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MILLIONS MARCH ON SATURDAY, DECEMBER 13



Vanguard of the march.

Many vigils and protest marches have been held since the Staten Island grand jury failed to indict Police Officer Daniel Pantaleo in the killing of Eric Garner. This decision followed closely the failure of the grand jury in Ferguson, Missouri, to indict officer Darren Wilson for the death of Michael Brown. These deaths and those of too many other unarmed African-American men move us not only to



"Hands Up" poster.

grieve but also to take action. On Saturday, December 13, tens of thousands took to the streets of Manhattan, marching from Washington Square Park to 14th Street, to sixth Avenue, to Herald Square, and back to Union Square. The assemblage included people of every race, age, and gender, united in a call for human rights and police reform. Across the country millions marched in Washington, DC and other cities.



(L-R) NYSEC members Chris Everett and Abe Markman with Leader Anne Klaeyen.

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Leader's Desk



DR . ANNE KLAEYSEN

Social Justice Call-and-Response

As the Humanist representative at interfaith vigils, I am often called upon to speak. Sometimes I reflect upon the person or situation, but I recently found a poem by Rebecca Parker that I revised as a call and response. It affirms the responsibility to use one's gifts to serve humanity.

Social Justice Call and Response

“Choose to Bless the World” adapted from a poem by Rebecca Parker

Your gifts—whatever you discover
them to be—can be used to bless or
curse the world.

Choose to Bless the World

The mind's power,
The strength of the hands,
The reaches of the heart.

Choose to Bless the World

Any of these can serve to feed the
hungry,
Bind up wounds,
Welcome the stranger,
Praise what is sacred,
Do the work of justice
Or offer love.

Choose to Bless the World

Any of these can draw down the
prison door,
Hoard bread,
Abandon the poor,
Obscure what is holy,

Comply with injustice
Or withhold love.

Choose to Bless the World

You must answer this question:
What will you do with your gifts?

Choose to Bless the World

The choice to bless the world is more
than an act of will,
A moving forward into the world
With the intention to do good.
It is an act of recognition, a confession
of surprise, a grateful acknowledgment
That in the midst of a broken world
Unspeakable beauty, grace, and
mystery abide.

Choose to Bless the World

None of us alone can save the world.
Together—that is another possibility
waiting.

Ethical Enrichment and Events

Open Meeting on Volunteer Action

Andra Miller and Daniel Julian

The Ethical Action Committee, which encompasses the Environmental Stewardship Committee, the Ethical Edge programs, our cosponsored events, and the presentation of the Ethical Humanist and Community Service awards, is having an open meeting with our members and interested others on the subject of volunteer action. We intend to focus on the various things that we can do for our community and beyond – and, as well, our important responsibilities as good citizens. These would include volunteer work here at the Society and the Social Service Board – and also "outside," for service organizations and other nonprofit enterprises that need our volunteer help. They would also include special projects, such as signing petitions (and encouraging others to sign), writing letters, and even lobbying or joining in advocacy marches.

We are inviting you to this special meeting on **SUNDAY, JANUARY 4** at **1:30 PM**, in the Adler Study, Room 514, so that we can tell you about the process we propose for choosing projects – and the qualifications

we would ask of you if you wish to join the committee. Also, we want you to give us your ideas on projects the committee might take on and what the committee's mission and procedures might be. We also would like to know the volunteer activities you are already engaged in outside of the Society.

So please join us for this brief meeting so that we can get our ethical action off on the right foot!

Great Books Discussion Group

Larry Schiff

We'd love for you to join us for this season of the Great Books Dis-



cussion Group. The sessions are always stimulating.

We meet on the first **WEDNESDAY** of each month (unless that's a holiday) from **7:00 PM** till **9:00 PM** in the Elliott Library, 5th floor. For the most part, we read excerpts from the Great Books series, usually 40-70 pages. For **JANUARY 7**, we'll be reading *Rothschild's Fiddle* by the great Russian writer Anton Chekov. We'll learn how and why Rothschild came to have been given

SUNDAY PLATFORM MEETINGS

11:00 am

Ceremonial Hall, 4th Floor

JANUARY 4

Ring in the New Year

With Calls for Reform

Dr. Anne Klaeysen, Leader

Cheryl Gross Presides

JANUARY 11

Torture Is Bad For America

Dr. Joseph Chuman, Leader

Andra Miller Presides

JANUARY 18

Dr. Martin

Luther King, Jr.

Remembrance Day

Dr. Anne Klaeysen Presides

JANUARY 25

How the Right Is Wrong

About Science

Curt Collier, Leader

Dr. Kathleen O'Connell Presides

NOT A MEMBER?

**All the more reason
to attend one of our
Enrichment Activities.**

**Contributions for
nonmembers are usually
only \$5.**

the fiddle by the most unlikely person in the village, and discuss the obvious as well as the underlying themes of this moving tale by the man whom many call the father – and most refer to as the master – of the modern short story.

To participate, all you need do is read the monthly selection (ideally twice) and, as you read, jot down some questions that you'd like to bring to the table.

To learn about the Great Books Foundation and the discussion process, visit our website: <http://www.meetup.com/Manhattan-Great-Books-Discussion-Group/>. In the first paragraph of the box entitled, "What is our Great Books Reading Discussion Group and how do we work?" click on Great Books (it's in red type). That's the link to the website page where you can order the Great Books Reading and Discussion First Series and Reader Aid (it's \$28.95). In the information bar on the left side of our meet-up page, you can click on "Our Calendar" to see the monthly readings scheduled for the year.

When you come, you will in essence be joining the thousands of readers who participate in the Great Books discussions across the nation, following a format that was developed by Professor Mortimer Adler and

Chancellor Robert Maynard Hutchins at the University of Chicago in 1947, and which spread across the country and the decades to come, with an ever-enthusiastic following. Some new members shared with us what the discussions meant to them. Here are two of their comments:

"An enthusiastic, intelligent and supportive group of people – actually, people who are becoming friends – men and women able to thoughtfully talk about the chosen texts. It's gotten my grey matter stimulated in constructive ways, and has brought me to literature that I had either read a long time ago, or had missed along the way. Thanks, everyone!"

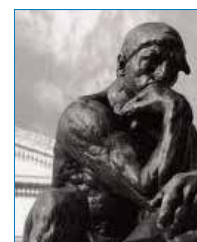
"As a relatively new member myself, I've really appreciated the group's open and welcoming spirit and the members' passion for close reading of great books. I'd recommend the group to anyone who enjoys doing serious reading with folks who don't take themselves too seriously."

Do come on **JANUARY 7**, and join us in another Great Discussion! If you have any questions phone me at 917-749-0695, or email me at: Larry@larryschiff.com.

There is no charge for members, and for guests it is \$5 per session.

Wisdom and World Affairs

Join us on the first and fourth **TUESDAYS, 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM**, in



Room 508, for a philosophical discussion moderated by Ken Gans. We'll cover a wide variety of subjects: the fate of humanity, world affairs, and Humanism, among many others. Come, and share your opinions.

There is no fee for this program.

Appreciative Inquiry: A Practice of Collaborative Change

We often focus on what is wrong or broken and try to fix it. The traditional approach to change is to look for the problem, diagnosis it, and find a solution. Appreciative Inquiry is the cooperative search for the best in people,

more Ethical Enrichment and Events...

their organizations, and the world around them. It involves a process of discovery about what enlivens us when we are most effective, capable and engaged.

Leader Dr. Anne Klaeyesen will offer an eight-session course on the second and fourth **THURSDAY** evenings from **6:30 PM** to **8:00 PM** starting on **JANUARY 8**, and **MONDAY** afternoons from **1:00 PM** to **2:30 PM** starting on **JANUARY 12**, both in the Adler Study, Room 514.

Registration is required and a commitment to attend all the sessions is requested. For information and registration, call Yalitz Garcia-Krawczyk at 212-874-5210, ext. 117.

The course will be offered at no charge for members, and a \$160 donation is requested from nonmembers.

Ethics and the Theater

Patricia Bruder Debrovner

On **FRIDAY, JANUARY 9**, at **7:00 PM**, Ceremonial Hall. Ethics and the



Theater will present a play reading of *Third*, by Wendy Wasserstein, who was a graduate of our Ethical Culture Fieldston School.

Laurie Jamison is a professor at a small New England college that she has helped transform from a bastion of white male privilege into an institution of socially and politically liberal ideals. Her courses are oversubscribed, her marriage happy, her daughters academically gifted. Then Woodson Bull III enters the picture. Third, as he prefers to be called, is a Groton grad and jock who challenges Laurie's preconceptions in ways that disrupt her professional and, ultimately, her personal life.

Pat Debrovner and Betsy Ungar direct our cast, which includes Jerry Chamlin, Susanna Frazer, Luke Hofmaier, Natalie Kropf, and Betsy Ungar. Come at **6:30 PM** for a reception and after the reading participate in a discussion of the ethical issues of the play, led by Betsy Ungar. Ceremonial Hall.

The suggested donation is \$5 for members and \$10 for guests.

Ethical Death Café

Join us on **SUNDAY, JANUARY 11**, from **1:30 PM** to **3:30 PM**, and on **WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 28**, from **2:30 PM** to **4:30**

PM, both in Ceremonial Hall. Our moderator is Rev. Dr. Barbara Simpson, who holds a Doctorate in pastoral counseling and is the Bereavement Program Community Outreach Coordinator at Caring Hospice Services.

We'll gather in a relaxed and safe setting to discuss death, drink tea, and eat delicious cake. The objective is to increase awareness of death and help people make the most of their (finite) lives. Topics include health care proxies, ethical wills, and green burial.

The suggested donation is \$5.

Ethics and War

Join us starting **TUESDAY, JANUARY 13** for six sessions, second Tuesdays, from **7:00 PM** to **9:30 PM**, in Ceremonial Hall. Our moderator will be Dr. Terry Perlin.

This course will investigate several of the complex ethical issues that arise in situations of war. Using examples from historical and contemporary war situations, monthly meetings will rely upon participant discussion rather than lectures. Among

the topics for consideration:

- Is there such an entity as a "just war?"
- When, if ever, is "torture" morally permitted during wartime?
- What are the responsibilities of combatants to civilians in wartime?
- How is conscientious objection to particular wars to be addressed by governments?
- Under what situations, if ever, may military personnel intentionally disobey orders from their superiors?
- How are various religious views of war, and of peace, to be understood?

Participants will be responsible for obtaining the following texts: *The New American Militarism: How Americans Are Seduced by War*, 2013, by Andrew J. Bacevich and *Crimes of War 2.0: What the Public Should Know*, 1999 (revised and expanded), by Anthony Dworkin (editor), Roy Gutman (editor), and David Rieff.

Registration is required. Space is limited. To register email Yalitza Garcia-Krawczyk at ygarcia@nysec.org, or phone her at 212-874-5210, ext. 117.

The cost for members is \$25, and for guests it is \$50.

Ethics in Film

Chris Everett

Join us on **FRIDAY, JANUARY 16, 7:00 PM**

(doors open at **6:30 PM**), in Ceremonial Hall to see *Dead Man*

Walking (1995), directed by Tim Robbins. I'll be leading our discussion after the movie.

A caring nun receives a desperate letter from a death row inmate trying to find help to avoid execution for murder. Over the course of the time to the convict's death, the nun begins to show empathy, not only with the pathetic man, but also with the victims and their families.

The suggested donation for this film is \$5, which includes snacks and beverages.



Winter Writing Classes

Elaine Berman Gurney

The winter semester of our Joy of Personal Writing workshops starts on **TUESDAY, JANUARY 20, 12:30 PM – 2:30 PM**, in the Elliott Library,

Room 507. The **THURSDAY** evening classes begin on **JANUARY 22, 6:30 PM – 8:30 PM**, in Room 508.

People who want to get started writing are welcome to the workshops, as are writers with more experience. Over the course of the ten-week semester, we work with very basic concepts about writing and more sophisticated ones as well.

Registration in advance is required. For information and registration, call Yalitza Garcia-Krawczyk at 212-874-5210, ext. 117.

If you'd like to read work by our current and past writers, please visit our website, www.nysec.org/workshop-writers-space.

The course fees for this are \$160 for members and \$260 for nonmembers.

Adler Reading Seminar

Join us on **TUESDAY, JANUARY 20**, from **7:00 PM to 8:30 PM**, in Room

502, with Leader Dr. Joseph Chuman as our moderator.

We'll discuss the works of



Felix Adler and other thinkers whose writings are seminal to Ethical Culture and Humanist philosophy.

To register email Yalitza Garcia-Krawczyk at ygarcia@nysec.org, or phone her at 212-874-5210, ext. 117.

There is no fee for this program, but advance registration is required.

Readings in Deep Ecology

Join us on **MONDAY, JANUARY 26, 7:15 PM – 8:45 PM**, in the Elliott Library, Room 507. Curt Collier, Leader, will moderate.

We'll explore selections from famous environmental authors. Chapters and selections from the works of Aldo Leopold, John Muir, Wangari Maathai, Michael Pollan, Rachel Carson, Richard Louv, Edward Abbey, and Jane Goodall, among others, will be offered. We will read the selections together and then discuss the important points the writers were striving to uphold. This is a great way to cover classic environmental literature.

There is no fee for this.

Curious About Tai Chi?

Andra Miller

A friend told me that she was doing Tai Chi and that it was increasing her strength. I tucked that thought away in the back of my mind – and then when a thyroid health blog claimed that Tai Chi is good for your system and therefore for your hypothyroidism (which I have a mild case of), I decided it was time to take it up. And so I started a beginners' class back in September of 2012 and have been faithfully practicing Tao Tai Chi since then.

I'm slow in the memorization department, so I can't do the 108 moves on my own, but in Tai Chi, you are told that "doing" Tai Chi is more important than "learning" Tai Chi. Plenty of others have the whole series down pat and serve as "corners." Their demonstration keeps us forgetful ones on track.

One of my classmates said, "Hey, so you're Ethical Culture – why not have us do a demonstration there?" Sounded like an excellent suggestion, so I asked Phyllis

Kreuttner, head of the Life With Health series – and she agreed that it would be a good idea. So we scheduled a demonstration for **SUNDAY, JANUARY 18 at 1:30 PM** in Ceremonial Hall.

I invite you to come and see this gentle sort of dance you've perhaps witnessed in a park or up on the High Line. I saw it in a park in Shanghai many years ago – a crowd of perhaps 100, some in costume with fans. I had no idea what the heck they were doing. Now I know.

You'll be encouraged to join in, even if you can't stand. The arm movements are excellent chair exercise. And, as doing Tai Chi is the thing, your form is not an issue – there's no real wrong Tai Chi!

Oh, and by the way, we'll be telling you a few tales of how this form of exercise improves balance, lessens or ends body pain and clears up the mind a bit. It has done lots of these good things for me! So come and see! **SUNDAY, JANUARY 18, 1:30 PM.**

Sunday Morning Platform Meetings 11:00 am

JAN. 4

RINGING IN THE NEW YEAR WITH CALLS FOR REFORM



Dr. Anne Klaeyesen, Leader

Cheryl Gross Presides

As we reflect upon 2014, it seems clear that ethics took quite a beating. From climate change deniers in positions of power who promote fossil fuels and hydro-fracking over solar and wind power to racist police practices that target, and too often kill, African-American men; from income and wealth inequality to a report confirming the CIA's wanton use of torture; in myriad ways we have witnessed behavior that calls out for reform. Leader Anne Klaeyesen examines today's moral landscape and suggests ethical policies that we can support.

The shared charity is Encore Community Services.

JAN. 11

TORTURE IS BAD FOR AMERICA



Dr. Joseph Chuman, Leader

Andra Miller Presides

It feels too gruesome to talk about, but perhaps that is why we should.

Though the basic outlines of the abuse of detainees throughout the early stages of "The War and Terrorism" have long been known, the exhaustive and recently published report of the Senate Intelligence Committee elaborates patterns of brutalization far more extensive and violative than assumed. Moreover, the CIA's withholding of the torture program from superiors has transformed this sorry episode of American history into a rogue operation. It does not speak well for our democracy.

Torture is the most horrid abuse of human dignity — the central value on which Ethical Culture is based — imaginable. In my address I will look at the historical picture, why there is no excuse ever to torture a human being, and how torture is not only immoral and futile as a means of gathering intelligence, but how it renders us less safe from those who plot to do us harm.

The shared charity is Encore Community Services.

JAN. 18

DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. REMEMBRANCE DAY



Dr. Anne Klaeyesen Presides

At this year's annual celebration of Dr. King's life and legacy, Leader Anne Klaeyesen

will interview a young African-American woman who is following in his footsteps and forging a career in human rights activism. Kira Shepherd is Director of Campaigns and Organizing at The Black Institute (TBI) whose mission is to shape intellectual discourse and dialogue and impact public policy uniquely from a Black perspective (a perspective which includes all people of color in the United States and throughout the Diaspora). Before joining TBI founder Bertha Lewis, Kira wore many hats in the fight for social and economic justice, serving as a grassroots organizer, communications specialist, civic advocacy curriculum writer, legal advocate, and coalition partner.

The shared charity is Center for NuLeadership on Urban Solutions.

JAN. 25

HOW THE RIGHT IS WRONG ABOUT SCIENCE

Curt Collier, Leader

Dr. Kathleen O'Connell Presides



With the rise of conservatism in America we have been witnessing an increasing anti-science bias. The new Republican majority in the House and Senate will result in vehemently anti-science representatives being appointed to key positions, roles that will shape the future of America for years to come. How bad is it going to get and what can we do to stop them?

The shared charity is Center for NuLeadership on Urban Solutions.

THIS MONTH'S SHARED CHARITIES

ENCORE COMMUNITY SERVICES — its mission is to provide care and service to the elderly of the Clinton/ Times Square/Midtown communities, and to any elderly person who comes to us; to assist those who are vulnerable and frail, poor and homeless, homebound and lonely, frequently desperate, most often ignored; to help them with their daily needs so that they might live as independently as possible, with dignity and decency, in a noninstitutional manner, in a safe and caring environment.

CENTER FOR NULEADERSHIP ON URBAN SOLUTIONS specializes in creating community solutions, human justice, and a future beyond prisons for our children.

Early Sunday Mornings 9:45 am (Rooms are subject to change)

JANUARY 4 **CHORUS PRACTICE**
Led by David Gracia and Pat Debrovner. Ceremonial Hall.

JANUARY 11 **COLLOQUY: "MANNERS"**
Bob Berger presides. Room 508.

JANUARY 18 **CHORUS PRACTICE**
Led by David Gracia and Pat Debrovner. Ceremonial Hall.

JANUARY 18 **POETRY READING**
Bring poems and join us as we close 2014 with poetry readings. Cheryl Gross presides. Room 508.

Sunday Afternoons 1:30 pm (Except as noted) (Rooms are subject to change)

JANUARY 4 **VOLUNTEER ACTION MEETING**
With Andra Miller and Daniel Julian, cochairs of volunteer activities for the Ethical Action Committee. Room 514.
Come and give them your ideas for process and activities, and to learn about the ways ethical action can be part of your life!

JANUARY 4 **SUNDAY ASSEMBLY**
2:00 pm. Ceremonial Hall.

JANUARY 11 **ETHICS IN THE NEWS**
Abe Markman presides. 12:45 pm, sixth floor school cafeteria.
We are having an informal contest to select the five most ethical persons in public life today. Nominations will be accepted during our 12:45 pm meeting on the second Sunday of each month, during lunch.
One other pressing ethical issue will be discussed at each meeting, as time permits. There will be special seating for the hard-of-hearing.
Our contest winners will be announced during the March 8, 2015, session.

JANUARY 11 **ETHICAL DEATH CAFÉ**
Moderator: Rev. Dr. Barbara Simpson. Ceremonial Hall.
A gathering in a relaxed and safe setting to discuss death, drink tea, and eat delicious cake.

JANUARY 18 **CURIOUS ABOUT TAI CHI**
Learn about the wellbeing benefits of Taoist Tai Chi. Andra Miller presides. You will see a group from the New York branch of the Taoist Tai Chi Society complete a 20-minute set of the full 108 "moves," and you will be welcome

more Ethical Enrichment and Events.....

to join in. This set of moves was developed by Taoist Monk Master Moy Lin Shin, as he learned about the workings of human physiology and internal circulation. Your questions will be answered after the demonstration, so come, see, and learn about Tai Chi!

JANUARY 25

SUSTAINABLE LIVING SUPPORT CIRCLE

Leader Curt Collier presides. Ceremonial Hall.

We'll discuss lifestyle choices, our impact on the planet, and ways we can make a meaningful difference. Participants will be asked to keep a log of their choices and to share openly with others in a supportive atmosphere. This course is open for those wanting to make a real commitment to eco-living.

Lunch Discussions Thursdays, 12:00 noon – 1:30 pm
Elliott Library, Room 507

Bring your lunch and join Leader Dr. Anne Klaeyen and Society members. This month's topic is: **FACING THE CHALLENGES OF 2015**. Folders with relevant articles will be available from Yalitza Garcia-Krawczyk in the Administration office. You can now access all of the Leader Lunch readings on our website at <http://www.nysec.org/leader-lunch>. Come and join the discussion.

JANUARY 1

NO CLASS – NEW YEAR'S DAY.

JANUARY 8

"UNEQUAL TREATMENT OF TWO PROTESTERS IN ERIC GARNER CASE, ONE WHITE AND ONE BLACK" by Jim Dwyer, *The NY Times*, 12/9/14; **"THE SCIENCE OF WHY COPS SHOOT YOUNG BLACK MEN"** by Chris Mooney, *Mother Jones*, 12/1/14; **"ACROSS AMERICA, WHITES ARE BIASED AND THEY DON'T EVEN KNOW IT"** by Chris Mooney, *The Washington Post*, 12/8/13; and **IMPLICIT ASSOCIATION TEST**, *implicit.harvard.edu*, 2011.

JANUARY 15

"TORTURE IN A DICK CHENEY MINUTE" by Amy Davidson, *The New Yorker*, 12/14/14; **"TORTURE AND THE TRUTH"** by Jane Mayer, *The New Yorker*, 12/22/14; **"ANTONIN SCALIA'S CASE FOR TORTURE"** by Matt Ford, *The Atlantic*, December 2014; and **"MY CAPTIVITY"** by Theo Padnos, *The NY Times*, 10/29/14.

JANUARY 22

"DIGNITY: FAST-FOOD WORKERS AND A NEW FORM OF LABOR ACTIVISM" by William Finnegan, *The New Yorker*, 9/15/14.

JANUARY 29

"ON AMERICA'S FRONT LINES" by Christopher Jencks, *The NY Review of Books*, 10/9/14, and **"WHY INNOCENT PEOPLE PLEAD GUILTY"** by Jed S. Rakoff, *The NY*

Our Ethical Family



The following members are celebrating birthdays in January:

- ROSEMARY IRVING.....1/4
- ELIZABETH UNGAR.....1/6
- MARILYN BRAVEMAN.....1/10
- WILLIAM CHARLTON.....1/13
- BONNIE BEAN.....1/14
- PHYLLIS KREUTTNER.....1/14
- STEPHANIE ROSENBLATT.1/14
- JOHN HWANG.....1/16
- ROBERT BERGER.....1/17
- JULIAN RAYMOND.....1/23
- JAMES GARA.....1/24
- ROSEMARY BRANCATO....1/27
- EDWARD GROSS.....1/31

ETHICAL CARES

The Caring Committee will help you should you fall ill or be incapacitated, whether you're home, in the hospital, in rehab, or in a nursing home. All you need do is call the committee chairperson, **STEPHANIE ROSENBLATT**, at 212-586-0017, and she'll make the arrangements.



MARGARET DETERMANN,
Assistant to the Leaders for
Membership Development

Welcome to new member **BARBARA CARLSEN**! She has known about the NY Society for a long time and recently connected when she attended the Frank B. Prescod Community Service award ceremony on October 25 recognizing the work of The Fortune Society. Barbara volunteers at The Fortune Society and greatly admires founder David Rothenberg (an alumnus of NYSEC's Encampment for Citizenship). She is also a musician and American String teacher who looks forward to working with Music Director David Gracia. Her interests include theater, dance and social justice.

* * * * *

Monica Weiss and Dan Hanson are enjoying their retirement by traveling to Southeast Asia in January. Their journey to Thailand, Laos and Cambodia includes visits to national parks, Buddhist temples and ceremonies, an elephant sanctuary where they will wash the elephants, small villages on the Mekong River where they will help teach an English lesson at a primary school, a Clean Water Program site, local markets, and cultural shows. Journeys Within is a leader in Philanthropic Travel, providing community support and sustainability programs in the countries they visit. What an exciting experience!

* * * * *

An Invitation from The Fieldston Choral Society

Congratulations to Julian Raymond, who recently opened a new chiropractic office and now runs his own practice!

* * * * *

A memorial service will be held for Dr. Jackie Pope's daughter Rhonda on Saturday, January 17, at the Ethical Culture Society of Essex County, NJ located at 516 Prospect Street, Maplewood, NJ 07040. As this newsletter went to press, a time had not been determined, but you can call 973-763-1905 for details. 🌀

The Fieldston Choral Society is a new multi-generational chorus with members representing all the many groups in the Ethical Fieldston community – parents, faculty and staff, alumni, parents of alumni, and friends of ECFS. There are no auditions and sight-singing skills are not required. We hope to bring together people with a shared love of singing and a commitment to learning and rehearsing a wide range of music, including classical, contemporary, multicultural, spiritual and folk. The aim is to create a community

of singers who will look forward to the FCS rehearsal as a highlight of every week! Sopranos, altos, tenors and basses all welcome!

Rehearsals are on **WEDNESDAYS, 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM**, in the fifth floor music room of the Ethical Culture School. The FCS web site can be found at: *fieldstonchoralsociety.wordpress.com*. Leader Anne Klaeyen joined the rehearsal on December 10 and highly recommends this new musical experience. This month's rehearsals are **JANUARY 7, 14 and 21.** 🌀

NEW YORK SOCIETY FOR ETHICAL CULTURE

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Ethical Action

Solitary Confinement — Another Abuse of Human Rights

David Rothenberg

In October, through the Ethical Culture Social Service Board, NYSEC presented the Frank Prescod Community Service Award to The Fortune Society, which Frank Prescod and NYSEC were instrumental in founding in 1967 and supporting. We asked David Rothenberg, the founder of The Fortune Society, to tell us more about the issue of solitary confinement and how we can help. *Elinore Kaplan*

Solitary confinement is the ultimate punishment in jails and prisons across the country. In that unnatural, violent subculture, prisoners frequently defy the rigid, often irrational rules of the system. Rather than confronting rebellious or violent behavior, the response is to place people in isolation.

Prison officials imply that they can't confront or resolve inmate protests, so they bury them in solitary cells.

In the play *Fortune and Men's Eyes*, an old-timer warns a newly arrived inmate about the perils of solitary confinement: "You ain't done hard time, kid, until you done solitary. You sit in a lonely six-by-six. All you do is eat, crap, jerk, and flop. It's real cozy if ya don't go haywire the first month. A couple goons smashed their own heads on the brick wall ... they figured they was better off in the hospital than locked alone in a cage like a screwin' canary."

Almost every inmate — male or female — who has been locked in solitary will return to the streets some day. Never having confronted the reasons why they have been incarcerated, they acquire a rage that is ready to be unleashed. Society picks up the tab.

Is there an ethical or moral response to the brutal concept of solitary confinement?

For over four decades, affiliated with The Fortune Society, I have met men and women who have returned to the streets from prison. To a person, the experience

of solitary confinement is described as the most damaging — to the body, to the mind, to the soul.

One man, questioned by a priest, was asked, "Did you have any spiritual guidance in there?" Without a second's pause, he responded, "They destroyed my spirit. There was nothing to guide." He then elaborated on his experience in solitary, left alone with his thoughts, his negative self-image, and all the critical views others had of him.

When he came to The Fortune Society, we offered him another challenge — to celebrate himself. It is easy to say, but often a long, agonizing process for people to discover their own potential.

Caz Torres — with 67 arrests, 16 years in prison, and drug addiction from 10 years of age until he was 35 — said, "I always knew there was something else. I just didn't know where to find it."

For those who want to see the connection between

Solitary Confinement — Another Abuse of Human Rights

ethics and pragmatism, it is to create an environment that is the antithesis of the prison experience, of the nihilism of the penal institution, of the insidiousness of solitary confinement.

The Fortune Academy is The Fortune Society's residence for 62 men and women, all of whom share the labels "homeless" and "formerly incarcerated." Called "The Castle" for its gothic architecture, it is the only operation of its kind in the country, and is for the most part run by former convicts who are the administrators and counselors. Located at 140th Street and Riverside Drive, the Fortune Academy was created to establish a residence that permits, encourages, and insists that people discover their own human potential. Services include therapy, education and job training. Residents are challenged to locate the inner demons that overtook their lives on a self-destructive path of poverty, drugs, alcohol, crime, and eventually prison.

We have been witness to people who have discovered the possibility of a new life, placing the prison experi-

ence behind them. Caz Torres is one of many who found that something else.

Let me share one story of a man I met many years ago. Eddie was described as a "career criminal" when he came to The Fortune Society. He was 38 years old and had been getting arrested since he was 12 years of age. We were driving to a speaking engagement in Westchester and I noted the scenic beauty. He turned to me and, in his familiar Bronx-street guttural voice, began to recite a beautiful poetic passage. As he voiced the poem, he achieved a look of serenity never before revealed in his tough-guy posture. "What is that?" I asked. He responded: "Lord Byron."

After treating us with several more of Byron's poems, he explained: "When I was 16, they threw me into solitary confinement where I stayed for six months. I don't know why, but there was one book there — *The Complete Works of Lord Byron* — and it saved my sanity, my life.

It brought beauty into that dungeon."

I always wondered what Eddie's life could have been. An abandoned child, in prison and in solitary, he longed for something better. He didn't know what it was until he found Lord Byron.

How many men and women, like Eddie, are out there looking for their Lord Byron? And what are the lessons we can learn from a man who overcame the savagery of society in the poems of Lord Byron? Or from Caz Torres, whose search was answered when he arrived at The Castle?

As long as there are people determined to locate the hidden treasures in lost souls, we can achieve a society which need not abandon its moral responsibility. It would be right there — in front of us.

More about David Rothenberg: he has been publicist and producer for over a hundred Broadway and off-Broadway productions. In the 1960's he produced the John Herbert play, *Fortune and*

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Men's Eyes, about a young man's experience in prison. The play, and especially the post-performance "talk-backs" gave Rothenberg his first encounter with the ex-offenders and the travails of their lives. He had never before been aware that those who had served time couldn't get jobs, licenses, or housing in the years following their release. He soon made his Times Square office a headquarters for providing those ex-prisoners with services they could not obtain elsewhere. Thus was born The Fortune Society.

Now 81, Rothenberg is going strong. Three days a week, at Fortune Society Headquarters in Long Island City, he runs a discussion group for high-risk youngsters in one of many Fortune Society's Alternatives to Incarceration programs. On Thursday evenings at The Castle, he comoderates a conversation with the residents. Rothenberg brings *The Castle*, a play he helped to create, to prisons, schools,


and community centers. In it, four former prisoners portray themselves and their lives. Rothenberg's memoir, *Fortune and Men's Eyes*. (You recall the Shakespeare sonnet, "When, in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes...")

David Rothenberg still hosts a weekly radio program (Saturday mornings at 10:00 am) on WBAI, which he's been doing for more than 35 years. He features great music of many decades, discussions of the arts, politics, and criminal justice, a quiz about those formerly in the news, and social commentary.

The connections between Rothenberg and Ethical Culture go back further than Frank Prescod's support in the founding of The Fortune Society. They can be traced to the Settlement Movement in America. Rothenberg's aunt was Lillian Wald, an active member of the Ethical Culture Society for many years. Wald, founded the Henry Street Settlement also known as the Visiting Nurse

Service, in 1893. NYSEC Leader John Lovejoy Elliot incorporated the Hudson Guild Neighborhood House three years later. Both had the full and generous support of NYSEC members. David says "I am a very proud alumnus of The Ethical Culture Society's Encampment for Citizenship. As an 18-year-old, I spent the summer at the EFC at Fieldston. It had a profound effect on my life." *E.K.*

How We Can Help

As volunteers at The Fortune Society, people have been one-to-one tutors at all levels, offering basic literacy, preparation for high school diplomas, precollege prep, and English as a second language. Other volunteers have done role-playing, preparing people for job interviews. And others have run writing and art workshops. To determine how your experience, interests, and availability can tie in with volunteer needs at The Fortune Society, call volunteer coordinator Benjamin Solitaire at 212-691-7554. 

News from the American Ethical Union



*Hank Gassner,
AEU Board Member,
Member of Northern
Virginia Ethical Society,
Member of Washington,
Ethical Society*

The last week of October and the first half of November were marked by workshops and conferences at which participants from various societies met to learn and to get perspectives from the points of view of other societies in the Ethical Movement. On October 23-25, 28 participants from 11 societies met for a Membership Growth and Development Workshop. This program marks the renewal of an earlier program of annual workshops run by the AEU Membership Committee designed to strengthen lay leadership skills in society management. The first program of the new series concentrated on strengthening pledge campaigns, but also included a workshop on greeting visitors

to your society. We learned that the most effective method for increasing contributions to a society (or for recruiting volunteers or keeping members engaged) is face-to-face visits from other society members. Other strategies were ranked in order of effectiveness: face-to-face conversations with a small group (six or less), face-to-face conversations with a larger group (seven to 15 people), personal phone calls or emails, and personal presentations to a larger group.

While newsletter articles and form letters should be part of the program, relying on such impersonal approaches as the main strategy for soliciting contributions is much less effective than personal approaches. Written materials should include a vision of what a society could do with increased contributions and a fair-share contribution guide based on percentages of income for

basic and generous contribution levels. Visits should start with short testimonial statements about the importance of the society to the visitor and soliciting such statements from the person being visited. The program evaluation forms from people who attended the workshop and were unanimously enthusiastic.

On November 7-9, about 40 people from eight societies attended the Ethical Education Conference. (The participant numbers included children who attended a special ethical education program while their parents were attending workshops.)

The Conference started with a presentation by Dale McGowan, author of *Parenting Beyond Belief* and *Raising Freethinkers*, on why he had chosen to become AEU's Ethical Education Director and

News from American Ethical Union

his vision for the future for growing ethical education programs. The program included workshops on starting an ethical education program from scratch, effective use of websites and social media in marketing ethical education programs, ethical action programs for children, adult ethical education programs, and a long-range proposal for developing an ethical education diploma program for teenagers.

On November 14-16 about 35 people from at least six societies attended the Youth of Ethical Societies (YES) Conference. The theme of this year's conference was Ethics in Science and Medicine. The participants broke into sharing circles to discuss various topics related to the theme.

Time was also available for some sightseeing in New York and sampling ethnic cuisines. I am told that the teens and youth advisors left feeling that

the conference was a great experience that energized them for further action back home and made them enthusiastic about returning next year.

Organizing these conferences has made this an exciting and busy period for the AEU. Members of various societies have gotten together, shared ideas, made friends, and seen how much we can learn from each other as our societies work to achieve common goals. 🌀

 **CHAMPIONS of CHANGE
2015 FORUM**

*The New York Society for Ethical Culture
Dr. Phyllis Harrison - Ross Award Series*

SAVE the DATE
*Thursday, April 30, 2015
7:00-8:30pm*

HISTORIC NYSEC
MEETING HALL AUDITORIUM
2 WEST 64TH ST
CENTRAL PARK WEST
NEW YORK CITY

JANUARY 2015

Office hours for the month are Monday-Friday, 9:00am - 6:00pm

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<p>Great Books: Rothschild's Fiddle, by Anton Checkov — January 7 Ethics and the Theater: Third, by Wendy Wasserstein — January 9 Ethics in Film: Dead Man Walking (1995), by Tim Robbins — January 16</p>						
<p>4</p> <p>9:45 Chorus Practice 11:00 Ethics for Children 11:00 Morning Meeting 12:45 Brunch/Social Hour 1:30 Volunteer Action Meeting 2:00 Sunday Assembly 2:00 Ethics for Teens - Coming of Age</p>	<p>5</p> <p>February 2015 Newsletter Deadline</p>	<p>6</p> <p>6:00 Wisdom and World Affairs</p>	<p>7</p> <p>7:00 Great Books Discussion Group</p>	<p>8</p> <p>12:00 Leader Lunch Discussion 6:30 Appreciative Inquiry</p>	<p>9</p> <p>7:00 Ethics and the Theater</p>	<p>10</p>
<p>11</p> <p>9:45 Colloquy 11:00 Ethics for Children 11:00 Morning Meeting 12:45 Brunch/Social Hour 12:45 Ethics in the News 1:30 Ethical Death Café 2:00 Ethics for Teens - Teen Deed Club</p>	<p>12</p> <p>1:00 Appreciative Inquiry 7:00 Newcomers' Reception</p>	<p>13</p> <p>7:00 Ethics and War</p>	<p>14</p>	<p>15</p> <p>12:00 Leader Lunch Discussion</p>	<p>16</p> <p>7:00 Ethics in Film</p>	<p>17</p>
<p>18</p> <p>9:45 Poetry Reading 9:45 Chorus Practice 11:00 Ethics for Children 11:00 Morning Meeting 12:45 Brunch/Social Hour 1:30 Curious About Tai Chi 2:00 Ethics for Teens</p>	<p>19</p> <p>Society Offices Closed Dr. Martin Luther King Day</p>	<p>20</p> <p>12:30 Writing Class 7:00 Felix Adler Seminar 7:00 Theatre of the Oppressed NYC</p>	<p>21</p>	<p>22</p> <p>12:00 Leader Lunch Discussion 6:30 Appreciative Inquiry 6:30 Writing Class</p>	<p>23</p>	<p>24</p>
<p>25</p> <p>11:00 Ethics for Children 11:00 Morning Meeting 12:45 Brunch/Social Hour 1:30 Sustainable Living Support Circle</p>	<p>26</p> <p>1:00 Appreciative Inquiry 7:15 Readings in Deep Ecology</p>	<p>27</p> <p>12:30 Writing Class 6:00 Wisdom and World Affairs</p>	<p>28</p> <p>2:30 Ethical Death Café</p>	<p>29</p> <p>12:00 Leader Lunch Discussion 6:30 Writing Class</p>	<p>30</p>	<p>31</p>

NEW YORK SOCIETY FOR ETHICAL CULTURE

ETHICAL

WE ARE ETHICAL CULTURE,

a community that believes all individuals have inherent worth and
dignity, and a responsibility to strive for ethical growth.

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We believe that leaving the world better than we found it is the highest good.

Learn more about us at our website — or, better still, visit with us.

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