

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

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Sunday Morning Programs 11:30 AM—Ceremonial Hall

October 5

“From California to the New York Island”: Whose Country Is It, Anyway?

Dr. Khoren Arisian
Senior Leader

Frank Prescod presides

October 12

The Death Penalty: Hidden Human Costs

David Kaczynski, Bill Babbitt, and Ray Krone

Dr. Judith D. Wallach Presides

October 19

From Roosevelt to Reagan to Bush II: How Far Forward—or Back—Shall We Americans Go?

Dr. Khoren Arisian
Senior Leader

Carol Nadell Presides

October 26

Ethical Culture’s Passport to Global Citizenship: The National Service Conference at the United Nations

Martha Gallahue
NSC Non-Governmental Organization Representative
Dr. Khoren Arisian Presides

WQXR-FM (96.3)

Broadcasts

1st and 3rd Sundays of the month at 7:30 am

October 5

Born Again: A Personal Conversion Story

Fritz Williams
Leader, Baltimore Ethical Society

October 19

The Prospects for Democracy When Evangelical Religion Gets Out of Hand

Dr. Khoren Arisian
Senior Leader

October Happenings

Sunday, October 12, we will recognize Amnesty International’s **Weekend of Faith in Action Against the Death Penalty** with day-long activities featuring noted speakers. For our morning meeting, David Kaczynski, Executive Director of New Yorkers Against the Death Penalty and brother of the Unibomber, will return. With him this year will be Bill Babbitt, whose mentally ill brother, a poor, African-American Vietnam war veteran, was executed, and Ray Krone, the 100th prisoner to be exonerated by DNA testing. (See page 3.) In our afternoon program, **The Death Penalty: Strategies for Change**, David Kaczynski and Ray Krone will be joined by Actor and Activist Ossie Davis, Julian Brown, Harlem social justice activist and Assistant Director, The Fifth Avenue Committee’s criminal justice program, Joe Chuman, death penalty activist and Leader of the Ethical Culture Society of Bergen County, Christopher Dunn, Associate Legal Director, American Civil Liberties Union, and Susan Schindler, Chair of the New York City Chapter of NYADP. As public opinion on the death penalty shifts, learn about organizing efforts currently underway, find out how you can become involved, and contribute your own ideas to what promises to be a stirring discussion of the prospects for change. A cafeteria lunch will be available after the 11:30 am meeting, before the 2:00 pm afternoon program.

Sunday, October 26, 1:30-3:30 pm, see the documentary *Counting on Democracy*.

Danny Schechter, a full-time independent filmmaker and Editor of mediachannel.org, vividly documents the Florida voting irregularities during the presidential election of 2000. A one-time employee of ABC News where he worked on the network program, “In the Neighborhood,” for eight years, Schechter will be present to speak about the film and respond to questions. Schechter’s book, about media coverage of the war in Iraq—ironically titled, *Embedded: Weapons of Mass Deception* (Prometheus Press)—will be available in October.

Advance Alert! Join us, **Sunday, November 2**, for our **Fifth Annual Benefit Concert** for the Stained Glass Windows Fund, at 2:00 pm in Ceremonial Hall, fourth floor. For tickets and information, or to volunteer, call Ruth Cohen, 212-860-4096.

President’s Notes

Michael Bogdanffy-Kriegh

Is the World Black or White?



I have had many occasions lately to ponder what happens when people see the world as all white or all black. I have noted the results of polarization, which leads to intransigence and, in too many cases, to subsequent violent interaction between individuals and peoples. This appears to happen whether or not the individuals or peoples in question start out with similar beliefs.

I have come to believe that polarization and the ways people behave towards one another because of it may be the number-one ethical problem we need to resolve if we

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Ethical Culture: Who We Are

“A Statement of Ethical Religion”

From *An Invitation to Action: A Vision of Ethical Culture*
 National Leaders' Council of the American Ethical Union, May, 2003

We are a humanistic community of individuals passionately committed to living ethical lives that affirm the worth and dignity of every person and that respect the integrity of the natural world. We strive to understand human experience and to bring out the best in the human spirit. We celebrate the good life—the joy found in creative involvement with the human community and the natural world

We are a nurturing, open fellowship where the unique individuality of each is shaped within the interactions of mature, authentic relationships. We are a caring evolving community where a person's inner life is cultivated and where his or her joys, sorrows, and dreams are shared and appreciated.

We are a community that believes in the Ethical Culture project—spreading the word that a life of ethical commitment is not just sufficient for meaningful living but is quite possibly the best there can be. It is an environment that confronts the commercialism and amorality of contemporary society with an optimistic vision of moral engagement.

Ethical Culture calls all people to more decent lives that take into consideration the lives of others and is dedicated to social justice. This group has a public face that promotes values to the larger community. We are a learning community where children and adults are engaged in the examination of their own lives and that of their community.

We are a community with accepted practices that reflect our commitment to the worth of each person and the group, practices that create a climate of equality befitting our commitment to the growth and fulfillment of each person.

are to have any hope of realizing the ideals in which we profess to believe. Let me give a few examples of what I'm talking about.

Republican conservative right wing rhetoric is absolute in its conviction about being the right way of thinking, and those who passionately hold this point of view frequently spew condescension and hatred at those of us who have a more liberal point of view. I am sure there must be liberal individuals who become as passionate about their beliefs, but I have not heard or met one whom I can recall, and I have much more contact with liberals than I do with conservatives. There are conservative right wing thinkers in my own family. As with many families, if there is to be peaceful interaction we have to avoid conversations about political ideology at all costs. The potential for a bruising, alienating conflict is always there.

I have noted a number of occasions at the Society when we have struggled as a community to resolve conflict in a way that was in line with our beliefs and that was respectful to all involved. In each of these cases, individuals became polarized in their view of the situation and reacted out of a single-minded point of view, unable to step back and see the entire picture and understand actions and reactions in a complete context. While for the most part I don't believe this has kept us, as a community, from making correct decisions for the institution, I do know that we have often found it difficult to act with the respect for individual worth and dignity that we believe all individuals are due.

We have plenty of company in this regard. Religious institutions are notorious for being unable to live up to their ideals within the context of their own congregations, let alone towards the outside world. I suppose we can take some comfort in having an idea that is inherently good, and knowing that human beings will never be perfect practitioners

of good ideas. But somehow I feel a unique responsibility in my ethical religion because it makes me alone responsible for the state of my relationships with the world around me. Our beliefs hinge on our treatment of one another.

How to behave in polarized situations so that they become less so is a nut I'm still trying to crack. How we can make sure we have not become polarized ourselves is every bit as much of a challenge. I think these two challenges are things we all need to be thinking about and working on, even as we take on the work of providing a liberal progressive voice in the world and steering our institution through turbulent waters. I am convinced that at least part of the answer lies in making sure that we step back from time to time and attempt to see the largest picture possible. We must acknowledge and accept the possibility that we may not be seeing enough of the picture and, therefore, we should leave ourselves open to new information. And finally, when we know a situation has the potential to be painful, we must always keep in mind the worth and dignity of every individual as we move into and through it.

Sunday Morning Meetings

October 5—"From California to the New York Island": Whose Country Is It, Anyway?

Dr. Khoren Arisian, Senior Leader

On October 7 citizens of California will vote on whether or not to recall Governor Gray Davis less than a year after his re-election, and will indicate whom they'd prefer to succeed him. More than 300 Californians filled out candidacy forms, including porn magazine publisher Larry Flynt, whose campaign moniker was along the lines of, "Vote for the smut peddler who cares!"

Eventually the list was honed down to a certified list of 135 individuals who filed correctly with the required minimum of 65 voter signatures and a \$3,500 entry fee. All nine candidates for the Democratic presidential sweepstakes signed a joint letter opposing the recall, referring to it as a "costly Republican power grab." Well, since when was politics not about power and since when were Republicans unwilling to spend all that it takes to win? Once moderate Republican Arnold Schwarzenegger announced his intention to enter the fray, Davis's likelihood of survival plummeted. However, Lieutenant-Governor Cruz Bustamante may yet inherit the office—or the wind. It's a crazy time! There's also the strangely humorous yet serious—and revealing—battle between Democrats and Republicans in the Texas legislature: 11 Democratic senators fled to New Mexico to preclude a quorum legally demanded by their Republican counterparts in Austin. Once again, Democrats were on the run, literally so in this case!

If California's next governor is a Republican, the national political balance will further erode the Democratic base. Bizarre politics has become the order of the day. The goofy California gubernatorial race has national implications, ethical as well as political. And, the bigger question looms: whose country is it, anyway?

October 12—The Death Penalty: Hidden Human Costs

David Kaczynski, Bill Babbitt, and Ray Krone

While public debate over the death penalty typically focuses on issues of crime and retribution, there is now a growing recognition that innocent people are often harmed by capital punishment. A wave of exonerations spurred by advances in DNA technology inspired Illinois Governor George Ryan to impose a moratorium on executions in

that state and ultimately to commute 163 death sentences to life imprisonment, as the only plausible remedy for what he termed “a broken system.” Ray Krone became the 100th death row exoneree in the United States since 1973, when his conviction was overturned in May 2002 after DNA testing established his innocence. Since then, Ray has become a compelling and eloquent spokesperson for all the innocent people (past, present, and future) sentenced to die for crimes that they did not commit.

David Kaczynski and Bill Babbitt both went to the authorities when they suspected their brothers of having committed murder. Whereas David’s brother was spared, Bill’s brother, a poor, uneducated, African-American, mentally ill Vietnam war veteran, was put to death before Bill’s eyes. The disparity in treatment received by the two defendants and their families reveals deep-seated inequality in the capital punishment system, where the scales of justice are often tipped by factors unrelated to the crime or the defendant’s character. Despite the different outcomes, both David and Bill experienced bitter disappointment as they saw the government work to thwart their humanitarian intentions. They too became innocent victims of a death penalty system that could not continue except through blindness or indifference to the human costs.

October 19—From Roosevelt to Reagan to Bush II: How Far Forward—or Back—Shall We Americans Go?

Dr. Khoren Arisian, Senior Leader

For many in the unreconstructed ultra-conservative American right, the year the nation changed for the worse was 1932, when FDR trounced Hoover for the presidency. The Great Depression was in full flower and “It’s the economy, stupid” would have been as relevant a pronouncement then as it was in 1992 and is again today. What the political

right looks upon most nostalgically is the McKinley era, a pre-1932 world. Not for them novelist John Steinbeck’s vision of an America devoted to social justice but the dream of a simpler country when the USA was still a predominantly conservative Protestant nation and where everyone had to look out for himself or herself.

At the same time, the Bush II Administration is pleased to be in charge of an advanced national security state, which we started to be in 1947 and which has been dangerously accelerated in that direction since. Can we be a democracy and an empire, too? Surely that is one of the critical questions of our time.

October 26—Ethical Culture’s Passport to Global Citizenship: The National Service Conference at the United Nations

Martha Gallahue, NSC Non-Governmental Organization Representative

Since 1947, The National Service Conference of The American Ethical Union has maintained accreditation at The United Nations through The Department of Public Information. Using the core inspiration of the UN and the NSC, Martha Gallahue will describe present initiatives that unleash Ethical Culture’s potency to promote peace and energize ourselves as global citizens.

From The Archives

Dr. Marc A. Bernstein

Nurturing Genius

Susan Sontag called him “simply the biggest, widest, most commanding talent in the history of American photography”; just one of his original platinum prints helped shape no less a photographer than Walker Evans; and he was the first photographer ever given a major retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art. His name was Paul Strand,

and Ethical Culture can rightly say that it launched his career.

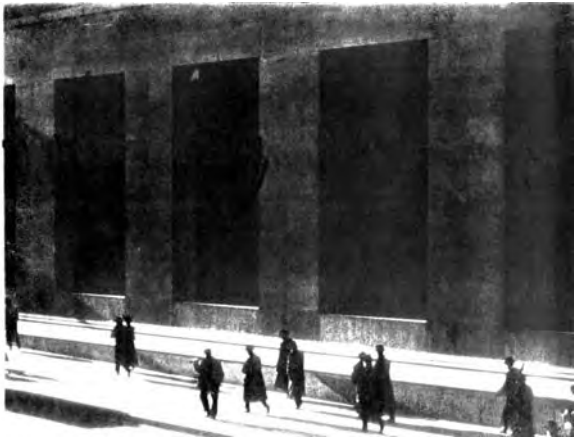
Born in 1890 to assimilated German Jews familiar with Ethical Culture, Strand entered the Ethical Culture School in 1904. In 1907 he joined Lewis Hine’s camera club as an extracurricular activity. Hine took the club to an exhibit of photographs at Alfred Stieglitz’s Fifth Avenue gallery; it was at this show, Strand later recollected, that he decided to become “an artist in photography.” He later took a formal course with Hine that taught him darkroom techniques and field work. Strand also profited from exposure to ECS’s art appreciation teacher, Charles Caffin, a critic and author, who in 1900 wrote the first book on photography as an art form. Not a bad pair of mentors.

Strand graduated from ECS in 1909, and within ten years had produced images unlike any seen before in American photography. His portraits of marginal Americans went beyond Hine, who had shown immigrants and child laborers in specific milieus that furthered his documentary purposes. Strand managed to capture the personality and life story of his subjects without their background. One of his figures, entitled simply, “Portrait, Five Points Square,” shows a middle-aged man dressed in an overcoat and hat. His face is unshaven, and his tired eyes, pouches beneath them, are locked in a vacant gaze. He is not ruminating like so many of Hine’s Ellis Island immigrants, but seems incapable of thought, almost catatonic. And yet, he does not evoke our pity. Like so many of Strand’s subjects, he retains an elemental dignity in spite of, or perhaps because of, the woe written on his face.

The year before Strand made this portrait, he shot what may be his most celebrated photograph. Entitled “Wall Street,” it captures a small number of people on their way to work during the early morning rush hour. Strand cast his

figures against the recently completed J.P. Morgan building, whose giant black windows, ominous and impersonal sentinels, completely dwarf the walkers. The political message—of a financial system that renders human beings small and inconsequential—is potent though never explicit.

During the same period that he produced both unforgettable portraiture and “Wall Street,” Strand did abstractions inspired by Cezanne, Braque, and



Picasso. He assembled crockery and fruit in different configurations in sunlight, then shot the whole with film that darkened the colors of the fruits and rendered them unreal. As the sun moved, each composition achieved different effects, the interplay of mass, light, and shadow, not the almost unidentifiable subject matter, making them work as art. These were not the first abstractions in American photography, but they were the best conceived and executed.

Such an innovator must have had innate talent before he arrived at ECS, but the school had a curriculum in which manual arts like photography were expected to stir the imagination, and it boasted teachers knowledgeable enough to nurture the gifted. Few such schools existed at the turn of the century, so it should not surprise us that a number of distinguished photographers, Strand foremost among them, should have developed in its rich soil.

Ethical Action Committee

*Carol Rost and Christine Swann,
Co-Chairs*

The Ethical Action Committee is happy to announce another release of \$2,500 from our dedicated DNA fund. We have sent this gift to the Innocence Project, which has chosen a recipient. We will report the results in the coming months.

Maria Fridman is revising her petition to the US Congress to rescind President Bush’s tax cuts of 2001 to include the tax cuts of May 2003. These cuts starve federal programs of needed funding and increase the burdens on struggling local governments, while doing little to help the vast majority of Americans. All of us will have an opportunity to protest our dissatisfaction with these unethical tax cuts by signing a new petition.

One of our many concerned citizens, who took the time to send off a letter to Speaker Gifford Miller protesting cuts to children’s programs, has received a reply. Miller detailed how he and the council gave the highest priority to protecting education. They restored funding for classroom supplies, so that the tools of learning will be available to all students. They also saved multi-service educational centers that provide services to 180,000 adults and children throughout New York City.

Commingled Lives

Barbara Litke

In his review of the photography exhibit currently at the New York Historical Society, “Remembering the Forgotten Ones,” a solo exhibition by Milton Rogovin, *The New York*

Times, August 22, 2003, Holland Cotter cites the Ethical Culture Society twice. Cotter begins the article with his attendance at a memorial service for his friend, Joseph Gilbert Riley, held at the Ethical Culture Center in Ossining, New York. His memory of Mr. Riley was of a person who devoted his life to improving the lives of those less fortunate by teaching hard-to-reach students. Cotter was then reminded of the photographer, Louis Hine, who was trained in sociology. Like Milton Rogovin, his photography documented people who lived their lives in an environment of deprivation. Cotter mentions that Hine taught sociology and photography at the Ethical Culture School in Manhattan.

Both Hine and Rogovin concentrated on “portraits of ‘ordinary’ people living lives in poverty but lives full of richness.” With little to offer by way of remuneration during the depression of the 1930’s, Rogovin gave prints to his subjects. Offering respect and friendship, he overcame their initial suspicion of him as an interloper and gave them a place in the history of the times through his art.

Finding similarity between Cotter and the Ethical Society, my thoughts turned to the New York Ethical Society’s annual hosting of “Unforgotten Voices” in the Social Hall. The men and women who bring their ‘unforgotten’ voices are homeless or formerly so. Some have attained a better lifestyle and are working and have relocated to permanent housing. With great exuberance, they entertain one another (and guests) in a spirit that celebrates the essence of life. They tell personal stories, play music, and sing songs that speak of sadness, loss, and joy. Their lives and their histories connect with the lives of those Milton Rogovin has preserved in print.

NYSEC 2004 PLEDGE DRIVE

Answering the Call–Together

The Call–The Society *must increase its income* to support its programs.

Answering Together–How do we increase our income? Who should be responsible? *We all are!*

If not us, who? If not now, when?

The 2004 Pledge Campaign presents an opportunity for each of us to extend the reach of the Society’s good works. Pledging gives the Board a clearer picture of our members’ expected contribution, allowing better planning. *The Board strongly urges everyone to pledge and make this fundraising effort a success.*

Some basic facts to consider

Each member costs the Society at least \$137 annually for American Ethical Union dues of \$87 and about \$50 for the newsletter. Additionally there are programming costs, staff to pay, a building to maintain.

Answering the Call–Together

Each of us must think seriously about pledging. Keep in mind what it costs the Society to maintain you as a member and commit. **Simply pledge**, as generously as you can.

Please consider the following information from other religious institutions and from our own past financial figures.

Comparative Pledge Information 2002-2003

	<u>NYSEC</u>	<u>Washington D.C. Ethical Society</u>	<u>St. Bartholomew, NY</u>
%Total income	5.17%	64%	50%
Pledge goal	none	\$400,000	\$4,250,000
Actually received	\$63,777*	\$325,000	\$1,718,464 (six months)

*NYSEC friends and members pledged – and additionally contributed – a total of \$148,822 which is 12% of total income.

Our Goals for 2004

Every member pledges; and \$250,000 pledged and paid

We, the members and friends of NYSEC, need to reverse the presently unsustainable pattern in which we find ourselves and move toward fiscal health and committed responsibility.

The issue is not only about how much money our Society needs. It is also about what kind of members we choose to become. Let us join together with enthusiasm in supporting the Society that we love and cherish.

October 2003

(Office hours for the month: 9:00 am – 6:00 pm)

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	Great Books Oct. 1 – The Bible, Ecclesiastes <i>Sophocles, Oedipus the King</i>	ECRA: (Ethical Culture Retirement Activities) Oct. 8 – Henry James, <i>Washington Square</i> Politics, Leadership, and Justice Oct. 15 – Isak Dinesen, <i>Sorrow-Acre</i>	1 November 2003 Newsletter Deadline 6:00 pm – Men's Group 7:30 pm – Shelter 7:30 pm – Great Books	2 7:30 pm – Shelter	3	4 9:30 am & 1:30 pm Supervised Visitation
5 7:30 am – WQXR-FM (96.3) 10:15 am – Leaders' Writings 11:00 am – Ethics for Children 11:30 am – Morning Meeting 12:45 pm – Cafeteria 1:30 pm – Ethics in the News 2:00 pm – Lay Leadership 7:30 pm – Shelter	6 6:00 pm – Board of Trustees 7:30 pm – Shelter	7 6:30 pm – Foundations of EC 7:30 pm – Shelter	8 3:00 pm – ECRA 7:30 pm – Shelter	9 7:30 pm – Shelter	10	11 9:30 am & 1:30 pm Supervised Visitation
12 10:00 am – Membership Growth 10:30 am – Colloquy 11:00 am – Ethics for Children 11:30 am – Morning Meeting 12:45 pm – Cafeteria 1:30 pm – Ethics Study 2:00 pm – The Death Penalty 7:30 pm – Shelter	13 5:00 pm – Caring Committee 7:30 pm – Shelter	14 6:00 pm – Women's Group 6:30 pm – Foundations of EC 7:30 pm – Shelter	15 6:00 pm – Membership Services Committee 7:30 pm – Shelter 7:30 pm – Politics, Leadership, and Justice	16 7:30 pm – Shelter	17 7:00 pm – Film Forum	18 9:30 am & 1:30 pm Supervised Visitation
19 7:30 am – WQXR-FM (96.3) 10:30 am – Poetry Reading 11:00 am – Ethics for Children 11:30 am – Morning Meeting 12:45 pm – Cafeteria 1:00 pm – Orientation 2:00 pm – Lay Leadership 7:30 pm – Shelter	20 6:30 pm – Social Service Board 7:30 pm – Shelter	21 6:30 pm – Foundations of EC 7:30 pm – Shelter	22 7:30 pm – Shelter	23	24	25 9:30 am & 1:30 pm Supervised Visitation
26 Daylight Saving Time Ends 10:30 am – Yoga Meditation 11:00 am – Ethics for Children 11:30 am – Morning Meeting 12:45 pm – Cafeteria 1:30 pm – Film 7:30 pm – Shelter	27 7:30 pm – Shelter	28 6:30 pm – Foundations of EC 7:30 pm – Shelter	29 7:30 pm – Shelter	30 6:00 pm – Ethical Action Committee 7:30 pm – Shelter	31	

Ethical Culture is a humanistic religious and philosophical movement in which people share a core of common values: the worth of each individual, ethics as central to our lives, eliciting the best from each other and doing good in the world.

We seek truth as a growing, changing body of knowledge based on experience, reason and scientific observation, and seek to use it in support of human well-being.

NEW YORK SOCIETY FOR
**ETHICAL
CULTURE** 

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