



ETHICALLY SPEAKING

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

Volume 95, no. 8

April 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.

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. With BSEC Leader Lisel Burns.

April 8: *Spring Festival*

Join us for a participatory improvisational mythical theater experience with the Children's Sunday Assembly.

April 15: *Colloquy: Holiday Reflections*

Meditation and reflection.

April 22: *Stem Cells: The Miraculous Cells at the Center of Controversy*

Embryonic stem cells have the potential to successfully treat Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, and a wide range of other degenerative diseases, so why don't American doctors use them in their research? With noted fertility expert and past president of the Humanist Institute, Dr. Charles Debrovner.

April 29: *Peace Site Award*

BSEC will bestow its annual peace site award on Luis Gilberto Murillo, a peace and human rights activist, for his work in trying to end the decades-old civil war in Colombia.

May 6: *Youth Leadership and the Future of Participatory Democracy*

With philosopher-activist Grace Lee Boggs and 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!

The American Ethical Union and the Faith-Based Initiative

(*Washington Ethical Action Report, April 2001*)

The American Ethical Union, the federated organization of Ethical Culture Societies in the United States, strongly urges you to oppose the establishment of an Office for Faith-Based Initiatives, recently enacted by President George W. Bush. We believe that the creation of this office is both unconstitutional and a dangerous assault on the secular state on which our democratic freedoms depend. We oppose the Office For Faith-Based Initiatives, also referred to as "charitable choice" for the following reasons:

- This program, conceptually and by design, constitutes an unacceptable establishment of religion and a fundamental violation of religious freedom. We note that charitable choice will ensure the use of federal taxes to promote religious creeds and messages in which individual taxpayers do not believe. Short of establishing a national church we can envision no more demonstrative establishment of religion. We note also that charitable choice is predicated on the assumption that social services when delivered within the context of religion are more effective than those rendered by secular agencies. While this assumption pertains for many Americans, we are very concerned that it renders impossible any provisions aimed at sustaining a constitutional separation of church and state.
- While the status quo requires that religious agencies receiving money from the government must provide their services in secular settings, and abide by federal employment protections, under President Bush's plan services can be rendered within church sanctuaries and with religious and sectarian doctrine as intrinsic to the service. Under such provisions we fear that missionizing will be rampant and uncontrollable. Moreover, those in need, often desperately so, will be confronted with receiving services at the cost of violating their religious conscience. Though charitable choice requires that secular alternatives be available whenever religious programs are offered, this proposal is unrealistically cumbersome and will in practice frequently go unenforced.
- We are concerned that by transforming houses of worship into social service arms of government, internecine religious strife will ensue, as churches compete for government contracts. Government will be then placed in the position of preferring one church over others, and perhaps even of making theological distinctions for which it is not competent.
- With funding comes accountability. If government oversight is lax, churches will be tempted to use funds for explicitly religious purposes. If it is stringent, we conclude that religious freedom will be undermined.
- Those employed by churches to render the respective services will not be protected by federal employment legislation. Hiring and firing can be based on the religious identification of the employee in question, resulting in explicit and widespread discrimination. In addition, charitable choice will allow personnel to be hired, often for sensitive tasks, who will no longer be required to be licensed or meet professional standards intended to protect those receiving such services. Hiring can be done on the basis of religious identity and devotion alone, regardless of needed professional training or skills.
- We seek to safeguard religion's invaluable role within American society through its ability to bring moral critique to bear on the abuses of secular and governmental power. It is our fear that charitable choice renders religion dependent on the state, thereby undermining religion's freedom to independently perform its vital prophetic role.
- While recognizing that many Americans choose to receive social services within a religious setting, we strongly feel that President Bush's Faith-Based Initiative is highly destructive of freedom of conscience and ultimately threatens inter-religious peace which the religion clauses of the First Amendment have so successfully safeguarded for over two hundred years of American history.

The American Ethical Union joins with a multitude of religious organizations and individuals across the entire religious spectrum, civil libertarians, legal associations, humanists and secularists in vigorously opposing the Office For Faith-Based Initiatives.

**THE BROOKLYN SOCIETY
FOR ETHICAL CULTURE**

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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 Klaeyens, Remi Gay, 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.

Children's Sunday Assembly

Greetings from the Children's Sunday Assembly Program!

In March, we focused on stories of heroines, in honor of Women's History Month. We celebrated Purim by telling the biblical tale of Esther, and talked about what made her a heroine. The story of Lady Deborah Moody, "the Grand Dame of Gravesend" as Peter Stuyvesant came to call her, was particularly interesting as she founded her own community based on religious tolerance right here in Brooklyn in the 1600's. Did you know that she built a town hall that was also used as a church on Sundays and a synagogue on Saturdays?

In April, we will continue to practice "put-ups" versus "put-downs" and see how personal behavior relates to the theme of peace. Appropriately, our Spring Festival this year will feature a story about Henry Neumann, the Ethical Culture Leader for the Brooklyn Society for over 50 years, and a pacifist. Join us on April 8th in the miracle of instant "Mythical Theater" - like Spring, a little chaotic but lively, colorful and creative. As is also appropriate for this month, we will tell the stories of Passover and Easter.

CSA Calendar

April 8: *Spring Festival.* Regular schedule, adults and parents are invited to join us in the meeting house for an intergenerational platform at 11am.

April 15: Easter Sunday, short day: 11am-12:15pm.

April's Theme: *Heroes of Peace*

Ethical Action Project: *Helping to beautify our BSEC garden.*

Our Children's Sunday Assembly program meets every Sunday (except where noted) from 10:00am to 12:15pm. We offer an ethics-centered curriculum and community for children aged 4-13 years; registration is open throughout the school year.

Remi Gay, CSA Director

The Life of a Leadership Trainee by Anne Klaeyens

One Sunday afternoon after platform, someone asked my husband, "Is it true that as part of her training Anne is not allowed to be here in Brooklyn?" Glenn was surprised by the question and replied, "I don't think so, but I'll ask her." So here's the answer: I am still an active member of the Brooklyn Society, but the training program to become an Ethical Culture Leader is taking a lot of time. I no longer work in the office; I have been travelling to other societies to give platform addresses; and I have cut back on some of my volunteer activities. But you can still find me at Tuesday night rehearsals with the Brooklyn Women's Chorus, Friday night Good Coffeehouse concerts, first Monday Com-

munity Storytelling sessions, and fourth Wednesday Ethical Culture Readings discussions.

I am also available to BSEC members for pastoral counseling. As part of my clergy training, I am taking a supervised course of study at the Post Graduate Center for Mental Health in pastoral counseling. Several Ethical Culture Leaders have participated in this highly regarded program. There is no fee. You need only call me to set up an appointment. Next fall I will start a half-time internship, but I hope to be able to continue with some of my activities here, including singing, telling stories, discussing readings, and offering pastoral counseling.

note

People new to the BSEC may not know that the BSEC Leader's Office is a resource for individual or relationship assistance in areas including coping with life passages, marking occasions or relationships with ceremony, short term personal counseling and crisis referrals, (usually to our BSEC consulting therapist and trainer, Hugh Simmons). Anne Klaeyens is a welcome addition to this team. We also collect "human" resources, people who make themselves available for peer support, sharing strengths they may have gained after going through a particular situation. Please let Celeste Leibowitz, chair of the Caring and Sharing Committee (336-3683) know if you can add your resource to this group.

<http://www.bsec.org>

Welcome New BSEC Members!

Dror Kahn and **Madeleine Sorel** have three children, with Saskia 12 and Siberia 5 at home. Dror was a mentor of the YES group when he was a member of New York Ethical in the late eighties. He went through the three-year Humanist Institute along with Lisel Burns. He and Madeleine live in Manhattan Beach. Madeleine is an artist and caterer; Dror works in the Long Island School District doing video and TV work. He will start work on making our BSEC website more accessible and participatory over this spring and summer.

Maureen Egginton came to New York from England working in film 30 years ago and has stayed ever since. She and her son Cameron live on Eastern Parkway, near Marshall Dubin and Vanda Bozicevic. Maureen is co-chair of the Brooklyn Chapter of the Million Mom March follow-up organization, and has been an active advocate for sensible gun control for the past decade. She takes part in the monthly women's leadership support group started by Lisel Burns and Donna Roberts on first Wednesdays.

A big welcome to you all!

APRIL 2001 BSEC CALENDAR

4/1 – 4/11

Sunday, 4/1

Monthly Membership Sunday

10am–12:15pm:

Children's Sunday Assembly

10-11am: Library Discussion Group

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

12:30pm: Lunch with the Bunch, celebration of April birthdays, and newcomers' circle.

Monday, 4/2

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

Tuesday, 4/3

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

Wednesday, 4/4

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

7–9pm: *T'ai Chi Chuan* class taught by J.P. Harpignes; \$12 per class or \$40 for 4 classes. Free to BSEC members.

Thursday, 4/5

7pm: Board of Trustees Meeting.

7:30–8:30pm: Ball Room Dancing Lessons, led by Christina, an international competitive dancer. \$15/\$10 for BSEC Members. Call (212)781-7475 for information.

Friday, 4/6

8pm: The Good Coffeehouse concert series presents a big band swing night with Art Lillard. Donation \$8.

Saturday, 4/7

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

Sunday, 4/8

10am–12:15pm:

Children's Sunday Assembly

10-11am: Library Discussion Group

11am: Platform: *Intergenerational Spring Festival*.

12:30pm: Lunch with the Bunch

Tuesday, 4/10

7:30–9pm: *Brooklyn Women's Chorus*

Wednesday, 4/11

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

7:30-9pm: Restoration Group Meeting.

7–9pm: *T'ai Chi Chuan*.

4/12 – 4/28

Thursday, 4/12

7:30–8:30pm: Ball Room Dancing.

Friday, 4/13

8pm: The Good Coffeehouse takes a break.

Saturday, 4/14

9–11am: *The Art of Belly Dancing*.

Sunday, 4/15

10am–12:15pm:

Children's Sunday Assembly

10-11am: Library Discussion Group

11am: Colloquy: *Holiday Reflections*.

12:30pm: Lunch with the Bunch

Tuesday, 4/17

7:30–9pm: Brooklyn Women's Chorus

Wednesday, 4/18

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*

Thursday, 4/19 through Sunday, 4/22

American Ethical Union Assembly
(Saint Louis, Missouri)

Friday, 4/20

8pm: The Good Coffeehouse concert series presents third Fridays with the Park Slope Food Co-op: an evening of folk with jazz and R&B flavor featuring the Ben Silver Group, and original contemporary pop music with the Debbie Deane Quartet. \$8 donation.

Saturday, 4/21

9–11am: *The Art of Belly Dancing*

Sunday, 4/22

10am–12:30pm:

Children's Sunday Assembly

10-11am: Library Discussion Group

11am: Platform: *Stem Cells: The Miraculous Cells at the Center of Controversy* with Dr. Charles Debrovner.

Tuesday, 4/24

7:30–9pm: Brooklyn Women's Chorus

Wednesday, 4/25

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

7:30-9pm: *Ethical Culture Readings: Nel Noddings' Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*.

7-9pm: *T'ai Chi Chuan*

Friday, 4/27

8pm: Good Coffeehouse to be announced.

Saturday, 4/28

9–11am: The Art of Belly Dancing.

4/29 – 5/6

Sunday, 4/29

10am–12:15pm:

Children's Sunday Assembly

11am: Platform: *Peace Site Award*, to Luis Gilberto Murillo.

12:30pm: Lunch with the Bunch.

1:30pm: Ethical Action Program: *Human Rights in Colombia*.

Tuesday, 5/1

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

Wednesday, 5/2

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

7–9pm: *T'ai Chi Chuan*.

Thursday, 5/3

7pm: Board of Trustees Meeting.

Friday, 5/4

8pm: The Good Coffeehouse concert series presents McMeen and Pattis with local favorite Alex Mogieleff. Donation \$8.

Saturday, 5/5

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

Sunday, 5/6

10am–12:15pm:

Children's Sunday Assembly

10-11am: Library Discussion Group

11am: Platform: *Community Change, the Role of Youth and the Future of U.S. Democracy* with BSEC Leader Lisel Burns and special guest Grace Lee Boggs.

12:30pm: Lunch with the Bunch

1:30pm: Spring Fair

We began as a mineral. We emerged into plant life and into the animal state, and then into being human, and always we have forgotten our former states, except in early spring when we slightly recall being green again.

Rumi



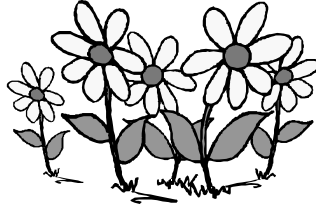
**BSEC Town Meeting April 7
Featuring Workshop on
Total Quality Management (TQM)**

On Saturday, April 7, we will begin this Season's spring Town Meetings with a guest leader, Linda Bankowski, a nationally-known trainer in organizational development, doing a workshop on Total Quality Management (TQM) and its application specifically to our desire for clear, agreed-upon standards of decisionmaking, performance, and accountability for the coming year

TQM is a renowned approach to participatory, bottom-up planning and management, used in business and non-profits alike. BSEC team leader Tony Severo gave an introductory presentation of this approach last spring and most program groups and all leader's Office projects have developed "measures of success" using TQM since then.

Ms. Bankowski has offered her service to help us fundraise for the upcoming development training trip to Kenya that BSEC members Rita Wilson, Greta Gladney and Donna Roberts hope to attend in June 2001. For BSEC members the workshop is free, though fundraising contributions are welcome. For other applicants we have a sliding scale of \$25-\$100. These town meetings are a good time to get an integrated sense of the core community, those 20-30 people whose efforts create the activities meaningful to so many of us, and meet like-minded leaders from other communities as well. All leaders of committees and projects are strongly encouraged to apply, and we hope that again we will have a goodly representation of new BSEC members, and others who wish to make their participation more meaningful in the coming Season.

**Spring Fair
Sunday May 6**



**Special Platform Speaker Grace Lee Boggs
Will Speak on Youth and the Future of Democracy**

May 6 is shaping up to be a big intergenerational program, focusing on the need for youth to take saving their local communities into their school programs and from there into the world. Grace Lee Boggs, a philosopher-activist for over 50 years, co-author of *Revolution and Evolution in the Twentieth Century*, *Conversations in Maine* and her recent autobiography, *Living for Change* will be the special guest speaker. The topic will be *Youth Leadership and the Future of Participatory Democracy*.

Following the platform we will have our annual Spring Fair, an intergenerational celebration and open house. This year's fair will feature a drumming program, community booths, silent service auctions, introductions to BSEC programs and project offerings, and other surprises.

Peace Site Award April 29: Luis Gilberto Murillo

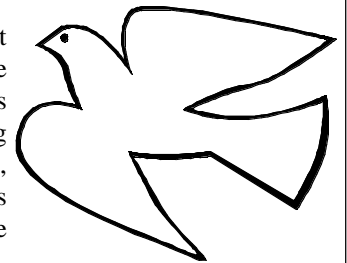
Platform followed by multimedia workshop on Colombia Civil War

On Sunday, April 29, BSEC will bestow its annual peace site award on Luis Gilberto Murillo, a peace and human rights activist and former governor of Choco province, for his work in trying to end the decades-old civil war in Colombia. Mario Murillo (no relation to the speaker) a Latin American scholar and journalist at WBAI producer will give the introduction.

After the talk there will be a lunch followed by a multimedia workshop at 1:30pm on the United States government's war against drugs – the Colombia Plan – which is rapidly developing into a Vietnam-type civil war.

In this workshop, Luis Gilberto Murillo, Mario Murillo, and Maria Victoria Maldonado of *The Colombia Media Project* will discuss the history of the decades-old civil war and drug problems in the country. Videos will be shown about the role of the drug lords, the rebel armies, the paramilitary forces, the Colombian government, the Afro-Colombians, the indigenous people, and other war victims.

Although the U.S. has voted to spend \$1.3 billion to fight drug trafficking in Colombia, experts have questioned the Colombian government's capacity to stop it because of its incompetence and history of corruption and the growing worldwide demand for drugs. Thousands of Colombians, human rights activists, journalists, politicians and civilians have been killed, wounded and displaced because of the war that has been funded by the narcotics industry.



CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

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