



ETHICALLY SPEAKING

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

Volume 93, no. 4

December Platforms

December 6: Story, Celebration, Storyteller

Leader Lisel Burns continues her First Sundays series on meaning-making. What is the relationship between community, moral agenda and story in a cynical world? Is our story one of celebration? If so, what do we celebrate and why?

December 13: Winter Festival

With the students of the *Children's Sunday Assembly*, in an intergenerational celebration the Winter Season.

December 20: Colloquy: Holiday Reflections

A seasonal meditation.

December 27: No Platform.

Happy Holidays!

January 2: Society and Sustainability

With Leader Lisel Burns, as she moves from personal to social meanings in her yearlong First Sundays series.

NOTE: The BSEC Platform Committee has decided to close the Society for Sunday April 25, and arrange transportation for all those interested in joining the AEU Assembly delegations at the Sunday morning program at the venerable New York Society for Ethical Culture, on 64th Street and Central Park West in Manhattan. This will be a marvelous opportunity to meet people from across the country who share the same commitment to the ideals of Ethical Culture.

AEU Governance Changes Proposed

What do YOU think about movement-wide representation?

The board of the American Ethical Union, the movement-wide federation of Ethical Societies, is in the middle of a two-year process of re-evaluating many fundamental aspects of the way the AEU operates. We recently completed a session on "governance" where we considered what the board's functions and responsibilities were and how we could do a better job fulfilling them.

The current board has 21 voting members, most of whom are supposed to represent regions, but instead are usually appointed by their society boards or presidents. Not only is the board so large that it cannot operate efficiently, but societies often have a hard time finding qualified representatives for the board and there is too much turnover among its members.

We have been discussing for more than a year ideas to reduce the size of the board and to hold board members accountable to more than just their local society. We now have a proposal to present to local societies for their comments so that we can incorporate them into the bylaws amendments to be approved at the Assembly in April 1999 in New York City.

The proposal is for a board of twelve members elected to two-year terms, with one member representing the National Leaders Council (down from two) and the other eleven chosen in a single movement-wide election. One possibility being considered is a mail-in

ballot sent to all 2,800 members; another is to hold the vote among the approximately 125 delegates at the assembly. Nomination would be by petition of ten members, and a recruiting committee would encourage qualified candidates.

An alternative voting method has been proposed in which voters would rank their top eleven choices. When votes are counted, each voter's top choice would get eleven points, the next highest would get 10 points, and so on. This is a mix of the current system, in which board members usually represent only their own society and traditional "plurality" voting which favors broad-based representation. Under the new system, candidates would be helped by both strong support from a narrow base and moderate support from a larger base.

We are bringing this to the societies not only because they will make the final decision at the assembly, but because we are concerned about the way members perceive their relationship and representation to the AEU. We would like to know what you think, about the proposal in general and the specific questions about which voting method is best. Do you think it would benefit the Ethical Culture movement as a whole to take this step towards movement-wide representation?

Brian King, American Ethical Union

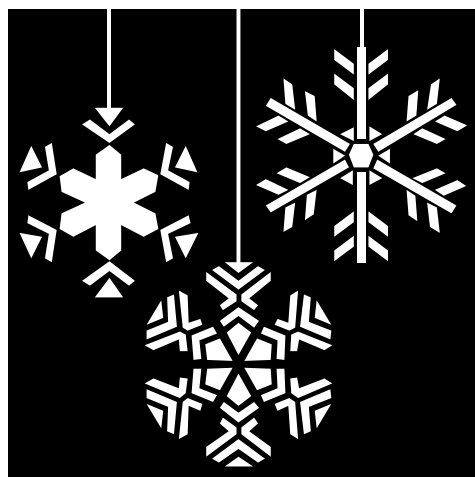


WINTER CRAFTS FAIR: Saturday, December 12, 11am - 4pm

GIFT SHOPPING?

BSEC celebrates Winter Crafts Fair '98 on Saturday, December 12th, 11 AM - 4 PM. Our magnificent turn-of-the-century landmark mansion will be transformed into a gallery of original arts and crafts, including pottery, jewelry, clothing, toys, art prints, and much more. Find that something special for everyone on your holiday shopping list. Also: delicious refreshments and a raffle of selected crafts. Call the office at 768-2972 for information, or to volunteer.

VOLUNTEERS STILL NEEDED!



New Pledge Chair Sought

Bruce Liebowitz will not be able to take on his new role as Fundraising Chair until a replacement has been found to take over his current responsibilities as Pledge Secretary. Anyone who likes talking to people and is interested in helping the Society be as productive as possible is strongly encouraged to contact the Office or call Bruce for more information.

In the meantime, Bruce wants a reminder made to all members who have not yet submitted their pledge (We know who we are, don't we?), that they are urged to please do so at their earliest convenience. Thanks!

**THE BROOKLYN SOCIETY
FOR ETHICAL CULTURE**

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

- Leader:** Lisel Burns
- President:** Charles Horowitz
- 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, Angela Lockhart, Jean-Jacques Senechal

- Ethical Action:** Charlie Horowitz 230-3537
- AEU Rep:** Anne Klaeyesen 768-2972
- Platform:** Constance Pigozzi 768-2972
- 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, Remi Gay, Lisel Burns, Bruce Liebowitz, Alex Mogelieff, Martha Hoffman, Marshall Dubin, and Ann Klaeyesen.

**ETHICAL ACTION
Universal Healthcare
Group Started at BSEC**

Approximately 40 million Americans are without real health insurance. Strong individuals like Abe Lieberman have taken this battle on for years; it's time for our whole Society to join their efforts. On November 1, Abe and Lisel Burns held a healthcare workshop for people interested in adding BSEC community resources to the local and national efforts for an expanded healthcare program for this country. After reviewing current issues, the group decided to take on the long range campaign, beginning with developing a statement outlining our concerns and the positive strategies we support, followed by outreach to our networks of family and friends and a teach-in forum to be scheduled for the Spring of 1999.

VIEWPOINT:

In Defense of the Old Year

New Year's Day is one of my most favorite holidays. Yet it has one almost fatal flaw. It has become encumbered with a stereotype and therefore it is inherently unjust.

"Ring in the new. Ring out the old." What does this mean? What does this mean at the BSEC where the observance of the New Year has become a ritual?

At the stroke of 12 midnight we celebrate. We blow horns. We embrace each other, old friends and new. We shout "Happy New Year" to each other and the world. Then we rush to the windows to enjoy a gorgeous fireworks display provided by the city of New York.

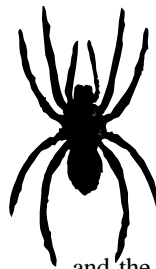
What's wrong with that? Good fun. Harmless merriment. Yes, but there is another meaning attached. We discard the old year like a worn out rag. We throw it onto the scrap heap of history. We feel "good riddance" as we see it go. We joyfully greet the replacement, the fresh, dewy, smiling babe we call the New Year.

Wait a minute. What was so wrong with the old year? Come to think of it, the old year was a great year for Ethical. We realized old dreams, and pursued new ones. We saw Ethical become more integrated and more international than ever before!

In 1998 several BSEC members went to the Island of Haiti. There they worked beside some beautiful people. There they observed the culture of a sad yet beautiful land. There they met warm, proud, gifted individuals. Some local Haitians joined our Society in Brooklyn, and there will be a serious effort to establish an Ethical Society in Haiti.

Yes, on this New Year's Day, we have a real cause for celebration. We will ring in the new, that babe who symbolizes a new start, a hope for the future. Yet we will also ring out the old year with the deepest gratitude and appreciation.

Marshall F. Dubin



Millenium Bugs

I stayed home from work today. I told my manager I had the Millenium Bug. He said I was a year early. I said there's already a lot of that going around. And it's not even 1999 yet!

In the years leading up to the year 1000, and the end of the first millenium, hordes of Europeans converted to Christianity. Entire nations converted *en masse*, hoping to prevent whatever disasters they were convinced would visit them if they did not.

In the years leading up to the year 2000, America seems to be experiencing a similar numerically inspired increased interest in spirituality, with the "millenial" religions, like Christianity, leading the way with an effluence of angels and other symbols of divine protection, coupled with the promise of a better life in the hereafter.

Not to be outdone, the materialists have added a modern twist to our building collective millenium fever: the Millenium Bug, a computer glitch which some say will cause unprecedented disruptions in society in the year 2000. Incredible horror scenarios, from transportation systems run amuck, to the power grid going offline, to the tripping of the fail-safe mechanisms of the American and Russian nuclear arsenals, have otherwise sane and reasonable engineers and systems analysts running like modern-day Noahs to the hills of New Mexico, their survivalist manuals in tow, fully expecting to build a better world on top of the ruins of this one.

Ethical Culture stands in contrast as a healthy alternative to the Millenium Fever that may soon become an epidemic. It is a religion with its feet planted firmly in this world, not the next, a religion not of the hereafter, but of the here and now. And the world is always full of light and shadows, wherever you look. When things seem to be completely sunny, there are always shadows lurking in the corners, and no matter how dark it seems to get, it's always possible to create light and hope through the power of human community. While some might find hope and meaning by escaping to another world, or to the hills of New Mexico, Ethical Culture believes that the best hope is already living inside us all.

We don't know what's going to happen when the clock chimes midnight on December 31, 1999. We don't know what's going to happen when the clock chimes noon next Thursday. We do know that whatever disasters befall us, of whatever magnitude, the power of the human spirit can overcome all in our darkest hours and leave this world a better place because of it, now and eons hence.

Bob Strock

.....

• The heart in thee is the heart of all;
 • not a valve, not a wall, not an inter-
 • section is there anywhere in nature, but
 • one blood rolls uninterruptedly an
 • endless circulation through all people,
 • as the water of the globe is all one sea,
 • and, truly seen, its tide is one.

.....

Emerson

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DECEMBER 1998 BSEC CALENDAR

12/1 – 12/5

TUESDAY 12/1

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

WEDNESDAY 12/2

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 12/3

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

FRIDAY 12/4

6:30PM: Youth Group meeting. (Y.E.S.)
8PM: Good Coffeehouse concert series presents an evening of devotional music produced by *Loretta Roome*, with henna painting by the *Mehndi Project*. \$8 at the door.

SATURDAY 12/5

6:30PM: Members' and Newcomers' Potluck Supper at Anne and Glenn's house. The supper will include reflections on family Channukah activities with *Yehudit Moch*, a family educator mentoring us on Jewish tradition this Season. Call Anne 768-2972 or Celeste 336-3683 about the food you will bring.

12/6 – 12/12

SUNDAY 12/6

10AM - 12:30PM:

Children's Sunday Assembly

10 - 11AM: Parents' Circle.

11AM: Sunday Platform: *Story, Celebration, and Storyteller*. Lisel Burns' continuing First Sundays series on meaning-making.

12:15PM: Lunch with the Bunch.

1PM: Wedding Couples' Meeting

2 - 6PM: Haitian Art Show!

MONDAY 12/7

7 - 9PM: Newcomers' Workshop: Open Questions followed by a discussion of *Ethical Culture as a Religion*.

TUESDAY 12/8

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

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

THURSDAY 12/10

7 - 9PM: *T'ai Chi*, with J.P. Harpignes.

FRIDAY 12/11

8PM: Good Coffeehouse concert series presents singer-songwriter *Ilene Weiss* and fancy-pickin' *Orrin Star*. \$8 at the door.

SATURDAY 12/12

11AM - 4PM: Winter Crafts Fair!

12/13 – 12/19

SUNDAY 12/13

10AM - 12:30PM:

Children's Sunday Assembly

10 - 11AM: Parents' Circle

11AM: *Winter Festival*: An intergenerational Sunday Platform celebration with the students of the Children's Sunday Assembly.

12:15PM: Lunch with the Bunch

1:30PM: Making Holiday gifts and greetings together. Bring your supplies.

TUESDAY 12/15

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

THURSDAY 12/17

7 - 9PM: *T'ai Chi*, with J.P. Harpignes.

FRIDAY 12/18

8PM: Good Coffeehouse concert series presents composer-pianist *Roberta Piket*, Concord Jazz recording artist *Will Woodard*, Jerry Mulligan's long-time drummer *Ron Vincent*, and others in an evening of acoustic, swinging modern jazz. Admission \$8.

12/20 – 12/31

SUNDAY 12/20

10AM: Children's Sunday Assembly

10AM: Parents' Circle

11AM: *Colloquy: Holiday Reflections*. A seasonal meditation.

12:15PM: Lunch with the Bunch.

1:30 - 3PM: Caroling Indoors. Seasonal songs and cider around a fireplace with a little time to explore their meaning.

TUESDAY 12/22

6 - 7 PM: Meditations with Remi Gay.

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

SATURDAY 12/26

1 - 9PM: Kwanza Celebration!

Hosted by BSEC and the Concerned Women's Cultural Collective. From 1-5 will be especially dedicated to families with young children, and the evening section from 6 to 9 will be more adult-oriented. Come celebrate at any time!

THURSDAY 12/31

6PM - 1AM: THE NIGHT BEFORE

Hosted by BSEC and Community Board 6. **6 - 9:** a special edition of *Sheila's Boogie by the Park*, a family supper and dance party for ages 0-100.

9 - 1: a New Year's Eve Buffet and more dancing, followed by fireworks across the street in Brooklyn's own Prospect Park.

AEU Growth & Development ~ Help Wanted ~

Joy McConnell is resigning at the end of December as the AEU's Director of Growth and Development and Religious Education. Filling, on a permanent basis, the responsibilities Joy has been carrying will require time to redefine staffing priorities and to search for the best candidates. Meanwhile, the AEU is seeking candidates interested in part-time employment to carry on the most essential portions of these responsibilities on an interim basis, from January to June 1999.

The jobs would include: dealing with inquiries about possibilities of forming new groups or of affiliation by existing groups; providing support to the leadership of new groups; being a congregational consultant assisting existing societies in dealing with issues and planning for the future, particularly in times

of transition; and providing training to recently formed Development Teams which, after training, are to be a source of assistance to new groups.

The estimated work would total about 80 hours per month, including about 10 hours of travel time each month. However, since most people with the required skills are likely to have substantial work commitments, it is most likely that the work will be split among two or three people working on a team basis. Candidates should have training and experience in issues of congregational growth and development.

Letters of interest and resumes should be sent to Dale Adams, Vice-Chair AEU Membership Committee, 3902 Rosalind Lane, Chattanooga TN 37416, or by e-mail to dalepadams@juno.com

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.

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

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CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

THE NIGHT BEFORE: A “know your neighborhood” New Year’s Eve Celebration



Religious and lay leaders in Brooklyn's Community Board 6, comprised of Park Slope, Cobble Hill, Carroll Gardens, Gowanus and Red Hook, have been getting together for breakfast once a month since July at Aunt Suzie's Restaurant, owned by CB6's co-chair Irene Lo Re, to discuss the ways they serve their community. Out of their discussions came a desire to get to know each other, and their neighbors, better. Their brainstorming sessions resulted in *The Night Before*, a Know-Your-Neighborhood New Year's Eve Celebration, to be held at the BSEC Meeting House, which will provide family entertainment, information about local and global community development concerns, and opportunities for social networking. And it promises to be a great way to ring in the New Year!

During Lisel Burns' November 1st platform on *Values, Standards and Practices*, we discussed the values which we at Brooklyn Ethical hold dear and how our practices might reflect those values in a New Year's Eve celebration. We wanted to celebrate the values of inclusion, involvement, connectedness, and eliciting the best in others; and generated several ideas to communicate these to the public. Among them are: hosting a community art gallery in our meeting room space, a Family Boogie starting at 6 PM, followed by a “do-gooder” buffet featuring donations from local restaurants and caterers, a performance by the Brooklyn Women's Chorus, fireworks viewing, champagne toasts, and, of course, traditional partying with friends and neighbors. We will coordinate our celebration with others in the neighborhood and publish a guide. For further details, call the office at 768-2972.



Children's Sunday Assembly: December Schedule

Our children's program meets every Sunday from 10 AM to 12:15 PM. Our focus is on the importance of ethics, personal responsibility and choice, religious tolerance, and a multi-cultural perspective. Classes are for children 3-13; a supervised toddlers' room is also available. *Registration is open throughout the year.* Parents' Circle, an ongoing support group, meets at 10 AM.

We start with a 30-minute assembly time for all the children that features stories and songs chosen to illustrate the theme of the month. The rest of the morning consists of 45 minutes of class time and 45 minutes of creative

or outdoor activities depending on the weather. Classes are split into three groups so children can focus on follow-up activities, and a discussion of the theme that is appropriate for their age group. A snack is served at mid-morning. We end with a closing circle at 12:15 PM. Activities to enrich our basic program include Arts & Crafts, Junior Chess League, Soccer and other games.

December's Curriculum Theme: *Winter Holiday Traditions*. Winter Festival, Kwaanza, Chanukkah, Christmas, and Ramadan all fall in December this year. We will tell the stories behind these celebra-

tions and honor the common human impulses from which they spring.

Ethical Action Project: Collecting food for CHIPS, the local Food Bank & Shelter, and pennies for the annual citywide Penny Harvest.

Sunday, December 13, at 11 AM: WINTER FESTIVAL. Adults and children join together to celebrate the season. This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations' International Declaration of Human Rights. We will take time during the festivities to discuss human rights, in particular the rights of children.