

ETHICAL OUTLOOK

December 2019

SUNDAY DEC. 15 | PLATFORM TALK at 11am INTERGENERATIONAL WINTER SOLSTICE FESTIVAL WEAVING THE LIGHT AND THE NIGHT

Richard Koral, Ethical NYC Leader,
 and Audrey Kindred, Youth & Family Programs Coordinator

Join us for a delightful morning of solstice celebration as our intergenerational community gathers to reflect on our relationship with nature. Explore how the cycle of waning daylight affords opportunities for dreaming, healing, reflection, and quietude, and how humans since the beginning have created ceremonies of light for warmth, safety, and storytelling. Through storytelling, music, singing and meditations, our festival team will weave the threads of the human story into the tapestry that we call nature. We are so happy that this year Bonita Oliver will be joining us.

Bonita Oliver is a multidisciplinary artist, actress, and award-winning filmmaker. She also performs under the pseudonym “French Leave.” The message of her work — which

is largely improvised— is about transition, the process of moving through. As a solo artist, Bonita has performed at venues such as The Northampton Center for The Arts, The Juilliard School, Joe’s Pub, and The Schomburg Center. She is a founding member of “Moving Star,” a vocal group in residence at Carnegie Hall, where she has recently led a program for children and families.

*This week’s shared charity, the **Encampment for Citizenship (EFC)**, founded by the New York Society for Ethical Culture, conducts residential summer programs with year-round follow-up for young people of widely diverse backgrounds and nations. It provides youth with a compelling experience in democratic living, with emphasis on critical thinking and social action.*

CO-SPONSORED BY THE ETHICAL ACTION COMMITTEE
 & AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL USA, Groups 9 & 80

WRITE FOR RIGHTS DAY CHANGE A LIFE WITH A LETTER



Sunday, December 8 at 1pm By Paul Pavese

Sometimes a letter can change someone’s life. That’s the premise of Write for Rights, Amnesty International’s annual global letter-writing campaign, honoring Human Rights Day on December 10th — the anniversary of the signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948.

Together, the 100 countries participating in this annual event have freed prisoners of conscience, saved the lives of human rights defenders under attack, stopped torture, and put an end to some of the world’s worst human rights abuses.

Each year, Amnesty identifies 10 urgent cases in which global activism can make a huge impact, and supplies infor-

... (continued on pg 10)



DEC. 22 | PLATFORM TALK at 11am CLIMATE ACTION: WHY COLLECTIVE ACTION IS THE ANSWER

Dan Hanson presides

With rampaging wildfires in California, devastating hurricanes across the Atlantic, and record temperatures across the US, climate change is ... (continued on pg 7)

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LEADER'S DESK

DR. JOSEPH CHUMAN

ETHICAL CULTURE'S QUIETER SIDE

When asked about Ethical Culture, I suspect what comes to the mind of many members is its notable public achievements in the arena of progressive social reform and social service. The list is long and we can be duly proud of what Ethical Culture and the New York Society have accomplished in its 143 years. But many of our members might therefore be surprised that when our founder, Felix Adler, when queried about the primary purpose of Ethical Culture, did not respond by making reference to the public realm or to social action. He responded that the purpose of Ethical Culture is to nurture and build “ethical personality.”

No doubt, social justice work is essential to Ethical Culture, and we would not fulfill our mission without it. But to Adler's mind, working to improve society and assist the downtrodden and oppressed is one vehicle among others toward improving the lives of those men and women dedicated to that social justice work. And the men and women he had most in mind were the members of Ethical Societies.

This primary commitment to the nurturing of “ethical personality” opens the door to the quieter, more hidden half of our mission, but arguably it is the more important half. It is the side of our philosophy which requires us to become increasingly more sensitive to the humanity that resides in each of us. Beyond our outward manifestations, our words and deeds, there resides, Adler believed, an element in us that requires the utmost respect, indeed reverence. And once we become sensitive to this indwelling humanity, Ethical Culture commends us to help bring it forth and

support its development. When we do this in relationship with others, we find that we elicit these qualities in ourselves.

What does this mean in concrete terms?

First, on the most basic level, it requires that we treat others with formal respect and courtesy. It is said that “manners are minor morals,” and I think that this is true. Formal courtesies are often more than merely formal. They suggest that the one so acting brings an attitude of respect and regard for the one that he or she is addressing.

Next, I think we should never lose sight of the importance of basic kindness. Life is hard. It is often coarse. The public world can often be harsh and unforgiving. Virtually all of us suffer hardships and tragedies that we sustain in silence. And as we all know that life is so often unfair. Simple acts

“The purpose of Ethical Culture is to nurture and build ‘ethical personality.’”

of kindness can work to soften this harshness and the presence of a kind word or kind gesture of support often carries with it greater sustaining effects than we assume for those who are the beneficiaries of our kindness.

Cultivating kindness costs us nothing, but it pays great dividends in the realm of human relations. William Wordsworth has a beautiful line in his poem, “Tintern Abbey” to the effect that “The best portion of a good man's life is his little, nameless, unremembered acts of kindness and of love.” I think there is



truth in that, and that thought has long resonated with me and even serves as a source of inspiration.

But cultivating “ethical personality” can suggest deeper forms of relationship that we can sustain with perhaps only a few chosen others. In this regard, it means that we pay attention to others. This requires, I believe, that we suspend judgment. It means that we approach others not with a view toward what they can do for us, but in the spirit of relationship and dialogue. In a deeper sense it suggests that we try to see others not as objects, but appreciate them as subjects and gain an empathetic sense of their interiority, so to speak. Perhaps we begin to see and experience the world as they do. And when we can do this, only partially at best, we can embrace them in their fuller humanity.

Ethical Culture and its humanism have a philosophy. But in the final analysis, we do not end with a philosophy. Our philosophy, rather, is a signpost that points our way to an experience. And that experience is directed, again, to an ever increasing appreciation of the humanity of all those with whom we share the human experience.



**NOT A
MEMBER?**

All the more reason to attend any of our Ethical Enrichment programs, special events, or Sunday Platform meetings. They're all open to the public, and you're always welcome.



YOUNG ETHICAL explorers (YEE)



**AUDREY
KINDRED**

*Coordinator,
Youth & Family
Programs*

Inviting all NYC open-minded and humanist families. Participation is free for Ethical NYC members. Newcomers are welcome.

Participate on a trial basis for a few visits as you consider becoming an Ethical Member-Family.

RSVP as a guest, become a member, or enroll:

youngethicalexplorers@gmail.com

Visit youngethicalexplorers.blogspot.com for regular updates.

See you in the new year!

SUNDAYS 11am

'TIS THE SEASON

Dec. 1 — Deed Meets Need: Children will gain empathetic understanding of the human needs in our city in this brisk season. They will gain deeper understandings of why and how to participate in deeds throughout the city throughout the season. You may bring winter clothes and winter coats that your family has outgrown, or no longer needs to pass forward.

Dec. 8 — Darkness: We are all experiencing the season's growing darkness. We will dive into the explorations of this darkness and emerge with appreciations that can light up our Winter Festival.

Dec. 15 — Winter Festival
(See Ethical Sundays, p. 6)

Dec. 22 — Sharing Our Families' Traditions: Being a gift to each other. RSVP is mandatory.



EL MUSEO DEL BARRIO

Friday, DEC. 20 at 10:30am

Founded in 1969, El Museo specializes in Latin American and Caribbean art, with an emphasis on works from Puerto Rico and the Puerto Rican community in New York City.

Meet in the Ethical lobby at 10:30am (or at the museum at 11:30am). From here we'll take the M66 bus to Madison Ave, and the M2 LTD bus up to 106th Street. Admission is \$9 adults, \$5 seniors.

Lunch is at the Side Park Café in the Museum. Questions: contact Elinore at ethicaloutlook@gmail.com.

TIME OUT!

Our wonderful Easy Walking Explorers leaders, Bob Bumcrot and Howard Rose, are giving us a Winter Recess. Their next outing will be in March 2020.



**LUNCH WITH
THE LEAGUE**

CO-SPONSORED WITH THE ETHICAL ACTION COMMITTEE

THE FIGHT AGAINST GUN VIOLENCE IN NEW YORK



Rebecca Fischer, Executive Director of New Yorkers Against Gun Violence (NYAGV)

Ms. Fischer will discuss the actions NYAGV is taking to protect New Yorkers from gun violence. This includes fighting for legislation that would close federal loopholes that allow gun sales by internet and gun shows without background checks.

She will introduce a representative from the newly formed Youth Against Guns (YOG) a group of high school and college students of color who are working on life-saving policies and programs to prevent gun violence in their communities.

Admission (with RSVP): LWV & Ethical Members \$20, Guests \$25

RSVP: 212-725-3541 or office@lwvnyc.org

\$25 at the door | Lunch is included with admission.

**Tuesday
DEC. 10
12 – 2pm**



ETHICAL ENRICHMENT

ONGOING PROGRAMS
AT THE SOCIETY

Maggie Determann, Membership Coordinator:

mdetermann@nysec.org / 212-874-5210 x1113

HOLIDAY SCHEDULE ALERT:

The building will close at 1:30pm on Tuesday, Dec. 24, and remain closed thru Dec. 27. It will also close Dec. 30 & Jan. 1.

M O N D A Y S EXPLORING ETHICAL DILEMMAS IN...

AGING: IF I'D ONLY KNOWN

Liz Singer, End of Life Specialist

Janet Rose, Coordinator

Why choose the title "If I'd Only Known" for this talk? Easy question. In the 10 years that I have been practicing as a geriatric care manager and coordinator, it is the phrase I most often hear. Planning for what is needed as one ages and as one faces the end of life — whether for oneself or for a loved one — can be overwhelming. There are so many decisions to make! Decisions in the areas of financial, legal, medical, personal, social, emotional...the list goes on and on. And these ethical decisions are fraught with ethical dilemmas.

What do you do when there's no clear ethical road to take? Join us monthly for speakers from a variety of backgrounds — medicine, law, business, science, education, the arts, social work, and more — who will share their experience navigating those ethical labyrinths.

1st Monday | DEC. 2, 6:30pm | Members Free, Guests \$5

NEWCOMER RECEPTION

MEMBERSHIP DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Find out who we are and what we do — our history, philosophy, social ethics, programs, and membership.

RSVP is a must. Please contact Maggie Determann. See box at top of this page.

3rd Monday (Refreshments served) | DEC. 16, 7pm | Free

SPEAKING OF SCIENCE...

Jesús Torres Vázquez and Joe Fashing, Coordinators

Speaker and topic to be announced. Please check our Events Calendar at *Ethical.nyc*.

4th Monday (Refreshments served) | DEC. 23, 6:30pm

T U E S D A Y S

WISDOM & WORLD AFFAIRS

Ken Gans facilitates

These philosophical discussions cover a wide variety of subjects — the fate of humanity, world affairs, humanism, and many others.

1st & 3rd Tuesdays | Dec. 3 & 17, 6pm | Free

RACE, SYSTEMS, AND SOCIETY

Dr. Richard Koral, Leader

Even among those who are mindful of the subtle racial, ethnic, and class distinctions that persist in society, we are all participants in a larger societal structure that perpetuates injustices. We continue to explore the features of systemic racism and classism in America to better understand the ways in which society can recreate itself to permit all people to flourish and thrive.

2nd Tuesday | Dec. 10, 6:30pm | Members Free, Guests \$5

CAMARADERIE & GOOD CONVERSATION ON ISSUES PHILOSOPHICAL & NEWSWORTHY

Dr. Joseph Chuman, Leader

We aim to illuminate the philosophical concepts and values that underlie the contemporary issues on which we focus in our discussions.

Please register to receive reading assignments. See box at top of this page.

3rd Tuesday | Dec. 17, 7pm | Free

W E D N E S D A Y S

GREAT LITERATURE DISCUSSIONS

Gunther Tielemans, Moderator

INVISIBLE MAN, by Ralph Ellison

This 1952 American classic is a rhapsodic investigation of what Ralph Ellison himself called "the beautiful absurdity" of American identity. A black American tells us about his life-journey, from his adolescence in the South to his turbulent adulthood in New York. He passes through, and in turn rejects, the mythical possibilities of black citizenship as they are presented to him during his odyssey: meek assimilation and religious consolation in the South, militant Africanism and radical Communism in the North. He emerges "like all men, ambiguous, limited in circumstance but not in possibility." Parts of this experience may have been told before, but never with such freshness, intensity and power.

Read the novel in advance and be prepared to discuss the aspects of interest to you by referring to and reading specific related text to the group.

Up next (Jan. 8): *Ceremony*, by Leslie Marmon Silko

1st Wednesday | Dec. 4, 7pm | Members Free, Guests \$5

LUNCHTIME ROUNDTABLE

Francesca Turchiano and Bob Bumcrot, Moderators
Read the articles in advance if you can. Access them online, pick them up when you attend the next weekly discussion, or ask Maggie Determann for them. Come join the discussion.

Theme: RACISM IN AMERICA 1619 — TODAY

Note: This is a big topic in a short month. If you can read and consider only some of the pieces, you're still welcome to attend. Listings that begin with "The 1619 Project" can also be accessed by Googling that title. You will then have access to the entire project which was published as a NYT Sunday Magazine section in August. It is a deeply researched and widely collaborative effort.

12/5 The History

The 1619 Project: A Brief History of Slavery That You Didn't Learn in School, Mary Elliott and Jazmine Hughes. *NYT Magazine*, 8/19/19; The 1619 Project: America Wasn't a Democracy Until Black Americans Made It One, Nikole Hannah-Jones. *NYT Magazine*, 8/14/19

12/12 Contemporary Perspectives

The Fight to Redefine Racism, Kalefa Sanneh. *The New Yorker*, 8/19/19; The 1619 Project: American Capitalism is Brutal, Matthew Desmond. *NYT Magazine* 8/18/19 The 1619 Project; How America's Vast Racial Wealth Gap Grew: By Plunder, Trymain Lee. *NYT Magazine* 8/18/19

12/19 Hope or Despair?

The Case for Reparations, Ta-Nehisi Coates, *The Atlantic*, 6/14; The 1619 Project: Undemocratic Democracy, Jamelle Bouie, *NYT Magazine* 8/18/19

12pm | Free

JOIN OUR
EMAIL LIST



Want to receive Ethical Outlook and notices of what's coming up at Ethical NYC in your email box? Easy! Just visit Ethical.nyc and add your email — top right, below Resources — in the box under "Join Our Email List."



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

LIZ SINGER



December is a month of celebrations. I have always loved December. As a native Californian raised in Los Angeles, I did not grow up with snow. Although one of my favorite holiday songs was "Over the River and Through the Woods," its lyrics did not have the same meaning to me as they do to East-Coasters.

*"Over the river and through the woods
To Grandfather's house we go.
The horse knows the way
To carry the sleigh
Through white and drifted snow."*

Matter of fact, they were a mystery to me, as the only snow and woods I ever saw was on our family's official start of the holiday season trip to Big Bear Mountain and Santa's Village. Santa's Village was 80 miles northeast of LA in the San Gabriel Mountains. My family

— consisting of myself, my brother (4 years younger), and my mother and father — would pack up our 1950 Chevy station wagon with winter gear (hard to find in LA), sandwiches for the long car trip, and chains for the tires. Yes chains! Off we would go, San Bernardino Freeway to Big Bear, then up the mountain. As we drove up the incline, we would start looking for SNOW. Whoever could find the first patch of icy grey snow won. At that point we would pull the station wagon off to the roadside and start the "putting on the chains" process. This is quite a feat (with which many in other parts of the country were familiar). First you must put the chains on the road, and then you drive the vehicle onto the chains. Then the chains have to be attached to the tires. That done, we were ready to venture into the wilds of the

California snow country.

Up the steep mountain to Santa's Village we went. The day was always fun, exciting, and emotional as it was the start of my family's Christmas celebrations. But now, as I look back on it, I realize that the best part was actually and always the anticipation of the day and the car trip rather than the arrival at the Village.

For many of us, the Ethical Culture society is family/community. Our times together, as evidenced by times past, are grand! So I have a feeling that for you, as for me, the anticipation of our shared holiday time has already begun. And this year, do we ever have celebration in store for the holiday season! Just read this issue of Outlook and find your special niche for celebration.

Come join us in all the festivities!

SUNDAYS AT ETHICAL

Spend all or part of your Sundays with us! Join us any and every Sunday for thought-provoking, engaging, informative programs and platform meetings. Stay for lunch and get to know one another. Lunch — at 12:30 in the 6th floor cafeteria — is free for newcomers and children, \$10 for members and guests.

DECEMBER 1



PLATFORM TALK at 11am WHEN AT TIMES THE MOB IS SWAYED

Professor Burt Neuborne
Maggie Determann presides

Drawing on my 55 years as a civil liberties lawyer (I appeared in my first Supreme Court case in 1967), I will attempt to assess the strength of our democratic institutions to withstand the intense pressures placed on them by politicians who seek to gain and retain political power by unleashing divisive rhetoric exploiting fear, envy, bigotry, misogyny and xenophobia. I conclude in my new book, “When at Times the Mob is Swayed,” that there is no institutional *deus ex machina* in the sky that can save American democracy if the people fail to defend it at the polls. While, I argue, our institutions can resist the erosion of democratic ideals, only the people can preserve them.



BURT NEUBORNE has been on the faculty of NYU Law School for 48 years; he is the Norman Dorsen Professor in Civil Liberties. He was National Legal Director of the ACLU during the Reagan Presidency, and is the founding Legal Director of the Brennan Center for Justice (emeritus). As a young ACLU lawyer, Neuborne challenged the constitutionality of the undeclared war in Vietnam. He has appeared in more than 200 cases in the US Supreme Court, including the Pentagon Papers, the flag burning cases, and, most recently, the unsuccessful attack on partisan gerrymandering. Beginning in 1996, he served as principal counsel in a series of cases against Swiss banks and German corporations seeking restitution for victims of the Holocaust, resulting in the distribution of almost \$8 billion to victims. In 2001, he was elected to membership in the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

*This week's shared charity is the **Brennan Center for Justice**, a nonpartisan law and policy institute whose mission it is to uphold the values of democracy — equal justice and the rule of law. The Center works to craft and advance reforms that will make American democracy work, for all.*

SOCIAL MEDIA 1.1

Steve Serling, Moderator

“Love it or hate it, social media is being used by politicians, businesses, non-profits, families and kids every day, all over the world! This tutorial is for any member interested in the basics of Facebook and Twitter. We can help you get the social media apps on your phone, sign-up for an account, and/or learn the basic

functions of how to post and communicate on the social media platforms. Next time you are asked to “check-in” at Sunday Platform or another Ethical NYC event or program, you will be able spread and promote the great things that the Society is doing!”

1:30pm | Free

DECEMBER 8

COLLOQUY

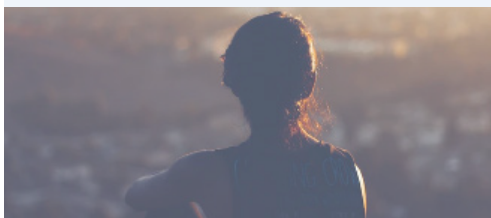
“What does it mean to be entitled?”

Bob Berger, Coordinator

Elinore Kaplan facilitates this month

Share your reflections based on the readings presented (quotes, parables, stories, and/or poetry). There are no right or wrong answers, just your individual response shared with others in a contemplative, thoughtful atmosphere.

9:30am | Free | Monthly, 2nd Sunday



PLATFORM TALK at 11am THE ENDURING RELEVANCE OF ETHICAL CULTURE

Dr. Joe Chuman, Ethical NYC Leader

Henryka Komanska presides

When Ethical Culture was founded in 1876, as a religious movement dedicated exclusively to ethical ideals, devoid of the accoutrements of the historical religions, it was radical, distinctive, and unique. And that uniqueness made it attractive to many who felt they could no longer embrace the traditional faiths. Ethical Culture also attracted luminaries from the upper classes, which enabled it to generate a raft of progressive institutions.

But times have changed and so have the resources of the Ethical Movement. Today our uniqueness has faded and it is more difficult to make our mark in a universe of social change and nonprofit organizations. We have also witnessed the emergence of humanist organizations espousing philosophies not so different from our own.

In what ways does Ethical Culture remain relevant as we confront a reality with many competing organizations plowing the same fields?

This week's shared charity, the New York Society for Ethical Culture's Social Service Board (SSB), is dedicated to helping the most vulnerable members of our community through social service projects that make a difference. For over 130 years Ethical Culture has served New York City through the work of the SSB, working to build a more ethical world. The core programs of the Social Service Board focus particularly on children and adults at-risk and in need.

DEATH CAFÉ

Rev. Dr. Barbara Simpson, Moderator

Gather in a relaxed and safe setting to discuss death, drink tea, and eat delicious cake. Begun in London in 2011, Death Cafés spread quickly across Europe, North America, and Australia, and Asia and are ongoing in 66 countries today. At the Café, with no formal agenda, objectives, or themes, there is group-directed discussion of death, the sole aim of which is to help participants make the most of our (finite) lives.

1:30pm | Members Free, Guests \$5
Monthly, 2nd Sunday

ETHICS IN THE NEWS

Joe Fashing and Abe Markman, Facilitators

Join in this lively give-and-take on compelling issues and events.

1:30pm | Members Free, Guests \$5
Monthly, 2nd Sunday

DECEMBER 15

PLATFORM TALK at 11am WINTER FESTIVAL: WEAVING THE NIGHT AND THE LIGHT

See p.1 for details.

POETRY READING CIRCLE

Cheryl Gross, Facilitator

What poems capture your feelings as 2019 comes to a close? Bring them. Or, any poems you choose.

9:30am | Free | Monthly, 3rd Sunday



**ETHICS & THE THEATER:
DANIEL'S HUSBAND**

by Michael McKeever

ENCORE Matinee (See *Friday Nights at Ethical*, p.12)

1:30pm | Members \$5, Guests \$10

PLATFORM TALK at 11am

CLIMATE ACTION: WHY COLLECTIVE ACTION IS THE ANSWER

(Continued from p.1)

...more visible than ever. Despite the billions of dollars in damages and lives lost this last year, the US is moving backward in climate policy. While individual actions can make a difference, systematic change is essential in dealing with the Climate Crisis, especially given its impact on marginalized communities, human health, inequality, and the economy. This talk will focus on why voting is essential, how we can organize our communities, and how we can turn the momentum on climate into a movement to the polls come 2020.

Saad Amer is an environmentalist, activist and the Founder of Plus1Vote. He works with the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change's Youth Constituency (YOUNGO), is an Expert Reviewer for the upcoming IPCC report, and is an advisor to the National Parks Conservation Association on their Next Generation Advisory Council. Amer has worked on environmental issues in India, China, and the US, co-created Harvard University's inaugural Sustainability Plan, and discovered a new hybrid species in French Polynesia. He has organized and educated hundreds of

K-12 students at the Fish Thicket Land Preserve in New York, and has worked with Brookhaven National Laboratory. At Harvard University he studied Environmental Science and Public Policy, with a minor in Organismic and Evolutionary Biology.

This week's shared charity, Plus1Vote, is dedicated to improving voter turnout and improving representation in our democracy. The organization rallies millions of voters on issues like climate change.

THE ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE PRESENTS

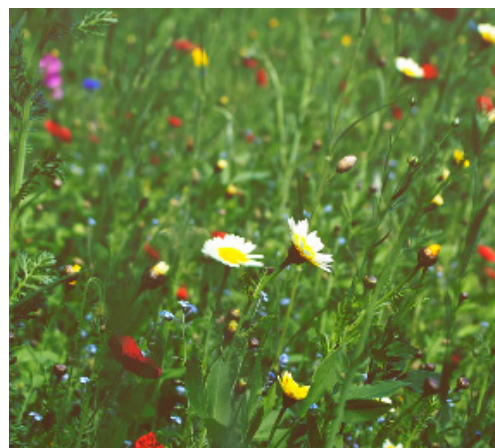
CLIMATE CHANGE CIRCLES

Lili Arkin Facilitates

Those of us deeply concerned about climate change can feel isolated and overwhelmed by the enormity of the challenge the issue poses. Here we will build supportive community, offer mutual support, bear witness to the harm the climate crisis is causing, and trade thoughts and ideas for ways to individually and collectively increase our impact in dealing with it.

Lily Arkin is a longtime volunteer with the Restorative Justice Initiative (RJI) and has helped to develop the program.

1:30pm | Free | Monthly, 4th Sunday



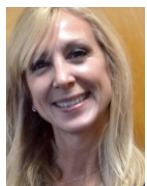
DECEMBER 29

PLATFORM TALK at 11am

REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY

Richard Koral, Ethical NYC Leader

On this last Sunday of the year, we set aside time to reflect and to honor the loved ones of the past for whose gifts we are grateful. We immortalize them by bearing witness and by carrying on their spirit in our own lives. We face tomorrow with hope made stronger by the lessons we have learned and the love we have shared.



OUR ETHICAL FAMILY

MAGGIE DETERMANN

Assistant to the Leaders/
Membership Development

WELCOME TO OUR NEWEST MEMBER

We have a lovely new member, **Deborah Goldstein**, daughter of longtime member **Sandra Stein**. Deborah and her husband James were married in 2006, with **Pat Debrovner** as their officiant! Deb was born in NYC and has spent most of her life here, with the exception of a couple of years in San Francisco and East Templeton, Massachusetts. Recently, she left her job of 17 years in fundraising for Memorial Sloan-Kettering. Deb's interests include travel, ballet, music, yoga, meditation, most board and card games, mysteries, reading, and British TV. She has joined our Joy of Personal Writing workshop and sings with our Sunday chorus. Please give her a warm welcome when you encounter her here at our meeting house.



CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations are in order for member **Dr. Chuck Debrovner**, who is a co-founder of the Global Bioethics Initiative. He is happy to report that the organization conducted two international summer schools, one in NYC and the other in Bangkok, Thailand.

ARTISTRY

On the creative front, member and artist **Bernette Rudolph** recently held her annual open art studio, where she sells (and sometimes gives away) her fabulous creations. Next year, Bernette plans to give us advance notice so we can attend!

SHARE YOUR NEWS

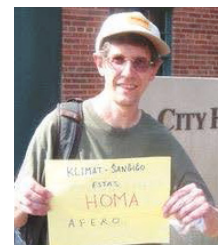
Will you be taking an exciting vacation? Retiring? Celebrating the birth of a child or grandchild? If you answered yes to any of these questions — or have something else of note going on in your life — and would like to share this with our community, let me know! I'll be happy to include it in "Our Ethical Family."

STAYING IN TOUCH

A few months back our assistant music director, **Jon Liechty**, moved back to Indiana before eventually heading off to Azerbaijan. Recently, Jon wrote to us:

Dear Ethical Friends,

Greetings from Indiana! I am living with a friend in Bloomington, in a house with a persimmon tree in the yard, and gradually getting settled in. It's very different from New York! The fall colors here are something to see! High points so far included attending a few meetups with a group of atheists, skeptics, etc.; we made quite a splash at a local trivia contest when our team, named "God is Dead," came in first! I volunteered to work backstage at the Lotus Festival, a yearly event featuring music from all over the world. It was quite the experience. Here's a picture of me with a sign I made for the local Climate Strike; it says, "Climate Change is a Human Issue" in Esperanto. Sending good wishes to all of my Ethical Culture friends!



ETHICS IN ACTION

MY OWN BOOK

The Program and Your Opportunity to Volunteer

By Vince Brancato, Ethical NYC Social Service Board Member



Our tagline is “Ethics in Action since 1876.” Ethical Culture was founded on a premise of putting ethics into action, a premise to which we remain firmly committed. In this column we recognize and celebrate the ethical actions in which our members are involved here at Ethical, independently, and with other organizations, and invite you — members and guests — to participate. This month, we invite you to join our Social Service Board’s My Own Book Foundation volunteers.

to Barnes & Noble. Later, the teachers will work with the students to help them make lists of the types, and often titles, of the books they’d like to purchase, with an eye towards selecting books in more than one genre. A few weeks later, the volunteers will meet the teachers and classes at Barnes & Noble and each child will select \$50 worth of books.

The volunteers, teachers, and Barnes & Noble personnel help the children, with the reminder, “Don’t choose a book by its cover.” They are advised to read the first few pages to be sure they understand

of the visit they have the opportunity to tell about the book. In most cases, by the time of that visit most of them have read all the books they’ve bought and are eager to share.

Both teacher and student anecdotes confirm that the My Own Book program increases reading skills and most often inspires a love (or, at the very least, a “like”) of reading. The kids are great; they have fun and appreciate what you’re bringing to them. Their excitement is contagious.

What does it take to qualify as a volunteer? Easy question. One does not need a background in education or library studies, just a willingness to invest your time and patience.

For your first time, you’ll “shadow” an experienced volunteer team through each of the phases of the program and ask and have answered any questions.

For some of the volunteers, the once-a-year four-part process — which usually amounts to four-to-six days) is just fine. Others choose to participate in more than one school and are most welcome to do so.

To learn more, speak with Carole Chamlin, Susan Horowitz, and/or Bob Berger. Bob’s been volunteering the past few years and Carole’s been with the program practically since its inception. Many volunteers are not members of Ethical NYC.

If you are interested in volunteering with the My Own Books Foundation, contact Burt Freeman at 212-249-3765.

According to the mission statement at their website, “The My Own Book Program was established by the Freeman-Harrison Family Foundation in 1999 to support child literacy and foster a love of reading among the most disadvantaged of New York City’s children, many of whom have never owned a book they could call their own.”

For more than 20 years, the program has been enabling New York City third-graders to choose and buy their own books. It’s a wonderful and beautifully successful program — currently active in 47 Title One schools.

Every third-grader in these schools gets to participate. There’s an initial session during which teams of two volunteers meet with the teachers, either on the same day or a couple of days in advance of meeting with each of the classes (about 30 minutes per class). Most schools have four or five third-grade classes. The volunteers talk with the children about the difference between borrowing books from library and owning books, about the different types of fiction and nonfiction, and about their trip

For us, the volunteers, it is so rewarding.

the words and content and that they like the book. It can take as long as two hours, during which they make choices regarding what they want and what they can afford within that \$50 budget. They make decisions, for example, as to whether to buy the hardbound or softcover book, often choosing the paperbacks so they can get more. For most of the kids, this is the first time they have been in a bookstore, and their first time having control over \$50 of self-directed purchasing power.

For us, the volunteers, it is so rewarding to help in what becomes a positive and memorable experience for these children. The proof comes in the follow-up visit to the classes about a month later. The children have been told to read at least one of their books by then, and in the course

AFFINITY GROUPS At ETHICAL

We partner with organizations that share our commitment to social justice and the environment. Come learn about their work and how you can participate in ethical action.

ENVIRONMENTAL

350NYC
CLIMATE REALITY PROJECT
DRAWDOWN NYC
FOOD & WATER WATCH

SOCIAL JUSTICE

AMERICAN INDIAN
COMMUNITY HOUSE
AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL
FEMINIST FREETHINKERS

FORMERLY FUNDAMENTALISTS

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
POLICE REFORM
ORGANIZING PROJECT
RADICAL AGE MOVEMENT

Visit our events calendar at Ethical.nyc for meeting dates.



GOING GREEN FOR HALLOWEEN... Our Young Ethical Explorers creatively used recyclable materials to create their own very original costumes this year.



A BROADER OUTLOOK...

Even New York City's finest enjoy reading *Ethical Outlook*!



UNDERSTANDING MIND CONTROL...

Steven Hassan, author of *The Cult of Trump*, was interviewed last month by Ethical Leader **Joe Chuman**.



EXPLORING THE NORTH WOODS...

The Easy Walking Explorer's final outing of 2019 took them up to the 40-acre portion of Central Park known as the North Woods. We drank in the beauty, including the Conservatory Garden and the Huddleston Arch, and topped it off with lunch at the Academy of Medicine. And more joined: **Gunther Tielemans** and daughter **Ada**, **Vince Brancato**, and **Beth Everett**.



THE ETHICAL BANNER OF THE MONTH

HELP END HOMELESSNESS

Over 60,000 people are sleeping in NYC's shelter system each night.¹ Last year, 1 in 10 public school students were homeless over the course of the year.² This housing crisis is inexcusable; it can be solved by applying our resources with resolve guided by ethics.

¹Coalition for the Homeless

²Advocates for Children of New York



MEET OUR STAFF: DAVID M'CANTS

By Larry Hurst

When and how did your job at Ethical come about?

It was Thanksgiving weekend in 1999. I got a call from Leonardo (Leonardo Gibson, now Facilities Manager) asking if I could come in to help out because he was working on his own. Well, I have known Leonardo since he was a child. So of course I came. And here we both are...twenty years on!

How did your job develop over time?

I started as Sunday relief Cafeteria worker under Mike Tomlin. In the spring of 2000 I moved on to three days a week, mainly doing maintenance work. That summer Mike asked me if I wanted to learn audio work and become full time. It meant looking after the audio system, and tape recording some of the Society's events including the Sunday Platforms. At that

time the Platforms were held in the Auditorium, where they continued for around another ten years before moving to Ceremonial Hall. Chuck (member Charles Debrovner) then started making videos. At one point Bob (Executive Director Robert Liebeskind) asked me if I could try front desk security for a week. He said I'd just need to be a happy face greeting everyone entering the building. Well, sitting there hour after hour I couldn't keep my eyes open, and after two days Bob said to me "OK, anything but." For quite a while since then, my specialty has been troubleshooting, and that seems to have fit well.

What is the staff set-up now?

The team is four full-time and five part-time. We are all-round guys. There is always something different to be done, which makes it a pleasure to work here. You've probably noticed, that the flag can now fly outside the building without getting tangled

in the trees. And the banner on Central Park West has new restraining ties to stop it blowing about. Just two examples.

What are some of the best things about Ethical?

It's a humanist organization, we don't do crazy things, and the members and staff I work with are great. Anne Klaeyen and I met when she was a Leader-in-Training and we've been neck to neck since discovering that our fathers knew each other. Small world.

And Challenges?

It can sometimes be a headache having so many events, some of them overlapping. But the introduction of set-up sheets has made a big difference.

Can you share a few things about your life outside Ethical?

I was born in December of 1961 in Mullins, SC. My dad worked for the Post Office. When I was 13 the family moved to the Bronx after he was transferred there. I've

lived in East Harlem the past 10. I've been married for 23 years. We have a daughter and I've been told that I am a good family man. Three years ago, I was diagnosed with prostate cancer, and since then I have had to take quite a bit of time off while receiving chemo and radiation treatment. Once, while waiting for the hospital elevator I noticed a picture of Dr. Phyllis Harrison Ross on the wall. She was a good friend. The others here at Ethical have been really supportive too. Recently, my cancer has migrated to the bone. When I admit to my wife that my back hurts a little, she says, "You can handle that, sweetheart," and that helps me to cope.

How would you describe yourself at this time of life?

I've been lucky to be among such a fun team of co-workers, with Bob such a great supporter and Leonardo here all the way along. New York is definitely in my blood. But I know that like my two brothers I'll always be a Carolinian.

LOOK WHO'S TALKING ABOUT...

ETHICAL CULTURE SOCIETIES



The Atlantic



Ethical NYC

In the magazine's "The Friendship Files," **Leader Anne Klaeyssen** and Ethical NYC President **Liz Singer** spoke extensively about Ethical Culture, its values, programs, membership, and issues they deal with in this "religion of ethics."

The Record

Ethical Culture Society of Bergen County

An article entitled "What does it mean to be ethical in Donald Trump's America?" described the Society as part of "a 142-year-old national organization that promotes social justice and ethical behavior," and quoted **Leader Joe Chuman** as saying: "People are more alienated and isolated than they used to be... When people are isolated, they are not reinforced to act in ethical and moral ways. Hyper-individualism is not good for strengthening the ethical fiber of a society. If we suffer from radical individualism, ethics erodes. People need to be together."



Ethical Culture Society of Northern Westchester

"Parents who come to the Ethical Society value this process of wanting their kids to learn, to question, to raise hypotheses, to think of alternatives, to think for themselves."

— **Bob Berson, Leader**

WESTCHESTER

"At 7:30 p.m. on Friday, the **Ethical Humanist Society of Westchester** welcomes artist Vinnie Bagwell as part of Westchester County's 400 Years Project."

WRITE FOR RIGHTS DAY: CHANGE A LIFE WITH A LETTER

Continued from p. 1

mation on each case, along with pre-written letters. This year, we're throwing our might behind young people who are fighting some of the world's biggest crises — people like Yasaman Ariani, a 24-year-old Iranian activist sentenced to 16 years in prison for campaigning against forced veiling; 17-year-old Magai Matiop Ngong, who has been on Death Row in Sudan for the past two years; and Yiliyasijiang Reheman, the Chinese Uyghur student who was "disappeared" in a Uyghur round-up while studying in Egypt.

These young people, all targeted for their human rights work, have stepped in where adults have failed to lead, and they are facing terrible danger as a result.

Participate in this year's annual global letter-writing campaign. Let these human rights victims know they've not been forgotten.

dress labels, envelopes, pens, case histories, and refreshments. All you need to bring is yourself and, if you like, return address labels, but they're not necessary. International stamps for the letters you sign would be greatly appreciated, but they are not required either. (For those who appreciate the fact that an original, handwritten letter makes the most powerful statement, there will be blank paper, useful as well to those who would like to write "solidarity letters" directly to the person or the family of the jailed person on whose behalf we are writing.)

Your letters really can change lives, and we urge you to participate in this year's Write for Rights event.

Please join us as we let the people in this year's 10 cases know they have not been forgotten. Amnesty International will supply pre-printed letters (to which you can add a short original paragraph) and ad-

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www.aeu.org

Friday Nights at ETHICAL



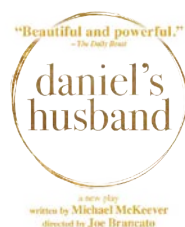
(1ST FRIDAYS) DEC. 6: ETHICS IN FILM **BLACK NARCISSUS**

Chris Everett, Facilitator and Moderator

A darkly grand film, this explosive work about the conflict between the spirit and the flesh is the epitome of the sensuous style of two of cinema's true visionaries, Michael Powell and Emeric Presburger.

A group of nuns struggle to establish a convent in the Himalayas, while isolation, extreme weather, altitude, and culture clashes all conspire to drive the well-intentioned missionaries mad.

7pm | Members and Guests \$5 | Refreshments served



(2ND FRIDAYS) DEC. 13: ETHICS & THE THEATER **DANIEL'S HUSBAND**

by Michael McKeever

Patricia Bruder Debrovner, Producer

Daniel wants to get married. Mitchell, his partner of seven years, doesn't. Their differing opinions are merely small irritants in an otherwise perfect relationship —

until an unforeseen event forces them to confront the consequences of their points of view.

Join us as members of the Society and theater professionals read selected plays before a live audience. Come at 6:30 for a reception with snacks and refreshments. *Betsy Ungar* leads the post-reading discussion of the ethical issues raised by the play.

(Encore Performance Sunday, Dec. 15, 1:30pm)

7pm | Members \$5, Guests \$10

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO MEMBERS...

RAY SCHILLER and JUDY WALLACH.....	12/1
SAL BUCAK and DEB SCHLEIN	12/4
JULIA HAYES	12/8
SANDRA GRASSBY and HELEN MECS.....	12/9
JOSEPH WEBER.....	12/10
DAN HANSON.....	12/20
BARBARA GOLD	12/24
JOAN KLIPS.....	12/27
TERRY PERLIN.....	12/29

ATHEISM & MORALITY: MAPPING THE GAME

THURSDAY, DEC 5
6:30-8:30 PM

FORMERLY FUNDAMENTALISTS PRESENT **ATHEISM & MORALITY: MAPPING THE GAME**

Andrew Dennis | Thursday, Dec. 5, 6:30pm

Andrew will introduce a framework that utilizes game theory to identify and analyze players in what he calls "The Values Game." By dividing the concept of atheism into three components, he explains how conversations in atheist spaces get derailed.

The aim of the game? Attendees should gain a new and intuitive understanding of human moral development, grasp a generalized history of how we got to where we are, understand the pitfalls that activist groups fall into, and improve their own activism, general understanding of reality, and conversations with others.

ALSO HAPPENING AT ETHICAL



Christmas in New York with
JACKIE EVANCHO & FRIENDS
Friday 12/6 @ 7:30pm

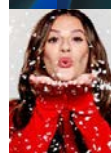
THE BLIND BOYS OF ALABAMA
Christmas Show



Saturday 12/7
@ 8pm



LOS LOBOS
Saturday 12/14
@ 8pm



LEA MICHELE: Christmas in the City

Thursday 12/19 @ 7:30pm
Friday 12/20 @ 7:30pm
Saturday 12/21 @ 7:30pm

Tickets & Info: <https://www.metropolitanpresents.com/concert-hall-nysec/>

JOIN OUR BOARD

At the annual meeting in May, we will elect members to 3-year terms on our Board of Trustees. While incumbent Trustees may seek re-election, the bylaws require us to elect at least one new Trustee each year to assure fresh insights and perspectives. The only qualifications are that the candidate has been a member of the Society in good standing for not less than eighteen months

preceding the election. For more information, speak with any member of the Nominating Committee. Obtain an application form from Yalitza in room 510 and submit it by February 3, 2020. We will consider every applicant, subject only to an interview and review of qualifications. This is an open election; all are welcome to apply.

ETHICAL

We are Ethical Culture NYC,
a humanist community dedicated to ethics, social justice,
and education since 1876.

We celebrate life's joys, support each other through life's crises,
and work to make the world a better place.

Join us for hundreds of community and cultural programs
where people meet to explore and embrace ethical living.

Learn more about us at our website, www.ETHICAL.nyc —
or, better still, visit with us. You're always welcome.

NEW YORK SOCIETY FOR ETHICAL CULTURE

ETHICAL OUTLOOK

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