



# Ethical Views

November 2008 Vol. 123, No. 3 Newsletter of the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia



## Platforms

**Sunday, November 2, 2008**

***Buddy, Can You Spare a Dime?***

**Speaker: Richard L. Kiniry, Leader, Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia**

Now that the economy is contracting due to the financial crisis it is easy to point to past policy mistakes, but as we contract our own lifestyles the bigger question becomes the basic justice of our economic system. Forgetting historic economic theory for now, what does the Ethical Humanist approach offer as a guide to future economic actions?

**Sunday, November 9, 2008**

***I Never Met a Chimpanzee with a Learning Disability***

**Speaker: Bob Kay, Retired Psychiatrist and Associate of the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia**

Nature has lessons to teach us. Almost all young chimpanzees become, in their own sweet time, well-integrated adult chimpanzees, given need satisfaction, limit-setting, and demonstrations of adult behavior. Every human child has unique strengths, weaknesses, interests, experiences and rates of development. The concept of "learning disability" is a humiliating artifact of testing, measurement, coercion and arbitrary expectations.

**Sunday, November 16, 2008**

***Lifting the Hoods: Real Victims or Icons? Art, Torture, and the Human Cost of Abuse at Abu Ghraib***

**Speaker: Daniel Heyman, Visiting Assistant Professor of Studio Art, Swarthmore College**

The photos taken by American perpetrators of torture, our primary visual resource to understand the torture

that took place at Abu Ghraib, re-victimize those wrongly detained and abused each time they are reproduced. Heyman will discuss the paintings and prints he has made of many of these Iraqis in face to face interviews, giving each victim a chance to own his story in his own words and reclaim his human dignity.

**Sunday, November 23, 2008**

**Humanist Thanksgiving**

The Society's annual celebration of the bounty of life. As we share a Thanksgiving meal produced by the members, we celebrate harvest time with song, poetry and reflection. We both honor the bounty of the earth and remember the unequal distribution of that bounty in our human world. We will have a special collection for Kiva.

**Sunday, November 30, 2008**

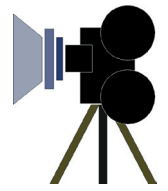
**Follow the Money**

**Speaker: Lori Lipman Brown, Director of the Secular Coalition for America**

Brown will focus on funneling public funds into religious education and churches; easing rules against employment discrimination based on religion with federal funds; using earmarks to fund constitutionally suspect projects, Faith-based initiatives and charitable choice language in Federal programs. <>

## Thursday Night Talkies

**November 20 at 7:00p.m.**



Please come join us for a viewing of: **The Power of Community – How Cuba Survived Peak Oil**, Recipient of People's Choice Award for Best International Film at [Aotearoa Environmental Film Festival](http://www.aotearoaenvironmentalfilmfestival.org/)

When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1990, Cuba's economy went into a tailspin. With imports of oil cut by more than half – and food by 80 percent – people were desperate. This film tells of the hardships and struggles as well as the community and creativity of the Cuban people during this difficult time. Cubans share how they transitioned from a highly mechanized, industrial agricultural system to one using organic methods of farming and local, urban gardens. It is an unusual look into the Cuban culture during this economic crisis, which they call "The Special Period." The film opens with a short history of Peak Oil, a term for the time in our history when world oil production will reach its all-time peak and begin to decline forever. Cuba, the only country that has faced such a crisis – the massive reduction of fossil fuels – is an example of options and hope.

<http://www.powerofcommunity.org/cm/index.php>

Popcorn provided with refreshments and open discussion/reflection to follow.

Thursday Night Talkies is to be a regular Ethical Society event scheduled for 7:00pm on the Third Thursday of the month.

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### *Leader's Message*

## **PRACTICAL MATTERS**

by Richard L. Kiniry

As a religious group that professes values and opinions relating to social justice, we are challenged to come up to the plate and do something. But as a religious Society we are constrained in what we can do. If the solution to a social problem appears to lie with politicians, the most effective avenue of action would seem to be partisan politics. But in a secular state we must uphold another value; we can support values and policy but not politicians. Besides that, while every congregation in America probably leans in one political direction or another, freedom of conscience must be respected, especially by us. There are myriad legitimate reasons for voting or not voting for any one candidate.

Campaigning for certain causes is a different matter. In such cases, the principle is the focus and although issues are often identified with certain political parties and ideologies, it is the pain, the dislocation, the neglect behind the cause that we are addressing.

While it is usually the true believers who are involved in any organized social justice cause, the primary purpose of those groups must be affecting the minds and hearts of those who remain unconcerned. Civil rights for African Americans did not start to be addressed until a critical mass was created that felt the injustice. Breaking through the normal self-interest of the average citizen and bringing those citizens to the point of concern for distant peoples or the environment is the ultimate aim of any social change group.

And that is the aim of many of our Sunday Platforms – an issue is brought

to our attention in the hope that some of us will get involved, or at least that we will be more aware. Beyond that, the focus of our Ethical Action Committee's efforts is either getting us to participate in some event or organizing forums that will present an issue that touches the minds and hearts of others in the larger community.

Which leads to the reason for this message. The EAC will be doing a few new things in the near future. We will be offering a monthly movie night that will start in November with a film that focuses on resource depletion. And close to my heart, we are going to initiate a project in which members are invited to help build a network of religious congregations involved in anti-death penalty work.

We can't just wish ourselves to a better world, it takes work. And we have some work in mind. Pennsylvanians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty is leading the abolition effort that was so successful in New Jersey but PADP lacks the person-power to do the necessary but time-consuming work of contacting the area's liberal congregations about the abolition effort. That could be a small but significant project for us. We're hoping that after a Sunday Platform speaker on the death penalty issue, some of you will be inspired to get involved in the hard work of phone calling and letter writing.

Abolishing the death penalty is a basic human respect issue – a person's life does not belong to the state – yet abolition is a hard sell because of the unattractiveness of the victims. Working against the Death Penalty is truly a walk with our foundational values. Other religious groups might find pretexts within their belief systems to execute human beings, but because intrinsic worth is our foundation we are forced to respect and fight for those who appear to be the least deserving of our brothers and sisters.



## **SCHOOL FOR ETHICS**

### **THE IDEA OF GOD**

This three-session discussion group will look at what human beings have said about God and what they have been trying to say about life when they speak of God. We will start with Karen Armstrong's *The History of God*, then move on to Richard Dawkins's *The God Delusion* and end with Michael Benedikt's *God is the Good We Do*. This group is open to members and non-members but you must sign up on Sundays, or by contacting the office by phone or email.

Led by Richard L. Kiniry.

***Second Tuesdays – November 11, December 9 – 7:30 pm, Weston Room***



### **A PEOPLE'S HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES**

As we mature we learn that the history of the United States that we learned in high school civics class was patriotic but not objective. This discussion group offers an opportunity to learn the rest of the story. Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States* offers the counter history of America from Columbus's arrival in "China" (actually, Hispaniola) to the "War on Terrorism". Members, friends and the curious are invited. The book is available in paperback. We will be reading the first five chapters for the first meeting.

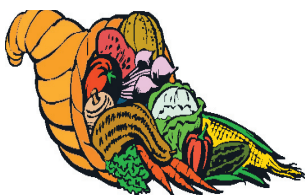
***First Wednesdays of the month, starting November 5, 7:30***

# November 2008

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<p><b>2</b></p> <p>10:45 a.m. - 4th Floor Ethics for Children</p> <p>11:00 a.m. Platform: <b>Buddy, Can You Spare a Dime?</b> Richard L. Kiniry</p>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<p><b>5</b></p> <p>Meeting - Weston Room 6:30 p.m. Finance Committee</p> <p>Class - 7:30 p.m. <b>A People's History of the US</b></p>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>
<p><b>9</b></p> <p>10:45 a.m. - 4th Floor Ethics for Children</p> <p>11:00 a.m. Platform: <b>I Never Met a Chimpanzee with a Learning Disability</b> Bob Kay</p>	<b>10</b>	<p><b>11</b></p> <p>Class - <b>7:30p.m.</b> <i>The Idea of God</i></p>	<p><b>12</b></p> <p>Meetings - Weston Room 6:30 p.m. Education Committee</p> <p>7:45 p.m. Ethical Action Committee</p>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>
<p><b>16</b></p> <p>10:45 a.m. - 4th Floor Ethics for Children</p> <p>11:00 a.m. Platform: <b>Lifting the Hoods: Real Victims or Icons? Art, Torture, and the Human Cost of Abuse at Abu Ghraib</b> - Daniel Heyman</p>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<p><b>19</b></p> <p>Meetings - Weston Room 6:30 p.m. Exec. Committee</p> <p>7:30 p.m. Board of Trustees</p>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>
<p><b>23</b></p> <p>11:00 a.m. <b>Humanist Thanksgiving Celebration</b></p>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<p><b>26</b></p> <p>Meeting 7:00 p.m. Camp Linden Committee</p>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>
<p><b>30</b></p> <p>10:45 a.m. - 4th Floor Ethics for Children</p> <p>11:00 a.m. Platform: <b>Follow the Money</b> Lori Lipman Brown</p>						<p><b>31</b></p> <p>Birthdays</p>

## Humanist Thanksgiving

Sunday - November 23rd - 11:00 a.m.



Join members and friends for a Humanist Thanksgiving Festival. Share in the feast prepared with loving hands by our community. In addition to the fabulous turkey, a treasured tradition, we need folks to bring their favorite side dishes. Be prepared to sign up on Sunday mornings with your contribution. With music, poetry, readings, and song, we will celebrate Fall's bounty and the company of friends. \$5 if you bring a dish; \$10 if you don't.

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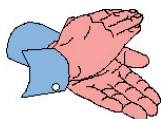
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## SUNDAY MORNING VOLUNTEERS

**Flower Dedications** - Ramona Ward, Chair

November 2 - Richard Kiniry: "In  
Memory of His Aunt Mary Hagan."

November 9 - Terry and Lyle Murley:  
"In Celebration of Their 32nd Wedding  
Anniversary."

November 16 - Ramona Ward: "To  
Celebrate the Inner Child in Each of Us."

November 23 - Humanist Thanksgiving  
Celebration

November 30 - Doris Leicher: "In  
Honor of Howard's Birthday."

**Ushers** - Betsy Lightborn, Chair

November 5 -  
November 12 -  
November 19 - T.B.A.  
November 26 -

**Coffee Hour Lunch**

November 2 - Group A-E  
November 9 - Group F-L  
November 16 - Group M-P  
November 23 - Humanist Thanksgiving  
November 30 - Group Q-Z

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