



# Ethically Speaking

53 Prospect Park West  
 at 2nd Street in Park Slope  
[www.bsec.org](http://www.bsec.org)  
[bsecdirector@yahoo.com](mailto:bsecdirector@yahoo.com)  
 718.768.2972

## Sundays at the Meeting House

10:00 am: Members' Sharing Circle, Library

10:30—12:30 pm Children's Sunday Assembly

11:00—12:30pm Platform, Meeting Room

1:00pm or as noted Afternoon Program

## Platform Program Quotes

Without 'ethical culture' there is no salvation for humanity  
**-Albert Einstein-**

People let me paint a picture. You know ain't a Christian. I ain't a muslim. I ain't a jew. I'm losing my religion  
**-Talib Kweli, Brooklyn Rapper**

Like my mother on her rehabilitation floor. Like my son with his new bass guitar. Like me in the morning light with my little dog on the rail trail. We learn each day to walk  
**-Lawrence Bush-**



Quotes to Remember...

## BSEC Platforms



### Muslim Women Moving Mountains Sunday, March 8, 11am

**With Robina Niaz**

A Women's History Month platform sponsored by the Ethical Action Committee.... A social worker, Robina founded Turning Point for Women and Families in December 2004 to work against domestic violence and empower women in New York's diverse Muslim communities through community events, direct service, and a girls' group. She has been honored as a CORO Immigrant Leadership Fellow and a 2005 Open Society Institute/RCLA Social Justice Fellow.



### Cultivating Empathy Sunday, March 15, 11am

**With Jone Johnson Lewis**

Empathy is a critical attitude and skill for developing more ethical relationships in personal life, in politics, at work, in every venue of life. Jone Johnson Lewis, the clergy leader of the Northern Virginia Ethical Society, asks how do we learn empathy as a skill and nurture empathy as an attitude.

**1-2pm:** Jone will lead a post-platform discussion delving into questions raised by the platform.



### Socialism and Spirituality Sunday, March 22, 11am

**With Lawrence Bush**

*Newsweek* magazine headlined a recent cover, "We're All Socialists Now." As the current economic crisis makes "socialism" less of a dirty word in America, what spiritual and ethical insights can we bring to the discussion? Lawrence Bush is a Fellow of the Society for 2009.

**1-2pm:** Larry will lead a post-platform discussion delving into questions raised by the platform.



### Parenting Beyond Belief Sunday, March 29, 11am

**With Dale McGowan**

Secular parents can raise their children with values, rites of passage, means of engendering wonder, and other benefits of religion. Dale McGowan is the Atlanta-based editor of *Parenting Beyond Belief*, the author of *Raising Freethinkers*, and recent Harvard Humanist award

winner.

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**The Good  
Coffeehouse  
Music Parlor**

**BROOKLYN'S HOME FOR  
ACOUSTIC ROOTS MUSIC**

Our 34th Year  
53 Prospect Park West at 2nd Street  
Park Slope  
Brooklyn, NY 11215  
718-768-2972

**March 13 Bruce Markow, Spook  
Handy, Emily Pickrell, Glen Roethel  
–Roots / Singer-Songwriters**  
(\$10 adults, \$6 kids)

**March 20 Third Friday with the  
Park Slope Food Coop**  
(\$10 adults, \$6 kids)

**March 27 Blue Harvest – Traditional  
American music**  
(\$10 adults, \$6 kids)

**April 3 Del Rey & Craig Flory –  
Blues – Traveling Troubadour Concert  
Series**  
(adults \$15 / kids \$6)

**April 10 closed (BSEC event)**

**April 17 Third Friday with the Park  
Slope Food Coop**  
(\$10 adults, \$6 kids)

**April 24 Frank Fotusky – Acoustic  
blues guitar**  
(\$10 adults, \$6 kids)

**DIRECTIONS BY MASS TRANSIT:**

Q train to 7th Av station in Brooklyn; F  
train to 7th Av; 2or 3 train to Grand  
Army Plaza; B69 bus to 2nd St; B75  
bus to Prospect  
Park West; B41 or B71 bus to Grand  
Army Plaza; B67 bus to 2nd St.

*(continued from page 1)*



**Making Meaning and Finding Justice: On  
Existentialism and Ethics**

**Sunday, April 5, 11am**

**With Rev. Osageyfo Sekou**

This platform will address how we as human beings make meaning for ourselves and create justice, building upon the legacy of the existentialists Albert Camus and Jean Paul Sartre, and Ethical Culture founder Felix Adler. Rev. Sekou is a Fellow of the Society for 2009.



**Alain Locke, the Harlem Renaissance &  
Ethical Culture**

**Sunday, April 12, 11am**

**With Bob Berson**

Ethical Culture's history intersects with that of Alain Locke, one of the most challenging and inspiring innovators of the Harlem Renaissance. Bob Berson, leader of the Northern Westchester Ethical Society, reflects on the connection.



**Can the New Labor/Environmentalist Alli-  
ance Save the Planet?**

**Sunday, April 19, 11am**

**With Mijin Cha**

Almost 2000 environmentalists and unionists converged on Washington DC in February to expand their alliance in building a green economy. Mijin Cha is director of research of Urban Agenda, a lead partner in NY's Apollo Alliance bringing together labor and environmentalists and will report on the possibilities of the movement to save New York and the planet. An Earth Day platform sponsored by the Ethical Action Committee

**1pm panel: Building a Green Economy**



**Sex and Self Knowledge**

**Sunday, April 26, 11am**

**With Lawrence Bush**

"Restrain your impulse," teach most religions; "break the boundaries!" declared the sexy Sixties. From where should our sexual guidance as ethical humanists come? Larry Bush is a Fellow of the Society for 2009.



## Editor's Column

(The following was written before I joined ethical culture but, I feel, reflects the ideas that brought me to join. I share it for the members to consider, critique, or reject.)

### CREDO

**I BELIEVE** that human beings have the potential for being decent and caring and helpful to one another, but, unfortunately, that is not always the case. Still, I try to treat each person I meet as someone worthy of my attention if not my devotion.

**I BELIEVE** that democracy is the highest form of political association. However:

**I BELIEVE** that true political equality cannot happen without a measure of economic and social equality. Economic disparity inevitably yields to inequality under the law.

**I BELIEVE** that without a properly educated electorate, democratic forms of government can be used as a cloak for undemocratic political practices.

**I DO NOT BELIEVE** that "all men—and women—are created equal." There are many forms of inequality: intellectual, physical, psychological. But I think that everyone should be treated as if they are equal.

**I BELIEVE** that the highest forms of human expression are derived from the pursuit of the beautiful in the arts, of truth in science, and an attempt to know love both as giver and receiver.

**I BELIEVE** that although there is no God in the universe, at least not one that has any role in the affairs of human beings, that we all have a spirit that enables us to aspire to being as fully ourselves as is possible.

**I BELIEVE** in the life here that should be realized to the greatest extent and that this is the only life we have.

**I BELIEVE** that there is a future for the human race although not in the manner in which it is presently developing because on the path it is taking it will destroy itself.

**I BELIEVE** that the most important task we have while we live is to continue to discover who we are, both in relation to ourselves and to others, even if this task will never be completed.

(The following, however, was written recently: *The Ocean Parkway Testament*)



When I was growing up in the Bronx in the 1950's and early 60's, I had the buoyant optimism that the scary world I had been raised in-- with the threat of nuclear war —would somehow right itself, embrace enlightened socialism, and eliminate poverty through social justice. That feeling was reinforced during my period of political activism in the 1960's and early 70's against the War in Vietnam and for Civil Rights. It may be a product of my advancing age, and the realization that what worked well for me physically a few years ago wasn't doing quite as well now, but I have become deeply disturbed and often depressed about what I see as the state of society, not only in terms of social and economic inequality becoming entrenched, even with the small miracle of having a Black

President, but in terms of the future of the human race. Since I have a grand daughter who, if good health and good fortune go with her, might well live into the next century, I seriously wonder if there is going to be a next century, at least in terms of what we like to believe is human civilization. There still might be human beings living on the planet, but they would be the most fit, in Darwinian terms, to *(continued on p. 4)*



### "Thoughts" by Joel Shatzky

#### BSEC's

#### Mission Statement

**The Brooklyn Society for Ethical Culture** is a humanistic, religious and educational fellowship promoting knowledge, love and practice of ethics-centered living. As a diverse and welcoming community, we assist each other in developing ethical ideals, exploring choices, navigating our life journeys, and working to realize a more just and compassionate world.

BSEC belongs to a federation of Ethical Culture & Ethical Humanist Societies and/or Fellowships in the U.S. known as the American Ethical Union

[www.aeu.org](http://www.aeu.org)





**SAVE THE DATE**  
**May 18th, 7:30pm**  
**@ Brooklyn Society for Ethical Culture**

**Peter Woit**

Peter Woit is a mathematician, physicist, and author of the 2007 book "Not Even Wrong: The Failure of String Theory & the Continuing Challenge to Unify the Laws of Physics." He will discuss string theory and why it is controversial, as well as prospects for new experiments and a better understanding of the mathematical theories used to describe the physical world.

*Sponsored by: Center for Inquiry*



**March 12**

Ruth Pikitch

**March 16**

Marie Yoleine Gateau

**March 25**

Diane Kirschner

**March 27**

Xena Brooks

**March 29**

Lisel Burns

**April 8**

Linda Stallard

**April 17**

Joel Cohen

**April 20**

John Duffy

**April 20**

Roger Kaufman

**Be Well!!**

*(continued from p. 3)*

survive in a far more uninviting environment plagued by sudden floods, storms of gargantuan size, drought, famine and pestilence in almost dysfunctional societies. Each time I read in the paper about the melting ice caps, the drought-plagued sections of the world that are becoming quickly uninhabitable, the prediction by an increasing number of scientists that global warming even now is irreversible, and then consider the pitifully feeble attempts the government proposes to cope with these crises by setting a goal of a forty mpg requirement for autos in twenty years, I wonder whether I might not, even in my lifetime, witness the abrupt decline of the human race.



One doesn't have to be a Malthusian to realize that with the demands on declining resources by an increasing number of human beings, many of whom aspire to achieve a standard of living that has hitherto been enjoyed only by Western Europe and U.S. and a few select other countries, that there is simply not enough "stuff" on this planet to accommodate those expectations unless we were able to produce three or four more earths with similar resources to ours. And yet, the word "growth" is on the lips of even the more enlightened economists as the way to cope with the slipping economy and that "increased consumption" is the solution to all our woes. To me "growth" in terms of the depredations the human race has inflicted on this planet has the connotation of cancer, and "increased consumption," the unhappy symptoms of tuberculosis.

It seems that the limitations of the human imagination when it comes to thinking and planning for the future have finally been reached. And I believe that the reasons for the economic meltdown that has had many enablers from all sides of the economic spectrum is that somewhere in their subconscious, they realize that "*après nous, le deluge.*" Perhaps the truest thing that George W. ever said during his presidency was his answer to the question: "What do you think history will say about you?" And he responded, "By that time I'll be dead." Perhaps all of these reckless entrepreneurs, especially that fabulously duplicitous Bernard Madoff, are really the atheists, profess what they will to an Afterlife. They are certain of one thing: that after they are gone there will be no retribution that they can suffer, and since the world of pleasure they've enjoyed will soon disappear, they might as well pillage it to the fullest while they can.

I hope I am overly pessimistic about the future my children and grand-daughter might be facing, but I have little faith in the human race. It's too new, too underdeveloped, and too powerful to exercise the necessary self-control to save itself. But if the planet can survive the innumerable indignities it has suffered at the hands of this monstrous delinquent called mankind, perhaps a more mature species can rise from the ruins of our follies and live in harmony with its only home.

### Letters from Readers: Suggestions for the Newsletter



#### From Carolyn Meiselbach:

Perhaps a Member Corner or some such name as a bulletin board for people to invite others to their private events/workshops/readings, or if they are looking for something to swap/buy/sell, or looking for a job, or have a job, or are offering their product(s) or services for something specific, etc.

Of course there should be strict guidelines, but I think it will give it a personal, member-helping-member flavor and be interesting for folks to see what others are doing outside BSEC.



## Editor's Note on Newsletter Input.....



*In a recent meeting on communications issues involving our Newsletter, the suggestion was made to review some of the newsletters we receive from other chapters around the country and present items that might be of interest to our own members. The following is a sample from various newsletters.*

**Chicago Ethical Humanist: February 2009**-There is an "Our People" column that features the activities and achievements of members including births and deaths (Would such a column be appropriate for our newsletter?). P.S. They are having a membership pledge drive in which 89 people so far have pledged \$48,000 toward reaching their goal of \$55,000. That's an average of over \$500 per pledge.

**Ethical Connection, St. Louis: February 1-15, 2009**-Appropriately, in view of the previous item, the subject of their February 1 platform was "Tithing in Tough Times." As we, they also had a Darwin Day platform on February 15th.

**The Page, Westchester: February 2009**- The first page consists of both a President's and a Leader's Message. The newsletter also reports the proceedings of board meetings.

**CFI Inquirer, Greenlawn, N.Y.-February 2009**-The lead article was an extensive essay by the editor titled "How Does a Humanist Approach Economics?" There is also a letter to the editor section and a very thoughtful critique on the Adam Smith theory of the "invisible hand" and the market economy as well as an essay by a contributor who writes a monthly column.

**Ethical Society News of Northern Virginia: February 2009**-About a half dozen articles including essays as well as extended announcements were the feature of this newsletter. The guest speaker for their February 15th. platform was someone who should be familiar to us: Arthur Dobrin who presented a talk on "Raising Moral Children."

**Concern, Riverdale-Yonkers-February 2009**-This chapter runs an overnight homeless shelter for adult males. This might suggest an opportunity for our own membership to become involved in such activities perhaps through the Gethsemane Church. Certainly it would bring a new visibility to BSEC in the wider community at a time in which an increasing number of Brooklynites will need the extra caring of those who are fortunate enough to devote the time to do volunteer work.

*(Editor's Note: Future issues of the Newsletter will contain more detailed summaries of activities at other chapters as reported by their newsletters. If there is sufficient interest and the editor can receive permission of the authors, excerpts or short essays that would prove of interest to our membership might be included as a regular feature of Ethically Speaking.)*

### The Brooklyn Society for Ethical Culture (BSEC)

**Lawrence Bush,  
BSEC Fellow**

**Osagyefo Sekou  
BSEC Fellow**

**Damal Edmond,  
Administrative Director**  
bsecdirector@yahoo.com

#### Board of Trustees Executive Committee:

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Lois Kellerman  
Lisel Burns

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#### Next Newsletter Deadline:

**April 25**

Send submissions to



bsecnews@gmail.com

Editor: Joel Shatzky  
Proofreader: Vandra Thorburn



## PARENTING BEYOND BELIEF SEMINAR

1 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.  
**Saturday, March 28, 2009**  
Brooklyn Society for Ethical Culture  
53 Prospect Park West,  
Brooklyn, NY 11215  
**Free Childcare will be available.**

**Over nine million parents** in the U.S. are raising children without theistic religion. The “Parenting Beyond Belief” Seminar, a unique half-day workshop with **author and educator Dale McGowan**.

In the “Parenting Beyond Belief” Seminar participants will learn effective ways to: encourage religious literacy without indoctrination; help kids interact productively with a religious world; help kids develop active moral reasoning; weigh church-state issues in the public sphere; address sensitive issues with religious relatives using the principles of nonviolent communication; help children develop a healthy understanding of death and a joyful love of life; and build a family atmosphere of fearless questioning and boundless wonder.

“The Seminar is ideal for loving and thoughtful parents who wish to raise their children without religion,” said Fiona Boneham. “There are scores of programs available for religious parents. Now there's one for the rest of us. This workshop offers solutions to the unique challenges secular parents face and provides specific answers to common questions, as well as activities for both parents and children.”

“Based on freethinking philosophy, Dale McGowan’s book offers encouragement and practical solutions for secular parenting in today’s world,” said Fiona Boneham, parent of children in BSEC’s children’s programs and organizer of the seminar. “He is helping empower secular parents across the country to raise ethical, caring, confident kids without religion.”

Newsweek called *Parenting Beyond Belief* “a compelling read,” and it topped the Amazon Parenting Best-Seller list for 30 weeks. The book is available from the Brooklyn Society for Ethical Culture for those who wish to explore the Freethinking parenting philosophy prior to the workshop.

The seminar is \$30 (AEU member)/\$40 (non-AEU member) for an individual and \$50 (AEU member)/\$60 (non-AEU member) for a couple. Free child care will be available. For more information about this Seminar visit [www.parentingbeyondbelief.com](http://www.parentingbeyondbelief.com) or [www.bsec.org](http://www.bsec.org)

## Announcements



### NEWCOMER SUPPERS

Fridays, March 27th and April 24th from 6:30p.m. to 8:00p.m. If your interested in finding out more about BSEC, please join us. Contact [carolynmei@aol.com](mailto:carolynmei@aol.com) to R.S.V.P or for more information.



### MEET THE MUSICIAN

We are trying something new at the Good Coffeehouse Music Parlor: a pre-show “Meet the Musician” at 7:00 pm. We are particularly promoting this event to music schools and young musicians and their families. This is an opportunity to meet and converse with musicians in the intimate setting of the Library. We hope to generate a new cohort of fans for the musicians and the Coffeehouse. GCMP is wonderful and family-friendly entertainment and a must-do break from Friday night at the movies.

**Make Friday nights time for live music and really good coffee at BSEC’s GCMP.** We feature fair trade coffee and tea and the café is managed by Xena Brooks and Tyler Lurie. The plan is to build a team of teenagers to learn how to produce and manage the Good Coffeehouse Music Parlor. If you know of any teenagers that would be interested in joining this team, please call BSEC office (718 768 9272) and leave a message for Vandra.



### ALL ENCAMPMENT FOR CITIZENSHIP ALUMNI

Pull up your socks, put on your shoes, grab your camp mementoes, and run over to the NY Society for Ethical Culture on Saturday, May 16, 7 - 10 PM, for a Camp Reunion. You have kept in touch over the years by phone, email, snail mail, and Facebook. Now it's time to get together in person. The NY Society is located at 2 West 64th Street on the corner of Central Park West. The reunion will be held in Ceremonial Hall on the fourth floor. We will have drinks and light refreshments and a table on which to display your photos, scrapbooks, souvenirs, etc. Check Facebook and Meet up for invitations and RSVP to Leader Anne Klaeyesen at the New York Society: [aklaeyesen@nysec.org](mailto:aklaeyesen@nysec.org) or 212-874-5210 ext. 118.



## Guest Columnist

### Ellen Raider

*(The editor welcomes articles expressing opinions of our members. The following is a review written by Ellen Raider of a book critical of the Bloomberg Administration's handling of education in NY City's public schools.)*

#### Revealing New Book on Mayoral Control of NYC Schools by David Rogers

The law that gave Mayor Bloomberg control of the New York City public schools will “sunset” in June 2009. The State Legislature will have to make a decision about mayoral control. It will either decide to keep it, tweak it, go back to the old system or go forward to something new.



David Rogers, a professor emeritus of the Stern School of Business, New York University, is a sociologist and student of organizational change in the private and public sectors. From his change management perspective, Rogers gives us fresh insights into the potential and disappointments of NYC's experiment with mayoral control of public schools.

Rogers is not a hostile critic. In Chapter 4, he discusses Bloomberg/Klein's vision for transformation and what Rogers believes are some positive developments in the New York City schools resulting from mayoral control. Readers will have to decide for themselves whether or not they agree with Rogers's assessment. I did not, even though I really appreciate his desire for a balanced perspective.

What I did find compelling however, was his thoughtful and insightful critique.

“[If mayoral control] is used as a tool to create wide support for a credible new vision for education in the city and to bring together the key participants at the school level to develop pedagogies and curriculum and more effective teachers and principals, it could be a highly productive driving force for needed improvement,” he states. “But if it functions as an elite group of senior managers and consultants mandating changes from the top, functioning in secrecy and insensitive to implementation issues, the lack of trust and disruptions it generates will undermine its values and reduce the chances for the reform to continue after the mayor leaves office at the end of 2009.”



“This book is about the change management style of the mayor and chancellor using an analysis of their strategy and its implementation to argue that they would have done better in transforming the New York City Public Schools had they been more inclusive, worked in collaboration more with educators and parents and emphasized a more bottom up approach than they have.”

He argues that the Bloomberg /Klein administration has contributed to the polarization of the city's educational politics “by imposing a corporate paradigm through an exclusionary, top down management style that too often undermined the good programs the chancellor had established.” He continues, “The style alienated many key groups, brought about unnecessary blow ups in its implementation and polarized the city's educational politics into two loosely joined coalitions: a corporate management-oriented group of the mayor, the chancellor, business leaders, management consultants, lawyers, state education department officials and selected foundations and university-affiliated researchers and a more grassroots oriented assemblage of parents, community leaders, teachers, principals, their unions, educational reporters in the city's main newspapers, the City Council, the Office of the Public Advocate in New York City government and State Legislators.” *(continued on p. 8)*



(continued from p. 7)

In his last chapter, "Critical Issues for the Future," Rogers offers important Do we want considerations that must be taken into account as the current authority for mayoral control "sunsets" and the legislature decides whether to continue, modify or eliminate it in the next few months. A major conclusion of Rogers's book is that, while mayoral control could theoretically provide an opportunity for the kind of deep systemic change that is needed in the relationships among key participants within schools and between schools, families, and various community resources essential to successful urban education, the Bloomberg/Klein administration has not projected a vision of such change, and has indeed obstructed its development through its top-down polarizing approach. The governance structure must be based on a partnership model where local schools and their communities, supported by a strong commitment from City Hall, can work together collaboratively to envision and carry out the deep changes needed.



Rogers's analysis of the governance style of the Bloomberg/Klein administration is a welcomed breath of fresh air in the spin dominated culture of City Hall. In my opinion, Rogers' vision of what could be should encourage those who know that substantive changes, beyond, but including governance are needed if the New York public education system is to properly serve the needs of its students and the communities of the City.

I believe that to accomplish this kind of change would require more than a few alterations to the nature of Mayoral Control. It would require a citywide dialogue that goes well beyond a debate about governance to answer these critical questions:

1) What kind of educational system do we want?

a system that narrows the curriculum to test preparation or a system that fulfills the human right of children to reach their full potential?

2) Who decides what that system should be?

Are these decisions to be left to a small elite group or should we develop a citywide consensus of parents, students, educators, community activists, business and religious leaders?

Only after these critical questions are answered can wise decisions be made on how the school system should be governed and how those who govern it should be held accountable for results.



***March is “Women’s History Month”***



Please join Brooklyn Society for Ethical Culture for our activities celebrating and empowering locally with a global reach

***Muslim Women Moving Mountains***  
**Platform—Sunday, March 8, 11am**  
**With Robina Niaz**

A Women’s History Month platform sponsored by the Ethical Action Committee.... A social worker, Robina founded Turning Point for Women and Families in December 2004 to work against domestic violence and empower women in New York’s diverse Muslim communities through community events, direct service, and a girls’ group. She has been honored as a CORO Immigrant Leadership Fellow and a 2005 Open Society Institute/RCLA Social Justice Fellow.

***HerStory: Have We Come A Long Way Baby?***  
**Life & Ethics Program—Sunday, March 15, 3pm**  
**With Ivette Attaud-Jones**

**\*\*Donations are requested\*\***

**Ivette Attaud-Jones** is a social entrepreneur, former Fort Bragg Army wife and a 20 year survivor of domestic violence. After the loss of her infant twin daughter to domestic violence and beginning her journey to healing, she has made it her mission to speak out against domestic violence by raising awareness within the faith based community. She is also the author of *Silent No More, A Woman’s Story of Surviving Domestic Abuse in the Military*, soon to be published. She has also served on the Battered Women’s Justice Committee of Voices of Women Organizing Project and received a Certificate of Completion in Victim Assistance Training from the Office For Victims of Crime.

**About My Life My Soul**

My Life My Soul is a domestic violence program of the East Harlem Churches and Community Urban Center in New York. We focus on raising awareness through community education projects including workshop facilitation and public speaking on issues such as domestic violence and dating violence.

My Life My Soul is also an interactive, live internet talk-radio show that focuses on domestic violence and its impact on survivors. Callers are encouraged to call (646) 716-5556 to listen or share their experience. The show will be hosted live every Saturday morning at 9 a.m. Eastern on [www.BlogTalkRadio.com/mylifemysoul](http://www.BlogTalkRadio.com/mylifemysoul).

**Brooklyn Society for Ethical Culture**

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