



ETHICALLY SPEAKING

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

Volume 95, no. 2

Leader Notes: Taking Stock by Lisel Burns

Spending virtually all my work life on an academic (September through June) schedule, I usually count on July and August for “in-between” time and save it for reading, clearing out my piles of files, and rethinking my various projects.

One result is usually a 1 or 2-page chart with several defensible, prioritized intentions. I have come to prefer the word intention to “goal” because for me a goal is a bit too other, or out there, however useful, whereas “intention” is within me, coming out of me into the roles and strategies that will shape my calendar for the next ten months or so.

But it’s also a practical thing. Without that assessment, the next year isn’t developmental, flowing out of insights gained previously, but more circular, just more of the present; so it tends to be a “pile-on” of new projects on top of ongoing unevaluated projects.

The years I’ve gotten behind on this plan haven’t worked out too well. As I explained

to my family this summer in New England, these days people are overwhelmed with extensive and extended networks that demand their energy. Each person has to create their own internal logic, a combustion system of their own, where their energies are not depleted but amplified by how they live.

My father is a retired naval officer, who joined the war effort as a 23 year-old naval aviator, and later commanded antisubmarine flight squadrons, and ended his career commanding the former United States Naval Base in Bermuda, where my mother had grown up. This summer we sat and talked, and he wrote later that it was the first time in a long time he had understood my work and what it meant to me.

As a military man, he understands a lot about leadership and the awesome responsibilities it can represent. We watched a film (*The Bridges at Toko Ri*) with a lovely fictional story where William Holden is a citizen pilot wondering what he was doing risking his life in Korea while his friends were playing softball with their kids back home. Don’t blame the folks back home, for not doing what you are doing,” his commander (Frederic March) said at one point to the depressed pilot, “they do what they do because they are there, and we do what we do because we are here, even if it is the wrong war in the wrong place at the wrong time.”

My father said later that leadership to him meant mostly sorting through the issues and finding a path through them that had the most chance of accomplishing the mission objectives that he was bound to accomplish. His energies were those of patriotism, professionalism, and a love, he said, for the men who risked so much in their daily lives.

I think, now, in situations that don’t look like war, it is so easy to waste each other’s time, and work without bothering to figure out the main missions we are accepting, the issues complicating the situation, and the possible paths through those issues and obstacles. Like the pilots of those faraway planes on aircraft carriers moving across the Pacific waters, can’t we figure out what is significant enough to accomplish, ask our BSEC community to do it, and then do it together?

Fonkoze Courier Kidnapped, Found Dead in Port-au-Prince

On September 6, around 2:30 pm, ten armed men posing as police entered the central branch of Fonkoze in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. They robbed the bank of what little cash was in the safe and kidnapped Amos Jeannot, a 29 year-old, a gentle and beloved bank courier and father of a three month-old son. Two days later, a telephone call was made to the bank demanding that Fonkoze close its doors. No money demand was ever made.

On September 21, Amos’ body was found at the morgue. He had been dead for some time and his body was tortured and horribly disfigured.

BSEC has sent a letter to the Haiti government demanding a full investigation of this brutal crime. The police seriously began such an investigation after more than 500 messages were sent to them from organizations and individuals in 14 countries but as of press time, there have been no arrests.

Fonkoze (“the shoulder-to-shoulder foundation”) is Haiti’s alternative bank for the organized poor, an economic alliance whose goal is sustaining democracy in Haiti through economic development. It has been one of BSEC’s main Ethical Action activities since its founding in 1994, and many of our members have close personal ties to the organization.

While random violence is no stranger to Port-au-Prince, this crime is especially unsettling because it seems to single out an organization that gives so much directly to the community. Fonkoze is the only bank available to many poor peasants and women street merchants and small business owners throughout Haiti, and a disruption to its operations could have a chilling effect on non-profit groups throughout the country. But people close to Fonkoze have faith in the courage and perseverance of its leaders and continuing success.

“There are many strong leaders in Fonkoze,” says BSEC Ethical Action Chair and Fonkoze USA board member Charley Horwitz, “and we believe that this tragic event will bring people closer together and make Fonkoze even stronger.”

Go to globalexchange.org/getInvolved to join the fax campaign demanding justice for Amos.

RE/YES Conference November 10-12

The AEU Religious Education Conference will be held November 10-12 at the Holiday Hills retreat center in Pawling NY, with the theme *Ethical People and How They Got That Way*, inspired by the book of the same title by Arthur Dobrin. Programs geared for children and adults are scheduled, as well as time for socializing and fun.

The Y.E.S. (Youth of Ethical Societies) Conference for 13-18 year-olds will also be held at the center the same weekend. If you plan to attend the RE conference, and know a teenager or two who you think would enjoy a retreat upstate, invite them along!

Only a couple hours north of New York City, the grounds are lovely with a lake and walking trails. This is a great chance for a weekend family getaway with a plus! The conference fee, housing, and food costs are all reasonable. You may also attend Saturday only, if you like.

Sponsor a Y.E.S. member who might not be able to otherwise attend! Call the BSEC Office for registration forms and for information on sponsoring a teen.

**THE BROOKLYN SOCIETY
FOR ETHICAL CULTURE**

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Ethically Speaking is published 6-10 times a year by BSEC. This issue was produced by Bob Strock, Lisel Burns, Anne Klaeyesen, Remi Gay, Charles Horwitz, Rita Wilson, 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>

Great truths do not take hold of the hearts of the masses. And now, as all the world is in error, how shall I, though I know the true path, how shall I guide? If I know that I cannot succeed and yet try to force success, this would be but another source of error. Better then to desist and strive no more. But if I do not strive, who will?

Chuang Tzu

The Children's Sunday Assembly

Greetings Everyone!

The new season has started for our Children's Sunday Assembly Program! Our theme for this year is: *We All Can Be Ethical Heroes*. Super Sunday was held on September 10th with many newcomers and returnees. We held a typical opening circle time, replete with singing, candle lighting and story telling. We also set aside time to contemplate and share about the following questions - typical of what we do during class time - which lead to some thought provoking exchanges: "Who is an ethical hero for you? What did s/he do? What can you do to be like them?"

Special kudos to Anne Klaeyesen and Tracey Jindyeh for being especially responsible. We couldn't have had such a lovely morning without them. Thanks to the rest of the staff - Margit Sheldon, Audrey Kindred, Andrew and Emily Newman, Ali Hussein, Tim Severo, Jessica Mestel - and kids like Dylan Cohen and Jason Leibowitz, who helped set up, clean up, etc. Let's not forget Ouafa Jindyeh and David Sheldon who stayed home to baby-sit! Many thanks to our musicians, Joel Cohen and Jon Kolleeny, plus all the other people who helped out. (My apologies for not listing everyone, but we're running out of space here...)

CSA Calendar: NO classes scheduled for October 8. Call 768-2972 to see if there will be any volunteer children's activities that day from 11AM-12:15PM.

October Theme: *Heroes Are Responsible*. One of the basic precepts of Ethical Culture is that we live in relationship with other people and how we treat one another is supremely important. How do ethical heroes/heroines act? What kind of persons have world religions used as role models of heroism?

Ethical Action Project: Collecting for UNICEF

Our Children's Sunday Assembly program meets every Sunday 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, Director

The Humanist Institute: A Course in Learning and Leadership

Do you enjoy learning about the world around you and discussing philosophical and social issues? If so, then consider joining the next class of the *Humanist Institute* starting on Friday, December 1st. The curriculum includes: the history of humanist thought; an exploration of world beliefs, ideologies and religions; issues of multiculturalism, racism, gender, and family; science and postmodernist thought; and ethical, moral, and human development.

"Our Institute faculty share a common nontheistic, naturalistic way of thinking. For some of us, the critique of religion and irrationalism is central, whereas others put primary emphasis upon practical ways of living out such a philosophy in our own times and places, an historic moment tinged with both conservatism and anomie — both deadly to historic humanism.

"We also share the experience that unbelief is a common door into humanism but is, itself, not a substitute for humanism. The bloody experiments of our century in Russia, Germany, and China should have removed all doubts on this score. Our Humanism assumes an unbelief in traditional supernatural religions plus a commitment to

human reason as particularly exemplified in the modern sciences, democracy as the logical extension of universal human rights, and morality/ethics as the reflection/action of humans upon their human situations.

"Labels have both dictionary definitions and usage definitions. The *Humanism* of the *Institute* embraces freethought, atheism, secular humanism, religious humanism, and ethical humanism. By bringing together individuals holding these varied qualifiers, the Institute classes and faculty colloquia are enriched and the varied movements are brought into better mutual understanding. This more realistic goal supplants any ephemeral mergers, and helps us avoid the organization blunderings of the past."

from the 1998 issue of Humanism Today

Classes meet in December and April for long-weekend seminars and in August for 5 days for a three-year period. Tuition is \$450 for each weekend session and \$850 for the summer session, including books, room and board. For more information, call Jean Kotkin, executive director, at (212) 873-0918.

SEPTEMBER 2000 BSEC CALENDAR

10/1 – 10/12

Sunday 10/1

Monthly Membership Sunday

10AM-12:15PM:

Children's Sunday Assembly.

11AM: Platform: *A Family Story* with BSEC Leader-in-training Anne Klayesen. Music by George Wurzbach.

12:30PM: Lunch with the Bunch, October birthdays celebration, and Newcomers' Circle.

1PM: *But Is It Right?* An open discussion focusing on basic ethical notions and everyday moral dilemmas.

Tuesday 10/3

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

Wednesday 10/4

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

Wednesday Program

6:30-7:30PM: Quiet Workshop/Reflection.

7:30-8:30PM: Colloquy.

Thursday 10/5

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

7:30-9PM: Storytelling Workshop with storyteller and consultant Mary Savage. Create community through storytelling, culminating in a celebration. Four workshops, \$7-10 each, free for BSEC members. Call 965-3611.

Saturday 10/7

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

Sunday 10/8

11AM: Platform: *Heritage Sunday Education: Our Personal Stories.*

12:30PM: Lunch with the Bunch.

Tuesday 10/10

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

Wednesday 10/11

Wednesday Program

6:30-7:30PM: Quiet Workshop/Reflection.

7:30-9PM: Members and Friends supper, followed by a planning session for activities at future meetings.

Thursday 10/12

7-9PM: T'ai Chi Chuan.

7:30-9PM: Storytelling with Mary Savage.

10/13 – 10/27

Friday 10/13

8PM: Good Coffeehouse concert series presents the *Bridge-Kalbro Duo* in an evening of classical guitar and vocal music. Ed Bridge and Kirsti Kaldro are well known in Park Slope for their teaching studio and performances at the Brooklyn Museum of Art and the Old Stone House. Donation \$8.

Saturday 10/14

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

Sunday 10/15

10AM-12:15PM: Children's Assembly.

11AM: Platform: *Who Are the BSEC Wednesday People, Anyway?* with Lisel Burns.

12:30PM: Lunch with the Bunch.

Tuesday 10/17

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

Wednesday 10/18

Wednesday Program

6:30-7:30PM: Quiet Workshop: Sharing Personal Spiritual Practices.

7:30PM: *Faith Conversations.*

Thursday 10/19

7-9PM: T'ai Chi Chuan.

7:30-9PM: Storytelling with Mary Savage.

Friday 10/20

8PM: Good Coffeehouse concert series presents Third Friday with the Park Slope Food Coop featuring the *Sheila Cooper Trio* and *Chuck Clark's Little Big Band*, a ten-piece ensemble playing the arrangements and compositions of Chuck Clark. Donation \$8.

Saturday 10/21

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

Sunday 10/22

10AM-12:15PM: Children's Assembly.

11AM: Platform: *The Dream Grows in Brooklyn* with Martha Gallahue, from the AEU National Service Conference.

12:30PM: Lunch with the Bunch.

Tuesday 10/24

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

Wednesday 10/25

Wednesday Program

6:30-7:30PM: Quiet Workshop/Reflection.

7:30-8:30PM: Ethical Culture Readings.

Thursday 10/26

7-9PM: T'ai Chi Chuan.

7:30-9PM: Storytelling with Mary Savage.

Friday 10/27

8PM: Good Coffeehouse concert series presents violinist *Lisa Gutkin* in an evening of klezmer music. Donation \$8.

10/28 – 11/5

Saturday 10/28

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

Sunday 10/29

10AM-12:15PM:

Children's Sunday Assembly.

11AM: Platform: *Elections and Democracy* With Charley Horwitz.

12:30PM: Lunch with the Bunch.

Tuesday 10/31

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

Wednesday 11/1

6:30-10PM: *Pinewoods Folk Open Sing.*

Wednesday Program

6:30-7:30PM: Quiet Workshop/Reflection.

7:30-8:30PM: Colloquy.

Thursday 11/2

7-9PM: T'ai Chi Chuan.

7:30-9PM: Storytelling with Mary Savage. *Final session and celebration!*

Friday 11/3

8PM: Good Coffeehouse concert series presents an evening of fine fiddling with *Sam Zygmuntowicz, Bill Christophersen,* and friends. Donation \$8.

Saturday 11/4

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

Sunday 11/5

Monthly Membership Sunday

10AM-12:15PM:

Children's Sunday Assembly.

11AM: Sunday Platform: *Moral Logic* with BSEC Leader Lisel Burns

12:30PM: Lunch with the Bunch, October birthdays celebration, and Newcomers' Circle.

1PM: *But Is It Right?*

This Fall: New Year's Raffle and Four-Hour Volunteer Pledge

As part of its long-term fundraising effort this fall, BSEC will be offering a raffle with a large cash grand prize (up to \$1250!). Tickets will be mailed to members, and available for purchase through the office. The grand prize drawing will be held at our New Year's Eve celebration. Proceeds will go toward the maintenance and restoration of our landmark meeting house.

And BSEC members, don't forget to sign up for your four-hour volunteer member pledge. Time can be more valuable than money in many cases, so please contact the office for more information on how you can contribute.



Storytelling Workshop with Mary Savage Thursdays through November 2

Learn the power of storytelling from a master of the art. Mary Savage will conduct a workshop at 7:30 PM on the Thursdays in October (5, 12, 19, 26) with a celebration and storytelling performance on Thursday, November 2, also at 7:30 PM. The workshop is free to BSEC members and \$7/10 per session for non-members.

Mary helps people find their way back home through storytelling. She is the founder of the *Henry Street Parent Storytelling Workshop*, a community-based storytelling project on the Lower East Side, and she directs *Stories in the Land*, the Storytelling Institute at Hofstra University. She has published many articles on storytelling and literature and holds a doctorate in Medieval Narrative. For more information, you may call Mary at 622-0111.

October 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.

October 1: *A Family Story*

With Leader-in-Training Anne Klaeyen. An exploration of how storytelling can help us to reflect upon our lives and an introduction to Thursday evening storytelling workshop with Mary Savage. Featuring the music of singer/songwriter George Wurzbach.

October 8: *Education: Our Personal Stories*.

Join us for Heritage Sunday, an annual BSEC tradition.

October 15: *Who Are the BSEC Wednesday People, Anyway?*

The Wednesday programs at BSEC represent more than a place for members and friends to substitute or supplement Sunday Platforms. Some of us are walking our talk regarding the need for life balance, and attention to personal journeys of mind, body, and spirit. With Lisel Burns.

October 22: *The Dream Grows in Brooklyn*

With Martha Gallahue from the National Service Conference of the AEU.

October 29: *Democracy and Elections*

With BSEC Ethical Action Chair and Civil Rights Attorney Charley Horwitz.

November 5: *Moral Logic*

Our exploration of paths and resources for an ethical life raises some questions early on. Does it accept the larger cultural assumptions and conclusions or does it follow from our own hard-earned assumptions? What is the real logic we are applying to our lived lives? With 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 Wednesday Program

Conversation, Reflection, Community

The Wednesday evening program commences in October. Each week we will begin at 6:30 with a half hour to an hour for quiet personal reflection. Bring your journal or sketchpad or something you've been meaning to read, or meditate, or simply take a few moments to slow down. After the reflection time, the rest of the evening shapes up something like this:

1st Wednesdays: **Colloquy.**

A traditional Ethical Culture ceremony of reflection, music, and Quaker-style sharing.

2nd Wednesdays: **Dinner and...?**

Dinner for Members and Friends, followed by a program of activities: perhaps a poetry reading or a dance lesson or an informational seminar; we'll plan the schedule at the first meeting. Child care provided.

3rd Wednesdays: **Faith Conversations**

Shared practice and reflective discussion. Each meeting a designated member of the group will share or demonstrate their personal method of centering or relaxing or inspiring; perhaps one session we'll learn a little yoga and the next listen to music or have a guided meditation; whatever people choose to share.

The shared practice will lead seamlessly into a *Faith Conversations* discussion, centering on the question of the place of faith within the context of a humanist religion.

4th Wednesdays: **Ethical Culture Readings**

Read and discuss some of the classic writings by Felix Adler, Henry Neumann, and other Ethical Culture leaders past and present.

The odd 5th Wednesday will be used for trying out future programs. Check this space. And see you on Wednesday!

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