping our website ([www.aeu.org](http://www.aeu.org)) to make it easier to use for all visitors! The website will include our new logo, the history of the Ethical Culture Movement, current projects and events, and how you can get more involved.

Help get the new website live as soon as possible by donating. Mail your contribution to: AEU, 2 West 64th Street, New York, NY 10023. Or call 212-873-6500 to donate with a credit card.

Thank you for your support and we look forward to inviting you to our new website in April 2014!

## REVITALIZING DEMOCRACY: MONEY, POWER, AND POLITICS

*Join us in Skokie this May for the AEU's 99th Assembly!*

There is an undeniable growing divide in our country between the rich and the poor which is undermining our democracy. We are witnessing an erosion of citizen's rights and shirking of responsibility due to the influence of money in politics. We must challenge this influence by demanding transparency in campaign donations, increased voter registration, and equitable treatment of third party candidates. Together we can make a difference! Join us in Illinois May 1-4 to learn what you and your Society can do. Our Assembly theme is "Revitalizing Democracy: Money, Power, and Politics."

The American Ethical Union's 99th Assembly is co-sponsored by the Ethical Humanist Society of Chicago, who will host a special edition of their popular *Prairie State Companion* featuring Rachel Baiman (Nashville-based fiddler and recording artist and alumna of both the Chicago and Essex Societies). Along with the Chicago Society and AEU office, this year's Assembly was organized by representatives of the National Leaders Council and Future of Ethical Societies.

Come early on Thursday, May 1 to participate in a Pre-Conference Social Action Project with JoAnn Hoepfner (Chicago) and the Midwest Workers Association. We will be providing resources to low-income communities.



Register now online at  
<https://www.regonline.com/AEU2014>

Ron Baiman (Chicago) will lead a participatory exercise exploring the links between values and economics. Dale McGowan, our new Director of Ethical Education (see page 5), will explain the connection between thinking well and doing good and encourage participants to do the same in their own lives and work. Alderman Joe Moore will discuss the successes and challenges of his innovative process that gives residents of his Chicago neighborhood the power to decide how his annual \$1 million discretionary capital budget is spent. And for the Social Justice Dinner, Keynote Speaker Jack Altschuler will show how we can move forward in "a system that keeps participants entrenched in paralysis."

Our program is full of various opportunities to connect with individuals of AEU Board, staff, member Societies, and affiliates. We will learn about and share ideas on fighting the Citizens United ruling, attracting the "nones," developing strong ethical education programs for families, and promoting Ethical Culture with Social Media.

Registration is open now online and brochures are available at your local Society. Book your hotel room early to receive the discounted rate. Visit the AEU Assembly website for more details:  
<https://www.regonline.com/AEU2014>.

## LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, BART WORDEN

*These are challenging times for religious congregations.*

There are a number of factors in our current cultural landscape that make life difficult—even for congregations who have been quite successful.

**Shift in personal values and priorities** In the past several decades there has been a move away from individuals' seeing their association with religious organizations as vital to their standing in the community. People used to identify themselves through their membership in a church, synagogue, or temple and strived to measure up to the standards of congregations. Along with this identification came an expectation that one demonstrated one's faith through financial commitment and regular attendance, which was fostered by laws and norms that carved out Sunday mornings for religious expression. Where in the past people were inclined to get their identity from their religious body, these days people are much more likely to shop for an organization that reflects and enhances their identity. People look for a group that suits them rather than look for ways to become suitable to a group.

**Competition for time and attention** Growing up in New Jersey in the 1960s I expected that on Sunday

mornings stores would be closed, television would have a lot of religious programming, and sporting events, especially local ones, would not be scheduled. Now Sunday is much like other days—if you want to shop, recreate, or be entertained there are plenty of options available.

**Desire for convenience** We have grown accustomed to convenience and become increasingly impatient with inconvenience. The food, shopping, and entertainment industries have responded with ever more options to make for ease and quickness. Food companies produce ready-to-eat or quick prepare meals to save you time cooking. Staples, the office supply store, has capitalized on this trend with their "Easy" campaign: "Download an Easy Button for your desktop to get everything from Staples with one push of the button." EZ-Pass whisks us through tollbooths and card swipes speed our purchases.

The convenience trend runs counter to the success of religious congregations that are inherently inconvenient. We are faced with having to offer great reasons for people to come out of their homes and participate. Why else would we make the effort rather than stay home and have food delivered to us while we watch TED talks or shop on Amazon?



**Accustomed to low cost or free** Once you have access to high speed Internet you can access endless entertainment and information, connect with friends, and buy all kinds of discounted things and services with free shipping!

Despite all of these challenges, members of Ethical Societies and friends of the Movement continue to provide welcoming homes for humanists because our communities are still greatly needed and cherished. I encourage you to take heart—you have friends and fellow travelers who really appreciate the joys and benefits of being part of a congregation of people who care about you and about bringing goodness into our world. There are more people like you in your community who would appreciate you and your congregation and would benefit from being part of your local Society. Yes, there are challenges but they can be overcome when we realize how vital our Societies are to our lives and the potential to expand our circles.

## Save These Dates

### Board Meetings

Individual members of member Societies are always welcome to attend meetings.  
March 21-22 @NYSEC  
May 1-4 @ AEU Assembly

### American Ethical Union Assembly 2014

May 1-4 Chicago, IL  
Join us in May as we challenge the influence of money in politics. Registration is open. See article on front page.

### Future of Ethical Societies (FES) Conference 2014

May 23-26 Philadelphia, PA  
Connect with young adults across the Ethical Culture Movement for an awesome weekend full of discussion and action. This special conference will include workshops, an Ethical Career panel, and a social action project at Camp Linden. Registration coming soon. For more information, email us at [fesconference@gmail.com](mailto:fesconference@gmail.com).

### Lay Leadership Summer School

July 12-19 The Mountain, NC  
The week-long curriculum includes the religious, philosophical, and organizational history of Ethical Culture; leadership skills for groups, including conflict-management and compassionate communication; and personal development. There are many opportunities for participants to get to know one another, learn about other Societies and have fun! See article on page 6. Registration is open.

## LETTER FROM AEU PRESIDENT, RICHARD KORAL

I've participated in numerous workshops and retreats whose purpose was to plan for the future. Planning is a heady undertaking since it optimistically assumes that one's future is actually subject to all the effort one invests in planning for it. If I take myself too seriously, the demands of the future are a weighty burden. You can't let the future down! But actually, instead of making me more connected with the future, these exercises made me wonder what the future really is, which is to say, I question what "future" is all about.

Some people say that there is no such thing as future, just as there is no such thing as past. Rather, we are all whirling in a continuous present, with the past and future simply artificial, one-dimensional matrices that we impose on a more complex topography.

For a while I was fixated on the notion that I am not living in the present at all, but in the deep past—say, 5,000 years before history is written. My life is barely discernible in crushed artifacts painstakingly glued

together by some museum restorer. In the course of those 5,000 years, some 200-250 generations will have passed. Empires come and are replaced by others that decline in their turn. Seas rise and seas ebb. The North Star is not Polaris anymore; it is now Deneb in the constellation Cygnus. In 5,000 years, the wonders that amaze us in our day may be child's play to the ordinary person, or they may be wholly lost and unknown.

The very notion of future, of a direction in which we're headed or whether we are going anywhere at all, is rooted in the attitude of the person doing the wondering. Their aspirations may be entirely different from ours, aligned with a culture that has different questions and concerns. As Yogi Berra observed, "The future ain't what it used to be!" Over the span of 5,000 years the crises and challenges of our day seem small and lost in the sweep of time.

Some things would remain consistent—the brain structure of future people should be essentially the



same as ours, with the same hard wiring that evolved over eons which instills the social instincts that form us (and sometimes bedevil us) today. If that is true, then the fundamental human needs and urges of their day will at least be similar to ours. The basic skills of social interaction and organization, the same ethical dilemmas we struggle with today, will be relevant for them, just as we might look to back some 2,400 years to Plato and Zeno for rules that can work for us.

To the extent we, the people of the past and those of the future, are all faced with similar issues, our collective experience would be basically the same and little has changed—the future is the same as the past. We who live in different epochs are in fact living the same life no matter how the year is numbered or what today's empire is called. In this way, there is no past or future. The human experience is level. History is flat. We are

all, across the ages, wondering at 10pm where our children are.

Does that make all our planning futile, vain, or absurd? It can't be pointless if there remains injustice to make right, hunger to abate, or pain to alleviate. The perennial struggle of humanity is all the more real and poignant for the scope of its history. The continuity of experience across the peoples and nations, across the multitudes of tribes and families, indeed the repetition of all the troubles and all the triumphs across time and space, makes me identify with those of all eras. The outrages people visited upon each other in the past will still make me angry. Those, I cannot resolve. The outrages of the distant future will have to be handled by the people of that time. But the outrages of today are on my watch.

I do the planning for my time. The future I can handle is short and bite-sized. I can deal with it. Edward Everett Hale wrote, "I am only one, but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something; and because I cannot do everything, I will not refuse to do the something that I can do."

### GET YOUR SOCIETY FEATURED ON NEW AEU WEBSITE!

Each member Societies' logo and contact information is listed in the website's "Who We Are" section.

Only 3 Societies will be featured at a time on the homepage with a special image and description.

To be a featured Society, send an image and text (250-350 characters with spaces) to [dialogue.aeu@gmail.com](mailto:dialogue.aeu@gmail.com).

## NOTES FROM YOUR AEU BOARD

Karen Elliott, *AEU Board Member*

The AEU Board met on November 16, 2013 and January 18, 2014 at the New York Society for Ethical Culture.

Anne Klaeyesen, Vice President of National Leaders Council (NLC), described a typical NLC retreat. The main areas of focus are spirituality, learning, and philosophy, with discussion during the retreat segueing into discussions via email. They began looking into adult education and what should be included in a standard curriculum for Societies. They also worked on guidelines to be used in various professional relationships (fitting given Adler's emphasis on relationship), including what a Society should expect from a Leader, what a Leader should expect from a Society, and what a Leader should expect from another Leader. There was discussion about the need for mediation when relationships become troubled. Leaders are also working on content for the new AEU website.

Lately it seems that AEU Executive Director Bart Worden is all about relationships. He is maintaining the AEU's connections to the American Humanist Association (AHA) and the Secular Coalition for America (SCA), while reaching out to humanists among the Unitarian Universalists and keeping conversations going with numerous other groups. He reported that the SCA has reorganized to facilitate growth and support its members. It now has a formal elected Board of

Directors in addition to a group containing representatives from its member organizations, including the AEU. It continues to have an Advisory Board as well. Bart is reaching out to the humanists at Harvard University and the Center for Inquiry with Leader-in-Training James Croft, who has been working as the Research and Education Fellow at the Humanist Chaplaincy at Harvard.

Other Board members have been working on developing relationships with outside organizations as well. Anne sent the Board information on the 2015 Encampment for Citizenship. Emily Newman, Paulo Ribeiro, and others have opened communication lines with the Sunday Assembly ("a godless congregation that meets to hear great talks, sing songs, and generally celebrate the wonder of life") in New York. Their meetings are now at the New York Society.

The Leadership Committee has been busy recertifying 20 Officiants who are trained to perform rites of passage such as wedding, memorial services, and naming ceremonies. Committee Chair and AEU Board member Carol Bartell told us that often Leaders-in-Training attend the Humanist Institute as part of their training. Two of them are currently doing so. Ethical Culture has strong ties to the Humanist Institute, which is obvious if you look on its website at the names of some of those involved (ex. Anne

Klaeyesen is a co-Dean and well-known Ethical Culture Leader Howard Radest is a member of the Executive Committee and a Dean Emeritus).

Emily Newman, AEU Communications Coordinator, reported that our next social media goal is to have 500 likes on Facebook, so all of you on Facebook please like the AEU—and ask your friends to like us as well. Forward posts to your friends, retweet us if you're on Twitter—get the word out about what a great community we have and about all of the wonderful things happening at Societies around the US. Work on the new website is progressing with frequent working meetings of the taskforce. The Board's look at the current version excited us—we can't wait 'til everyone can see it! Keep an eye on the current website for news about registration for the 2014 Assembly in Chicago [see pg 1].

Speaking of the Assembly, NLC Chair Jone Johnson Lewis gave the Board a preview of the schedule and it promises to continue the recent trend of Assemblies getting better and better—more information, more learning, more putting our ethics into action, and more fun. While work on the content of the 2014 Assembly is winding down as we get closer to going to Chicago this May, work on the logistics for the 2015 Assembly is gearing up. Our planner (and member of the Chicago Ethical Humanist Society) Sue Walton has found a great location for us and the Assembly Committee will be hard at work on plans for 2015 shortly after 2014 wraps up.

Board members spent some time in October and November focusing on the Membership Committee. We developed ideas on what the Committee could do and areas that would benefit from its oversight, but like all committees (like all things involving volunteers) they could use more hands and minds to do the work. If you're interested in getting involved on the national level, or if you currently volunteer locally and have ideas that might be able to be used nationally, please contact AEU President Richard Koral.

Treasurer Tom Weishaar reports that the AEU budget is slim but in the black, which is a lovely color for a budget to be. Our year-end fund-raising letter produced the kind of return we've gotten in the past. But, we are still not able to provide the level of support we would like for the Societies, so we discussed fundraising. And in order to do more than discuss it, the Board agreed to hire a consultant to help us, including doing all of the internal analysis necessary so that we have not only a vision of what we want to do but some workable ideas about how. With this and other activities, the Board is working on positioning the AEU for growth so that the Ethical Culture Movement as a whole can grow with its support.

The next Board meetings will be held on Friday, March 21 and Saturday, March 22, 2014 at the New York Society for Ethical Culture. Individual members of member Societies are always welcome to attend.



Left: Teens at YES 2013 Conference; Right: Long Island Society teens spell out YES

## NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN AEU RELIGIOUS EDUCATION



Aimee Neumann, our National Director of Religious Education, is stepping down from her position after ten years of service. A truly lifelong Ethical

Humanist, Aimee attended Sunday School at the Ethical Humanist Society of Chicago, taught their Sunday School, and became the Society's Director of Religious Education before taking on the National Director role.

Aimee has been a strong and hardworking force for ethical education: organizing weekend conferences, offering workshops

at Assemblies, and supporting children's programs across the Movement. She also helped us develop the RE listserv and an online library that is easily accessible. While Aimee is stepping down to have more time for family she intends to continue working with the RE Committee as a member.



We are pleased to announce that Dale McGowan will be our new National Director of Ethical Education. Dale is a nationally recognized author and presenter, as well as founding Executive Director of Foundation Beyond

Belief, an organization that facilitates charitable giving and volunteering in the humanist and atheist community. His books are valuable resources for many Ethical Society Sunday School teachers, directors, and parents.

Dale's different title of National Director of Ethical Education is a reflection of a conversation held at the most recent RE Conference about focusing more attention on Ethical Education and a bit less on Religious Education.

Dale will present at the American Ethical Union Assembly this May in Chicago! Join us in welcoming him to our community!

## TEENS EXPLORED UTOPIAS

Trish Cowan, *YES Conference Coordinator*

November 2013 brought the AEU's annual Youth of Ethical Societies (YES) conference to Washington, DC. Washington Ethical Society members and staff were excellent hosts to our 34 teens and 9 adults who came to crash on the floor for the pre-conference lock-in. Much love to you, especially Peggy Goetz, Susan Runner, and Pati Sanabria!

At Camp Letts, we hunkered down for two solid days of discussion, play, brainstorming, performance, ceremonies, campfires, and bonding. Discussions and skits focused on the theme "Utopia," asking the question: What would your perfect world look like? Isa, Aaron, Mulenga, and Cailyn did a phenomenal job leading the groups and activities. Future of Ethical Societies (FES) rep Kaitlin Wright gave a presentation to seniors about FES and stayed for our moving bridge ceremony, which includes heartfelt speeches about our seniors who are moving on from YES.

Teens and adults came from the Societies of Bergen County, Brooklyn, Long Island, St. Louis, Washington, Westchester and—for the first time in a long time—New York and Northern Virginia!

The teens decided next year's theme will be tackling medical ethics. These are true critical thinkers! We look forward to Edith, Io, Sabrina, and Reid leading us in New York for YES 2014! Photos on page 4.

## RE CONFERENCE FACED "BULLIES"

Aimee Neumann, *AEU Director of Religious Education*

Teachers, directors of religious education, families, and others interested in Ethical Education meet each year to get to know each other, share successes, and inspire more ideas. We typically meet the first weekend of November in Stony Point, New York. Surrounded by nature and freed from our normal daily responsibilities, we are able to enjoy an intense weekend, focusing on our role as religious educators, honing our skills, and creating materials that help us to be more effective.

The 2013 theme was "Be the Difference, Not the Bully: Building Ethical Communities." About 40 adults and children from around the country participated. The weekend included intergenerational activities as well separate programming, a nice balance for families and religious educators. Through guest speakers, readings, video, modeling, role-

playing, and AEU leadership participation, we learned new ways to combat bullying.

We also began to work on a curriculum-mapping project for the AEU which includes defining what Ethical Sunday School graduates should know, do, and believe. Societies shared their progress in curriculum development and their processes in forming those maps. Our core values and commitments cover many of the areas we feel are important, but there may be others.

Want to learn more? Send your email address to [aneumann.aeu@gmail.com](mailto:aneumann.aeu@gmail.com) to join our AEU religious education listserv. Find out what's happening around the country, share ideas, and get your questions answered. Our national network of AEU religious educators is a wonderful resource at your disposal!



## JOIN US ON THE MOUNTAIN FOR LAY LEADERSHIP SUMMER SCHOOL

Paulo Riberio, *Leader-in-Training*

I didn't really know what to expect from the Lay Leader Summer School. Members of the Bergen Society had raved about it and, as a Leader-in-training, I was strongly encouraged to go. The Mountain Resort is perched high in one of North America's few temperate rainforests in the Blue Ridge mountains of North Carolina, an absolutely breathtaking environment. The scenery alone would have been worth the price of tuition.

My experience with Summer School was so rewarding that I decided to join the faculty this year to help create a great week for you. I have the privilege of working with a great team of knowledgeable professional and lay leaders from across the Ethical Culture Movement. We are working tirelessly to provide high-quality content to our

attendees. The Summer School curriculum includes an in-depth look at Ethical Culture's history and mission; lessons and practice sessions for organizational development and communication skills; and opportunities for students to craft engaging and meaningful ceremonies that they can take with them back to their Societies. Whether you're just stepping into a leadership role or a longtime lay leader, Summer School will be an extremely valuable experience.

If this sounds like an adventure you'd like to take part in, register today. For registration materials and more information, contact the AEU office at 212-873-6500 or [lmiller.aeu@gmail.com](mailto:lmiller.aeu@gmail.com).

See you on the Mountain!



## HOW WOULD YOU HELP SPREAD THE ETHICAL CULTURE MOVEMENT?

*Apply now for the Mossler Fellowship to put your idea into action.*

Emily Newman, *Communications Coordinator*

The Ethical Culture Movement is made up of a few thousand dedicated and passionate members. Although our successes are historic and our hearts are huge, our size is still relatively small. If you have a project idea to help us expand our outreach, apply for the Mossler Fellowship so we can you get started.

The Mossler Trust was set up by the estate of Adele S. Mossler, who died in 1984. Mossler was a member of the New York Society for Ethical Culture and Director of the Play Schools Association. The Mossler endowment provides funding (a) to create, annually, one or more Fellowships for Leaders-In-Training, preferably women, under the AEU Leader Recruiting Committee or Leader

Training Committee; and (b) to create, annually, one or more Fellowships to members of minority groups and/or women for the spread of the Ethical Culture Movement nationally.

Past Mossler Fellows include:

- Adam Foldes – Archiving Ethical Culture documents and preparing their digitalization
- Elizabeth Mulhall Collier – Researching the needs and wants of young humanists

The American Ethical Union's Board of Directors determines Fellowship awards based on the following criteria (in no order of priority):

- 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 and all supporting documents are due to the AEU by 5pm Friday, March 7th.** Awards and amounts will be determined at the AEU's March board meeting. All applicants will be notified of their status by April 15. For an application and more information, contact the AEU office at 212-873-6500 or [lmiller.aeu@gmail.com](mailto:lmiller.aeu@gmail.com).

We look forward to learning about your plan and supporting your work!

## BERGEN SOCIETY CELEBRATED 60TH ANNIVERSARY

Linda Bennett, *Ethical Culture Society of Bergen County*

The Ethical Culture Society of Bergen County celebrated its 60th anniversary in 2013 with a Gala dinner dance at the Clinton Inn in Tenafly, New Jersey. A total of 155 people attended, "including all our wonderful Youth Group members" notes Azar Gordon, who, together with her husband, Bob Gordon, orchestrated the event.

An honored guest was founding member, Rudy Herzog, who attended along with his grandsons. Members and guests came from as far as The Netherlands (Peter and Marinka Haring) and across the US to attend the gala. Some were the adult children of founding members (the Rubenstein family, for example), who made the

gala an occasion for a family reunion to celebrate their connection to the Bergen Society and Ethical Culture.

One of the Society's earliest leaders, Howard Radest, and his wife, Rita, attended and were honored. Several past recipients of the Jack Rubenstein Ethical Action Award attended. This award is given by the Society to community leaders whose work in areas of social action reflects the humanist ideals of the Ethical Culture Movement.

The gala included some amusing skits put together and performed by past presidents of the Bergen Society with the help of Youth Group members.

Nearly everyone took to the floor to dance. Local merchants, members, and friends of the Society showed their support by purchasing ads in the Gala commemorative booklet. Everyone attending took home a lovely set of crystal engraved coasters.

Photos of the Gala are available on the Bergen Society's website, [www.ethicalfocus.org](http://www.ethicalfocus.org). Just click on the photo of the Gala and it will expand, then click on the down arrow and on "slideshow."

Very special thanks from the Bergen Society to Azar and Bob Gordon for creating an outstanding and memorable event.

Left: Azar and Bob Gordon dancing; Middle: Honoree Rudy Herzog and his grandsons; Right: Youth Group member enjoying the meal



**And congratulations to the Ethical Culture Society of Bergen County for paying off their mortgage!**

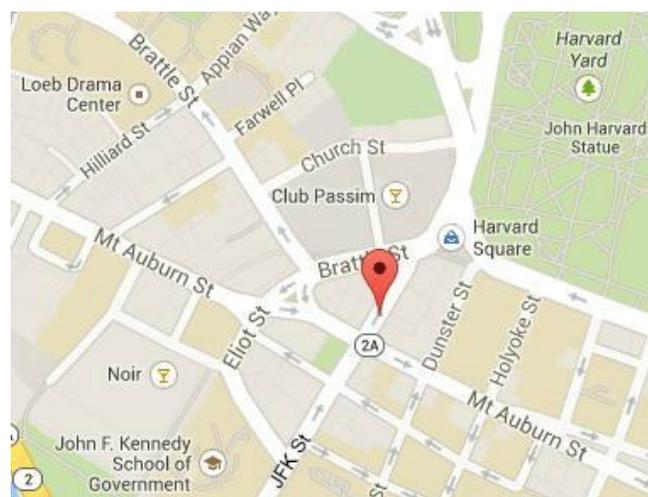
## NEW HOME FOR BOSTON SOCIETY

Congratulations to the Ethical Society of Boston for their new home at the Humanist Hub! The Hub was developed by the Humanist Community at Harvard so that atheist and Humanist students and locals can "Connect. Act. Evolve."

"With this new opportunity to build the humanist community in the Boston

area, we have the chance to grow, to connect, to build a home in a major intellectual center of the country, and to promote the humanist movement" said Andrea Perrault, Board President of the Boston Society.

Learn more about the Hub and the Boston Society at [www.bostonethical.org](http://www.bostonethical.org).



## FROM THE UNITED NATIONS: CHILDREN AND THEIR HUMAN RIGHTS

*CHARITY IS NOT ENOUGH. CHILDREN NEED THEIR RIGHTS PROTECTED BY INTERNATIONAL LAW.*

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

Throughout the world many children are denied their human rights: forced to become child soldiers, trafficked for labor or sex, and put in adult jails under life sentences without parole. Since the 1980's advocates for childhood human rights have increasingly agreed that children need their rights protected by international law. Charity is not enough to protect children. November 2013 was the 24th anniversary of the UN convention on the rights of the child. It is the first legally binding agreement that sets standards for the care, treatment and protection of persons below age 18. This convention is the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history. The only exceptions to ratifying this treaty are Somalia and the United States. Somalia is expected to ratify soon.

**Why a human Rights approach?**  
 When a country ratifies a treaty it must incorporate the provisions of the convention into its national legislation. Over 70 countries have done this, thus strengthening the protection of children. An additional reason for a rights approach is universality, which means this treaty applies to all children and carries with it accountability. Under stringent human rights legislation violators will be held accountable.

**Why has the United States not ratified?**  
 One of the biggest barriers is an aggressive misinformation campaign by parental rights organizations. US ratification of the human rights treaty for children is complicated by the continued practice of sentencing child offenders to life in prison without parole, which the convention specifically prohibits. This practice has fortunately been increasingly whittled away by the US Supreme Court in recent years.

Let us examine some other issues facing the world's children:

### **Trafficking**

After drug dealing, human trafficking (both for sex and forced labor) is the major and fastest growing criminal industry in the world today. The UN estimates that this activity involves over \$32 billion per year. Worldwide UNICEF estimates that there are nearly two million children in the commercial sex trade.

The International Justice Mission (IJM) relates the story of 14-year-old Manna from India. She ran away from her abusive home and met a woman who offered her a job selling fabric. She accepted the position and the woman provided her a place to sleep for the night. When she woke up, the woman was gone and she discovered that she was in a brothel. She was freed after two years when IJM investigators discovered her captivity and alerted local authorities that freed her and three other girls. She was lucky, but many others are not.

### **Child soldiers**

Worldwide hundreds of thousands of children are recruited into armed forces, paramilitary civil militia and other armed groups. Under international law the participation of children under 18 is prohibited. The recruitment and use of children under 15 is a war crime. Often they are abducted. Others enlist "voluntarily", usually and sadly, because these children see few alternatives. Since 2008 UNICEF and partners on the ground have been involved in the release of over 12,000 children from various armed groups in 9 countries.



### **Juvenile Justice**

According to UNICEF, more than one million children are detained through the justice systems worldwide at any time. The vast majority has not committed serious offenses. Many are charged with offenses such as running away from home, violating child related curfews, truancy and alcohol use. Children are also detained in the context of immigration.

The US is particularly harsh in its judicial system. After the 1970's the trend was to be tough on crime and especially on the use of mandatory sentencing for drug crimes. Over the past decades those laws pushed the American prison population to more than two million, the highest rate of incarceration in the world. African Americans are 20 times more likely than whites to be sentenced to life without parole. Human Rights Watch and the ACLU estimate that in 2011, more than 95,000 young people under the age of 18 were held in prisons and jails, many of which use solitary confinement, a particularly harsh punishment for young people.

**You can support children's human rights by donating to and assisting the work of Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, UNICEF, and Equal Justice Initiative.**

## FROM THE UN: UN PEACEKEEPING AND MEDIATION – UPDATE

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

Dr. Reba Goodman, *Ethical Culture Society of Bergen County*

The United Nations was founded in 1945, after the horrors of World War II. One of the most important purposes of the UN is the maintenance of international peace and security. Over the years the UN has helped end numerous conflicts, many in politically explosive situations, often through action of the UN Security Council.

When diplomacy fails and conflicts break out the UN mediates. If a peace agreement or a cease-fire is arranged, the UN organizes a peacekeeping force to monitor it. The UN is not a world government, does not have its own military force, and depends entirely on contributions from member states.

The UN Security Council creates and defines the details and clear rules of engagement of the peace mission. Peacekeeping troops, known as blue helmets, participate under terms carefully negotiated by their government and remain under overall authority of these governments while serving under UN operational command. The authority to deploy peacekeepers remains with the Security Council and the governments that volunteer them as does responsibility for pay, discipline and personnel matters.

Because of the Cold War, in the first 40 years of the UN's history only 13 peacekeeping missions were organized. During the 1990s, after the end of the Cold War, the focus was more on internal conflicts rather than inter-state conflicts. Since the end of the Cold War there has been a rapid increase in the demand for peacekeeping missions as well as a greater willingness to use them. Currently there are 111,000 personnel serving in 15 missions. Since 1948 there have been 68 missions with

a total fatalities of 3,100. Last year 111 personnel were killed.

The number of peacekeepers has risen in the past decade from twenty thousand to over one hundred thousand. Unfortunately, the Security Council doesn't always provide adequate resources, money, or well-trained personnel to carry out complex and overambitious mandates. Recently, the UN peacekeeping operations have come under fire. Let's examine the criticism and also how successful these operations are:

### Does Peacekeeping and mediation work?

There have been a number of studies showing both successes and failures. The Rand corporation in 2005 studied eight UN led missions and found that seven brought sustained peace.

A 2005 UN report was cited in a recent CNN crossfire discussion. The report claimed that since the end of World War II the UN has overseen 172 successful peacekeeping missions and negotiations. Examples include ending the Iran-Iraq war, facilitation of the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan and ending civil wars in Lebanon El Salvador and Guatemala. It has also used diplomacy to avert imminent wars. The CNN program host investigated and reported the claim mostly true. There have also been tragic failures such as Rwanda and Srebrenica.

### Criticism

Recent reports have highlighted serious problems with peacekeeping missions. Haiti has filed a lawsuit charging the UN with gross negligence in starting a serious Cholera epidemic. Nepalese members of a peacekeeping force,

infected with Cholera from their home country, spread the disease through reckless sewage disposal. This is a case of extremely bad UN oversight.

Next, Transparency International UK a London-based organization that monitors corruption reported cases of peacekeepers bribery, theft and unauthorized sale of equipment. They urged the UN to investigate and be more vigilant. If this is true it is a very serious charge.

Finally, there have been the outrageous sex abuses especially in the Congo. It is important to understand that this is a sovereignty issue in which each country insists on control over their troops and must take responsibility to monitor their soldiers. The UN has a zero-tolerance policy for sexual abuses but some contributing countries are lax in controlling their soldiers. This is a very serious situation and must be corrected.

There has been a recurrent idea that some of these problems could be mitigated through the creation of a well-trained standing UN force that can respond quickly to an unfolding crisis. This would not be a UN army, though some member states, given the history of colonialism, are suspicious that it may erode their sovereignty.

### Why is the world interested in Peacekeeping?

The answer is partially humanitarian to relieve suffering. Also chaos is a "travelling epidemic" for crime, disease, refugees, and general instability crossing national borders. Another concern is that if the UN doesn't do it, who will?

## WALL OF REMEMBRANCE

*Let us live truly while we live, live for what is true and good and lasting.*

Compiled from various sources including the Societies' newsletters



**George Bunk** (*Philadelphia*) died after a brief illness on December 27. His grand passion in life, and much of his career, can be summarized in the phrase *ad astra*—"to the stars." Inspired by writers like Isaac Asimov and Ray Bradbury and the adventures of *Star Trek*, he obtained a Masters in Space Technology and worked for Boeing and Lockheed-Martin for the space shuttle program, testing payloads, maintaining laboratories, and in numerous other capacities for space flights. He also taught astronomy and physics to train and inspire the next generation of space scientists.

**Tom Ferrick** died at age 84 this January. He was a Leader-in-Training at the St. Louis Society before becoming a Leader at the Boston Society and a founding member of the Humanist Association of Massachusetts. He signed the Humanist Manifesto II in 1973 and III in 2003, and founded the Harvard Humanist chaplaincy in 1991. Although originally a Jesuit priest, Tom became a very active board member of the American Humanist Association.

**Corinne Hammer** (*St. Louis*) died of natural causes on December 10 surrounded by family.

**Martha Herzog** (*Bergen*) passed away January 28.

**Princene Hyatt** (*Brooklyn*) died late December at the age of 81. She retired from the Department of Education, and also worked for 30 years in the accounting department of Gray's Advertising. She contributed to the Society's "Lunch with the Bunch" by coming early on Sundays to make a fresh green salad. Her stunning memoir in "The Dream Catcher's Song," the collection of the Brooklyn Ethical Writers' Group, opened up her difficult South Carolina childhood and early activism in the civil rights group CORE after coming to New York. She was a visual artist, and a picture of one of her sculpted, mixed media hangings graces the cover of the book.

**Edward Jackson** (*New York*) joined the Society in 1958 and was elected as a Member of the Society's Board of Trustees in 1989. He supported the Society's P.S. 133 Committee efforts to work with school staff to enrich the educational program within the school; was a Member of Build Your Own Philosophy class in '86; and served as panelist at Wednesday Platform on Education. Edward worked for the NYC DOE, as a principal of P.S. 133 for more than 30 years, retiring in 1989. During his tenure he steered the school's participation in "Writing to Read" a nationally recognized computer-based program developed by IBM, and his was the only school in the metropolitan area with that program.

**Stanley Krass** (*St. Louis*) died after a long illness on November 24. Condolences to his brother Walter and family.

**Don Newbart** (*Chicago*) was a Society member for many years before he died in September at the age of 90. Don was born in Cleveland and lived most of his life in the Chicago area. A graduate of the University of Chicago, he was a professional social worker. He was active as a volunteer in many local organizations, including as a docent at the Field Museum.

**Charlotte Roth** (*Westchester*), long-time member, died peacefully at her home in Mamaroneck on December 26 after a long decline. She was 91. She is survived by her husband Bob Roth (former ECSW board member and administrator), her three children, two step children, and numerous grand- and great-grandchildren.

**Frederick Emory (Fred) Simms** (*Asheville*) unexpectedly became ill and died peacefully, surrounded by family and friends, on December 16 at the age of 75. Originally from St. Louis, Missouri, Fred attended Yale University and served in the Air Force becoming a Negotiations & Sales Engineer. Fred became involved with Ethical Culture in 1978 when he and his wife Jackie enrolled their daughter in Sunday school class at the Ethical Society of St. Louis. When Fred and Jackie moved to Asheville in 1990, they found other former Ethical Culture members and established the Ethical Society of Asheville. After retiring in 2004, Fred increased his focus on volunteer work with several organizations and continued to support the growing Asheville Society.

Write for the *Dialogue*—We are accepting submissions for Spring 2014!

Send submissions to [dialogue.aeu@gmail.com](mailto:dialogue.aeu@gmail.com) by Tuesday, March 25, 2014. Please include a headshot and relative images with your submission when possible.

If you are interested in writing but do not know what to write about, become a reporter for the *Dialogue* and get assigned a topic or event.



Left: strikers marching; Right: Meg Chapman & Anne Klaeysen (NYSEC)

## SLEEPLESS IN SOLIDARITY

Anne Klaeysen, *Leader, New York Society for Ethical Culture*

I had to wake up at 4am, so I had to fall asleep. But I couldn't. So I read. The novel on the top of my nightstand pile had done the trick before, but it wasn't working. I still couldn't sleep. I could have easily finished the book, but I had to wake up at 4am.

I lay awake in bed, eyes closed, thinking about...everything. Nothing escaped my attention; nothing was too small or insignificant to ponder and analyze. A parade of people marched under my eyelids, and every one of them had a story that I replayed, like running a projector on the screen of a darkened and empty movie theater. I mostly thought about the workers who would soon be going on strike at fast food restaurants all across the country.

Just relax, I kept telling myself. You're lying down, your eyes are closed. Even if you're not sleeping, you're relaxing. Only

I wasn't. I kept going through the next day's (now this day's) agenda:

- Meet clergy colleagues on the corner of 52nd St. & 8th Ave. in Manhattan at 5:30am
- Combine forces with workers and community organizers at 6am and head to the McDonald's on Broadway
- Enter restaurant by any means possible and take it over by 6:30am
- Start the program with Ethical Culture Leader Algernon Black's Invocation and line up the speakers: workers and clergy
- Leave when the police arrive and reconvene on the sidewalk
- Be prepared with living wage chants—and let the politicians speak (but not too much)

Easy peasy. But what if we can't get into the restaurant? What if the police are already there and arrest us? What if no

reporters show up? What if I fail? What if? Enough already! Relax! I have to sleep. I have to wake up on time. People are counting on me.

But I'm not the only one; I'm part of a team: The Clergy-Worker Justice Table. We all support one another through breakfast meetings, emails, teleconferences, and texts. This is not our first fast food action; we are pros. My heart breaks whenever I hear workers tell their stories about walking to work because they can't afford public transportation; long shifts or reduced hours; children to feed, clothe, and educate; sleepless nights wondering how to pay all the bills. Sleepless nights, just like this one.

The alarm goes off, and I wake up, so I must have slept after all. What was my last thought before I drifted off? Whose face did I see? Now I see my own in the mirror as I brush

## AMERICAN ETHICAL UNION

2 West 64th Street, 4fl New York, NY 10023  
212-873-6500  
[office@aeu.org](mailto:office@aeu.org)

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Richard Koral, President  
Scott Walton, V. President  
Tom Weishaar, Treasurer  
Jan Broughton, Secretary  
Jone Johnson Lewis, NLC Pres  
Anne Klaeysen, NLC V. Pres  
Lisel Burns, NLC Alternate  
Carol Bartell  
Hank Gassner  
Ken Karp  
Laura Stark Steele  
Julia Julstrom-Agoyo, FES Rep  
Emily Newman, FES Rep Alt  
Bart Worden, Board ex-officio

## STAFF

Bart Worden, Executive Dir.  
Law'nence Miller, Dir. of Admin.  
Donna Pang, Admin. Assistant  
Dale McGowan, Natl Dir. of EE  
Trish Cowan, Natl YES Coord.  
Emily Newman, Comm. Coord.  
Susan Rose, Dean of Leadership Training

Thank you to Richard Reichart, our *Dialogue* Copy Editor!

my teeth. Soon I'll get dressed, pulling on my NYSEC vest over a warm sweater, and head out the door to the subway. I'm ready.

*Author's Note: It was pure joy to hear the words of Algernon Black's Invocation repeated back in classic Occupy Wall Street "mike check" fashion and to clear the way for workers' voices to be heard. Here's the link to Democracy Now's video: [http://www.democracynow.org/2013/12/5/we\\_cant\\_survive\\_on\\_725\\_fast](http://www.democracynow.org/2013/12/5/we_cant_survive_on_725_fast)*