

E T H I C A L O U T L O O K

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Sunday Morning Meetings **11:15 AM—Music & Reflection,** **Concert Hall**

January 7

Embracing Change

Tony Hileman

Senior Leader

Joseph Marvel Presides

January 14

Our Obligations To Others

Randy Best, Leader, Ethical

Culture Society of North Carolina

Muriel Berger Presides

January 21

The Third Rail of Religion

Tony Hileman

Senior Leader

Ben Bean Presides

January 28

Religion, Ethnicity, Identity, and Ethical Culture

Joseph Chuman, Leader, Ethical

Culture Society of Bergen County

Dr. Charles H. Debrovner Presides

January Happenings

NYSEC Members and friends are invited to celebrate New Year's Day, Monday, January 1, 2007 here at the Society. Join us for an afternoon of fun and friendship, 2:00 pm to 5:00 pm in Ceremonial Hall, 4th floor. We'll enjoy snacks, drinks, music, prizes, and lots of good cheer as we look ahead to the coming year. The party is sponsored by the Membership Activities Committee.

Microsoft Word Computer Course—The Adult Education Committee is pleased to announce that Tom Weishaar will teach a four-session course on Microsoft Word computer skills on Tuesday evenings, January 9, 16, 23 and 30, from 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm.

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From the Leader's Desk

Tony Hileman, Senior Leader



From Mentee to Mentor—The Flow of Life

This is a time of year for taking stock. One rewarding and respectful way to assess where you are in life, and who you have become along the path that brought you to where you are, is to look back over the years and identify your mentors. By spending some time examining and contemplating—if you will—who taught us what we know about life and how to live it, we come to a better understanding of ourselves.

And who doesn't want that?

In thinking of mentors, our attention most often turns outward to those we have known who have impacted our lives directly—parents, teachers, elders, and other trusted exemplars and advisors. Or perhaps we think of the towering figures of our time who

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Sunday Morning Meetings

January 7—Embracing Change

Tony Hileman, Senior Leader

Letting go of the past and embracing the future are the choreographed steps of a progressive dance. This is the time of year when many pause to rededicate themselves to progress through resolve, by adopting well-intentioned but often eventually abandoned resolutions. The will is never as strong as the ideal, and there's a human tendency to desert the ideals when the will to pursue them weakens.

How do we hold onto the ideal in the face of our inability to attain it? How do we hang in there when the past comforts us and the future can be intimidating? How do we embrace the change that we are only partially able to achieve?

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*Happy
New Year
to All*

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Leader's Desk

(Continued from page 1)

have impacted not only us but also our entire global culture. It's less common that we think of historic figures with whom we've formed a different, but in some respects closer, relationship. For example, all of us feel a certain kinship with the founder of Ethical Culture, Felix Adler. None of us knew him, he died in 1933, and many of us differ with him on significant philosophic points. But just our participation in the movement he founded grants him the status of mentor.

We can also be mentored by those we know only through their writings. For the politically oriented it might be the Federalist Papers that speak of the intentions of the framers of our Constitution, at least those of Hamilton, Madison, and Jay. For scholars it's often the writings of any of a number of ancient Greek philosophers that echo the teachings of those who preceded them and also informed the thinking of those who came after them.

I find myself returning to the Tao Te Ching and I have several renditions on my bookshelf. There's not a lot known about its credited author, Lao Tzu, who may or may not have been a historical person, but I've learned a lot from the writing attributed to him and feel a sense of closeness with those who have

studied, translated, and interpreted the "old master."

The role of mentor is not to complete, but to enable. If we have chosen our mentors—personal, contemporary, historic, or apocryphal—carefully, and if they have done their work well, we eventually become our own mentors. And as we assume that responsibility for ourselves, we become mentors to others, at least by example. As our mentors formed us, so we shape others—and in so doing continue to develop ourselves.

The flow of life, the stream of progress, the irrepressible dance of humanity—call it what you will. However you describe it, whoever has enabled you, and whomever you in turn assist, we are part of an astonishing, glorious, and breathtaking flow of life. That others have made it so for us is testimony enough that we can make it so for others.

Remember your mentors with gratitude. Be mindful of those you influence. And be always aware of the beauty of which we are a part.

Sunday Morning Meetings

(Continued from page 1)

January 14—Our Obligations To Others

Randy Best, Leader, Ethical Culture Society of North Carolina

Are we born free without any obligation to others, or does our position in history and society create obligations to others? Does economic success carry any obligation to help the less fortunate? Are we free to consume whatever we can afford without thoughts of the consequences outside of ourselves? Is treating others with respect and dignity an obligation or a mere convention to follow when it

makes sense? These are among the topics that will be addressed by Randy Best in his talk.

Randy, a life-long member of Ethical Culture, was born in St. Louis, where he attended the Ethical Society of St. Louis, of which his parents are active members.

He lives in Durham, North Carolina, with his wife and their four children whom they have home schooled.

Randy is also consulting Leader to the Ethical Society of Austin, Co-Leader of the Ethical Society Without Walls, and Associate Director of the Center on Global Change at Duke University in Durham.

January 21 – The Third Rail of Religion

Tony Hileman, Senior Leader

As riders of electric railways—the subway, the Long Island Railroad, and the Air Train to JFK, to mention a few—New Yorkers are well acquainted with the force and danger of the third rail that powers our daily commute.

Traditional religions glide along on rails that are polished to a mirror finish by custom and use. But what powers them? Is it the same thing that energizes this new religion of ours, Ethical Culture? Whether dedicated to a supreme being or a supreme way of being, do all religions draw their power from the same source?

January 28 – Religion, Ethnicity, Identity, and Ethical Culture

*Joseph Chuman, Leader,
Ethical Culture Society of Bergen County*

In an age of multiculturalism, one's ethnic or religious identity is not necessarily one's destiny. In fact, we are the products of many different identities and, to varying degrees, we have the freedom to choose which ones we wish to put forward and which ones we

place in the background. This freedom can be an important factor in undercutting the conflict and violence generated in the name of religion and ethnicity.

Early Sunday 10:00 AM

Jan. 7 – Everyday Ethics. Room 408.

Jan. 14 – Colloquy – Topic is Humor. Harriet Bigus presides. Room 408.

Jan. 21 – Poetry Reading – A peaceful hour with Cheryl Gross reading the poems we especially like. Come to read and listen, or just come and listen. Room 408.

Jan. 28 – Singing Practice – All voices, big and small, are welcome. Led by Pat Debrovner and Jerry Ranck, we'll practice the songs we sing on Sunday mornings and get some tips to improve our singing technique. It's a lot of fun, so join us! Room 507.

Sunday Afternoon 1:45 PM

Jan. 7 – Video Talk with Dr. Matthew Ies Spetter. Chuck Debrovner presides. Ceremonial Hall.

Jan. 14 – TBA

Jan. 21 – Dynamic Mindfulness and Easy Yoga, with Sam Kirschner and Stan Griero. Phyllis Harrison-Ross presides. Ceremonial Hall.

Jan. 28 – Health Talk #3. Jacqueline Pope presides. Ceremonial Hall.

Our Ethical Family

Suzy Frazer

Please welcome the following new Society members:

John Hwang was a Spanish language and literature professor at Montclair

State University, NJ, for 30 years. He has a strong interest in philosophy and the humanist goals of Ethical Culture.

Richard Sander attended our Sam Harris lecture and has since visited the Society for Sunday mornings and evening events. He edits the cable programs and arranges meet-ups for New York City Atheists, Inc. and the New York City Brights. Rich is very interested in humanism and getting many compatible groups to become part of the NYSEC community.

Marvin Liebman recently joined NYSEC. He is also a member at the Philadelphia Ethical Culture Society. (See November issue)



The NAACP and Ethical Culture

Marc Bernstein

An upcoming TV documentary celebrating the 100th anniversary of the founding of the NAACP in February 1907 will describe the role Ethical Culture played in establishing that great civil-rights organization. Vicangelo Films (VFI) will oversee development and production and will work with leading actors and production companies, including Morgan Freeman's Revelations Entertainment and the producers of *Eyes On the Prize*, the splendid history of the civil-rights movement.

VFI will also work with Sondra Kathryn Wilson, noted civil-rights historian, on the documentary. Dr. Wilson has been in touch with me, as NYSEC's archivist, about the role of our movement in getting the NAACP started. The exact date the film will air should be announced soon. Stay tuned!

Building Better Relationships

Patricia Bruder Debrovner

Is there someone you'd like to get to know better? Do you wish people would really listen and understand what you're trying to tell them? Do you dare let others know how you feel about what they're doing? Have you wondered how we can actually put into practice our philosophy of bringing out the best in others and in ourselves?

We can gain the understanding and practical skills to help us improve those challenging relationships and get closer to the people to whom we're attracted. Join us on Wednesday evenings, January 3 and 24, from 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm, in Ceremonial Hall for the final two sessions of this most rewarding three-session series. The cost for the final two sessions will be \$10 per session for members or \$15 per session for nonmembers.

Call Suzy Frazer at 212-874-5210, ext. 113, to register, or just come over.

Film Forum

Valerie Leiman

Come on Friday, January 5, at 6:00 pm, (note time change for this month), for *Judgment at Nuremberg* (1961), directed by Stanley Kramer, the next film in our 2006-2007 series "Reel Justice: Courtroom Dramas," hosted by our popular film historian, Richard Bruno.

This dramatic film is a fictionalized version of the real-life 1948 trial of the Nazi leaders for crimes against humanity. Later made into a Broadway play, the story revolves around an American judge (Spencer Tracy) presiding over these trials. We'll see fine performances by Marlene Dietrich as the widow of a German officer and

Montgomery Clift as an unbalanced victim of Nazi atrocities. Admission is \$3 for members and \$4 for nonmembers. After the film we'll have our usual lively discussion of the issues raised. Come and add your voice.

Microsoft Word Computer Course

Patricia Bruder Debrovner

(Continued from page 1)

The fee for the course will be \$50 for members and \$65 for nonmembers.

Participants will need to bring a laptop computer to the classes. If you don't have one, perhaps you can borrow one. Call Suzy Frazer at 212-874-5210, ext. 113, to register.

Ethics and the Theater

Patricia Bruder Debrovner

Can a spiritually exhausted priest make a real difference in the lives of his working-class parish, while focusing on ritual and the promise of salvation?

Join us on Wednesday evening, January 10, 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm, as we present the play, *Racing Demon*, by David Hare. The playwright offers strong positions on the topics of separation of church and state and the overzealousness of members of the clergy and their efforts to balance ritual with a commitment to their parishioners. David Hare is one of Britain's foremost playwrights; *Racing Demon* won him the Olivier Award for best play in 1990.

Barry Snider, a new member and a professional actor and director, will direct our fine cast, which includes both Society members and professional actors. After the play, Betsy Ungar will serve as moderator and lead a discussion of the ethical issues raised.

Thursday Writing Workshop

Elaine Berman

We will begin a new ten-week semester of "The Joy of Personal Writing," our Thursday writing class, on January 18. The class welcomes both new and experienced writers. This should be a very rewarding experience. For information call Suzy Frazer at 212-874-5210, ext. 113.

New Projects—Opportunities To Help

John Kreuttner, Treasurer

Several years ago we merged all of our endowment funds into one set of investment accounts. No mechanism was established to track the gain or loss by fund; some of these funds are restricted as to their use and we have no idea of their balances. What we do know is the balance in each when the funds were merged.

I have outlined a project to go back to the inception of our relationship with Morgan Stanley and come forward to calculate the balance in each fund. To do this, we need to set up new spreadsheets to track the performance month-by-month in each of these investment accounts.

We need two people, one of whom knows Excel, to establish the spreadsheets and then insert the data month-by-month. When this is done, we will be able to calculate the yearly returns and apply them to each endowment fund. The calculation is called an "unequal cash flow," and I will be able to do that. If you are interested, please call Bob Liebeskind at 212-874-5210, ext. 116, and leave a message for me. This should be an interesting project.

I also want to advise you that the IRS has stated that it will no longer accept undocumented cash donations. Donations must be receipted, or the donor must have a cancelled check. This will affect only those who itemize their deductions on Schedule A of their tax return.

One answer for us is to have everyone give by check, but that is a bit cumbersome. We are designing a collection envelope to be filled out. Again, we need a volunteer (or two) to log in the donations each week so we can receipt them at the end of the year.

Stained Glass Windows Benefit

Dr. Ruth Cohen

We are pleased to report the completion of our eighth annual Benefit Concert for the Society's Stained Glass Windows Fund. The concert was a wide-ranging musical event with classical, modern, and post-modern works, all executed brilliantly by our roster of artists. We were fortunate to have composer Debra Kaye with us, as well as Jon Liechty, who played one of his own compositions. Jon also performed a brilliant modern work composed for him by Leonard Enns.

But we missed you. We hope that all of our friends who were not able to join us at the concert will write and tell us your favorite afternoon event performance or your preferences. We want you to be here for future events, and we want to make these events appealing to you! Whether you've attended the concerts or forwarded a donation to the fund, our loyal and devoted friends have made it possible for us to create a standing endowment fund for the stained glass windows. We thank everyone, and look forward to presenting many more concerts.

AEU in Action

Andra Miller

At the last community meeting, I offered to write a report on what's going on at the American Ethical Union. I'm doing this in my capacity as a member of the AEU Board.

Youth: One of the main concerns of the AEU is growth—not only of each local society and group but also of YES (Youth of Ethical Societies, high school students); FES (Future of Ethical Societies, college students); and ESWoW, Ethical Society Without Walls (for those with no local society).

To help societies foster growth, AEU is planning a series of workshops for the next Assembly (June 14-17 in Long Island) on finances, control, and communication. Ideas submitted by societies to inspire other societies are posted on the website: <http://aeu.org>.

The YES group just held a conference attended by 50 high school students and 12 advisors from nine societies. FES is planning a spring conference, and is producing a brochure ("A community of proactive youth who work to change the world and better themselves in the process") and developing a website: <http://ethicalfuture.org/Home/index.html>. ESWoW has its site, <http://www.eswow.org/>, up and running. The plan is that as new members "cluster," we'll attempt to form new local groups.

Religious Education: One of the most vital responsibilities of AEU is to assure the quality of each society's religious component. Directors of religious education, Sunday school teachers, parents, and children attend annual conferences focused on improving the education of the young. A total of 39 people from 12 societies joined in the fun and learning at this year's conference and

described the social action projects in which their societies were involved. The key was, simply, our belief that "We can all make a difference."

National Leaders Council/Leadership Committee: Another focus on our religious component is that of the National Leaders Council and the Leadership Committee. NLC meets to bring leaders together to tell of their experiences and work on projects aimed at strengthening our faith in the tenets of Ethical Culture and spreading the word. A task force headed by our leader, Tony Hileman, and Randy Best, leader of the North Carolina society, is working "to clarify and update the Ethical Culture message and make it more compatible with the needs of our contemporary society, and to more clearly convey an Ethical Culture identity." The NLC will present one or more workshops at the Assembly, led by individual leaders.

The Leadership Committee is developing a designation of Ethical Culture Chaplain or Ethical Humanist Chaplain for health care services. This new service is considered vital, as religious/spiritual guidance is often a critical component of healing in the hospital and out of the hospital setting.

Ethical Hero Awards: The AEU Board issues a proclamation at each of its meetings announcing the Ethical Hero Award. At the last meeting, awards went to five volunteers for their rescue work after the Katrina disaster as members of "The Cajun Navy" and to another who mobilized food, shelter, clothing, and supplies for hurricane relief.

AEU Joins Amicus Brief: The Board chose to join ACLU organizations in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Delaware and several minority religious and rights groups in an amicus brief regarding a football coach who insists

on praying with his team before games. Americans United for Separation of Church and State was hired by the high school to argue that the coach's explanation of "unity," forces minority-religion students to join the prayer although it evokes a religious belief with which they are uncomfortable.

NYSEC and AEU: Aside from my connection as AEU Board member and Tony Hileman's work with the NLC, our president, Michael Bogdanffy-Kriegh, is involved in the President's Council and serves on the Leadership Committee; Ellen McBride and Lee Smalley are on the Publications Committee; Lucile Kleiman and Abe Markman are on the AEU's National Service Conference; and Eva Yachnes volunteers in the AEU office, where Donna Damhorst-Pang works.

If you have any questions about the AEU, please feel free to contact me at 212-627-3944 or andramm@juno.com, or check the AEU website.

I encourage you to get involved, as working with members of other societies is highly rewarding. Consider attending the special training of the AEU Lay Leadership Summer School, an exciting/exhausting/educational experience. Check with prior students Jim Farer, Sheila Kleinwald, Ellen McBride, or me to find out more about it.

Paid Family Leave

Abe Markman

The Public Issues Committee has chosen paid family leave as the next issue to submit to the Board of Trustees. Why have we chosen this? Although paid leave is not making headlines, it typifies the issues that have a good chance of being supported by those on both sides of the family values divide.

Nonprofits and unions are members of the 11-state Paid Family Leave Coalition, which we plan to join. To read a full discussion of the issue, click on: [http://www.nysec.org/pic/paid leave](http://www.nysec.org/pic/paid%20leave).

We recently held three well-attended talks, two by Dr. Charles Debrovner and the third by William Sweet. A summary of Dr. Debrovner's talks on stem cell research and therapeutic cloning can be accessed by clicking on: <http://www.nysec.org/pic/stem-cells>. William Sweet discussed his book, *Kicking the Carbon Habit*, and said that wind power as an alternative to fossil fuels is not only clean and available in abundance, but the technology is fully developed and is quite effective. The main drawback is that some communities find that the tubular wind towers obstruct their views. By the time you read this, his compelling videotaped talk may be posted at: <http://www.nysec.org/pic/global-warming>.

An article about PIC's work appears in the Winter, 2006-2007 edition of the AEU's *Dialogue* (page 14). We hope you will acquaint yourself with our issues, as we will be asking for your vote. Adoption of our positions by the membership will give them extra clout in the public arena. For a one-page summary of the three positions previously adopted by the Board, click on: <http://nysec.org/pic/ideas>.

Help End AIDS

Bristol-Myers Squibb donates \$1 to the National AIDS Fund for each person who simply visits its website: <https://www.lighttounite.org>, and "virtually lights a candle." The tally is over 1,000,000 "hits" so far. It only takes a second.

Scenes Around The Society. . . .

Membership Community Meeting



A lively group of NYSEC members attended the Nov. 5 Membership Community Meeting, at which Senior Leader, Tony Hileman (shown), President, Michael Bogdanffy-Kriegh, and committee heads reported on the state of the Society.

New Year's Day Party/Open House

A grand time should be had by everyone who attends our New Year's Day Party/Open House here at the Society. We plan an afternoon of good talk, good cheer, refreshments, and we hope you'll be there.



(L-R) Bonnie Bean and Barbara Levenson selling tickets for the New Year's Day Party

NYSEC Members Reach Out

Winterfest 2006

Winterfest 2006, on Sunday, December 17, was a festive intergenerational platform featuring stories and songs by our Sunday School children, as well as the traditional lighting of candles to celebrate the Winter Solstice.



Sunday School lead teacher Rita Chawla (center) sings with the children and their parents



Carole Chamlin leads singing practice

Greeting Cards Cheer Members



(L-R) Volunteers Valerie Leiman and Barbara Fennell

Volunteers create greeting cards for members who aren't able to attend Society activities as a Social Service Board project. The first card made was sent to our beloved former Senior Leader, Dr. Matthew Ies Spetter in his nursing home.



A Celebration of Life

At the Unforgotten Voices celebration on December 8 singers, poets, musicians, and visual artists—all currently or formerly homeless—presented an exciting program to a most appreciative audience.

The Unforgotten Voices Creative Workshop, sponsored by the Social Service Board for more than 20 years in conjunction with various New York City homeless shelter programs, gives these artists a welcome opportunity to show their considerable talents.

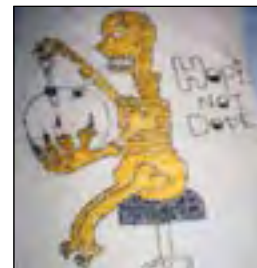


(L-R) Maria Fridman, of the Social Service Board, who facilitated the evening's festivities, and Judith Ginsburg, coordinator of the Unforgotten Voices Creative Workshop



Michael Ansonia, one of the performers, at the piano

Some of the artwork on display



January 2007

Office hours: Monday-Friday, 9:00 am–6:00 pm
Shelter: Monday-Thursday, 7:30 pm

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 Society offices closed 2:00 pm – New Year's Day Party	2 February 2007 Newsletter Deadline	3 6:00 pm – Men's Group 7:00 pm – Building Better Relationships 7:30 pm – Great Books	4	5 Note time change 6:00 pm – Film Forum: <i>Judgement at Nuremberg</i> (1961)	6 9:30 am and 1:30 pm Supervised Visitation
7 10:00 am – Everyday Ethics 11:00 am – Ethics for Children 11:15 am – Morning Meeting 12:45 pm – Social Hour 1:45 pm – Video talk with Dr. Spetter	8 6:30 pm – Board of Trustees	9 6:00 pm – Women's Group 7:00 pm – Computer Class	10 3:00 pm – ECRDG 7:00 pm – Ethics and the Theater	11	12	13 No Supervised Visitation today
14 10:00 am – Colloquy 11:00 am – Ethics for Children 11:15 am – Morning Meeting 12:45 pm – Social Hour 1:45 pm – TBA	15 Society offices closed	16 7:00 pm – Computer Class	17 6:00 pm – Socrates Café 7:30 pm – Great Books: <i>Great Conversations I</i>	18 7:00 pm – Thursday Writing Workshop	19	20 9:30 am and 1:30 pm Supervised Visitation
21 10:00 am – Poetry Reading 11:00 am – Ethics for Children 11:30 am – Morning Meeting 12:45 pm – Social Hour 1:45 pm – Easy Yoga	22 6:30 pm – Social Service Board	23 7:00 pm – Computer Class	24 7:00 pm – Building Better Relationships	25 7:00 pm – Thursday Writing Workshop	26	27 9:30 am and 1:30 pm Supervised Visitation
28 10:00 am – Singing Practice 11:00 am – Ethics for Children 11:30 am – Morning Meeting 12:45 pm – Social Hour 1:45 pm – Health talk	29	30 7:00 pm – Computer Class	31	<p>Great Books: January 3 – Karl van Clausewitz, <i>What is War?</i> Moses Maimonides, <i>On Evil</i></p> <p>ECRDG: (Ethical Culture Reading Discussion Group) January 10 – Philip Roth, <i>The Plot Against America</i></p> <p>Great Books: "Great Conversations I" January 17 – Ralph Waldo Emerson, <i>Self-Reliance</i></p>		



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