



Ethical Views

February 2004 Vol. 118, No. 6 Newsletter of the Philadelphia Ethical Society

Sunday, February 1

Platform: Richard Kiniry, Leader, Philadelphia Ethical Society

Love and the United States of America

Government is no doubt a balancing act between interests but as the organizer of our common life, what attitude or values should government actions represent? Of course, we want government to be efficient and careful with our money, and depending on your political philosophy, you wish for more or less government involvement, but should we expect the government to express love for the people?

Sunday, February 8

Platform: *Love Festival*

Join members and friends as we celebrate our annual Love Festival. Enjoy a fun-filled, interactive program of music, singing and poetry as we extol our love of Nature, art, food and all the wondrous things that enrich our lives. A chance to share your story!

Sunday, February 15

Platform: Amy Keitzman, Activist

Centering in a Storm: Perspectives on Avoiding Burnout and Nurturing Equanimity in Hard Times

Amy Keitzman, Quaker and political activist will share what has helped her and those she has worked with to keep healthy, stress - free, and balanced as they continue to try to make the world a better place. Her techniques include meditation, journaling, diet, exercise, and therapy.

Sunday, February 22

Platform: Bart Worden, Leader Ethical Culture Society of

Westchester

Making Love in Ethical Communities.

Ethical Societies create communities of people who are dedicated to the task of making ethics central to human living. Clearly, relationships are key to the ethical project but to what extent does love figure into our ethical yearnings? This address explores the positive and negative aspects of human love and the relationship between love and ethical living for those who work to create ethical communities.

Sunday, February 29

Platform: Dr. C. James Trotman, Professor of English, Founding Director of the Frederick Douglass Institute, West Chester University
The Life of Dr. Matthew Anderson

In 1899, Dr. Matthew Anderson, a pivotal influence in the religious, business, and educational history of Philadelphia, founded Berean Institute. Dr. Anderson also founded the Berean Presbyterian Church and the Berean Savings Fund Society.

Dr. Trotman earned his doctorate from Teachers College of Columbia University. His most recent publication is a book entitled Multiculturalism: Roots and Realities, a collection of essays from the 1995 centennial celebration of Frederick Douglass, the great 19TH century orator, abolitionist and author.

Leader's Message

Experts

Richard Kiniry

My old habit of watching *Sixty Minutes* on Sunday nights has waned through the years. Since football or some other sport postpones the show so often, I find other things to do. But when I do catch *Sixty Minutes* and watch it to the end, I marvel that Andy Rooney is still whining on and on. I find it sad. I remember how he used to comment on the real issues of the day, searching for the false note or hypocrisy. Now he cleans out his office or bedroom closet and discusses what he finds.

There are thousands of people who, like Andy Rooney, are expected to write a regular essay - myself for one - and it seems those writers can't help but get predictable and stale. You have to wonder why people are expected to listen any longer. A writer might be a clever wordsmith, or broadly educated, or have an unusually insightful turn of mind but after years of reading his or her take on life, couldn't you write it yourself?

Our plugged - in world is full of pundits and experts who unselfconsciously tell us what to think. It makes for a certain mental laziness. We don't have to read or think through issues because we can regularly read our particular group of experts who analyze life for us. People get in the habit of thinking our public life is a spectator activity and not actually their problem. This makes for a rather simple world. People know the arguments but the information, if any, >

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Platforms at 11:00 AM. All are Welcome!
Coffee Hour & Discussion follow the Platforms.
Piano Interludes performed by Tim Ribchester.
Childcare provided at no charge.

Experts

that supports those arguments remains only vaguely known. It is as if a few hundred heads control the voices of billions of people.

There is also an element of classism in the pundit culture. The experts have gone to similar schools, talk to each other and to those with money and power. So, even when they claim to speak for the people, most pundits are speaking from the point of view and from the interest of their class. Their expression of opinion does not include the actual perspective of most people.

So, I propose that in our small way we expand the gang of pundits by opening up the process here in *Ethical Views*. Let us have greater variety of points of view. Let us all get in the habit of articulating our points of view. Not just by reacting with letters to the editor, finding fault with someone's opinion or making tirades for or against a policy, but Op-Ed articles - a slice of life that the rest of us don't know about, personal observation about ideas and issues. We can have a Member's Message along with a Leader's Message and at times that article can replace the Leader's Message. Of course, that will make life easier for me. If you are interested, let me know. <>



March Forum on Prison Reform

At their December meeting, members of the Ethical Action Committee voted unanimously to collaborate with the First Unitarian Church of Philadelphia in sponsoring a three-hour workshop, *Crime and Punishment: Is Justice Being Served?* on Saturday, March 6, from 9:00 a.m. to noon, at the First Unitarian Church on Chestnut and 22nd Streets. The moderator of the program will be William DiMascio, executive director of the Pennsylvania Prison Society, who says Pennsylvania has the harshest criminal justice system in the country. DiMascio, an attorney and Vietnam veteran, adds that nationwide, over two million people are behind bars, four times as many as 25 years ago, even though the crime rate has fallen (violent crime, in particular, has remained constant or declined in the last 25 years). Many of those behind bars are mentally ill, incarcerated because social support systems have failed. And with mandatory minimum sentences, these and other prisoners are remaining in prison longer than before.

More details about registering for the forum, which includes lunch, will be forthcoming. <>



No Law

by Arnold Fishman

Rev. Dr. W. Wilson Goode Sr., former Mayor of Philadelphia, in his recent platform, *Faith in the Public Square*, makes a compelling case for alleviating the suffering of the needy in our poor communities. He and other proponents of the present administration's faith-based initiative, which would funnel tax dollars to churches, argue that religion has an absolute right to access to the public square, while at the same time asserting that no one may tell them how to worship. Orthodox Christianity teaches that salvation can occur only through an acceptance of Jesus, and the faithful are obliged to save the souls of the rest of us — ergo, their duty to proselytize. Religions are also exempt from laws outlawing discrimination in employment. The Pope is free to say only men can be priests and the Salvation Army can fire you for not being a true believer, our courts have held. They beg the question. The issue is: whether it is constitutional to use money, which must be paid under penalty of prosecution, for an institution whose duty to proselytize cannot be curtailed, and is not bound by the rules that we as a society have found it necessary to impose on all other employers.

The First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States of America (numero uno in the Bill of Rights) confers what are generally recognized as our most important rights. These are the freedoms without which a democracy is doomed, such as speech, press and assembly. Prior even to conferring these sacrosanct liberties we are admonished, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; ..." In plain words government must not favor religion nor can it tell us whether, or how, to pray. These words caused Jefferson to write later that a "wall of separation has been created." When government and religion join forces it >

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The Board approved the following policy statement at its December 17, 2003 meeting:

The Philadelphia Ethical Society supports the peaceful and fair resolution of the Israeli - Palestinian conflict through the creation of a homeland for the Palestinian people and the preservation of the homeland of the Jewish people. We pledge to work toward those goals.

invariably creates a tension between fostering that religion, and regulating the recipient. The line between the Establishment and the Free Exercise clauses is so narrow that the courts have created a test for its discernment. The Lemon test, named after the lead plaintiff Alton Lemon, a past president of the Philadelphia Ethical Society, sites several considerations. One of the factors is the degree of entanglement of governmental and religious institutions. Certainly religion has access to the public square, but at whose expense? If the religion wants to use its own money its right to access is guaranteed. Anyone may contribute to that effort, or not, as they see fit, and the politicians cannot tell them how to spend their money.

Perhaps the practice of diverting public cash to religious use, if legally suspect, is sustainable on pragmatic grounds. I concede that there are areas where faith-based groups offer the only relief there is. This, too, is disingenuous. For some time it has been the practice of religions to separately incorporate their social outreach as we have done with our Camp Linden and the AEU has just done with its affiliated organization Just Matrimony, which charges our Leaders with raising the consciousness of those who they are about to unite to the plight of those couples who cannot marry. These secular corporations may neither proselytize nor discriminate. According-ly, any not-for-profit corporation truly interested in ameliorating human suffering, which is willing to forgo attempting to convert everyone and be an "equal opportunity employer," can receive public funds. They enjoy tax exempt status, and "contributions are deductible to the full extent of the law." Government can decide who to finance based upon effectiveness and not be subject to charges of parochialism. Needy citizens will not have to choose whether the hot meal is worth suffering through the prayerful "sales pitch," and my taxes will not be used for your religion. ◇

Finding Meaning

Temma Fishman, Chair

At our annual *Winter Solstice Celebration*, we bestowed our own meaning on the season with artistically-arranged pine boughs, menorahs, and candelabras, setting the stage for singing, poetry, and the magical music of Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker* exquisitely rendered by our pianist, Tim Ribchester. Candlelight softened our faces as we contemplated the long, cold winter ahead. We read poet Greta Crosby's homage to winter's beauty "The clarity and brilliance of the winter sky delight" and found hope in the reading, "Perhaps there is only one person's voice lacking for peace to come about in the world." We are the meaning makers who celebrate Nature, not worship it. Leader Richard Kiniry reminded us that the Solstice is about honoring the harsh side of Nature even as we hold tight to each other. Together we made the light that graced the room as we lit every candle. We savored Rabbi Sherwin Wine's words, "We shall offer each other the help that Nature denies". We sang winter songs and made sure we didn't take it all too seriously by reading from Douglas Adams' *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, "There is a theory which states that if ever anybody discovers exactly what the Universe is for and why it is here, it will instantly disappear and be replaced by something even more bizarre and inexplicable. There is another theory which states that this has already happened."

When someone who wanted to challenge his lack of belief in God asked long-time member Lester Waters "Who do you think made the trees, birds and animals?" he would reply, "I don't know and neither do you." He was one of several beloved members we lost this year whom we honored at our annual >

Memorial Sunday. Bertha Waters, his wife of many years and partner in raising seven children, told us of his attitude toward what he called, "religious nonsense". Lester's father was a Methodist minister and he lived with a Pentecostal grandmother. This made him fiercely independent and an avid reader. Another member, Ruth Smith, who died this year at the age of 98, was born in poverty in a shtetl in Russia, and was almost killed by the White Army in the Russian Revolution. She came here at the age of 16 and settled in the Fairmount area of Philadelphia. Her search for meaning and cultural and intellectual stimulation eventually led her to the Ethical Society. We remembered Merle Jacobs, mother of Saul Machles, who spent many years searching for the next green pasture while living an adventurous, irreverent life. Her last 6 weeks were particularly happy living in a new apartment where people accepted her as she was. Frequent visitor Zareefah Storey honored a mother whom she regarded as her best friend, Jordan and Kate Orange a dear father, and Arnold Fishman a good friend. A flower was planted for each loved one and for all the service people and Iraqis who were killed in this terrible war. We reminisced about past leaders Lester Mondale and Walter Lawton. In closing, Leader Richard Kiniry said, "Each of us has a greater presence than just the enumerated facts of our lives. We honor the dead in our living. The best answer to death is the whole-hearted affirmation of our lives."

The Reverend Dr. W. Wilson Goode, Sr. is at the center of the debate concerning the question of whether religious, non-profit organizations have the right to receive public funding to carry out programs that relieve the suffering of people in their communities. In his talk, *Faith in the Public Square*, Dr. Goode, former mayor of Philadelphia and presently Senior Advisor on Faith Based Initiatives for Public/Private Ventures,>

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Finding Meaning

argued passionately that they do. Dr. Goode sees government funding as an opportunity for churches to be on a level playing field with other non-profit organizations. He does not fear that this is a violation of the Establishment Clause, which in his view, means that government will neither require nor prevent citizens from worshipping in a certain way. Churches reside in neighborhoods where the problems are, but the problems are so severe that the meager resources of local congregations can't deal with them. Millions and even billions of dollars are spent by non-profit secular organizations, and Dr. Goode said, "I want in!" He feels that since tax dollars come from the people, they should be used to help the people. Dr. Goode asserts that local congregations should be lighthouses, not mere clubhouses. People suffering from drugs, poverty, homelessness, teen pregnancy, and low educational achievement cry out for relief. He suggests that churches have a mandate based on a biblical mission to reach out to them. Dr. Goode visited a local prison where he met a grandfather, father, and grandson who were all incarcerated and met there for the first time in their lives. The grandson came to Dr. Goode declaring, "I have a son I haven't seen. I will see him for the first time in jail". If there is no intervention, 70% of incarcerated parents' children will wind up in jail themselves. The Amachi Program, an initiative created by religious leaders, attempts to address this problem. It brings together local congregations and is very successful - against strong odds. Seven hundred kids have been mentored and not one parent has complained about proselytizing. Mentored children have dramatically improved in academics, school attendance, and behavior. Dr. Goode revealed that he himself is the son of an incarcerated father. Local churches mentored him and he became the mayor of what was then the fourth largest city in the United States. Every year 600,000 people return to local communities from jail, but 70% end up returning because there are no reentry programs. Faith based organizations have taken this issue head on. Dr. Goode is a proud advocate who believes he is called to do this work. In his words, "Justice requires that we serve these people."

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“Fair” Trade Workshop Philadelphia Ethical Society

Sunday, February 22, from 2 to 4 PM

Are we really losing jobs to other countries?

Are regulations for maintaining our environment being undermined? Who benefits from more trade?

What have we learned from ten years with NAFTA?

What's coming up?

The Philadelphia Ethical Society is hosting a workshop conducted by the Philadelphia Area United for a Fair Economy.

The workshop will answer questions and alert you to action options. There will be good opportunity to express and discuss your own interests and understandings.

For more information, contact Nick Sanders at Sanders508@Earthlink.net or (215) 662-5636.

To register, send:

1. Name
2. Address
3. Phone (for any last-minute info)
4. Any special concerns or questions on fair trade
5. \$5 (\$2 for students and seniors)

to the




Philadelphia Ethical Society,
1906 South Rittenhouse Square, Philadelphia, PA 19103
by February 9.

If postmarked later, add \$5 more --
and phone (215) 735-3456 by 2/20, to confirm receipt.



February at the Philadelphia Ethical Society

Celebrate Love and Relationship

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Sat
1 10:45 AM Singing Practice 11 AM Platform <i>Love and the United States of America</i>	2	3  Arnold Fishman	4 <u>Class</u> 7:30 PM Defining the Good Life	5	6	7
8 11 AM Platform <i>Love Festival</i>	9 <u>Class</u> 7:30 PM Intro to Ethical Humanism	10  Carol Bond < on the 9 TH	11 <u>Meetings</u> 6:30 PM Ethical Action Committee 7:30 PM Education Committee	12	13	14
15 11 AM Platform <i>Centering in a Storm: Perspectives on</i>	16	17	18 <u>Meetings</u> 6:30 PM Exec Committee 7:30 PM Board of Trustees	19 <u>Class</u> 7:30 PM The History of Ethics	20 7 PM Social Fat Tuesday	21
22 11 AM Platform <i>Making Love in Ethical Communities</i> 2 PM Workshop <i>"Fair" Trade</i>	23	24 <u>Class</u> 7:30 PM Social Analysis: Economic Justice	25 <u>Meeting</u> 730 PM Camp Linden Committee	26	27	28  Birthdays
29 11 AM Platform <i>Dr. Matthew Anderson</i>						

Fat Tuesday comes to the PES - Friday, February 20 at 7 PM

We have beads and coins but there will be no baring of anything but baby bottoms. Bring a baby picture for a fun guessing game. Festive colorful attire is the order of the day and we'll have Cajun food and music. Sign up to bring a dish and \$5 or just contribute \$10.

Laissez le bon temps roulez! Philly gumbo anyone?!!!

Sunday Morning Volunteers

make Sundays special for all of us.

Ushers

Rick Zorger, Richard Kiniry, Saul Machles, Joe Monte & Arnold Fishman

Flower Dedications

Ken Greiff, Chair

February 1 From Temma Fishman, in honor of her husband Arnold's birthday. We won't tell which one, but the numbers add up to 11.

February 8 From Bob Moore, in honor of Charles Darwin's birthday, February 12, 1809. "There is grandeur in this view of life.....that whilst this planet has gone on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being evolved."

February 15 From Susan Jo Klein, in honor of the birthday of Gerry D'Alessio.

February 22 From Ethel Boyer, "Thank you Jean for all you do for us."

February 29 From Lew Wilkinson, in memory of his wife Jane.

Greeters

Saul Machles, Chair

February 1 Saul Machles

February 8 Lew Wilkinson

February 15 Joe Monte

February 22 Saul Machles

February 29 Temma Fishman

Coffee Hour Hosts

Harry Thorn, Chair

February 1 Doris Leicher and Howard Peer

February 8 David Ralston

February 15 Ken Greiff

February 22 Joe Monte

February 29 Harry Thorn

Coffee Hour Lunch

February 1 Doris Leicher and Howard Peer

February 8 Christanna Betonte

February 15 Jean Bradley

February 22 Ken Greiff

February 29 Betsy Lightbourn

March for Women's Lives

Sunday, April 25 in Washington, DC

The Philadelphia Ethical Society is supporting the *March for Women's Lives*. For the first time ever this pro-choice march is a collaborative effort of national women's rights groups - The Feminist Majority, NARAL Pro-Choice America, National Organization for Women and Planned Parenthood Federation of America.

The march will begin at noon from the Lincoln Memorial. After marching, a rally will be held from 1 to 4 P.M. on the National Mall. Special seating will be available for people with disabilities. The rally program will be signed for the hearing impaired. The route is wheelchair accessible and transportation will be provided for those who cannot negotiate the route.

The time is right for a public demonstration of historic size in support of abortion rights and reproductive freedom. Our rights are under attack as they haven't been in over a decade, and Roe v. Wade hangs by a thread in the Supreme Court. You can help build the momentum we need. So, mark your calendar and join us to *March for Women's Lives*. Contact the Society at 215-735-3456 if you would like to be part of our group.

Tentatively, buses will be leaving from the Wachovia Center in South Philadelphia, Progress Plaza, the Media Courthouse in Media, and the Norristown Courthouse.

The fare is \$30 per ticket till March 11 and \$35 after.

To reserve bus space, make your check out to "March for Women's Lives-Philadelphia Coalition" and mail it to :

March for Women's Lives - Philadelphia. Coalition
c/o Planned Parenthood
1144 Locust Street
Philadelphia, PA 19107

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School for Ethics

Defining the Good Life

This is an opportunity to examine your values as you confront real situations in the news or in your personal life. Each session will have a predetermined article or reading to consider.

Wednesdays, February 4, March 3, April 7 and May 5 at 7:30 PM

Introduction To Ethical Humanism

The Philadelphia Ethical Society is part of a 127 year old humanist religious tradition. This is a chance to delve into that history and tradition. Interested visitors, newcomers and members are invited to examine the basic ideas of Ethical Culture. Do they make sense and can they make your life better? Using the Eight Commitments of Ethical Culture we will look at the intrinsic worth of every human being, naturalism, nontheism, and ethics as a way of life.

Monday, February 9 at 7:30 PM

The History of Ethics

We are discussing Peter Singer's book, Practical Ethics and Daniel Dennett's Freedom Evolves.

Thursdays, February 19, March 18, April 15 and May 20 at 7:30 PM

Social Analysis: Economic Justice

This ongoing discussion group has been examining significant economic theories, seeking explanations of poverty and economic inequality.

Tuesdays, February 24, March 23, April 27 and May 25 at 7:30 PM.