



ETHICALLY SPEAKING

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

Volume 94, no. 7

March Platforms

March 5:

Let's Give Anima a Chance

In recognition of International Women's Day. How today's technology can help us revalue and invest in women's ways of living, learning and organizing for change. Facilitated by Lisel Burns, with women guest leaders from local and global settings.

March 12:

Forgiveness in an Age of Apology

With Dr. John Hoad, Leader Emeritus of the Ethical Society of St. Louis.

March 19

Tucker Farley

A visit from the Professor of Women's Studies at Brooklyn College.

March 26:

Single-Payer Universal Healthcare

With Dr. Oliver Fein of *Physicians for National Healthcare*. Sponsored by the BSEC Committee for Universal Healthcare.

April 2:

What is a Modern Moral Education?

And what would it look like in an Ethical Society in Brooklyn? BSEC Leader Lisel Burns continues her Ways of Living series.

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

Leadership: Our Health Factor by Lisel Burns

In a powerful sermon preached January 26th at the Riverside Church, for the funeral of longtime community activist Marshall England, The Rev. Dr. James A. Forbes compared Marshall's life as an unpaid organizer/leader in multiple organizations and social change campaigns to what he called the "health factor."

"The health factor" he said, is that element in the body or the community that works tirelessly for health, that renews a flagging spirit, that monitors all systems impacting upon health and then coaches the body's own resources to restore threatened or damaged elements and rebuild the immune system. The health factor is an upward trend in nature, Dr. Forbes reminded us, a life energy that works to organize natural forces, even while contrary principles such as entropy and decay are undoing that same order. It seems to act as a protector, doing whatever is needed, whatever the threat, to help the body to identify danger, restore and continuously renew itself.

To me, responsible leadership roles, in any organization, are exactly that health factor. Positive group improvements don't occur at random (at least not in my experience); they are usually the results of someone inspiring the group's best thinking, weaving the strands of its difficulties into recogniz-

able themes and turning problems into proposals that contradict passivity and avoid destructive negativity.

Good leadership sees to it that someone watches over the needs of both group members and the group as a whole, and keeps the big picture as well as details of a task in mind. Good leadership needs enough authority to see to it that things go right as much as possible, and also the means to resolve repeating difficulties. When taken in service to the group's ideals and aspirations, good leadership is hardly ever authoritarian; while judgment calls are necessary, wide consultation tends to strengthen most good decisions and prevent many a bad one.

In organizational development terms I've said that BSEC is moving from an informal hierarchy to a more horizontal model. We are in the process of turning from a triangle structure into a big circle with all members and subgroups looking to the middle, where sits hopefully our latest vision, strategies, and purpose. But some element I call leadership has to fill in the spaces between our overall goals and our everyday operations.

Starting March 1, we will have that leadership as the Personnel committee has authorized a coordinating group of part-time staff who are members and BSEC team Leaders. They will meet weekly and be responsible for the planning, practices, and self-initiated assessments of BSEC staff and volunteer programs and projects.

Beginning in March, Rita Wilson takes a six month leave from the Board to work half-time for BSEC, serving as part-time Team leader for the Administrative staff, coordinating their planning and reporting; she will also be assisting me in clergy and core program developments. Welcome to Rita and many thanks for bringing her unfailing graciousness to this leadership challenge. With Rita's able assistance, I will keep Program Coordination, focusing clergy oversight on those core programs we sponsor as a Society (including Sunday Platform, Wednesday Values and Culture series, the Sunday School, the Youth Group, and Sheila's Boogies).

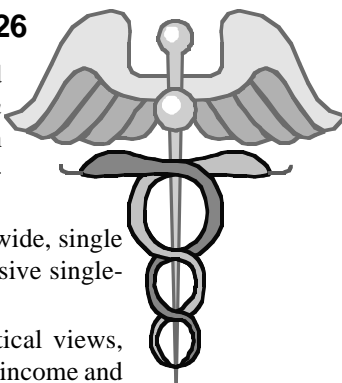
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Universal Health Care Platform March 26

The BSEC Committee for Universal Health Care is proud to bring you a platform on *Single-Payer Universal Health Care*, with special guest Dr. Oliver Fein, Associate Dean of Cornell Medical College, Chair of the New York chapter of *Physicians for a National Health Plan*. (PNHP)

Physicians for a National Health Program is a nationwide, single issue organization advocating a universal, comprehensive single-payer national health care program.

PNHP includes members with widely differing political views, united by their dismay at the nation's widening gaps in income and access to medical care, the deteriorating public health infrastructure, and the corporate takeover of the health sector. They are convinced that most Americans, and most physicians, support health care reform based on precepts of social justice and medical need, not the current reforms driven by Wall Street. Come to BSEC on March 26 to learn more! You can also visit the PNHP website at www.phnp.org.



**THE BROOKLYN SOCIETY
FOR ETHICAL CULTURE**

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Youth Group: Rita Wilson & Tony Severo

Ethically Speaking is published six to ten times a year by BSEC. This issue was produced by Bob Strock, Lisel Burns, Anne Klaeyesen, Abe Lieberman, and Remi Gay.

VIEWPOINT

The Meaning of Membership: Part Two

by Anne Klaeyesen, Membership Coordinator

A new member recently asked me if she was required to attend Sunday Platform. I was surprised by her question. "Required? No, of course not," I replied. "Why do you ask?" It seems that she had received that impression from other members who commented at not having seen her at platform. A young man whose assistance at the Good Coffeehouse concerts has been invaluable said that he sometimes feels that adults at Brooklyn Ethical will accept him as a member of the community only if he joins the youth group.

Our Society has become a very vibrant community with many meaningful programs. People who make a commitment to become members agree to support our community both financially and proactively. After exploring different possibilities, they find a program that is meaningful to them and volunteer their time and energy to sustain it and help it thrive. Not every program will appeal to every member, and we must be open and flexible enough to let every new member find his or her own way.

Brooklyn's Youth Ethical Society (Y.E.S.) provides a wonderful experience for teenagers. I had always hoped that my children, upon graduation from Sunday School, would join the youth group, but they have found their own, independent paths. My daughter, together with three other teenagers, is a teaching assistant in the Sunday School. My son, a former teaching assistant, is not currently involved in any community activities, but still identifies himself

as an Ethical Culturist. Not all young people will find a place in our youth group. This is not a criticism of the program, but an understanding that each of us has different needs. Let us help each other find what is the best experience for us.

To help in that process, we have designated the first Sunday of the month "Membership Sunday," a time to focus attention on membership activities. Starting at 9:30 AM, coffee, juice and doughnuts will be available in the sunroom, followed by committee meetings at 10 AM, a platform address by our leader, Lisel Burns, then Lunch with the Bunch celebrating all the birthdays in the month, and, finally, afternoon workshops. We welcome suggestions, so please give me a call at 965-3611.

Eros/Logos by Bob Strock

I just finished a book that goes a long way in making clear to me what all this talk of creating authentic community is really about, and why it's so important. The book is Lewis Hyde's *The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property*, and I think it should be required reading for all Ethical culturists. The book has almost as many facets as it has pages; it's impossible to impart its full impact in this limited space.

Hyde distinguishes between two types of commerce: *logos* commerce, the commerce of the marketplace, and *eros* commerce, the commerce of the gift. The history of western civilization can be seen as basically an inversion of human commerce from one to the other, from the tribalism of the hunters and the gatherers to the capitalism of the bankers and the salesmen. While he does not advocate a reversion to tribal values, Hyde's book is in a way a hopeful call for an expansion of the gift spirit beyond the accepted contemporary capitalist confines of the nuclear family.

While market exchange is stimulated by scarcity, gift exchange is fueled by abundance. Generosity breeds generosity, as long as the social scale is small enough for the bond to be felt. And the best form of gift exchange is not one-to-one, but a circle, where your gift is passed from one person to the next, until it comes back to you, unrecognizable, but gratefully received.

The Ethical Culture principle of "eliciting the best" is a pure statement of the spirit of *eros*. Be as generous as possible with people who are in your circle, and their circles will spin, in epicycle after epicycle, until they cross the earth and come home again. *Logos* and the marketplace are necessary forces when the social scale expands beyond the reach of human love, but we must not let them rule our real relationships.

BSEC should continue in its efforts to connect to the countless gift communities that already exist. There is a great spiritual wealth available in abundance, if we open our hearts and minds to the possibility.

Million Mom March ~ Mothers' Day 2000

Mobilize in Washington for Common Sense Gun Laws

While we acknowledge that guns may be necessary for hunting, law enforcement, and national security, the proliferation of firearms intended for one purpose only — killing another human being — has become untenable.

We, the mothers, are calling on Congress to enact common sense gun control legislation by Mothers' Day 2000. Come May 14th, we mothers will go to Washington, D.C. either to celebrate sensible legislation or to protest bipartisan ineptitude.

from the Million Mom March Mission Statement

Reacting to the recent wave of gun violence in schools, a group of mothers developed the idea of a mass march on Washington Mother's Day, May 14th to protest gun violence directed at children and to demand passage of sensible gun safety legislation. Since its unveiling at a press conference in New York on Labor Day 1999 the idea has been endorsed by numerous civic, religious, labor, and advocates for gun control. The American Ethical Union supports the march, and encourages all members and friends of Ethical Societies across the country to take part.

There is a national toll-free telephone number, 1-888-989-MOMS, as well as a website: www.millionmomsmarch.com. Donna Dees Thomases, the Founder and President of Million Mom March, can be reached via e-mail at donna@millionmomsmarch.com. The local coordinator in Brooklyn is listed as mmmbrooklyn@yahoo.com.

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.

MARCH 2000 BSEC CALENDAR

3/1 – 3/9

Wednesday 3/1

6:30-10PM: *Pinewoods Folk Open Sing* with potluck supper & snacks. Bring your voice, instruments, friends, neighbors, and family. Free admission.

6:30-8PM: *But Is It Right?* an open discussion focusing on basic ethical notions and everyday moral dilemmas. Led by Vanda Bozecevic.

7:30-9:30PM: *The Creative Process*, a series of discussions with guest speakers in the fields of literature, music and art. Tonight: singer-songwriters George Wurzbach and Ilene Weiss.

Thursday 3/2

7PM: Monthly Board of Trustees Meeting.

7-9PM: *T'ai Chi Chuan* with J.P. Harpignes. \$12/class; \$40 for 4; BSEC members free.

Friday 3/3

7PM: Y.E.S. Youth Group Meeting. Contact Rita Wilson at 284-0241 or Tony Severo at 854-0710 for information.

8PM: The Good Coffeehouse concert series presents a high energy evening of original instrumental compositions and songs from Latin America, featuring Barry Kornhauser on cello, Jerome Harris on acoustic bass, drummer Drori Mandlak, and violinist Marty Laster, with special guest vocalist Lucia Pulido. Donation \$8.

Saturday 3/4

10-11AM: *The Art of Belly Dancing* taught by Salome. Free to BSEC Members. Call 399-1732 for information.

Sunday 3/5

Monthly Membership Sunday

9:30AM: Membership reception: coffee, juice, and donuts in the sunroom.

10AM-12:30PM:

Children's Sunday Assembly.

10-11AM: Parents' Discussion Group.

11AM: Sunday Platform: *Let's Give Anima a Chance*. Facilitated by Lisel Burns, with women leaders from local and global settings.

12:30PM: Lunch With the Bunch.

Tuesday 3/7

7:30-9PM: *Brooklyn Women's Chorus* directed by Bev Grant. We believe every woman can sing! Join us. 768-2972 for info.

Wednesday 3/8

7:30PM: Wedding Couples Workshop with BSEC Leader Lisel Burns. For further information call 783-2298.

Thursday 3/9

7-9PM: *T'ai Chi Chuan*.

3/10 – 3/20

Friday, 3/10

6:30PM: Membership Potluck Supper for new, old, and future members.

8PM: The Good Coffeehouse concert series presents an evening of traditional and not-so-traditional music with blues singer Bob Malenky, sea shanty singer Frank Woerner and ballad singers Alison and Hilary Kelley. Donation \$8.

Saturday 3/11

10-11AM: *The Art of Belly Dancing*.

Sunday 3/12

10AM-12:30PM: Children's Assembly.

10-11AM: Parents' Discussion Group.

11AM: Sunday Platform: *Forgiveness in an Age of Apology* with Ethical Culture leader John Hoad.

12:30PM: Lunch with the Bunch.

1-3PM: Workshop with John Hoad on Ethical Culture ceremonies and practices.

Tuesday 3/14

7:30-9PM: *Brooklyn Women's Chorus*.

Wednesday 3/15

7:30-9PM: *Faith Conversations* – Chris Jacques leads a discussion that addresses, among other things, the question of faith within the context of religious humanism.

7:30-9PM: *Games Galore Night*. Family entertainment with games and light refreshments. Admission \$8 per person or \$6 if you bring your own game. Call Bruce Leibowitz at 336-3683 for information.

Thursday 3/16

7-9PM: *T'ai Chi Chuan*.

Friday 3/17

8PM: The Good Coffeehouse concert series presents Third Friday with the Park Slope Food Coop: Alan Friend with *Steal the Donut* and the *Roberta Picket Duo*. Donation \$8.

Saturday 3/18

10-11AM: *The Art of Belly Dancing*.

Sunday 3/19

10AM-12:30PM:

Children's Sunday Assembly.

10-11AM: Parents' Discussion Group.

11AM: Sunday Platform with Tucker Farley, Professor of Women's Studies at Brooklyn College.

12:30PM: Lunch with the Bunch.

1:15-3PM: *ERA – Unfinished Business with the Constitution* A short film followed by a discussion on the current status of the Equal Rights Amendment. With Sherry Rogers from Brooklyn NOW.

3/21 – 4/2

Tuesday 3/21

7:30-9PM: *Brooklyn Women's Chorus*.

Wednesday 3/22

6:30-8PM: **Newcomers' Workshop:** *Eight Commitments of Ethical Culture*.

8PM: **Core Values Workshop**, with Leader Lisel Burns and Anne Klaeyesen.

Thursday 3/23

7PM: The Richard Price Book Discussion Group discusses *Accordion Crimes* by Annie Proulx. Call Constance Pigozzi at 331-1137 for information.

7-9PM: *T'ai Chi Chuan*.

Friday 3/24

8PM: The Good Coffeehouse concert series presents a Big Band Swing Night with *Art Lillard's Heavenly Band*. Donation \$8.

Saturday 3/25

10-11AM: *The Art of Belly Dancing*.

Sunday 3/26

10AM-12:30PM: Children's Assembly.

10-11AM: Parents' Discussion Group.

11AM: Sunday Platform: *Universal Health Care* with Dr. Oliver Fein of Physicians for a National Health Plan.

12:30PM: Lunch with the Bunch.

1:30PM: Fundraising Goods & Services Auction. Call Ruth Pikitch at 256-6739 for information and to volunteer.

Tuesday 3/28

7:30-9PM: *Brooklyn Women's Chorus*.

Thursday 3/30

7-9PM: *T'ai Chi Chuan*.

Friday 3/31

8PM: The Good Coffeehouse concert series presents guitar-picking *Orrin Starr* with the red-hot trio *Sultans of String*, and *Squeezology* featuring Jody Kruskal. Donation \$8.

Saturday 4/1

10-11AM: *The Art of Belly Dancing*.

Sunday 4/2

Monthly Membership Sunday

9:30AM: Membership reception: coffee, juice, and donuts in the sunroom.

10AM-12:30PM: Children's Assembly.

10-11AM: Parents' Discussion Group.

11AM: Sunday Platform: *What is a modern Moral Education and What Might it Look Like in an Ethical Society in Brooklyn?* with BSEC Leader Lisel Burns.

12:30PM: Lunch with the Bunch.



The Children's Sunday Assembly

Our children's Sunday program meets every Sunday from 10:00am to 12:15pm. We offer an ethics-centered curriculum and community for children aged 4 to 13 years. Through age-appropriate stories, discussions and activities we help children understand the importance of personal responsibility, religious tolerance and respect in a multi-cultural world. Registration is open throughout the school year.

March Curriculum Theme: Spring Holiday Reflections

We tell the stories behind Purim, Passover, Easter, and other holidays related to the spring equinox. March is also Women's History Month. We'll tell some of their stories as well.

Ethical Action Project: Hosting a visit from the Queens Ethical CSA.

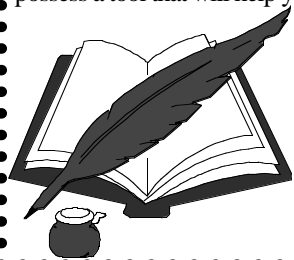
Winter is a good time for reflection and telling stories. In January, besides learning something about making resolutions and meditation, we had two visits from distinguished elders from the congregation, Marshall Dubin and Annemarie Wong Mogil. They shared a bit about their life histories and families with stories and photographs. They also described what times were like when they were younger and the ideals they believed in. The children were attentive and asked good questions so that both times what started out as a fifteen minute show and tell stretched out to over half an hour.

In February, we started out with a bang by celebrating the Chinese and Tibetan Year of the Dragon with stories and traditional treats. We told tales of black history and discussed the idea of freedom. We threw in a couple extra Ethical Action projects suggested by the children, like shoveling some of the old snow away in front of the Society building so people could "walk better".

A special thanks to member Herb Dalin for starting up our chess club again — a perfect activity when it's too cold and icy to go out of doors! — *Remi Gay, CSA Director*

Intensive Journal Workshop April 21-22 A Powerful Tool for Reflection and Self Development

Come to BSEC for a workshop in the Intensive Journal Method, developed by the late holistic depth psychologist Ira Progoff. Work on a series of guided, reflective writing exercises designed to heighten your attention to images, metaphors, and deeper questions, not only on a personal level, but also on a community and even global scale. Once you complete the workshop, you will possess a tool that will help you develop many elements of your life, including (but not limited to) creativity, energy, self-esteem, healing, and decision-making.



The workshop will consist of two sessions, both required. The first will be Friday 4/21 from 7 to 10pm, the second will be on Saturday, from 10am to 6pm, with a break for lunch. The cost is \$145, with discounts available for BSEC members and other community-involved individuals. To register, please contact the BSEC office at 768-2972, or e-mail bsecoffice@aol.com.

Leader Notes, continued from first page...

Tony Severo will continue to assist the Board President by coordinating the special projects of the board not assigned to a committee, and by monitoring the performance of Board Administrative Committees. Anne Klaeyesen will continue as Leader-in-Training and part-time Membership coordinator, chairing the new Membership Committee, which will focus on membership outreach, community building, and external communications including publicity and the newsletter.

Ready or not, Rita, Tony, and Anne are stepping now into a new co-leadership role; in many ways they will be acting as a coordinating committee for the overall operations of this community and its projects. As their clergy consultant and yours, I bid you encourage them to take this role fully, with the authority they need to do the job. For the next six months at least, this group's leadership will be our best reminder of the deadlines, standards, values, and agreements we have set ourselves. Cooperation — giving them full information without defensiveness, checking in with the team leader in your area when things are successful as well as when they aren't going to plan, keeping your agreements, and showing a willingness to share the BSEC work they prioritize — may make the "health factor" difference.

Do you have the patience to wait
till your mud settles and the water is clear?
Can you remain unmoving
till the right action arises by itself?

Tao Tè Ching

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