



# ETHICALLY SPEAKING

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

Volume 94, no. 10

## News from the April Retreat

The second BSEC leadership retreat was held on Saturday, April 29. Issues we face include overcoming barriers to effective communications, increased volunteering, larger-scale fundraising and the all-day Sunday coordination of programs, people, and projects.

*Communications:* we plan to establish Member e-mail groups and a regular e-letter. Website information will be expanded over the summer. More direct coordination between the website and the newsletter is needed, with weekly website updates to complement the monthly newsletter. Regular input from Society committee and program leaders with advanced notice of upcoming activities and reports on past events will greatly facilitate this process. Effective telephone communication must be maintained (and enhanced if possible) to ensure inclusion of Members without internet access.

*Revision of the BSEC Community volunteering system:* 4-hour monthly pledges will be banked by the Caring/Sharing Committee, and member jobs will be matched with key objectives of BSEC planning each month (community work prioritized by the Board and lay leaders). Greta Gladney will coordinate this with Lisel and Rita in the Leader's Office for the Fall 2000 period. The July Planning Retreat will focus on the new 4-hour pledge of community service and the Fall programming cycle. Tentative plans are for a cookout and an all ages weekend campout (or subway home at night!) at the former Floyd Bennet airfield past Sheepshead Bay, the weekend of July 29. All Members will be notified when plans are finalized.

### June Platforms Sundays at 11:00AM

**June 4:** *Membership Recognition Sunday*  
Taking in and hearing from our new members from this Season. Lisel Burns presiding, along with Anne Klaeysen.

**June 11:** *Practicing Without Preaching: Brooklyn Ethical Culture Practices and Self-Development Traditions Today.*  
Lisel Burns presides over the final platform of the Season. Do we really value what we do not make real and evident in our personal or community life?

## Leader Notes: A New Day Coming by Lisel Burns

Three weeks ago I called my sister Stephie in New Hampshire, asking her to join me and the BSEC delegation to the Million Mom March in Washington on May 14. We'd talked about it earlier and she was enthusiastic. She got on a plane in Manchester and found thirty-three other people going to the March as well.

The march was organized in our area by a group of mothers who met weekly at Ozzie's Café in Park Slope. We invited Maureen Eggerton (who had reached out to BSEC on gun control issues over the years) to speak at my March platform on women using the web for social actions.

We then secured support for the march from the BSEC Board rather than only the Ethical Action Committee, as part of our Board-approved BSEC commitment to action on the well-being of all children and families. We offered our Meeting House in April for the Brooklyn pre-Event Rally, which brought out many people and supportive local politicians. And with the April Rally's coverage by the local press, a big photo on our front steps took us to Daily News fame.

I travelled down with four buses organized locally, with BSEC members Valerie Francis (with her mom and son Edmund), Fran Rabinowitz (with son John), Jean Shaffer, Mohammed Hussein and Kate Martin from the Youth Group, and two score of moms from Brooklyn. Rita Wilson took the train down. Dawn Edwards planned to go earlier with local organizers, and the Klaeysen-Newman and Horwitz families were already in Washington for the weekend.

Sometimes outrage and ideals come together in a seemingly effortless way, (though there's always tons of work behind the scenes), and the experience renews, inspires, and carries a message so important that it is a marker for significant change. I feel the Million Mom March was, for our little delegation, and for many of the 750,000 other participants, such an event.

Its genius seemed to be the coming together of a historical situation, in this case, I believe, caused by 1) our present Congress's refusal to challenge the national culture's fixation on individual liberties, now carried to a further extreme by the NRA gun lobby and its army of voting citizens, and 2) a year now of televised violence by and against children, coupled with our citizenry's tolerance of a Congress that rates NRA votes higher

than children's safety from unregulated purchases and possession of deadly firearms.

But it was the new factor, 3) the power of the computer technology tied into the internet (see [www.millionmomsmarch.com](http://www.millionmomsmarch.com)) that made possible the brilliant match of concerns, grassroots moms willing to organize their own delegations, and millions of people who needed a communication infrastructure in place to help them become not only concerned but to do something with their concern that could actually make a difference.

I've wanted to pinpoint some of the elements that make up a successful effort of this kind. First there is a historical situation, and a group of people who work to develop a critique of that situation in a way that shows how an ethical standard is compromised: how civility is broached, basic human needs denied, or humane ideals undermined. This visionary critique is turned by hardworking organizers into a "call", shaped to engage both the hearts and minds of a broad range of people. It inspires heartfelt feeling, and invites that feeling to be turned to commitment, usually through practical action. Then there is a strategically brilliant presentation of that message: simple, visible, and inclusive of a wide enough range of voices to be credible in the many subcultures.

The depth and range of the subcultures represented in the effort's leadership also make a big difference. Both the leadership and the organizing came from a cross-class and cross-cultural mix. I saw it here in Park Slope – mothers walking their toddlers to the meeting, joined by mothers from other neighborhoods: mothers with children, and mothers whose children had been slain.

Donna Dees-Thomases, the March's founding mother, said it was the photo of a black police officer leading a line of preschool children to safety from the Los Angeles synagogue shooting of 1999 that moved her to action. She was a soccer mom, a wealthy professional minding her family and career when she became sufficiently outraged and inspired to express her concerns in the widest possible arena. Her passion catapulted her into leadership she had never sought before. She was charged with her conviction that other mothers felt the same way she did, and that all they needed was an opportunity to express their feelings. It was an instinct for camaraderie that crossed class and cultural lines. And she was right.

**THE BROOKLYN SOCIETY  
FOR ETHICAL CULTURE**

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**Leader:** Lisel Burns

**Leader-in-Training:** Anne Klaeyesen

**President:** Glenn Newman

**1<sup>st</sup> Vice President:** Constance Pigozzi

**2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President:** Stephanie Heacox

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**Pledge Secretary:** Bruce Leibowitz

**Board Members:**

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*Emeritus: Marshall Dubin, Isabel Ross.*

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

**AEU Rep:** Anne Klaeyesen 768-2972

**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

**Membership:** Anne Klaeyesen 768-2972

**Board Special Projects:** Tony Severo

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

**Coffeehouse:** Anne Klaeyesen 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 Klaeyesen, Marshall Dubin, and Martha Hoffman.

## VIEWPOINT

### Membership: Final Thoughts for the Year

by Anne Klaeyesen, Membership Coordinator

The "liturgical" year in a typical Ethical Culture Society runs from September through June. In the early days of the movement, Felix Adler and his colleagues would spend time during the summer months relaxing together in the Adirondacks. There are even mountain hiking trails bearing their names. The tradition of taking time off during the summer remains. It gives us an opportunity to reflect upon the past year, to evaluate our activities, to think about where we have succeeded and how we might improve.

Some societies experiment with summer platforms and programs, including Sunday colloquies and picnics, ethical day camp for children and evening family campfires. Here in Brooklyn we discussed what we should do and decided that we needed a break: we need time to reflect and plan, to think about what we have learned and still need to learn (and make some repairs on the building.)

I learned that coordinating an effective membership program takes a great deal of time and effort, and the support of the entire community. I gained

an appreciation for my predecessors and for the people who volunteered to help me this year. I also learned more about Ethical Culture, both as a life philosophy and a religious institution, as I prepared for each workshop. I appreciated the many questions and concerns from newcomers interested in getting to know us better. I learned that while many people attend our programs and ask us to celebrate their life passages with them, far fewer actually feel the commitment to become members. I appreciate the distinction, and I am learning to recognize it so that I can be welcoming without appearing pushy.

Perhaps one way to accomplish this is to reactivate our Friends category so that those people who want to become more involved than a newcomer, but not as involved as a member, can feel that they are part of our Brooklyn Ethical Culture community. I'll reflect upon that this summer. And since we won't be able to go for a whole summer without getting together, please check our bulletin board or call the office to find out about summer events.

### Police Brutality: Cause and Cure

Probably the most serious ethical problem facing New York City today is the ever-present evil of police brutality.

No, I am not a "cop-hater." I have worked so many years in the trade union movement that I am well aware of the difference between good and bad police behavior.

What determines the difference? Practically speaking it is the Mayor of most every city who basically determines police behavior. He appoints the Police Commissioner who in turn establishes the rules.

Mayor Giuliani throughout his term in office has given the police a "license to shoot." This is so particularly when minorities are involved. The hopeful solution: he is approaching the end of his term in office. Hopefully then we will welcome a much more rational and humane Mayor!

*Marshall Dubin*

[Even more hopefully: given the recent developments in the Mayor's life, especially confronting his own mortality and the withdrawal from the Senate race, who knows? Maybe that rational and humane mayor will be Rudolph Giuliani in the last year of his mayorship! I doubt it, but it's good to remind myself that change is possible for every human being, while still maintaining a healthy skepticism toward the sincerity of conspicuous outward expressions of dramatic internal change. -Ed.]

All truths should be used to cross over; they should not be held onto once you have arrived. You should let go of even the most profound insight or the most wholesome teaching; all the more so, unwholesome teachings.

*Buddha*

### Membership News

Dorothy Klein has had a series of medical hassles this spring. She's home resting now and would appreciate calls and letters. If you don't have her number, call the office. Or, you can e-mail Dorothy at [dsklein@aol.com](mailto:dsklein@aol.com).

Lois Kellerman, our Leader Emerita, will be here for a week's visit in June. She will do a naming ceremony at the June 11 Platform and be available to meet with people during the preceding week (June 5-10). Please contact the Leader's Office to schedule some time with Lois for counseling, leadership training, or just to get together and talk.

Lisel Burns will be in Germany June 18-28 to do training related to a four-week Grassroots Global learning academy, with groups from nine world regions sharing community development methodologies. Anne Klaeyesen and Lisel be in St. Louis July 9-12 for national training with Leaders and lay leaders interested in starting new Ethical Societies.

*Restoration Raffle!* The leader's Office is sponsoring a raffle with big cash prizes! For New Year's Eve 2000 we will draw from a new fundraising raffle at BSEC. \$25 tickets will buy a chance to use the Meeting House for 4 hours (a \$1,000 value for non-member private event rental), or \$500 cash prize for the rest of us. \$50 tickets will get you a chance for an 8-hour shindig at BSEC or a \$1000 cash prize. Help out by buying a ticket or two, and selling some to your friends!. Tickets will be available through the office and on Sundays.

*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.

# JUNE 2000 BSEC CALENDAR

6/1 – 6/7

**June 1-4: AEU Conference in Hasbrouck Heights, NJ.** Contact the office for details.

**Thursday 6/1**

\*\*\**Storytelling workshop moved to 6/5*\*\*\*

**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 6/2**

**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 an evening of song and dance presented by the BSEC Youth Group. Donation \$8.

**Saturday 6/3**

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

**Sunday 6/4**

**Monthly Membership Sunday**

**10AM-12:15PM:** Children's Assembly.  
**10-11AM:** Parents' Discussion Group.  
**11AM:** Membership Recognition Platform.  
**12:30PM:** Lunch With the Bunch and Summer birthdays celebration.  
**12:30PM:** Caring/Sharing Committee.  
**1PM:** Newcomers' Circle and Ethical Culture Workshop.

**Monday 6/5**

**7:30-9PM:** *Storytelling Workshop* with storyteller and consultant Mary Savage. Create community through storytelling and celebration. Final of four workshops, \$7-10 each, free for BSEC members.  
 \*\*\**Please note change of date*\*\*\*

**Tuesday 6/6**

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

**Wednesday 6/7**

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

**8-9:30PM:** *The Creative Process*, a series of discussions with guest speakers in the fields of literature, music, and art. Tonight's guest is *Matt Mitler*, director of the theater group *Dzieci*.

**Thursday 6/8**

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

6/8 – 7/2

**Friday, 6/9**

**8PM:** The Season Finale of the Good Coffeehouse concert series, with music from the *Brooklyn Women's Chorus* under the direction of *Bev Grant*. Donation \$8.

**Saturday 6/10**

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

**Sunday 6/11**

**10AM-12:30PM:** Children's Assembly.  
**10-11AM:** Town Meeting for CSA parents, teachers, and children.  
**11AM:** Sunday Platform: *Practicing Without Preaching: Ethical Culture Practices and Self-Development Traditions* with BSEC Leader Lisel Burns leading the final Platform of the Season.  
**12:30PM:** Lunch with the Bunch.

**Tuesday 6/13, 6/20, 6/27**

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

**Thursday 6/15, 6/22, 6/29**

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

**Saturday 6/17, 6/24, 7/1**

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

**Thursday 6/22**

**7:30-9PM:** The Richard Price Book Discussion Group discusses *'Tis: A Memoir* by Frank McCourt. Call Constance Pigozzi at 331-1137 for further information.

**Sunday 6/25**

**11AM:** BSEC Membership Meeting.

**Sunday 7/2**

Caring/Sharing Committee meeting and potluck, place and time to be announced.

## September Dates

**Sunday 9/10**

**10AM-1PM: Super Sunday.** Children's Sunday Assembly and Membership Open House. Learn all about our Sunday School and membership activities by joining us for breakfast and an orientation.

**Sunday 9/17**

**11AM:** Opening Platform with BSEC Leader Lisel Burns.

**Friday 9/29**

**8PM:** The Good Coffeehouse kicks off with *James Reams and the Barnstormers*.

**Saturday 9/30**

**12-10PM:** American Traditional Music at *The 3rd Annual Bluegrass Oldtime Jamboree*.

## Marion Kronheim Comes to See Us

At a recent meeting of the Brooklyn Society for Ethical Culture we had the opportunity to see and hear Marion Kronheim. As one of the oldest members of Brooklyn Ethical, I can tell you that I was thrilled at the sight of her.

If you don't already know this fact, Marion made a name for herself in this community by her ceaseless efforts to promote the cause of peace on earth. This she did as the chairperson of SANE (the Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy), the city's leading peace organization.

Small of size but large in energy and passion, Marion put these qualities into her campaign for world peace.

Honoring Marion Kronheim was a duty and a pleasure for her fellow Ethical members. We hope to see more of her in the days to come.

Marshall Dubin



## One Art by Elisabeth Bishop

The art of losing isn't hard to master;  
 so many things seem filled with the intent  
 to be lost that their loss is no disaster.

Lose something every day. Accept the fluster  
 of lost door keys, the hour badly spent.  
 The art of losing isn't hard to master.

Then practice losing farther, losing faster:  
 places, and names, and where it was you meant  
 to travel. None of these will bring disaster.

I lost my mother's watch. And look! my last, or  
 next-to-last, of three loved houses went.  
 The art of losing isn't hard to master.

I lost two cities, lovely ones. And, vaster,  
 some realms I owned, two rivers, a continent.  
 I miss them, but it wasn't a disaster.

Even losing you (the joking voice, a gesture  
 I love) I shan't have lied. It's evident  
 the art of losing's not too hard to master  
 though it may look like (Write it!) like disaster.

## Wednesday Evening Program: Deepening the Discussion, This Year and the Next

This year we began a series of discussion groups for members and friends to explore various philosophical, religious, and creative issues. We called the series "Values and Culture," but today I prefer the simpler "Wednesday Evening Program," since it has no pretensions greater than asking that we bring our selves with us to the discussion. Each group met once a month, on a Wednesday evening. Two of these evenings were devoted to Newcomers Workshops or Lisel's Wedding and Commitment Couples. But I'd like to discuss the three programs with which I was directly involved.

All through the year Vanda Bozecevic led a discussion called *But Is It Right?* Each month she raised a philosophical question, usually by presenting a theoretical story or a story from the news. As we considered specific subjects such as the Amadou Diallo case or more general topics such as tolerance or charitable duty, we continually raised underlying questions of how to judge an ethical life and of personal versus public responsibility. As one member of the group noted, we never came up with a single answer, recommendation, or plan of action, but we forced ourselves to examine our reactions.

Another series, organized primarily by Anne Klaeyen, but with my enthusiastic support, was called *The Creative Process*. Creativity, as one of Ethical Culture's "Eight Commitments" says, is an essential part of human life. We invited authors, artists, singers, and songwriters to discuss how they went about their work; we learned about their sources of inspiration, their work methods, what they did when inspiration didn't come, and how they balanced creative work with other

necessities. These conversations were not lectures but a lively exchange; many of us who came to hear the invited guests were ourselves artists, writers, and musicians, eager to hear and share. We learned that the frustrations and joys of these different arts are often very similar and that creative work is hard work.

Our third discussion group, *Faith Conversations*, implicitly raised the question of how Ethical Culture is or is not a religion. In six sessions led by Chris Jacques, we considered basic elements of traditional religion, such as faith and belief, practice and ritual, inspiration and ecstasy, and asked how they fit or don't fit within a humanist religion. Ethiciculturists often have trouble with such words because we associate them with religious traditions that we have left behind. Yet many of us feel what might be called a religious instinct. I personally found these discussions extremely rich and came away with a much clearer sense of how spiritual needs can be addressed within Ethical Culture.

One of the things I brought away from all these discussions is that people want and long to have reflection and communication. When we get together to talk about such personal and ethical issues, we almost inevitably reach a level of deep exchange of ideas and understanding. By stopping in our busy schedules to have this simple and complex exchange, we experience and share what I would call a spiritual life.

If you would like to take part in planning next Season's series of Wednesday Evening Programs, or would simply like to be kept informed on its progress, please contact me at the BSEC office.

*Martha Hoffman*

And what about "religion"? The word is used to designate things as different from one another as Satanism and satori, as fetish-worship and the enlightenment of a Buddha, as the vast politico-theologic of financial organizations known as churches and the intensely private visions of an ecstatic. A Quaker silence is religion, so is Verdi's *Requiem*. A sense of the blessed All-Rightness of the Universe is a religious experience and so is the sick soul's sense of self-loathing, of despair, of sin, in a world that is the scene of perpetual perishing and inevitable death.

*Aldous Huxley*

*What might a modern moral education look like at an Ethical Society in Brooklyn? Do you think it might be designed with these elements?*

- Assess the strengths and ills of modern society as Adler had in his day
- Focus on those roles and issues that we deem the most important
- Develop internal practices sufficient to hold the values and virtues members need to carry out these roles

Practices developed perhaps along these four lines, to varying degrees of personal emphasis:

- Personal life reflection and direction
- Community learning and support exchanges
- Collaboration with effective social improvement organizations and coalitions
- Supporting the leadership of those individuals and groups whose values, strategies, and goals you agree with.

**BSEC Membership Meeting  
Sunday, June 25, 11:00AM**

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

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