



ETHICAL CULTURE

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Leader's Message

"Victimized Once Again"

We have all seen by now the devastating pictures of the melting of the polar ice in the North Pole. There is at this point great concern that the Polar bear and other species will not survive the melting of the polar ice cap. Even now though, our government still claims that global warming is not such a threat. While there are legitimate controversies concerning the issue, the overwhelming evidence is hard to refute. Of concern in our country is the political and economic motivation to discount the dimensions of the crisis. Our government denies the seriousness of the threat. This situation is starkly presented in an excerpt from a recent web article below.



"While NASA's administrator remains unconvinced of the need to combat global warming, the director of NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies disagrees. Goddard's director, James Hansen, argues that disaster will strike in 10 years if emission levels are not controlled. Atmospheric carbon dioxide levels seem to be the main concern, and uncontrollable "feedback loops" may pose a dangerous risk. The example given is melting of the Arctic sea ice and snow, which leads them to release greenhouse gases (carbon dioxide and methane) they store. Atmospheric carbon dioxide prevents sunlight from being reflected back into space, increasing the temperature on Earth. Rising temperatures cause more ice to melt, and the cycle continues."

The U.S. is one of the two largest producers of green house gases. Our administration has shown no inclination to acknowledge this or to shoulder

responsibility or officially recognize the challenges posed by our nation.

Under the guidance of Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, the UN has assumed a major commitment to address global warming. The UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change received the Nobel Peace Prize along with our own Al Gore. The UN work clearly points out that the countries in the southern hemisphere are more likely to suffer the greatest damage from global warming. Those effects will be exacerbated by the limited resources that many of these nations have at their disposal to cope with the devastation.

There is a deep and painful irony here. The great empires formed by the dominant nations of western Europe throughout Africa and Asia as well as the "spheres of influence" later developed by the U.S. following its achievement of independence set in motion a period of dominance and exploitation of the peoples of the earth's Southern hemisphere. Centuries would pass before they could reclaim sovereignty over their own land. The enormous wealth that Europe and the U.S. enjoy in part rests upon the prior Imperial profits from those former empires. And now just as many of these liberated nations begin to emerge into the world market, global warming (which is mostly a product of the nations of the north western hemisphere, with the major exception of China) threatens those southern nations and their people with unprecedented natural disasters. Water, air and soil will all be affected.

And so once again many of the peoples of the southern hemispheres will suffer because of the actions (albeit unintentional this time) of their northern neighbors. This is a bitter irony. I

submit that we of the northern climes and especially our current government have an ethical obligation (not only to ourselves but especially to our southern neighbors) to refrain from acting like ostriches and remove our heads from the sand. We can be the UN's greatest ally and the world's hope, if only we can harness the right leadership and will. — Boe Meyerson

President's Letter

At our annual membership meeting last May, I declared that our Society was in a crisis mode. Since then, we have added seven new vital members to our rolls, the platforms have been consistently outstanding and the social action committee has added our "Welcoming the Warrior" to our ethical action agenda. Our competent board of trustees are addressing our difficulties with vigor. The board has decided to have brainstorming sessions to take a fresh look at our problems. On a bitter cold night in January, volunteer board members Jill Fox, Terry Seuss, Boe and I met at the Society to set an agenda for the brainstorming, mainly three topics: FINANCES (coping with the deficit), MEMBERSHIP (building community) and SPECIAL THEMES such as our "Welcoming the Warrior" project (helping disturbed veterans from all our American wars, Vietnam and Iraq).

Note that I am not waiting for our annual meeting to open our discussion. All members will be part of the brainstorming as we work together to address the questions of our Essex society "surviving and thriving". Either is possible. As a member, please be alert to later member brainstorming sessions,

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Ethical Culture Society of Essex County



Boe Meyerson, Leader
Jim White, Leader Emeritus

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Editor's note

The newsletter invites you to submit articles, announcements, commentary, etc. for publication. ITEMS MUST BE RECEIVED BY THE FIRST OF THE MONTH FOR INCLUSION IN THE FOLLOWING MONTH'S EDITION. Items should be no more than 150 words, preferably submitted via email to the editor (gilman.howard@gmail.com). Items can also be delivered to: Editor, Ethical Society Newsletter, 516 Prospect St., Maplewood, NJ 07040. Please call the office, 973-763-1905, and leave word especially if your item is time-sensitive.

Editor reserves right to edit for length, clarity and content. Opinions offered in this publication are those of the authors.

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**...act so
as to elicit
the best
in others
and in
ourselves**

Attention members! Please submit your email addresses to ethicalesssex@netscape.com to receive newsletter and other special event notices.

From the UN

WORLD HEALTH AND THE UN

In our increasingly interconnected world, global health is facing a further challenge — new diseases are emerging at the rate of one per year. Since 1967 at least 39 new pathogens have been identified, including HIV, Ebola fever, Marburg fever and SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome). Other century old threats such as pandemic influenza, malaria, TB, continue to pose a threat through a combination of factors such as mutation, rising resistance to antimicrobial medicines, and weak health care systems.

Airlines now carry more than 2 billion passengers annually, greatly increasing opportunities for the rapid international spread of infections. The industrialization of food production and processing, the globalization of marketing and dependence on chemicals have also furthered the threat. No nation, no matter how wealthy or technologically advanced, can alone prevent, detect and respond to all public health threats.

More than ever, global public health security depends on international cooperation. It is both a humanitarian imperative and in their national self interest for richer countries to help poorer ones. Poverty deepens disease and disease leads to poverty. Diseases are much more prevalent where malnutrition, unclean water and inadequate sanitation exist. Disease is also a stark barrier to economic growth, social progress and civil peace.

Microbes have no respect for borders — or neighborhoods. During the Industrial Revolution, the major cities of London and New York experienced typhoid and cholera traveling from the slums to the residential areas of the wealthy. Only then were sewer systems built and clean water supplied for the whole population. Inequality in health care resources worldwide continues. About 90% of the world's healthcare resources are used by less than 20% of the world's population, mostly in the richer countries. Africa and southeast Asia have the largest share of disease and about 40% of the world's population. Yet they spend only 2% of the world's health resources.

WHO's 2007 World Health Report fo-

cuses on the international spread of disease. They are particularly concerned with a potential influenza pandemic, paying special attention to influenza viruses coming from the animal world, which could affect 1.5 million people. A precedent exists. The last great flu epidemic after World War I devastated populations in the wealthy countries. To prepare for this possibility, a WHO conference created a gathering of health representatives from many countries, and vaccine manufacturers to ensure a stockpile of available flu vaccine. They expect to have about 4.5 million by 2010.

Partnership by many countries with WHO has resulted in a dramatic drop of 90% of measles deaths in Africa, requiring follow-up of vaccinations every two to four years. Progress has also been made in halting the resurgence of yellow fever in Africa.

The 2007 Report outlines a successful revision on International Health Regulations, binding regulations adopted by most countries to contain threats from emerging infections, chemical spills, leaks, dumping or nuclear melt-downs. The previous regulations addressed only four diseases, cholera, plague, yellow fever, and smallpox. Happily, smallpox has since been eradicated.

The 2005 revision adopted by the World Health Assembly has led to an unprecedented agreement of the utmost importance because it subjects the sensitive principle of national sovereignty to international health security. In the past, regulations were focused at borders and involved only passive measures of notification and control. Now the agreement permits action to travel to the source. This agreement came into force on June 15, 2007. It includes coverage of all disease and health events that may constitute a public emergency of international concern.

Only the United Nations could have created such a legal framework — from global necessity to local action. Since people are travelling more, both for pleasure and need, and diseases are travelling as well, these obscure laws may save lives many times over.

— Phyllis Ehrenfeld, Pres. of National Service Conference of the AEU, and Rep. to the UN.; and Dr Sylvain Ehrenfeld, IHEU Rep. to the UN

President's Letter (continued from page 1)

well before our annual meeting. In the meantime, I welcome hearing from you with your comments and ideas before then. Please telephone me at 973-763-1033. There is much reason to be hopeful about our Society. We are good people with much intelligence and energy. Your participation in problem-solving will make a difference. Warmly,

— Betty Levin, President

Note: The date of the **Annual Membership Meeting** has been changed to **Sunday, June 1**. Please mark your calendars. Special brainstorming for members will occur well before then.

Upcoming Fund Raising Events

Soup and Sondheim March 2, Sunday afternoon is set for the Strollers' musical, Stephen Sondheim's *"Anyone Can Whistle"*, an absurdist social satire about insanity and conformity, among a dozen other things. Any opportunity to experience his genius is an event not to be missed. Add to that lunch and camaraderie and you've got a fun afternoon. Donation for the ticket and lunch is \$23. Call the office to reserve a ticket.

Formerly Trivial Pursuits, now dubbed **Game Night** will be held this year on March 14, Friday evening, at Jeanine Rosh's starting at 7 p.m. Some warm grog (or beverage of your choice), healthy snacks and the challenge of the game will start out your weekend with a bang. Room for 9, \$15 donation. There is still time to sign up.

Dinner Call — On Saturday, March 29, Sue Willis will host a dinner at her home. Come enjoy the fine food and good company. Call or sign up at the society.



Concert news — The Sterling Duo Event will be held on Sunday, April 13, at 3 p.m. at the society. Joe and Mary are tuning up for Ethical and promise an enjoyable afternoon. Donation is \$20. Call or sign up at the society.

Sylvia Kramer's Poetry Evening is set for Saturday, April 26, at 7 p.m. If you believe you could never write anything, you are a perfect candidate. Sylvia weaves her magic in a most delightful way and voila! a poem appears. Or it's great fun to come and just listen. Treat yourself to this experience.

More Concert News — Marjorie Berg and pianist John Pivarnik, along with flautist Margaret Walker, return on May 31 in a concert of romance and passion. Please keep the date open, this will be a lovely evening of music and meeting old friends and new.

June 7 Wine and cheese at the shore — Barbara Lipton has graciously offered her new "digs" overlooking the ocean at the Jersey shore for a wine and cheese event on Saturday June 7. Rain date is June 15. More details to follow but mark that date.

Mini Market — We are continuing with Nancy Bohn's idea for raising funds after the Sunday Platform, offering good, useful items for resale. If you would like to participate, bring your clean, saleable items on Sunday, we will sort and ticket those that are marketable and you take them back home if not sold. Or just peruse the goods and maybe you'll find something you've been looking for. Items are on a table on Sunday, then on the mantle during the week.

Platforms (continued from page 4)

modern middle east. A former career diplomat from Pakistan, he has served as Pakistan's Ambassador to Morocco, Syria and Malaysia. He is a frequent guest on TV and Radio as a commentator on foreign affairs. He lives with his family in East Hanover.

March 30 Karen Burns: Making a difference for children in foster care.

Essex County CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates for Children) is an independent, court-authorized, nonprofit organization which works through professionally trained and supervised volunteers to promote the welfare of foster children in Essex County who have been removed from their homes because of parental abuse, neglect or abandonment.



CASA serves as a child's "Voice in Court", working to insure that needed services and assistance are provided while helping to move the child toward a safe and permanent home.

The focus of the presentation will be to demonstrate how volunteer CASA advocates can help improve the lives of abused and neglected children in foster care. Court Appointed Special Advocates are volunteers appointed by Family Court to gather information about a child's needs while in foster care and to represent a "child's voice in court". For the over 2,700 foster children in Essex County, their time in out-of-home placement can often be lessened and their chances for trauma recovery greater through the presence of trained CASA Child Advocates. The presentation will present the scope of the foster care problem in Essex County and provide some insight into the lives of the children in the foster care system.

Karen Burns joined CASA as Executive Director in September 2002. Karen believes that "Childhood is very short, and it is our challenge and societal responsibility to provide more Child Advocates for traumatized foster children." A social responsibilities activist for faith-based outreach programs to Newark and other municipalities, she serves on the Board of Wind of the Spirit, a Morris county-based Immigrant/Labor Rights group. She is married with two adult children.

ETHICAL CULTURE SOCIETY OF ESSEX COUNTY

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ETHICAL CULTURE

SUNDAY MORNING PLATFORMS

March, 2008

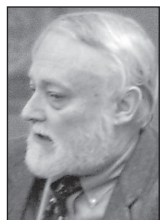
Platforms begin at 11 a.m. All are welcome. Platforms are subject to change without notice. For information about our Sunday School, 11 a.m.–12:15 p.m., and our Youth of Ethical Societies (YES), contact the Society office, 973-763-1905.

March 2 Boe Meyerson: *“Victims Once Again: the Inequities of Global Warming”*

Leader Boe Meyerson will explore the dimensions of global warming and the projected devastating effects on the southern hemisphere. The scientific and moral implications will be discussed as well as social action options. Boe is the Leader of the Ethical Culture Society of Essex County and is also the Humanist Chaplain at Columbia University.

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March 9 James White: *“A Humanist Confronts Death”* — which fundamentally is about how we confront life. Jim will talk about loss and how its pain can make our relationships more and more dear. Equally important, realizing the limits to our lives can give our ethical-political commitments more depth and urgency as years go by. There really is Humanist immortality if we live our lives to the fullest.



Jim White is Leader Emeritus of the Ethical Culture Society of Essex County. By profession, he is the principal attorney for Men-

tal Hygiene Legal Services representing psychiatric patients in New York State. Jim is also a community activist in Harlem and with the Coalition Against the Violence Initiative.

March 16 Danny Fingerth: *“Superman On The Couch: What Superheroes Tell Us About Ourselves And Society”*

- Have you ever been so angry you felt like you were “hulking out”?

- Did you ever walk into a dangerous situation and feel your “spider-sense” start to tingle?

- Have you ever fantasized that people would be sorry for the way they

treat you if they only knew your “secret identity”?

In modern society, superhero culture has become the metaphorical prism through which we see--and live--our lives. How did this happen--and why? With the megahit status of movies like Spider-Man and Batman, and the red-hot popularity of TV series like Heroes there’s clearly a lot more to superheroes than POW! BAM! ZAP!

Pop culture expert Danny Fingerth, author of *Superman On the Couch: What Superheroes Really Tell Us About Ourselves and Our Society* and the recently-released *Disguised as Clark Kent: Jews, Comics, and the Creation of*

the Superhero (both from Continuum), reads from his landmark book, *Superman on the Couch*, and explores these colorful characters who are such potent myths for our times. Q&A to follow the presentation.

A recognized expert on superheroes and comics, Danny Fingerth was group editor of Marvel Comics’ *Spider-Man* line, consulted on early versions of what was to become 2002’s *Spider-Man* movie, and has written many comics for Marvel and other companies.

March 23 Azmat Hassan *“Violent Extremism with particular reference to South and South West Asia” (originally scheduled for February 17)*

Former Pakistani Ambassador Azmat Hassan will discuss the elections in Pakistan, the broader subject of violent extremism in the region and the possible responses to it from the governments involved and the international community.



Ambassador S. Azmat Hassan (Ret.) is a Senior Faculty Associate at the John C. Whitehead School of Diplomacy and International Relations, Seton Hall University. He teaches courses on the history of diplomacy and on the

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