



ETHICALLY SPEAKING

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

Volume 93, no. 10

Pillars of Our Society

As the end of our fiscal year approaches on June 30, I want to thank all our members for financial support through their pledges. Our most important support is derived through our membership pledges.

I believe the select few members who have acknowledged the worth of our Society by becoming *Pillars of the Society* deserve an extra special thanks. What is a Pillar of the Society? Someone who has gone beyond the normal level of pledging to the Society and made the commitment of giving to BSEC a full 2% (or more) of their net earnings. This group of members totals 17 out of a membership of 88 people, and their generosity should be applauded. I would like to acknowledge them by name (except for 5 who requested anonymity) as follows:



Charlotte Alper
Lisel Burns
Edith Calabro
Charles Horwitz
Chris Jacques & Laura Long
Abe Lieberman
Annemarie Mogil
Constance Pigozzi
Jean Shaffer
(and Celeste & Bruce Leibowitz)

Of approximately \$20,000 in pledges promised to BSEC for the fiscal year July '98 to June '99, we have received better than \$15,000 as of May 10, 1999. *Members, please take a moment to write a check today to complete your pledge for the year ending June 30.*

By July 1, 1999 we will be mailing pledge forms to our membership for next year (July '99 to June '00). Please consider joining the list of *Pillars of the Society*. We can only prosper as an organization through your pledges. However, please, whether or not you become a Pillar, it is extremely important to mail in your pledge form as early as possible (preferably by September 1). It makes budgeting for our community much easier if we know how much income we can count on before scheduling programs.

Have a wonderful, healthy and fun summer! I look forward to being with you again this fall.

Bruce Leibowitz

Leader Notes: Corridors of Community and Stability by Lisel Burns

I'm working on the idea that if we can better frame, for the larger community, what we do and the message our work carries, we will in turn be in a better position to achieve a more ethical culture.

What we do best, as I see it, is the work of trying to live decent and meaningful lives. As our community provides opportunities for learning exchange and mutual support, the interactions deepen into something many of us experience as religious. And if we are to grow larger than the friendly family we have now, people should be able to count increasingly on the community itself to be a stable as well as visionary organization.

Former BSEC member Tim Collins (who with his family has moved to Westchester) and I were talking the other day about the culture of Ethical Culture. "Traditional culture has almost an inherited pattern of relating," Tim said. "You're born into it, you're subject to it. There are delineated lines of authority, whether religious or secular. In Ethical Culture we have almost a centrifugal culture. It's tough to change that. Perhaps," he went on, "the task for us is to establish corridors of community based on something other than traditional authorities and long-established custom."

The Mountain Platform this spring introduced three such possible "corridors" for BSEC by helping us form three groups, depending upon what we considered most important to each of us in Sunday Platforms and in BSEC as a

whole: Community Building, Life Reflection/Direction, and Social Change emerged as three distinct yet interrelated priorities.

The Mondragon Cooperatives in the Basque Country in northern Spain, where my friend Jorge lives, started nearly 50 years ago with a technical school formed by one village priest and several high school students in the extremely repressive period under Franco following the defeat of the Republican forces in the Spanish Civil War. Directed by their understanding of Roman Catholic social teachings which encouraged democratic but alternative economic structures based upon social principles, Mondragon created and then federated small worker-owned cooperatives into a larger entity of now almost 30,000 worker-owners.

The people of this region took control of key resources needed to sustain the ways of life and community they needed and valued. It is now a mighty federation of cultural schools and factories which together form a deep social project that has used its economic activity quite successfully to accomplish its social aims. Together the people of Mondragon own the largest bank in northern Spain, a chain of supermarkets, and direct vast assets; they have their own access to work, healthcare, cultural education and housing, their own means of production, insurance monies, savings, pensions, and other forms of capital.

In the tiny Ethical movement, we don't yet share economic resources other than our Meeting Houses and the staff we do engage to serve our communities via local Societies and the national AEU office. We haven't yet formed cooperatives and are relatively well-off economically, with little fire in our bellies driving us to organize alternative institutions for our own survival. But most, if not all, of our members seem to me capable of accomplishing much more in a meaningful life with the support of a stable and visionary Ethical community than off on their own.

To the extent that we take the fulfillment and moral quality of our own lives as the legacy of the Ethical movement, so we may in turn be called to take the economic stability and long-term goals of the Ethical communities

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June Platforms

There are two platforms scheduled for this June, both given by BSEC Leader Lisel Burns.

June 6 will be a special platform on *Membership Appreciation* to get us ready for the big membership meeting that afternoon.

June 13 will be Lisel's final platform of this transition Season, as she reflects on *Endings and Beginnings*, leaving off where she picked up back in September.

The Platform Committee has settled on a Platform Theme for next Season: *Creating a Rooted, Responsible, and Reflective Way of Life Amid the Challenges of the Year 2000.*

VIEWPOINT

THE BROOKLYN SOCIETY FOR ETHICAL CULTURE

53 PROSPECT PARK WEST
BROOKLYN, NY 11215
(718) 768-2972

Leader: Lisel Burns

President: Charles Horwitz

1st Vice President: Constance Pigozzi

2nd Vice President: Stephanie Heacox

Treasurer: Glenn Newman

Board Secretary: Kurt Johnson

Pledge Secretary: Bruce Liebowitz

Board Members: Charlotte Alper,
Jeannine Anas-Launay, Rita Wilson,
Jean-Jacques Senechal. *Emeritus:*
Marshall F. Dubin, Isabel Ross.

Ethical Action: Charlie Horwitz 230-3537

AEU Rep: Anne Klaeyesen 768-2972

Platform: Constance Pigozzi 331-1137

Coffeehouse: Anne Klaeyesen 965-3611

Environment: Kurt Johnson 768-2972

House & Grounds: Tony Severo 854-0710

Greeting: Rita Wilson 284-0241

Membership: Stephanie Heacox 768-2972

Peace Site: Bea Rubin 768-2972

Sunday School: Remi Gay 768-2972

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, Martha Hoffman, Richie Buzzo, Marshall Dubin, Bruce Liebowitz, Rita Wilson, Charley Horwitz, and Anne Klaeyesen.

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.

Mumia Abu-Jamal: Our Next American Martyr?

The annals of American History are replete with the names of those who struggled and died for human liberation. Think back over many years about those courageous people who gave their lives in the name of freedom: Sacco and Vanzetti, Ethel and Julius Rosenberg, Joe Hill, Rev. Martin Luther King, and so on and on. Will Mumia Abu-Jamal be our next American martyr?

On Saturday, April 24th, a pilgrimage of the American people from all over the country journeyed to Philadelphia to add their voices and bodies to the growing movement to free Mumia Abu-Jamal. Myself and many other members of Ethical joined with countless others to proclaim that Mumia was wrongfully convicted of murder. We believe that he was convicted by perjured testimony, not for any wrong he did but for his principled stand against police brutality.

At this rally of April 24th, many voices were heard. To me the most notable speeches were those made by relatives of Mumia, by the President of the Association of Black Policemen, and by comedian and social critic Dick Gregory.

Most important of all was the presence of so many women and men: African-American, Latino, and white. All displayed spirit and determination. "Mumia Abu-Jamal is innocent. He shall be restored to freedom."

Marshall F. Dubin



Words from Our Outgoing President Charles Horwitz

I thank all members, friends, staff, and board of trustees of BSEC for allowing me to serve as your President for the past four years. Just as we have had a smooth transition with Lisel replacing Lois as our Leader, I am confident that we will have an equally smooth transition when your next President is chosen in June.

Last month I attended a reunion of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade veterans who fought in the Spanish Civil War. Although it was wonderful to see the huge crowd applaud the surviving vets, now in their 80s and 90s, for their dedication and heroism, the gathering was disrupted by people who interrupted a speech by demanding that the speaker address the war in Yugoslavia. Although the gathering followed the moderator's urgings to respect the purpose of the meeting and let the speaker continue, the disruptions cast a sour note over the otherwise splendid event.

As many of us remember, BSEC, a decade ago, survived similar unpleasantness when our Society almost imploded from disagreements presented by a few disgruntled members. The rancor escalated into picketing the Society and ended up in court. It is natural to have differences of opinion in any group, however, what distinguishes us from other groups is how we resolve our differences. Ethical Culture requires us to resolve conflicts in an ethical way even though it is hard work to disagree agreeably.

I think this happened because we adopted and practice Quaker-inspired procedures. We decide almost all issues by consensus and follow Robert's Rules of Order only on rare occasions. Although trying to achieve a Quaker-like consensus is more time-consuming than voting issues up or down, it is ultimately more satisfying and productive. It helps get us to win-win situations and fosters respect for each other as human beings.

I urge our next board to adhere to these procedures. They include simple techniques which include the mailing of a detailed agenda before each meeting. The agenda is approved before the meeting and items are added or subtracted. On occasions when we have hot disagreements, we adopt time limits on certain items, we use "I statements", we avoid personal putdowns, we allow everyone to speak and we limit a few people from monopolizing the meeting. Sometimes, we delay decisions and often thereafter, the dispute resolves itself. Finally, we trust and respect each other and know when to inject our healthy sense of humor to cool down overheated palaver.

ETHICAL ACTION

June 1: Workshop on Renewable Energy

Ayiti Vet (Haitian Initiative on Environment and Development) in collaboration with Fonkoze-New York will be hosting a workshop on renewable energy and agriculture:

- bringing electricity to rural Haiti using solar and wind power
- improving irrigation and water delivery
- mobilizing community action

Featured speaker will be Jon Narr, Director of International Marketing for the Solar Electric Light Company. Mr. Narr has twenty-five years of experience financing and delivering solar and wind energy systems in developing countries, including the Dominican Republic, India, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, and China. In 1977, he helped install solar collectors and the first wind turbine on a New York City building. He is the author of eight books on sustainable development, most recently *This Land Is Your Land*.

The event will be held at 7PM on June 1 at the Meeting House. For more information, please call the BSEC office, or Yanique Joseph at (212)774-7497.

JUNE 1999 BSEC CALENDAR

6/1 - 6/6

TUESDAY 6/1

7PM: *Renewable Energy and Agriculture* workshop with Jon Naar, Director of International Marketing for the Solar Electric Light Company. Co-sponsored by Ayiti Vet and Fonkoze New York.

7:30 - 9PM: *Brooklyn Women's Chorus* directed by Bev Grant. Call 768-2972 for more information.

WEDNESDAY 6/2

6:30 - 10:30PM: Folk Open Sing with potluck supper & snacks. Co-sponsored by the *Pinewoods Music Society*. Bring your voice, instruments, friends, neighbors, children, and/or a snack to share.

THURSDAY 6/3

6 - 7PM: *Meditations* with Remi Gay. Guided meditation based on Native American practices to create peaceful mind. Newcomers and drop-ins are welcome. Suggested donation \$2-10.

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

FRIDAY 6/4

6:30-8:30PM: *Y.E.S. Youth Group Meeting*

8PM: The Good Coffeehouse series presents an evening of klezmer and jazz with the utterly astounding *Harold Selitsky*. Admission \$8 at the door.

SATURDAY 6/5

10 - 11AM: *The Art of Belly Dancing* taught by Salome. Call 399-1732 for info.

SUNDAY 6/6

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

10 - 11AM: Parents' Discussion Group.

11AM: Sunday Platform: *Membership Sunday* with BSEC Leader Lisel Burns.

12:15PM: Lunch with the Bunch.

1PM: *BSEC Membership Meeting*.

I would like to beg you to have patience with everything unresolved in your heart and try to love *the questions themselves* as if they were locked rooms or books written in a very foreign language. Don't search for the answers, which could not be given to you now, because you would not be able to live them. And the point is, to live everything. *Live* the questions now. Perhaps then, someday far in the future, you will gradually, without even noticing it, live your way into the answer.

Rainier Maria Rilke

6/7 - 6/13

TUESDAY 6/8

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

THURSDAY 6/10

6 - 7PM: *Meditations* with Remi Gay.

7PM: BSEC Board of Trustees Meeting.

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

FRIDAY 6/11

8PM: The Good Coffeehouse concert series presents an evening of poetry and choral music with *Sheila Jean-Baptiste*, *Angela Lockhart*, and the *Brooklyn Women's Chorus*. Admission \$8.

SATURDAY 6/12

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

SUNDAY 6/13

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

10 - 11AM: Parents' Discussion Group.

11AM: Sunday Platform: *Endings and Beginnings* with BSEC Leader Lisel Burns. Final platform of the Season.

12:15PM: Lunch with the Bunch.

1:30PM: *The Moral Issues in Kosovo* discussion circle with Manuela Dobos and Vanda Bozicevic.

6/14 - 6/30

MONDAY 6/14

7 - 9PM: Newcomers' Workshop on *The Eight Commitments of Ethical Culture*.

TUESDAY 6/15

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

FRIDAY 6/18

8:30 PM: Cabaret style GROOTS Concert and celebration, benefiting the Grass Roots Academy to be held at the Frankfurt 2000 Expo in Germany. \$10 Donation.

SATURDAY 6/19

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

6:30PM: Members' Summer Potluck.

SATURDAY 6/26

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

WEDNESDAY 6/30

7 - 9PM: *The Richard Price Book Discussion Group* will discuss *Stones from the River* by Ursula Hegi. Call Constance Pigozzi at 331-1137 for more information.

<http://www.bsec.org>



Reflections on Time

by Richie Buzzo

Richie Buzzo is an active member of BSEC's Y.E.S. (Youth in Ethical Societies) group, and a student at Bronx Science. He made these observations at the Y.E.S Platform in February, and we wanted to have them reprinted here:

Time is defined in the dictionary as the measurement of duration. Duration is defined as a continuancy in time. By the mathematical law of syllogism, these definitions lead to each other over and over in a literary circle of meaning. From this, one can gather that time has to be determined and measured by each person. If time is measured by an individual, that must mean that a life is only a moment in the fabric of time and existence. The only real reason that time has a measurable "flow" is that it is human nature to give order and serenity to all things, natural, supernatural, or just artificial.

The flow of time is most closely associated with a river's current. Steady and forever changing. Some people come to the river to drink of the knowledge of the past, some come to swim and enjoy the present, and still others come to bathe themselves of the past and look toward the future. And like a river, time never follows the same course. A small stone thrown into a river can change the landscape over a thousand years.

Time is a thing that can never be regained. One may look upon lost years, and want to return to that age. However, that is impossible. The only way to retain youth is to remember it. But as a river can dry up, memories of a past time can also dry. Time is lost to itself. Its ultimate end is to be remembered, and learned from. However, as the life of a human being fades, so do the lessons they have learned over the years. If a person does not pass on the experiences of their lifetime, then their lessons must be learned over again by others, only to be forgotten again.

Dear People,

I want to tell you how much I have enjoyed getting your newsletters. If I lived in New York, I would love to attend your programs. I feel this keenly out here, where most people are into traditional religion and nothing like Ethical Culture exists. As a transplant, I miss people who share my beliefs.

Sue, Altoona PA

Membership News: Plans and Appreciations

The platform and the coffeehouse may close for the summer, but that doesn't mean BSEC members don't do anything from now until September. Plans are in the works for establishing a center for adult education: a resource for BSEC and the greater community for exploring issues of philosophy, religion, and politics, from a distinctly "Ethicultural" perspective.

Please contact Lisel or the office for more info.

Philosophy sessions with Vanda Bozicevic. Informal discussions with limited reading, each session will be devoted to practical consideration of a particular ethical issue.

A series of foreign language discussions is planned for this summer – Spanish and possibly others – which will involve weeknight dining and conversation at local Park Slope restaurants.

Faith Discussions with Chris Jacques. Conversations on faith and other issues related to human spirituality and how it fits (or doesn't fit) into our lives.

Appreciation: Constance Pigozzi

A special appreciation goes out this month to Constance Pigozzi for contributing so much in so many different areas of the Society: platform music programmer, acting chair of the Platform Committee, First Vice President of the Board, the driving force behind the Richard Price Book Discussion Group, plus so many other things, big and small. With her attentiveness and care for the building, and her wonderful graciousness in person, she is a good friend to us all.

An ongoing series has been the Democracy Workshop, meeting every other Sunday since April. Readings have included Parenti, Grossman, Chomsky, and Zinn. Summer schedule tba. Contact Dorothy Klein for details.

BSEC caretakers Greg Ruth and Jen Smith were married at the Meeting House on Saturday, May 22. Congratulations!

Leader Notes, continued from first page.

more seriously as well. Perhaps Tim's "corridors of community" could be based upon the sense that the quality of our own lives depends upon the quality and stability of our Ethical communities within the larger society.

It might mean learning to more align our economic activities and resources with our declared aims. We need to face real consequences if we fail to balance our expenses with creative fundraising and fair-share member pledges, rather than hoping for building rentals to somehow increase like rabbits are rumored to do. For example, we know that local advertising for communities like ours works. But it may cost more than four thousand dollars a year to have a small weekly ad in two local Brooklyn papers and a larger one every quarter.

On June 6, we hold a membership Sunday, holding our big annual meeting after lunch, hopefully in the garden. Let Membership Sunday be a time of celebration of the community-making efforts we share. We will hear from the people who have joined this past Season. We can spend some time helping me and the increasing circle of people now leading small groups or producing BSEC programs make an evaluation of how we are doing, and what we might do better next Season.

I have greatly enjoyed working with you as the Transition Leader this year, and am willing to continue for the next year, if we can reach a mutual understanding about roles, responsibilities and resources needed to do what we intend in the coming months. A transition subgroup is exploring ways we can best balance our budget, our busy lives, and the community's ambitious program agenda. Please join us, and encourage others to do the same.

Special Event June 13: The Moral Issues in Kosovo

Sunday, June 13, will be a day for reflecting on the past year, looking forward to the coming year, and facing issues that confront ourselves and the world today. Lisel Burns will be presiding over the final platform of the Season, with a talk entitled *Endings and Beginnings*, as we transition out of this transitional year.

After platform, at 1:30PM, there will be a discussion in the Library on *The Moral Issues in Kosovo*. Present at the discussion will be CUNY Professor Manuela Dobos, a Balkan expert and a member of *Brooklyn Parents for Peace*. Also present will be new BSEC member Vanda Bozicevic, a philosophy professor from the former Republic of Yugoslavia. All interested people are encouraged to attend a careful consideration of this extremely complex and tragic situation.



CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

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

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