



# ETHICALLY SPEAKING

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

Volume 94, no. 2

## Ethical Action—October 7th Resisting the New World Order

October 7, 7:30PM, as part of a national speaking tour organized by Witness for Peace, BSEC will be host to speakers reporting on resistance to economic policies forced on Haiti and Chiapas by the forces of globalization.

The most visible sign of resistance in Chiapas, a state in southern Mexico, is the Zapatista movement, now in the headlines again because of renewed attempts by the Mexican army to crush it. In Haiti, the resistance has plunged the country into a political crisis which has been going on now for three years. The conflict in both places concern issues that affect the entire developing world.

The speakers will be:

Camille Chalmers, a survivor of imprisonment and torture during Haiti's military dictatorship, and former Chief of Staff of President Aristide's government-in-exile.

Gustavo Castro Soto, a former member of Bishop Ruiz's National Mediation Commission support team and a former resettlement coordinator for Guatemalan refugees.

Local co-sponsors include HPP/BSEC, Park Slope United Methodist Church, Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian Church and the People of Faith Network. The event is free and open to the public, and refreshments will be served. Contact Charles Horwitz at 230-3557 for more info.

## Pledge Reminder

Thanks to those who have already handed in their pledge forms, and especially to those who have made the commitment to increase their pledge amount. By getting your pledge form in early, you make it easier for the Society to plan programs and activities.

Please, if you have not yet sent in your pledge form, fill it in and mail it to the office before the Fall Membership meeting, so that we can report on progress at that time. If you don't have a pledge form, ask Celeste or Bruce Leibowitz, at 336-3683. Also, please, consider increasing your pledge by 15% and/or becoming a Pillar of the Society with a pledge of 2% of your net income, so that our Society can grow and thrive.

Celeste Leibowitz  
Pledge Coordinator

## Leader Notes: From a She-Pilot's Cabin by Lisel Burns

Turning a tanker, or getting the ship successfully through an unknown passage usually takes more than the resources used on the open sea. To handle such situations, in addition to the captain and the regular crew, another member is taken aboard: a pilot, who coordinates the upcoming navigation.

A smallish Ethical Society in Brooklyn NY may be understood as considerably less weighty than a tanker. Nonetheless, sometimes I feel like that pilot — a guide from the side brought on board for a short portion of this tanker's voyage through history.

Where are we going? My worst thoughts are of some Titanic-style lost Antarctic iceberg future lying dead ahead while our 90 BSEC members celebrate their free-thinking diversities by running back and forth on our BSEC boat deck below. Most are smiling and waving to those of us standing watch in the pilot's cabin.

It's reassuring that we are developing a common destination this Season; so far, we have an excellent start with our '99-'00 Platform theme:

As caring individuals, and as members of the Brooklyn Society for Ethical Culture community, we are committed to helping each other find rooted responsible ways of living amid the challenges of the year 2000. To that end we dedicate this Season's core programs and activities.

And our next planning step, to draft a practical version of our aspirations is underway. The upcoming version of the BSEC Member Handbook now reads:

### WHAT DO WE WANT?

- > We want to live ethically ourselves and encourage others to do the same.
- > We want to support others in their efforts to live ethically.
- > We want to help families of all kinds to bring up children who have positive moral values and a principled approach to solving moral problems.
- > We want to help people act upon their ethical concerns in the larger community.

I'd like to be more of a Taoist this year, *being* more than *doing*, in wiseness laying back and letting most things happen "in the course of nature." But my judgement is that the



opportunities of this period require a coordination team (including the Board, the staff, and lay leaders of projects and programs) to take more of a Confucian, or pilot role, keeping projects pointing to these more practical destinations.

I'm proud of what we offer, and how we are now clustering offerings along lines of real needs expressed within our community and in the surrounding area. Newer programs are enriching our more personal and family lives: Personal Reflection and Life Direction themes on Wednesday nights and First Sunday offerings, Saturday night Family discos where toddlers are welcome.

Sunday morning Platforms in October focus on Local, National, and Global development. We've asked people whose insights come from decades of community involvement, seeking lessons from their experience, and crucial moral distinctions that we can apply to our own commitments in the future.

Wedding couples are beginning to meet monthly on second Wednesday evenings "to see what we can accomplish, both for ourselves and for the common good." This fall one of the grooms has organized his junior high students, in Red Hook Brooklyn, to research the Turkish earthquake disaster; in late Fall they hope to use BSEC as a site for their own fundraising benefit concert for Turkish relief.

A simple act with a lovely, "win-win" agenda. First-world (that's northern industrialized societies starting with the USA and Western Europe) low-income students building their own capacity to make a difference anywhere, by first focusing on the needs of people far away and far worse off than themselves.

In these and other efforts I see the beginning of our next passage through these "anything goes" waters, a passage made possible only for a community like ours, with no mandate but that which we ourselves claim. We have indeed the freedom and also the awesome responsibility to become more fully ourselves, one quiet conversation, one moral decision, one pot luck supper, social project, or kindness at a time.

**THE BROOKLYN SOCIETY  
FOR ETHICAL CULTURE**

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<http://www.bsec.org>

**Leader:** Lisel Burns

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*Ethically Speaking* is published six to ten times a year by BSEC. This issue was produced by Bob Strock, Lisel Burns, Marshall Dubin, Anne Klaeysen, Remi Gay, Abe Lieberman, Glenn Newman, Larry Sherman, and Celeste Leibowitz.

*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.

**The Creative Process**

A new addition to our Wednesday evening "Values and Culture" discussions will be a series entitled *The Creative Process*, with guest speakers from the worlds of literature, music and art. Here's a sneak peek at the upcoming line-up:

Nov. 3 - Ernesto Mestre, author

Dec. 1 - Bernadette Speech, composer

Jan. 5 - Greg Ruth, illustrator

Visit our website!

<http://www.bsec.org>

**VIEWPOINT**

**The President's Column**  
by Glenn Newman

The presumption of innocence is not just a legal concept. In commonplace terms it rests on that generosity of spirit which assumes the best, not the worst, of the stranger.

*Kingman Brewster, 1971*

I was watching television the other day and heard this story: Someone was riding the subway when a man and two children boarded the train. The man sat quietly, but after a short while the children started fidgeting, fussing and finally fighting with each other. The passengers on the train tried to ignore the increasingly rambunctious youngsters. Eventually someone turned to the father and said, "Sir, would you please control your children? They are creating a disturbance and annoying the other passengers." The father turned apologetically to the person and said, "I'm sorry. I didn't realize the kids were bothering other people. They've been cooped up in a hospital visiting room all day. Their mother, my wife, died at the hospital a couple of hours ago."

Needless to say, the whole atmosphere changed immediately from annoyance and anger to deep sympathy and a desire to help. The passengers felt embarrassed at having complained about something as trivial as loud children on a subway train. The rising blood pressure slowly building up from watching unruly children and an inattentive parent gave way to compassion.

What do we learn from this? When confronted by someone whom we perceive as difficult, someone who is in our way, or someone who is acting in an inappropriate manner, we have a choice: we can assume the best about the person and the circumstances or we can ignore motives and believe the worst. The next time someone cuts you off on the highway, try assuming that he or she is speeding to the hospital to visit a sick loved one.

There are methods designed to improve our chances of understanding another person's state of mind. As anyone who has attended a meeting at BSEC knows, the "opening go-round" is a fixture. I have often considered this practice a waste of time and chosen to "pass" rather than say anything. However, at a platform given by Lisel Burns, she noted that one major purpose of the go-rounds is to give participants an opportunity to let others know of any difficulties, sorrows or joys they bring to the meeting. With such awareness of one another, hurts may be avoided and issues framed more sensitively. With true caring, we not only *assume* the best, but also *elicit* the best in each other.

**Discovery**

A Creationist once in Yellowstone Park Found the actual skeleton of old Noah's Ark. There were two skulls of animals, of bull and of cow, And two Missing Link skulls on the port bow.

*Marshall F. Dubin*

**For Art's Sake** by Bob Strock

In all this ruckus over the controversial exhibit *Sensation* set to run at the Brooklyn Museum this fall, I was struck by the Mayor's statement: "If I can make it, it's not art." I believe that quite the opposite is true: if we can make it, or do it, it is art.

Art is an essential human instinct – whenever we create something, we are to some extent "doing art," which I would say is participating in the creation of the universe. No matter how utilitarian the product or the action, it still adds to the whole in its own way.

Human action can be called purely artistic when it is divorced from utilitarian intentions, yet still strives to express a connection to the deepest creative forces of nature. The human products that are the most successful at communicating this connection can be called great art, and they deserve to be objects of veneration and placed in museums, and plazas, and on the walls of public buildings. They deserve to be shared with the greatest number of people, because it is through them that people are able to connect to the deepest, most common of universal truths.

However, most of human action is not, and cannot be, divorced from utilitarian intentions, and the institutions that have grown up around our creative instincts are not immune. Artists need to earn money to live, and museums need to build a decent subscriber base in order to survive.

The repulsiveness of serious contemporary art seems intended to achieve one of two effects: either to attract attention to the artists so they gain notoriety (and earn a living), or else to wake people up from their commercially-induced aesthetic slumber and look at the world around them with fresh eyes and a queasy stomach. Usually it's a mixture of both. The second effect is admirable, but limited to the same shallows established by commercialism itself. By not venturing into the expansive, intricate depths of human experience that the marketplace turns its back on because it can't be quantified into persuadable segments, contemporary art is little more than commercialism's ugly underbelly. And it's getting uglier and uglier.

As a culture we've lost something very precious when what we consider to be our best art fails to connect us with the eternal currents of human life and the world. If there is one piece in *Sensation* that even points me in that direction, I would consider it worthwhile. I'm not going to hold my breath; I may hold my nose, but I won't hold my breath.

# OCTOBER 1999 BSEC CALENDAR

10/1 – 10/9

**Friday, 10/1**

**7PM:** Y.E.S. Youth Group Meeting. Contact Rita Wilson at 284-0241 for info.

**8PM:** The Good Coffeehouse concert series presents *Lily White* and *Big Blue Line* for an evening of Jazz. \$8 Admission.

**Saturday, 10/2**

**10-11AM:** The Art of Belly Dancing taught by Salome. Free to BSEC Members.

**7PM:** Commemoration of the 20th Anniversary of the Greensboro (NC) Massacre. Three survivors will tell their story and the legacy of the Greensboro Justice Fund. Music by Bev Grant and the Brooklyn Women's Chorus.

**Sunday 10/3**

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

**10-11AM:** Parents' Discussion Group.

**11AM:** Sunday Platform with Leader Lisel Burns and Sally Bermanzohn of the Greensboro Justice Fund. Music by the Brooklyn Women's Chorus.

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

**4-7PM:** Wedding Couples' Fall Gathering with Lisel Burns. Call 789-7891 for info.

**Tuesday, 10/5**

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

**Wednesday 10/6**

**6:30-8PM:** *But Is It Right?* An open discussion focusing on basic ethical notions and every day moral dilemmas. Tonight's topic: Why Be Moral?

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

**Thursday 10/7**

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

**7:30PM:** HPP Special Event: *Resisting the Globalized Economy in Haiti and Chiapas.*

The most beautiful and profound emotion we can experience is the sensation of the mystical. It is the sower of all true science. He to whom this emotion is a stranger, who can no longer wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead. To know that *what is impenetrable to us really exists*, manifesting itself as the highest wisdom and the most radiant beauty, which our dull faculties can comprehend only in their most primitive forms — this knowledge, this feeling, is at the center of true religion.

*Albert Einstein*

10/10 – 10/16

**Sunday 10/10**

*NO Sunday School or Parents' Discussion.*

**11AM:** Annual Heritage Platform: *Ethnic Contributions to Social Justice*, with Constance Pigozzi and Remi Gay.

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

**Tuesday, 10/12**

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

**Wednesday 10/13**

**7PM:** Fundraising Event for CHIPS.

**7:30PM:** Wedding Couples' Supper and Workshop with BSEC Leader Lisel Burns.

**Thursday 10/14**

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

**Friday, 10/15**

**8PM:** The Good Coffeehouse concert series presents Third Fridays with the Park Slope Food Co-Op: *Jennie Hill with Liquid Horn* and *Todd Isler with Two Step* in an evening of Latin and jazz music.

**Saturday, 10/16**

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

**Sunday 10/17**

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

**10-11AM:** Parents' Discussion Group.

**11AM:** Sunday Platform: *Ethical Choices in a Globalizing Economy* with GROOTS Intl. economist Sandra Shilen.

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

**Tuesday, 10/19**

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

**Wednesday 10/20**

**7:30-9PM:** *Games Galore Night.* Family entertainment with games and light refreshments. Admission \$8 per person or \$6 if you bring your own game. Call Bruce Leibowitz at 336-3683 for information.

**7:30-9PM:** *Faith Conversations.*

**Thursday 10/21**

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

**Friday, 10/22**

**8PM:** The Good Coffeehouse concert series presents singer-songwriter *David Roche* with musical guests in the world premier of *Odyssey*, a song cycle based on the Homeric epic. Admission \$8.

**Saturday, 10/23**

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

10/24 – 10/31

**Sunday 10/24**

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

**10-11AM:** Parents' Discussion Group.

**11AM:** Sunday Platform: *Community Collaboration – What Does It Really Take?* with local leaders Pat Conway and Richard Green.

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

**Tuesday, 10/26**

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

**Wednesday 10/27**

**6:30-8PM:** *Newcomers' Workshop: The Eight Commitments of Ethical Culture.*

**8PM:** *Core Values Workshop.*

**Thursday 10/28**

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

**7PM:** The Richard Price Book Discussion Group — *Lake in the Woods* by Tim O'Brien.

**Saturday, 10/30**

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

**6-9PM:** *Sheila's Boogie-by-the-Park* Family Dance with a Halloween theme. Admission \$5/person, \$7-15/family.

**Sunday 10/31**

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

**10-11AM:** Parents' Discussion Group.

**11AM:** Sunday Platform: *Democracy and Elections* with Charles Horwitz.

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

## Membership News

Ethical Culture Orientation & Core Value Workshops are back! The first session is October 27.

BSEC is planning a fund-raising auction for March 26, 2000. We need donations from members and friends. If you have any services you can offer (dinners, babysitting, tours, etc.) or products you would like to donate, please contact us. We will also be needing storage space (garages, basements, etc.) Please contact Larry Sherman, Ruth Pikitch, Bruce Leibowitz, or the BSEC Office.

Stephanie Heacox is recovering very nicely from her jaw surgery last month. She still has a plastic splint in her mouth for a couple more weeks, which makes it difficult for her to talk, and she'll be on a liquid diet for another month or so.

*Nabokov's Blues: The Scientific Odyssey of a Literary Genius*, co-authored by Kurt Johnson, BSEC's own Environmental Chair, is due in bookstores by October 15. It's already receiving rave advance reviews in the trade journals.

## October Platforms

**October 3: *Responsibility and Reflection***  
Lisel Burns with Sally Bermanzohn of the Greensboro Justice Fund.

**October 10:**  
*Ethnic Contributions to Social Justice*  
Heritage Sunday, with BSEC members Remi Gay and Constance Pigozzi.

**October 17:**  
*Ethical Choices in a Globalizing Economy*  
With Sandra Schilen, Economist and Facilitator for GROOTS International.

**October 24: *Community Collaboration: What Does It Really Take?***  
With Richard Green of the Crown Heights Youth Collective, and Pat Conway of the Fifth Avenue Committee in Park Slope.

**October 31: *Democracy and Elections***  
With BSEC member Charles Horwitz.

Platforms are held every Sunday morning from 11AM to 12:15PM in the main hall of the Meeting House on Prospect Park West, followed by a convivial and delicious buffet lunch. Please stop by!

### But Is It Right?

Motives for moral action, individual responsibility, tolerance, justice, freedom. Will we reach consensus or just clear the air?

*But Is It Right?* will be an open and ongoing discussion on practical ethical issues as they affect us in real life. There will be a different focus for each meeting, planned for Wednesday evenings at 6:30PM, 10/3, 11/6, & 12/1.

Discussions will be led by BSEC member Vanda Bozicevic, a philosophy professor from Croatia, who with her husband and two young children has recently settled in Brooklyn.

## Health Care Update

In 1997, Assemblyman Gottfried of Manhattan submitted a bill on Universal Health Care. The Assembly passed it and it was sent to the NY State Senate to be voted on. It died in committee. Now, Mr. Gottfried is resubmitting the bill, *NY Health Bill A3571*, and we are patiently awaiting its outcome.

As the rate of uninsured is rapidly rising – now up to 43 million Americans (11 million children) and 35 million under-insured – many states are considering legislation for a national health plan.

The legislatures of Massachusetts and Maryland, as well as Illinois, have passed resolutions for universal coverage, and North Carolina is now considering passage. The Illinois version states:

Health care is an essential safeguard of human life and dignity. There is an obligation for the state to ensure that every resident be able to realize this fundamental right. On or before 2002, the General Assembly, by law, shall enact a plan for universal health coverage that permits everyone in Illinois to obtain decent health care on a regular basis.

This is progress; and we hope the Federal Government will now listen to what many of the states are saying on health care.

*Larry Sherman & Dr. Abe Lieberman, on behalf of the Committee on Health Care*

## Religious Education Conference Nov. 12-14 "A Call to Character"

The annual AEU Religious Education Conference will be held Nov. 12-14 at the Holiday Hills Conference Center in Pawling NY. This year's theme: *A Call to Character – Six Pillars which support Ethical Education: Responsibility, Respect, Trusting, Caring, Fairness, Citizenship.*

Are you and your family interested in going to the conference? You will be able to meet other Ethicists from around the country and get good ideas on moral education, new songs, books, etc. There will also be a concurrent Y.E.S. conference, for people 13-18 years of age.

The conference starts Friday evening, Workshops are on Saturday, with Colloquy and an Intergenerational Platform on Sunday. There will be plenty of socializing and information exchange throughout, and all will enjoy the beautiful grounds and the fine food.

If you are interested, please contact Remi Gay at 941-5338, or the BSEC office.

## Boogie-by-the-Park Halloween Style Costumes Welcome!

Sheila's Boogie-by-the-Park, a multi-cultural, intergenerational dance party will be celebrating Halloween on Saturday, October 30, from 6 to 9 PM.

Sheila's Boogie is a Family-style party for people aged 1 week to 100 years. Music, munchies, and juice are provided. Admission is \$5/person, \$7-15/family. Call 768-2972 for more info.

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& MORE!



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Brooklyn, New York 11215

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