



ETHICALLY SPEAKING

53 Prospect Park West, Brooklyn NY 11215 (718) 768-2972

Volume 95, no. 6

February Platforms

This Season's Platform Theme is *Living Our Ideals: an Exploration of Paths and Resources for an Ethical Life*. The focus this Season will be on a BSEC community-wide, bottom-up collection of questions, resources, themes, and practices to help us assess and achieve our own aspirations for ethical living, however onerous the external conditions, or misguided our national or global authorities.

February 4: *Freedom to Doubt: The Life and Humor of Dr. Richard Feynman*
Presented by Anne Klaeyen: Richard Feynman, who won the Nobel Prize for Physics in 1965, was not only a brilliant scientist, but also one of the great humanists and educators of the 20th century, who approached life with openness, originality, and great wit.

February 11: *The Mountain People*
Greta Gladney, Donna Roberts, and Rita Wilson reflect on lessons learned and insights gained at The Mountain (better known as the AEU Summer Leadership Workshop) last July.

February 18: *Personal and Favorite Poetry*
A celebration of the power of language. Members share their own poetry, as well as personal favorites.

February 25: *Annual Y.E.S. Platform*
Members of BSEC's youth group present their annual platform, which always makes for a provocative and engaging Sunday morning. This year: *Has political correctness gone too far?*

March 4: *One Woman's View:*

Fighting Fair and Losing to Win

We cohabit a world where conflict comes with the situation, and can become a road to either ruin or transformation. Join our discussion of the life energy that conflict taps, and how people willing to be both ethical and proactive can use their personal and cultural resources to the advantage of all stakeholders. BSEC Leader Lisel Burns.

Platforms are held every Sunday morning from 11am to 12:15pm in the main hall of the Meeting House at 53 Prospect Park West, followed by a convivial and delicious buffet lunch. Please stop by!

Leader Notes: Reflections on Race and "The Debt" by Lisel Burns

There is much fessing up that white society must be induced to do here for the common good. First it must own up to slavery and acknowledge its debt to slavery's contemporary victims. It must, at long last, pay that debt in massive restitutions made to America's involuntary members. It must help to rebuild the black esteem it destroyed by democratizing access to a treasure trove of histories, near and ancient, to which blacks contributed seminally and prominently. It must open wide a scholarly discourse to the African ancients to which its highly evolved culture owes much credit and gives none. It must rearrange the furniture of its national myths, monuments, lores, symbols, iconography, legends and arts to reflect the contributions and sensibilities of all Americans. It must set afoot new values. It must purify memory. It must recast its lying face. —Randall Robinson, *The Debt*

This winter, I invite members and friends of BSEC to undertake (with as little defensiveness as we can muster) both a personal and community-wide self-assessment, regarding not only our community in general, but also our operations and priorities as they relate to the ideals we consider most important in this particular period.

Last year we held a series of moral conversations on race sparked by the shooting death of Amadou Diallo. This February we start a tradition of BSEC members and friends taking at least a full month each year to talk, study, and reflect on the realities of race, class, and caste operating around us. Each member is encouraged to choose a suitable way to follow the reflection with inner and outer social change action.

We do this for our own commitment to truth-telling; we do it for ourselves and in solidarity with the descendants of American Slavery and the hundred years following of legalized injustice—a group to whom our nation owes a terrible unpaid debt of immense proportions. There's a Portuguese proverb that says, "No matter how far down the wrong road you have travelled, turn back." Racism and the structural inequities of economic and educational resources are deeply entrenched on the American landscape. Despite great gains experienced by a small number of people, statistics of declining test scores, graduations, employment, assets, and income, alongside the ugly fact of growing incarceration, tell the story of a nation that has failed a significant proportion of the descendants of U.S. slavery and the ensuing Jim Crow establishment.

What would success really look like in the area of race and class in America? To make a serious

assessment, we would need a vision of success and criteria with which to measure progress toward it. We would have to look at the wrongs of the past and the havoc they have wrought.

Can we first agree with Randall Robinson's challenge in his recent book, *The Debt*, that we need to start with an *ethical* bottom-line objective? He suggests one: "There will always be differences in the abilities and achievements of individuals, but achievement differences that correlate with race must never be tolerated. That gap must be fully closed." He goes on to say, "But how many will share this objective? Clearly not everyone. Clearly not most; not even most blacks. The endless gauntlet exacts its price in lowered expectation. To do what is right, of course will require a virtual Marshall Plan of resources, far in excess of anything contemplated, but I see no evidence of any will to do anything much...The problem is one of will—and consensus on course-setting."

I am moved by Robinson's call for a long historical view to really understand race issues today, and his argument for the benefit of a full campaign to learn and deal with the immense cultural and economic debt owed the descendants of slavery. I think it is a crucial book for people both black and white who are willing to suspend their cynicism, assumptions and conclusions to date and dare RETHINK race issues from the beginning at least of U.S. history.

Please join me 10am Sundays this February for study and reflection, as we discuss *The Debt: What America Owes to Blacks*. Selections will be available at each session; the first ten minutes will be for silent reflection.

to order books or to RSVP, please call Jason at 783-2298 or e-mail monkeysalad@hotmail.com
on the web: <http://www.thedebt.net> and http://www.puaf.umd.edu/ipp/Summer00/case_for_reparations.htm

**THE BROOKLYN SOCIETY
FOR ETHICAL CULTURE**

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Ethically Speaking is published 6-10 times a year by BSEC. This issue was produced by Bob Strock, Lisel Burns, Anne Klaeyens, Remi Gay, Marshall Dubin, Charley Horwitz, and Martha Hoffman.

Ethically Speaking is written by a number of BSEC members. Views expressed in this publication are always open to friendly discussion. Our newsletter staff, like the membership at large, may vary in their thinking on many issues, yet we are all committed to putting deed before creed, and to strive constantly toward living out, each in our own particular way, the Ethical Ideal of eliciting the best from ourselves and others.

<http://www.bsec.org>

Universal Healthcare Platform March 11

The BSEC Committee on Universal Healthcare is pleased to announce a healthcare platform for March 11.

The speaker will be Martha Livingston PhD, Associate Professor of Health and Society at SUNY/Old Westbury, and member of the Executive Committee of the *New York Chapter of Physicians for a National Healthcare Program*. Dr. Livingston is an expert on the Canadian health care system.

Children's Sunday Assembly

Hello! I hope this finds you enjoying a prosperous and healthy year of the snake. In January, after our winter break, children, parents and teachers all seemed to be happy to be together again.

The theme of the month was "A hero is more than an action figure". We told stories and talked about the small ways that people can be kind to one another and help each other. In many traditional cultures, winter is a natural time to tell stories and reflect on past actions as the cold weather forces us indoors. The children learned a little about meditation and reflection including a moving meditation based on a Native American practice.

We reflected about the importance of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and started a quilt about peace and racial justice for February and Black History Month. Abolitionists would use quilts to convey messages to the underground railroad— one more example of being a hero in small ways.

CSA Calendar

February 18: NO regular classes scheduled. Call 768-2972 to see if there will be childcare from 11am, or after platform.

February's Theme: *Heroes of Freedom*

Ethical Action Project: *Taking Personal Inventory*

Our Children's Sunday Assembly program meets every Sunday (except where noted) from 10:00am to 12:15pm in the Poly Prep/Woodward School building, 49 Prospect Park West at 1st Street. We offer an ethics-centered curriculum and community for children aged 4-13 years. Through age-appropriate stories, discussions and activities we help children to understand the importance of personal responsibility, religious tolerance and respect in a multi-cultural world. Registration is open throughout the school year.

Remi Gay, CSA Director

Membership News

Milestones

Tony Severo's mother, Victoria, passed away on December 16. She was 84. A memorial service is planned for the early spring.

Tracey and Oufah Jindyeh are the proud parents of a baby boy, Sami, who was born on December 18.

John and Laura Duffy welcomed their new daughter, Irene Diana, into their lives on December 19.

Represent BSEC at the AEU Assembly

The American Ethical Union General Assembly will be held in St. Louis this April 19-22. BSEC is forming a delegation to attend. Delegates vote on the AEU board and changes to the bylaws, attend workshops on Ethical Culture and related topics, and get to meet Ethiculturists from around the country. It's a chance to share challenges and success stories, and to enjoy the company of a great group of people. Contact Lisel at 783-2298 if you would like to be a delegate.

First Saturdays at the Brooklyn Museum of Art

A group from BSEC is emerging that meets for the monthly free festivities at the internationally renowned cultural center. All ages are welcome and a variety of activities is always available: films, concerts, dancing, gallery-walking, etc. The BMA group will also be sponsoring month-end potlucks. Contact Rita if you are interested in participating.

Erratum

Last month, we misspelled the name of new member Selma Richman. Please accept our apology, Selma!

BSEC Philosophy and Practices:

If you have not taken the three orientation workshops with the Leader which we offer to newcomers and members, contact Rita Wilson at the BSEC office (768-2972) for a February schedule.

Workshop Planned on Moral Education

The January 21 platform was cancelled due to a Sunday morning snowstorm, and we all missed the platform on *Raising Ethical Children* with Janice Novet. A Sunday afternoon workshop on the moral education of children has been scheduled for *Sunday, February 25, from 1-2:30pm*. Contact Lisel Burns at 783-2298 for more information on the workshop.

Happy Ethical New Year

A Happy New Year to one and all.
We may stagger but we won't fall.
We might attain our greatest desire.
We might even set the world on fire;
Or, better still, we might strive to attain
A life in which giving supersedes gain.
And throughout our years, be they many or few,
I wish for me and I wish for you
The joy of creating more sunshine than strife.
May you drink the sweet juices of ethical life!

*Marshall F. Dubin
January 1, 2001*

FEBRUARY 2001 BSEC CALENDAR

2/1 – 2/12

Thursday, 2/1

7pm: Board of Trustees Meeting.

Friday, 2/2

8pm: Good Coffeehouse concert series presents an evening of jazz with the *Kevin Schmidt Quintet*, featuring Kevin Schmidt on bass trombone, with Nathan Hanson on Tenor Sax, Matt Richelson on guitar, Lee Alexander on bass, Dave Anania on drums. Donation \$8.

Saturday, 2/3

9–11am: *The Art of Belly Dancing* taught by Salome. Free to BSEC members. Call 399-1732 for information.

Sunday, 2/4

Monthly Membership Sunday

10am–12:15pm: Children's Assembly

10-11am: Library Discussion Group on Randall Robinson's *The Debt*.

11am: Platform: *Freedom to Doubt: the Life and Humor of Dr. Richard Feynman*, with Anne Klaeyesen.

12:30pm: Lunch with the Bunch, February birthdays, and Newcomers' Circle.

Monday, 2/5

7–9pm: *Brooklyn Community Storytellers Group* (see last page for details)

Tuesday, 2/6

7:30–9pm: *Brooklyn Women's Chorus* directed by Bev Grant. Come sing with us! Call 965-3611 for information.

Wednesday, 2/7

6:30–10pm: *Folk Open Sing* with potluck supper and snacks, co-sponsored by the Pinewoods Music Society. Free admission.

7–8:30pm: *T'ai Chi Chuan* class taught by J.P. Harpignes; \$12 per class or \$40 for 4 classes. Free to BSEC members.

6:30–7:30pm: quiet workshop and reflection

7:30pm: *Women's Leadership Support Group*

Friday, 2/9

8pm: The Good Coffeehouse concert series presents Chris Seymour and the *Fulton Ferry Amblers*, featuring Sean and Deirdre Murtha and the *Tri-County Ramblers*. Donation \$8.

Saturday, 2/10

9–11am: The Art of Belly Dancing

Sunday, 2/11

10am–12:15pm: Children's Assembly

10-11am: Library Discussion Group on Randall Robinson's *The Debt*.

11am: Platform: *The Mountain People*. A report from participants at last summer's AEU Summer Leadership Workshop.

2/13 – 2/27

Tuesday, 2/13

7:30–9pm: *Brooklyn Women's Chorus*

Wednesday, 2/14

6:30–7:30pm: quiet workshop and reflection

7:30–9pm: Valentine Supper benefiting Design and Restoration Group Projects.

7–8:30pm: *T'ai Chi Chuan*.

Friday, 2/16

8pm: The Good Coffeehouse concert series presents Third Friday with the Park Slope Food Coop: *Leroy Jenkins* on solo violin.

Saturday, 2/17

9–11am: *The Art of Belly Dancing*.

Sunday, 2/18

10am–12:15pm:

Children's Sunday Assembly

10-11am: Library Discussion Group on Randall Robinson's *The Debt*.

11am: Platform: *Personal & Favorite Poetry*

12:30pm: Lunch with the Bunch

Tuesday, 2/20

7:30–9pm: *Brooklyn Women's Chorus*

Wednesday, 2/21

6:30–7:30pm: quiet workshop and reflection

7:30–9pm: *Faith Conversations*, an ongoing discussion series centering on the place of traditional religious beliefs and practices within a humanist religion.

7–9pm: *T'ai Chi Chuan*

Friday, 2/23

8pm: The Good Coffeehouse concert series presents composer/pianist Bernadette Speach, poet Thulani Davis, mezzo-soprano Alva Rogers, Mark Dresser on Bass and Jeffrey Schanzer on guitar in an evening of music-poetry collaborations featuring selections from the upcoming CD *Reflections*. \$8 Donation.

Saturday, 2/24

9–11am: *The Art of Belly Dancing*

Sunday, 2/25

10am–12:30pm:

Children's Sunday Assembly

10-11am: Library Discussion Group on Randall Robinson's *The Debt*.

11am: *Annual Y.E.S. Platform*

1-2:30pm: Workshop: *Raising Moral Children* with Janice Novet and Lisel Burns.

Tuesday, 2/27

7:30–9pm: *Brooklyn Women's Chorus*

2/28 – 3/4

Wednesday, 2/28

6:30–7:30pm: quiet workshop and reflection

7:30–9pm: *Ethical Culture Readings:* selections from William James' *The Varieties of Religious Experience*.

7-8:30pm: *T'ai Chi Chuan*

Friday, 3/2

8pm: Good Coffeehouse concert series presents Harold Selitsky and Nozze de Carlo. Donation \$8.

Saturday, 3/3

9–11am: The Art of Belly Dancing.

Sunday, 3/4

Monthly Membership Sunday

10am–12:15pm:

Children's Sunday Assembly

11am: Platform: *One Woman's View: Fighting Fair and Losing to Win*, with BSEC Leader Lisel Burns.

12:30pm: Lunch with the Bunch, March birthdays, and Newcomers' Circle.

Eliciting the Best

Hence the final formulation: So act as to raise up in others the ideal of the relation of give and take, of universal interdependence in which they stand with an infinity of beings like themselves, members of the infinite universe, irreducible, like and unlike themselves in their respective uniqueness.

The simile that may be used is that of a ray of light which has the effect of kindling other rays, unlike but complementary to itself. Each ethical unit, each member of the infinite universe, is to be regarded as a center from which such a ray emanates, touching other centers, and awakening there the light intrinsic in them. Or we may think of a fountain from which stream forth jets of indescribable life-power playing out of it, playing into other life, and evoking there kindred and yet unkindred life-waves, waves effluent and reffluent. Whatever the symbolism may be, inadequate in any case, the idea of the enmeshing of one's life in universal life without loss of distinctness—the everlasting selfhood to be achieved on the contrary, by means of the cross-relation— is the cardinal point.

Felix Adler



Campaign to Rename Brooklyn Street to Honor the Memory of Etheline Dubin

BSEC members are campaigning for a Crown Heights street to be renamed in memory of beloved Etheline Dubin.

Etheline, late wife of BSEC member and union activist Marshall Dubin, was a true pillar of the community and an unflinching protagonist for justice and civil rights.

She was a community leader who never sought elected office. She was a longtime member of Community Board Eight, from which she was able to work directly and unceasingly for the interests and quality of life of her Crown Heights neighborhood.

U.S. Representative Major Owens considers Etheline to be one of his mentors. In a letter to Congress honoring her as a *Point of Light for All Americans*, he declared "Etheline Dubin was a solid brick, a *golden* brick in the foundation of what is best about our American democracy. Most of us in decision-making positions realize that the hope of our system comes from the bottom up. It is the integrity and the tenacity of the brothers and sisters who are never awarded medals and big prizes; these qualities keep our society moving forward."

A petition and letter-writing campaign is being coordinated in an effort to bring a lasting and visible memorial to Etheline's life and example. We would appreciate everyone who wants to help contacting Rita at the office for information on writing a letter to support this effort. We will get copies of it to all local politicians and the community board for speedy action.

Brooklyn Community Storyteller's Support Group Meeting at BSEC First Mondays, beginning February 5

The Brooklyn Community Storyteller's Support Group is starting monthly gatherings on first Mondays starting in February. Please join us! Here is what it is all about:

What do the Brooklyn Community Storytellers do?

Brooklyn Community Storytellers provide spirited support for telling and gathering stories. We tell stories to Brooklyn folks and in Brooklyn places. We perform for friends, family members, and neighbors. We tell stories on stone stoops and in homes, parks, churches, libraries, and schools. We use stories to celebrate births, mark the passing of loved ones, tell our histories, and connect deeply to the earth on which we all depend. We take stories into our work as teachers, librarians, ministers, counselors, and healers. We create events where we gather stories from the many communities that enliven Brooklyn. And we hold classes, workshops, and support groups to learn more about storytelling.

What is the Storyteller's Support Group?

The Storyteller's Support Group provides information and spirited support for anyone who wants to know more about telling and gathering stories. This is a place to tell stories and learn new ones, share storytelling experience and expertise, look for help with stories and storytelling projects, learn about storytelling opportunities and resources in Brooklyn and beyond. A professional storyteller guides the monthly meetings which are structured so people can give each other mutual support.

Who can attend? Do I need experience?

Anyone interested in learning about storytelling and gathering in an atmosphere of mutual support is welcome. The only experience necessary is life experience.

What happens at Support Group meetings?

Each meeting explores a new topic, such as finding stories to tell, and connecting with audiences. A professional storyteller and/or group members sets the theme and tells a story; group members exchange stories if they have prepared them; we expand our storytelling in a mini-workshop; and we find out what everybody has been doing with storytelling and help out where we can. There is also a resource exchange and plenty of great fun and good-spirited sharing. There may even be a raffle or two. If you bring goodies, we will eat them.

When and where does the Support Group meet?

We meet the first Monday of each month at the BSEC Meeting House from 7-9pm.

What does the Support Group cost?

There is a sliding scale suggested donation of \$5-\$12 that covers expenses, including an honorarium for the professional storytellers who work with us.



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