



From the Leader's Desk: Community Matters

What happens to the national moral climate when our government leaders don't play fair, but instead have one standard for the USA's actions and another for everybody else? What happens in hearts and families when our nation's world leadership is not tied to the provision of basic education, housing, livable wages or health insurance for millions of our own citizens?

The stakes are high and include the hearts and minds of the younger generations. I meet young people who are activists but feel isolated in a sea of apolitical peers, and I meet others whose contempt for the world's poor makes Fox TV sound "fair and balanced." Sadly, without strong communities where shared values are put into action, big hearted people too often settle into individualized resignation, offering their children a model of compassionate but powerless adults, who are ashamed of their own society's wrongs, but without enough will or organized clout to set things right for more than their own immediate families. Cynicism, apathy and double standards will be mouthed by people of all ages in a

society where these attitudes are supported by the prevailing culture. We need people in our lives who go against these trends and who live well doing so.

Where do we turn today for examples of ethical living to influence our children? The plain truth is that our values and character are pretty much the sum of the habitual ethical choices we make and those choices are most influenced by the people and communities where our actions matter to others, and where other people concern themselves actively with our well-being and conduct. The vast majority of us live and find meaning in smaller or larger groups we call communities. Humanistic traditions, including Confucianism, parts of Buddhism, and Ethical Culture require human community for their version of human moral development to unfold.

To reap the benefits of a caring community, it takes sufficient participation to build the trusting friendships that really carry the community. So many good people do so many good things at BSEC. This December we offer several events that can hold

some of our dearest values:

1. Giving and Receiving Across Local and Global Boundaries: This year we started a small Holiday Giving Catalogue of people and projects Members and Friends know directly, because we want our community's members and children to really know how wide is our combined circle of care and resource sharing. We hope to attract your support and that of the December 13 Craft Fair customers shopping that day.

2. Celebrating the holidays together: The Winter Festival, December 14, 11:00am, again draws together the CSA families and Sunday Platform participants. I especially encourage you to attend this year. We will put together care packages for people in prison for the church of Gethsemene's monthly visit. We will create our own gifts for people we love. We'll have fun together.

- *Lisel Burns*

Benefit Concerts at BSEC

Bach at Zion

Baroque Chamber Concert:
Vivaldi, Telemann, Handel
with Michele Eaton, Soprano
Kathy McDonald, Baroque Flute
Rebecca Pechefsky, Harpischord
Saturday, December 6, 8pm

Admission: \$15, includes wine reception

The Voice of Georgia

Internationally acclaimed pianist Tamara Kurdadze will perform works of Chopin, Schubert, Mozart, Rachmaninoff and others.

Sunday, December 14, 2:30-4pm

\$15 admission

Both concerts will benefit the BSEC building fund to maintain our historic landmark meetinghouse.

Call 718-768-2972 for information

December Platforms

December 7 *Our Nation's Ethics Will Be Our Legacy Also*

At the heart of ethical living is the decision to take responsibility for our actions. Taking responsibility for our location in the world's most powerful nation is a stretch for a lot of us. Will the 2004 elections be an ending or a beginning for American Democracy?

With BSEC Leader, Lisel Burns; Also, a special welcome to BSEC "Leader Emerita" Lois Kellerman who will be here for platform today.

December 14 *Winter Festival: A Celebration of Community*

Join the students of the Children's Sunday Assembly for an annual BSEC tradition: An intergenerational, festive and thoughtful celebration of the December holiday season, as we share our diverse traditions, stories, creativity and other gifts.

December 21 *Holiday Colloquy*

A more meditative Ethical Culture ceremony, with sharing, music and reflections.

There will be no platform on December 28.

January 4 *January Personal Retreat: The Need for a Daily Ethical Practice*

Without daily reflection and challenge, are we kidding ourselves about ethical living? In this next year, what help for living can we find from both inner and outer resources? The world within calls for reflection and quiet; the world without demands our attention lest we lose our place in the crowded public square. An Ethical Society has as its first priority the personal support and ethical inspiration of its members. Let's gather and reflect on ways this will happen this year. With BSEC Leader Lisel Burns.

Platforms are held every Sunday morning, 11am-12:15pm, in the main hall of the Meeting House at 53 Prospect Park West, followed by a buffet or potluck lunch.



Crafts Fair 12/13 !!!



**THE BROOKLYN SOCIETY
FOR ETHICAL CULTURE**

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

BSECOffice@aol.com

Leader: Lisel Burns

President: Constance Pigozzi

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Pledge Secretary: Ruth Pikitch

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Ethical Action: Charles Horwitz 230-3537

AEU Board: Martha Gallahue 768-2972

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Fundraising: Ruth Pikitch 256-6739

Caring & Sharing:

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Platform: Constance Pigozzi 331-1137

Sunday School: Tracey Jindyeh 748-7084

Building Rentals:

Rita Wilson, Linda Stallard 768-2972

Operations Manager:

James Alford 768-2972

Bd. Special Projects: Maureen Egginton

Peace Site: Maureen Egginton 638-4767

Coffeehouse: Linda Stallard 768-2972

Environment: Kurt Johnson 768-2972

Youth Group: Adriana Baker 768-2972

Ethically Speaking is published 6-10 times a year by BSEC. This month's issue was produced by Martha Hoffman, Maureen Egginton, Lisel Burns, Rita Wilson, Roger Kaufman, Ruth Pikitch, and Tracey Jindyeh.

Building and Grounds

The Peace and Memorial Garden installation of stone patio and benches was completed in November. The large stone and garden plantings will take place in the spring of 2004. Thanks to Anne Wiesen, Alex Berryman and Jim Alford for their untold hours of planning, design and project management! Member and Friends who would like to make memorial donations please contact Ruth Pikitch.

Also, by the time you get this edition, the lower floor dining and meeting space of the meeting house should be transformed by new terracotta and beige tiling. Many thanks again to Jim Alford for the project management and Miguel Lopez for the floor design.

Is the Right Right? A Conversation

On Sunday, November 23, 2003, the Brooklyn Society for Ethical Culture hosted religious leaders representing a variety of faith perspectives for an open conversation concerning the role of the religious right in our national dialogue. Between 40 and 50 people attended the event, which was part of the General Meeting of the Brooklyn Community Action Network (BCAN). In planning the event, Rev. Finley Schaef, BCAN's Director, noted that "since the religious right has gained enormous political influence in this country, we must do our best to understand them, dialogue with them and when necessary oppose them."

Eight panelists presented perspectives on "Is the Right Right?" and concluded that, partly, the right is right. They are partly right in regards to their capacity to organize and get out the vote. We might not consider them right on particular issues but they are effective in mobilizing people and creating wedge issues on the political scene. Part of this effective appeal is a simplicity of message and a certain rigidity of view. Dr. Kurt Johnson of the InterSpiritual Dialogue, who moderated the panel, explains "The religious right is often successful because it tells a story that is steeped in simplicities. The problem is that simplistic views of reality, seen through a completely American lens, often do not match the complexities of America's involvements overseas and simply lead to more hatred against the U.S. and its policies." Lyndon Wilburg, Co-Chair of the UN Committee on Human Rights' SubCommittee on Elimination of Racism and a member of the Ethical Culture Society of Queens, added that "The religious right has sought to capture the hearts and minds of the people by manipulating and reinforcing our worst fears."

Rev. Dr. Tom Downes (of the Association of Interfaith Ministers and UN Representative for Pax Christi) represented shamanistic tradition at the meeting and noted that shamans preached flexibility and believed that rigidity in any form will become obstructive: "Historically we have seen that, in an ever-changing world, rigid ideas can be a threat to the then-current civilization." Lyndon Wilburg followed up by pointing out that the left itself can be in danger of becoming rigid, of moving so left that it comes full circle with the right. Rabbi Jeffrey Marker, who is active in the Jewish Renewal movement and the Park Slope Jewish Center, noted that the Jewish tradition "teaches that justice must only be pursued by just means. The challenge is to organize our communities with justice on the one hand and compassion on the other."

Martha Gallahue, UN Representative of the National Service Conference of the AEU, noted that both sides of the religious spectrum have views anchored in deep convictions. She believes that it is time to look for core issues on which to work together in order to cull out fundamentalist approaches and separate them from other elements that make up the right. Rev. David Dyson, filling in for Rev. Schaef, challenged participants to come up with an issue that is equally compelling as those the right uses to mobilize its constituents. Other participants in the panel were Rabbi Michael Feinberg, Rev. Liz Braddon of United Methodist Church of Park Slope, and BSEC Leader Lisel Burns.

Martha Gallahue commented that she left feeling that the audience didn't resonate with the message of depolarizing. It remains a challenge for progressive religious movements to retain the flexibility that is part of our ideal of open-mindedness while building a message strong enough to challenge the focused, organized religious right.

Membership News

- Welcome back to Bonnie Lowenstein who rejoins BSEC this month.
- Welcome to Melanie Richardson who is transferring her membership from the Austin Texas Ethical Society to BSEC.
- Congratulations Ethel Kirschner on her recovery and return home from Cobble Hill Nursing Home.
- Bon Voyage to Charlie and Carol Horwitz who are going to Israel and Palestine for two weeks in January.
- Roz Heitner is going to read to Dorothy Klein while her eyes are giving her some trouble.
- The membership committee invites all members and interested newcomers to a community newcomer supper before the Coffeehouse concert on December 5. The cost is \$7.00 for supper from a Senegalese restaurant on Fulton St., \$15 for supper and the Coffeehouse. Please rsvp 783-2298 by Friday 4PM to reserve food order.
- Thanks to all who made our Halloween party such fun for all ages: Ruth Pikitch, Les Lopes, Selma Richman, Dorothy Wood, Bruce Liebowitz, and Tracey Jindyeh. We had a parade of all the people in costume, bobbed for apples and had a story telling circle. Everyone got prizes. Next year let's do it again!
- Tracey Jindyeh will be taking on another role at BSEC: She will be working 5 hours a week as Staff Committee Chair.
- December Member Birthdays: Fran Rabinowitz (9), Josie Radosta (17) Josie will be 90 years old this year, Sami Jindyeh (18), Celeste Liebowitz (26), Joan Donnen Klips (27), Hafizur Kahn (29).

NEW YEAR 2004 HOLIDAY FIXINGS

NEW YEARS EVE "ZIP CODE" DINNERS. Call the office or Lisel if you would like to get together for neighborhood dinners on December 31 (see under Caring/Sharing Committee). If enough members are interested, we can plan dessert and fireworks at the Meetinghouse.

NEW YEARS DAY BRUNCH-LUNCH starting about 1pm, including a program of activities (anyone who would like to help PLAN activities, please contact the committee). Children are welcome. Friends are welcome. There will be a small fee to cover clean up costs. To rsvp or volunteer, call Ruth Pikitch (718) 256-6739

Increase the Peace Around the Holidays

David Potorti, a former Park Sloper, is a founder of September Eleven Families for Peaceful Tomorrows and has written a new book, *Turning Our Grief into Action for Peace*. This book tells the story of how they came together as a group, and how they've struggled to keep their losses from being used as a justification for further violence. The book, available at the Crafts Fair and through Maureen, will be gift wrapped and postage paid to mail the books to friends and family. Priced at \$15, proceeds go to September Eleven Families, and any donations above the sale price will go to the Peace Site.

Thursday December 4th, 7:00pm: Robyn Lundy, National Organizer of the Tikkun Community will speak about Tikkun's vision of a peaceful means of achieving security in Israel/Palestine. This includes a discussion of the Geneva Accords - an agreement reached by leaders from both the Israeli and Palestinian Authority peace movements who have been meeting in secret in Switzerland for the past three years. St Paul and St. Andrew Church, 263 West 86th Street, on the corner of West End Avenue, NYC. Contact nytikkun@well.com for more information.

Sunday, December 21st, 4-8pm: BSEC Community Partner, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom cordially invites BSEC members to their pot luck holiday party at the home of Marilyn Clement, 8 West 13th Street, Apartment 2RW, NYC.

Contact Maureen Egginton at bsecPeace@aol.com or 718-638-4767 for more information.

News from the UN and the National Service Conference

December 1st is World Aids Day. At the same time, The traditional Values organization is lobbying Congress to pressure The National Institute of Health (NIH) to defund AIDS research grants. In a letter to Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson, this week, Representative Henry Waxman (D-Ca), denounced as "scientific McCarthyism" what he called a "hit list" targeting grantees for their research. Ask your Congresspersons if they are following the issue.

December 8th is Human Rights Day, honored in several Ethical Societies throughout the country. See www.un.org/UniversalDeclarationofHumanRights to read one of the most humanist manifestos written in English.

The National Service Conference of the American Ethical Union will celebrate its 75th anniversary on May 30, 2004, at the New York Society. Save the date! There are now 17 Societies in the NSC network and our outreach is global.

Caring Sharing Committee

The Caring Sharing Committee, chaired by Roger Kaufman, is not just about health, but about members' well-being in general and can serve as a sounding board for problems that could arise within a family: a legal issue, a problem with school, or anything for which a member might need support or advice. All information will be held strictly confidential.

As one committee project, Roger and Dorothy Klein are organizing a series of "zip code" parties for members and friends beginning in December in the Kensington area 11218 and surrounding communities. The idea is that friends could walk to each other's homes, but of course, any members and friends would also be welcome. Date to be announced. Roger can be reached at (718) 972-0468.

If members are interested, the first "zip code" dinners will be held on December 31. Potluck or an ordered dinner with a fee to be decided. If enough folks are nearby, we can offer dessert, champagne and fireworks at BSEC from 11:30 on. If you would like to host a supper or be a guest this time, contact the office or Lisel Burns at 783-2298.



Holiday Crafts Fair December 13, 11am to 4pm BSEC Meetinghouse

Our beautiful landmark building will turn into a gallery of original arts and crafts including jewelry, pottery, toys, paper arts, clothing and decorations. Also, enjoy refreshments and enter to win a cash prize raffle.



50/50 raffle! Buy your ticket at the Craft Fair: the drawing will be held the next day. The last time we had a 50/50 raffle, Dillon Milder Cohen won over \$200.00. So take a chance! Proceeds go to the building fund.



Holiday Community Partners Catalogue

This December, the annual Craft Fair and Winter Festival (December 14) will offer our community the opportunity to support local and global development in the first annual BSEC Community Partnership Holiday Catalogue, sponsored by the families of the Children's Sunday Assembly. To help our members and friends find ways to give gifts that will build partnership with groups with which we have a personal connection, member Fiona Boneham will compile items into a catalogue from which gift certificates supporting these organizations can be purchased. The Children's Assembly will process the gift certificates and send collected funds to each group. Projects will include local groups such as the Sunset Park Headstart program and the Church of the Gethsemene's prison care package project; and global partnerships such as Haiti Free Summer Camp Amitie.

If you know of or are involved in a project in local or global community development that you would like to recommend for our holiday catalogue, please send (as soon as possible!) a description of the project and how people can help to Fiona Boneham at oyi@vei.com.



Ethics for Children

Tell your friends about the Society's Ethics for Children Children's Sunday Assembly. Classes are held Sundays 10:am-12:30pm, for children ages 1-12. Arts, role playing, cooperative games and more. All are welcome. Guests may attend their first class free. Pick up brochures to acquaint yourself with our excellent program and place them where you think there may be interest: your local children's clothing store, karate clubs, music schools: wherever parents might see them.

December Good Coffeehouse

December 5 Workshops can't teach you to write songs like the ones that *Ellsworth & Hicks* write. It's more than technique; it's real life. "Whether harmonizing, trading instrumental licks, or just exchanging onstage banter, these two settle into their repertoire like a pair of old cats on a windowsill. Their music is cool, observant, and delivered with a baggy-pants soul." Mark Keating, *Sound Views*

AND *James O'Malley* has shared the stage with such notables as Cheryl Wheeler, Jack Williams, Lynn Miles, Louis Taylor and Chuck Pyle. His songs are eloquent hook-laden gems delivered in his own inimitable style. "What puzzles this reviewer most is how an artist this talented is not already an established fixture on the national acoustic music scene." *Music Matters Review*

December 12 *The Love Handles*: Offering classic rock, blues and folk in the final leg of their "Gimme Affordable Shelter Tour," The Love Handles' show is an annual Good Coffeehouse special event!

December 19 *Third Friday with the Park Slope Food Coop* presents: *Rufus Cappadocia* (5-string electric cello) tours internationally with the acclaimed music and dance company Urban Tap and performs regularly with oriental, jazz and African musicians. He will be performing original compositions for solo cello. AND *Leann Darling* (viola) draws from her classical technique, her Arabic and jazz skills, and her passion for improvisation. She will appear solo and with her Arabic ensemble.



Upcoming Ethical Action Activities

Friday, December 5, 7:30 pm: The New York Chapter of Tikkun, a national Jewish peace group, is re-starting and will meet at the Center for Constitutional Rights, 666 Broadway (south of 8th Street). Tikkun supports the recent Geneva Accords agreed to by Palestinian and Israeli non-governmental leaders. All people of good will are welcome.

Saturday, December 6: *Evaluating BCAN*. Brooklyn Community Action Network General Meeting. Time and place to be announced.

Saturday, December 13, 10 am: Planning meeting for BCAN's March 2004 Conference, at Ken Diamondstone's house, 216 Dean Street.

Thursday, December 18: *Rally to support the troops: Bring them home now! End the Occupation*, organized by Brooklyn Parents for Peace. 4:30 pm: Gather and music at Borough Hall. 6pm: candlelight rally at Albee Square, Fulton Street Mall.

Contact Charley Horwitz (718-230-3537) for more information and details on these events.

Community Partners:

Campaign for A National Health Program NOW

A Film Festival In Support of National Health Insurance

Sunday, December 7, 3 - 8 PM

Service Employees International Union 1199
310 West 43rd Street (8th & 9th Aves)
Free! Open, Ongoing Admission

3pm: *John Q* starring Denzel Washington.

5pm: Congressman John Conyers (D-MI), author of the U.S. National Health Insurance Act (HR676) in Congress, and Dr. Oliver Fein of Physicians for a National Health Program explain how we can establish a universal national health care system.

6pm: *Damaged Care* starring Laura Dern.

Co-Sponsored by Physicians for a National Health Program and Campaign for a National Health Program NOW. For information, contact Women's International League for Peace & Freedom at 212-533-2125 or wilpf@wilpfnymetro.org

BSEC Hosts Dialogue Project

The (Middle East) Dialogue Project will hold discussions this month in conjunction with the Brooklyn Philharmonic's production of John Adams' opera "The Death of Klinghoffer." BSEC is the site host and will also receive rental income for the sessions.

December 1, 6:30-9pm: Learn about the work's musical roots: John Adams draws on sources from J.S. Bach to the minimalism of 1980s New York.

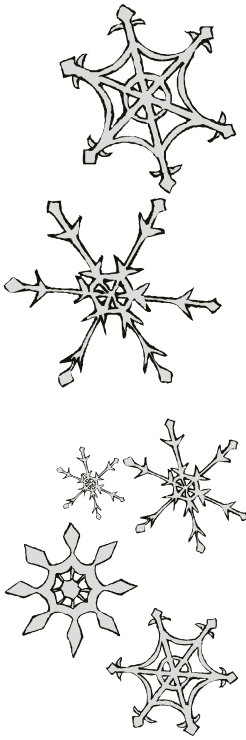
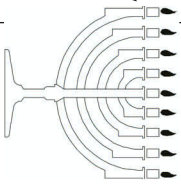

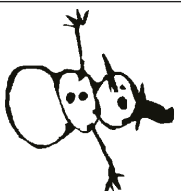
December 7, 4:30-7pm: Reflect on the experience of seeing and hearing the new production of "The Death of Klinghoffer." Audience members from the run of the performances at BAM will be invited to join the discussion.

Please note: Both sessions are now full.

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

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

December 2003 at the Brooklyn Society for Ethical Culture

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	<p>1 6:30pm: Dialogue Project: <i>Death of Klinghoffer</i></p>	<p>2 7:30pm: Women's Chorus</p>	<p>3 7pm: T' ai Chi</p>	<p>4 7:00pm: Board of Trustees Meeting</p>	<p>5 6:30pm: Newcomers Supper, \$7 8pm: Good Coffeehouse \$10 donation</p>	<p>6 3-6: Reflection Group (Lisel's) 8pm: <i>Baroque Concert, \$15</i></p>
<p>7 10am-12:30pm: Children's Assembly 10-11am: CSA Parents Meeting 11:Platform: <i>Our Nation's Ethics Will be Our Legacy</i> Also 12:30pm: Lunch with the Bunch. 1-4pm: YES acting class 4:30pm: Dialogue Project: <i>Death of Klinghoffer</i></p>	<p>8</p>	<p>9 7:30pm: Women's Chorus</p>	<p>10 7pm: T' ai Chi</p>	<p>11 7:00pm: Platform Committee Meeting</p>	<p>12 8pm: Good Coffeehouse \$10 donation</p>	<p>13 Holiday Crafts Fair, 11-4</p>
<p>14 10am-12:30pm: Children's Assembly 10-11am: CSA Parents Meeting 11am: Platform: <i>Winter Festival</i> 12:30pm: Lunch with the Bunch 1-4pm: YES activities 2:30-4pm: <i>Voice of Georgia</i> concert, \$15</p>	<p>15</p>	<p>16 7:30pm: Women's Chorus</p>	<p>17 7pm: T' ai Chi</p>	<p>18</p>	<p>19 8pm: Good Coffeehouse: Third Friday/ Park Slope Food Coop \$10 donation</p>	<p>20 </p>
<p>21 10am-12:30pm: Children's Assembly 10-11am: CSA Parents Meeting 11am: Platform: <i>Holiday Colloquy</i> 12:30pm: Lunch with the Bunch 1-4pm: YES activities</p>	<p>22</p>	<p>23</p>	<p>24</p>	<p>25 </p>	<p>26</p>	<p>27</p>
<p>28 <i>No Sunday Programs</i></p>	<p>29</p>	<p>30</p>	<p>31 11:30pm: Dessert and Fireworks</p>	<p>1 NEW YEARS BRUNCH</p>		<p></p>