



# ETHICALLY SPEAKING

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

Volume 95, no. 7

## March 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.

### **March 4:** *Race and Class: Effective Dialog*

Continuing the discussion of race and class divisions in our own lives and communities. Methods of creating a safe forum for effective dialog. With BSEC Leader Lisel Burns and Jennifer Brisette, owner of the Indigo Cafe and Bookstore in Fort Greene. Music provided by the Brooklyn Women's Chorus.

### **March 11:** *Universal Health Care*

With Martha Livingston, Professor of Health and Society at SUNY Old Westbury.

### **March 18:** *American Religious Expectations and Ethical Culture's Response*

With Curt Collier, Leader of the Riverdale-Yonkers Ethical Society. Music provided by local singer-songwriter Chris Seymour.

### **March 25:** *Women and Ethical Culture*

With Jean Kotkin, Leader, New York Society for Ethical Culture, and member of the IHEU delegation to the United Nations.

### **April 1:** *Conflict Partnership*

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: Taking a Winter Measure by Lisel Burns

Winter is a traditional time to gather thoughts, hopefully in service to something bigger than me, myself, and I. While the world may benefit from our member activity in the larger society, I appreciate BSEC more and more as a community we use to become more self-aware. It also is a place for people to try on leadership and gather resources for shared projects in a semi-sheltered environment.

The emergence of several new BSEC experience-based discussion groups brings me great pleasure. We can look forward to a women's leadership support group, a teaching and learning group, workshops on approaches to the moral education of our children, and on our differing experiences of our nation's racial history. I also recommend new community discussions of racial experience (March 4), efforts toward universal healthcare (March 11), plus, at the Park Slope Jewish Center, a larger community Arab and Jewish dialogue March 25.

Like it or not, it is a democratic group's responsibility to set up assessment measures. After trying out a given course of action, we need to provide safe space for honest conversations that include feedback and measurement against our original goals. Reporting back to the BSEC Board, the current Long-Range Fundraising Task Force at BSEC is coming up with simple surveys of our assets and our current use of resources, human and otherwise.

Taking our own measure means putting aside defensiveness about current operations and opening ourselves to documenting existing conditions in service to the whole community's future. Without truthful acknowledgment of our current conditions, standards do not make sense — we need alphas as well as an omega against which to chart any progress.

The needed knowledge we gain in this process may well be painful. For example, I learned only last fall that the Ethical movement's founding generation's fiscal policies held that no new Society could be started unless at least one-third of its budget was set aside for philanthropy. Over a century later, I venture to say no current Ethical Society budget comes close to honoring this guideline. What does that say about who we have become in relation to our

founding standards? Without a willingness to assess ourselves and look back somewhat dispassionately, the debts to our founding ideals will not be acknowledged, much less discharged.

I think increasing honesty about our own intentions and the commitments they require will also strengthen our case when we speak up in the painful and needed larger society conversations about what is the role of the USA government both here and abroad.

In the present national social climate two opposing parties in Congress are almost evenly matched, each holding strongly conflicting sets of policy priorities. One side seems to believe that God is not only on the government leader's team, but is also an active advocate of inventing missile defense shields, digging for oil in the far northern park wilderness, of the NRA gun lobby, and repealing U.S. women's legal right to abortion and women foreign aid recipients' right to full options in family planning.

The good news to me is that the general public may now be receiving a lot simpler and clearer picture of the dominant forces in U.S. culture with our new President than they had before. Seen in that light, new agendas could provide the stimulus for general debate about community values and the role of government in the national arena. Moral and ethical values could become priorities.

A worthy example is the stance taken by a group from *Responsible Wealth and Business Leaders for Sensible Priorities*, organizations of wealthy people, decrying the new Administration's proposed repeal of the estate tax. Their grounds are that the tax brings in billions of dollars which could be spent for the common good. In addition, they argue that a repeal of the estate tax would drastically reduce charitable donations, routinely used by the wealthy to reduce their taxable income. They took a high road by looking beyond narrow self-interests and are winning others to their arguments.

As both a humanistic and a faith-based group advocating ethical living and ethical culture, we have a historic opportunity to widen our influence. The house lights are dimming, and ready or not, we're behind the curtain that is rising.



**THE BROOKLYN SOCIETY  
FOR ETHICAL CULTURE**

53 PROSPECT PARK WEST  
BROOKLYN, NY 11215  
(718) 768-2972  
fax (718) 768-3278  
<http://www.bsec.org>

**Leader:** Lisel Burns

**President:** Glenn Newman

**Vice President:** Constance Pigozzi

**Treasurer:** Donna Roberts

**Recording Secretary:** Kurt Johnson

**Board Members:**

Marie-Yoleine Gateau-Esposito,  
Frances Rabinowitz, Rita Wilson,  
Charlotte Alper, Tony Severo, Irene  
Baker, Ruth Pikitch

*Emeritus: Marshall Dubin, Isabel Ross*

**Ethical Action:** Charles Horwitz 230-3537

**A&E Rep:** Anne Klaeysen 965-3611

**Membership Coordinator:** Jason Dubin

**Platform:** Constance Pigozzi 331-1137

**Sunday School:** Remi Gay, director

Tracey Jindyeh, associate director

**Building & Grounds Chair:** Rita Wilson

**Building Manager:** Sheila Kosoff 768-2972

**Board Special Projects:** Tony Severo

**Peace Site:** Bea Rubin 768-2972

**Coffeehouse:** Anne Klaeysen 965-3611

**Environment:** Kurt Johnson 768-2972

**Youth Group:** Rita Wilson & Tony Severo

*Ethically Speaking* is published 6-10 times a year by BSEC. This issue was produced by Bob Strock, Lisel Burns, Anne Klaeysen, 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>

**Design & Restoration**

The Design and Restoration group is doing a survey of existing conditions of the BSEC Meeting House, with an eye to future design and refurbishment changes. They have scheduled three Sunday building fix-up sessions on the first Sunday of March, April, and May. They are developing two proposals for the Sacred Sites office of the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission. Ruth Pikitch has been named the Board liaison to the group. To volunteer your ideas, services, or financial help, call Lisel Burns at 783-2298.

**March Sunday/Monday  
Workshop Series**

In addition to the *Brooklyn Community Storytellers Group*, which meets first Mondays at 7pm, BSEC is offering a series of workshops for March on Sunday afternoons at 1pm and Monday evenings at 7:30pm. They will be clinics on practical, everyday topics like finance and computers, many of which will be held once on Sunday and repeated on another Monday.

**Monday March 5:**

*Tax Questions and Living Legacies*

Frank Bottini, CPA, will mentor people who want to get a better handle on their finances: making a budget, planning for retirement, saving money on taxes, making socially responsible investments, charitable remainder trusts, and other secrets of the rich.

**Sunday March 11: Retirement 101**

Making Social Security and other retirement benefits work the best for you. Florence K Rice, longtime President of Harlem Consumer Education Union will lead a workshop on what we should all know about retirement benefits and current threats to the Social Security system under the new administration.

**Monday March 12: Computer Clinic**

Jason Dubin will lead a lesson in letting technology work for you: using email, cut-and-paste editing, web site searches, group addresses for your favorite committees and discussion groups. "How to become a low-tech computer whiz in one hour of practice!" (Other technically oriented individuals are welcome to help!)

**Sunday March 18: Computer Clinic**

**Monday March 19: tba**

**Sunday March 25:**

*Tax Questions and Living Legacies*

**Monday March 26: Immigration Law Clinic**

With Alena Weiser, Esq.

Please RSVP Rita at 768-2972 if you plan to attend. There will be no charge for any of these workshops; all contributions will go to the Building Fund.

**BSEC Environmental News**

Dr. Kurt Johnson, Chair of BSEC Environmental Affairs, was invited to a "working breakfast" by NYC Parks Commissioner Henry Stern on February 9th. Kurt, along with four other consultants, has compiled a 300-page database for the Parks Department about landscape enhancement for birds and butterflies. A current effort of the Parks Department is to restore to New York City many of the birds and butterflies that used to frequent the area but have now disappeared. The "let it grow" policy seen now in Prospect Park is a part of this effort.

**Membership News**

Bea Garber is recovering from her broken leg and will return home by the second week in March. Her cell phone number is (347) 200-1516.

Longtime BSEC member Joe Radosta died in Pennsylvania on Saturday, February 17. A Memorial Service will be arranged at a later date. Josie Radosta can be reached at: (732) 961-0866. Mail to: 1400 Rte. 70, Apt. 401; Lakewood, NJ 08701.

A Memorial Service is planned for Tony Severo's mother, Victoria Severo, who died December 16 at 84 years. The service will be held at 3:00pm on April 1 at the BSEC Meeting House.

Vanda Bozicevic has been appointed for the Spring Semester (and maybe longer) as a full-time faculty member in the Philosophy Department at Brooklyn College.

**"Drop the Rock Day"**

**Demonstration March 27 in Albany  
Against the Rockefeller Drug Laws**

BSEC's Community partner the *Fifth Avenue Committee* is organizing a group to go to Albany on March 27 to join in a demonstration against the New York State "Rockefeller Drug Laws", which since 1973 have inflicted mandatory prison sentences of *15 years to life on anyone* convicted of selling 2 ounces or possessing 4 ounces of cocaine or heroin, regardless of the circumstances of the offense or the individual's background.

Governor Pataki has taken a small step toward reform with a recent proposal, but more must be done. The scale is tipping against mandatory sentencing, and the time has come to topple it. Go to Albany on March 27 and make it happen!

Contact Charley Horwitz at 230-3537 if you'd like to join the effort. For more information on the movement to abolish mandatory minimums, see *famm.org*.

**Health Care Changed  
to Wealth Care  
(and the Remedy)**

We live in a rich man's welfare state.  
That is the truth, sad to relate.  
The hospital bed, the clinician's chair,  
Pay the fee and you're welcome there.  
In this time of conservative sway  
Market values rule the day.  
What you need we can only regret.  
What you own says what you get.  
Money talks on the hospital floor,  
Determines if you get less or more.  
A very raw deal but now please note:  
You can change that deal  
By the way you vote.

*Marshall F. Dubin*

# MARCH 2001 BSEC CALENDAR

**3/1 – 3/10**

**Thursday, 3/1**

**7pm:** Board of Trustees Meeting.

**Friday, 3/2**

**8pm:** The Good Coffeehouse concert series presents singer-songwriter-guitarist Jon Kolleeny and *Le Nozze di Carlo*. Donation \$8.

**Saturday, 3/3**

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

**Sunday, 3/4**

**10am–12:15pm:**

Children's Sunday Assembly

**10-11am:** Library Discussion Group

**11am:** Platform: *Race and Class: Effective Dialog and Painful Questions*, with BSEC Leader Lisel Burns and Jennifer Brisette, owner of the Indigo Cafe and Bookstore.

**12:30pm:** Lunch with the Bunch

**1pm:** Fundraiser for AIDS Research, with entertainment provided by theater group *Dzieci* and the *Fort Greene Music Scene Kids Chorus*. Donation \$5-10.

**Monday, 3/5**

**7–9pm:** *Brooklyn Community Storytellers Group* A workshop for storytellers of all levels of experience. \$5-12.

**7:30pm:** Financial Planning Workshop: *Tax Questions and Living Legacies*.

**Tuesday, 3/6**

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

**Wednesday, 3/7**

**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:** Sustainable Agriculture Discussion: meet with organic farmers.

**Friday, 3/9**

**8pm:** The Good Coffeehouse concert series presents Orrin Star and Russell Scholl with Kate and Lou Giampetruzzi. Donation \$8.

**Saturday, 3/10**

**9–11am:** The Art of Belly Dancing

**3/11 – 3/23**

**Sunday, 3/11**

**10am–12:15pm:**

Children's Sunday Assembly

**10-11am:** Library Discussion Group

**11am:** Platform: *Univeral Health Care* with Martha Livingston, Professor of Health and Society at SUNY Old Westbury.

**12:30pm:** Lunch with the Bunch

**1pm:** Financial Planning Workshop: *Retirement 101*.

**Monday, 3/12**

**7:30pm:** Computer Clinic with Jason Dubin.

**Tuesday, 3/13**

**7:30–9pm:** *Brooklyn Women's Chorus*

**Wednesday, 3/14**

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

**7:30-9pm:** Restoration Group Meeting.

**7–8:30pm:** *T'ai Chi Chuan*.

**Friday, 3/16**

**8pm:** The Good Coffeehouse concert series presents Third Friday with the Park Slope Food Coop: *The Jerome Harris Trio*,

**Saturday, 3/17**

**9–11am:** *The Art of Belly Dancing*.

**Sunday, 3/18**

**10am–12:15pm:**

Children's Sunday Assembly

**10-11am:** Library Discussion Group

**11am:** Platform: *American Religious Expectations and Ethical Culture's Response* with Curt Collier, Riverdale-Yonkers Leader.

**12:30pm:** Lunch with the Bunch

**1pm:** Computer Clinic with Jason Dubin.

**Monday, 3/19**

**7:30pm:** Financial Workshop: *Retirement 101*

**Tuesday, 3/20**

**7:30–9pm:** *Brooklyn Women's Chorus*

**Wednesday, 3/21**

**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 the context of a humanist religion.

**7–9pm:** *T'ai Chi Chuan*

**Friday, 3/23**

**8pm:** The Good Coffeehouse concert series presents Keener Brothers and singer-songwriter David Roche. \$8 Donation.

**3/24 – 4/1**

**Saturday, 3/24**

**9–11am:** *The Art of Belly Dancing*

**Sunday, 3/25**

**10am–12:30pm:**

Children's Sunday Assembly

**10-11am:** Library Discussion Group

**11am:** Platform: *Women and Ethical Culture* with Jean Kotkin, Leader at the New York Society for Ethical Culture.

**1pm:** Financial Planning Workshop: Tax Questions and Living Legacies.

**Monday, 3/26**

**7:30pm:** Immigration Law Clinic

**Tuesday, 3/27**

**7:30–9pm:** Brooklyn Women's Chorus

**Wednesday, 3/28**

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

**7:30-9pm:** *Ethical Culture Readings* David Saville Muzzey: *Ethics As a Religion*

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

**Friday, 3/30**

**8pm:** Good Coffeehouse concert series presents Alison Kelley and sea shanty singer Frank Woerner. Donation \$8.

**Saturday, 3/31**

**9–11am:** The Art of Belly Dancing.

**Sunday, 4/1**

**10am–12:15pm:**

Children's Sunday Assembly

**11am:** Platform: *Conflict Partnership*, with BSEC Leader Lisel Burns.

**12:30pm:** Lunch with the Bunch.

## Universal Healthcare Platform March 11

The BSEC Committee on Universal Healthcare is hosting a healthcare platform on 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. Bring a friend!

Familiarity breeds contempt. How accurate that is. The reason we hold truth in such respect is because we have so little opportunity to get familiar with it.

Mark Twain



**Arab-Jewish Dialog  
March 25 at the Park Slope  
JewishCenter**

On Sunday March 25, please consider joining us, after Sunday Platform and lunch, for a trip up the road to our neighbor, the Park Slope Jewish Center, at 14th Street and Eighth Avenue. At the behest of the PSJC's able Social Concerns Committee, leaders of an ongoing Arab-Jewish Dialogue taking place in the Middle East and in New York City will be sharing their conversations and insights in Brooklyn. The program will be co-hosted by several local congregations, including Brooklyn Ethical.



**Kenya Trip Planned  
June 1-16  
Donations Needed**

This June three lay leaders at BSEC, Donna Roberts, Rita Wilson, and Greta Gladney, hope to share an extraordinary opportunity to combine a study trip to modern Kenya with a week hosted by families active in the famed Green Belt Movement of villagers who have planted over 20 million trees in the past 20 years.

Donations are being sought to help sponsor Donna, Rita, and Greta on their mission this summer. One of the biggest expenses will be travel, so a donation of 40,000+ airline miles would be especially appreciated!

**Children's Sunday Assembly**

Greetings from the Children's Sunday Assembly Program

In February, our theme of the month was *Heroes of Freedom*. We focused on the civil rights movement in this country. Among other activities, we re-enacted Rosa Park's decision to refuse to give up her seat on the bus. This allowed us to see what it might have felt like for her, and for the other people involved in that incident including the bus driver, fellow passengers and arresting officers. It made the incident come alive for the children. We also told the story of Harriet Beecher Stowe - a woman with "no power" who helped abolish slavery. Of course, we also created some magnificent valentines for February 14th.

In March, we will celebrate Purim by telling the biblical story of Esther, and talk about what made her a heroine. We'll also tell the stories of Lady Deborah Moody, "the Grand Dame of Gravesend", Phillis Wheatley, the first black poet of America, and Martha Ellis Fischel, a woman of courage who was one of the founders of the St. Louis Ethical Society.

**CSA Calendar**

**March 4, 1pm:** *Fun(d)Raiser for AIDS Research*. Entertainment provided by theater group Dzieci and the Fort Greene Music Scene Kids Chorus. Suggested donation \$5-10.

**March's Theme:** *Heroines for Women's History Month*

**Ethical Action Project:** *Fundraiser for AIDS Research*

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*

.....

- **AEU Assembly** BSEC sends a powerful delegation to this spring's National
- **Saint Louis, MO** Assembly of the American Ethical Union, which will be held
- **April 19-22** April 19-22, hosted by the Ethical Society of St. Louis.
- Mohammed Hussain will present a workshop representing our
- youth; Lisel Burns, Anne Klaeyen and Donna Roberts will be
- active in the organization of program activities. If you would
- like to join these and other BSEC members leaders Rita Wil-
- son, Greta Gladney, Joan Donnen Klips, and Linda Stallard in
- the Heartland that weekend, count your pennies and contact
- Rita in the Leader's Office.

.....

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

Brooklyn Society for Ethical Culture  
53 Prospect Park West  
Brooklyn, New York 11215

Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage Paid  
Brooklyn, NY  
Permit #6318