



Ethical Views

January 2011 Vol. 125, No. 5 Newsletter of the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia

Sunday Platforms

Sunday, January 2, 2011

Memorial Sunday



This is the time to remember those we love but who have left us behind, a time to feel ourselves in the stream of life. Guided by **Richard**

L. Kiniry, Leader of the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia, we will remember and honor our members who have died in the past year and others who have played a significant part in our lives. Members are invited to come and share their stories and memories. We will also welcome and honor those who have recently become members of the Society.



Sunday, January 9, 2011

Bringing Human Rights Home

Speakers: Sarah Paoletti and Ezgi Taboglu, Transnational Legal Clinic at University of Pennsylvania Law School

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) involves a review of the human rights records of all 192 United Nations Member States once every four years, under the auspices of the UN Human Rights Council, which provides the opportunity for each State to declare what actions they have taken to improve the human rights situations in their countries and to fulfill their human rights treaty obligations and those rights set forth in the UN Charter and the UN Declaration on Human Rights. The US government appeared for review



on Nov. 5, 2010 with representatives from 11 different federal agencies, demonstrating an unprecedented level of engagement in the human rights discourse. The outcome report was preliminarily adopted on Nov. 9. The next step is the return of the United States before the United Nations Human Rights Council in March 2011 to state what recommendations it will be implementing, which it will take under consideration, and which recommendations it will reject. The Transnational Legal Clinic has been working together with the U.S. Human Rights Network to coordinate broad civil society participation in all aspects of the historic first Universal Periodic Review of the United States.

Sunday, January 16, 2011

Living an Ethical Life: Members' Platform

Speakers: Doris Dabrowski, Michael Fiore, Marta Guttenberg, Garry O'Rourke, Leonard Weeks

Each Sunday we come together as a community and are reminded, by the Platform presenter, that "Ethical Culture is a humanistic religious and educational movement inspired by the ideal that the supreme aim of human life is working to create a more humane society" and that "our faith is in the capacity and responsibility of human beings to act in their personal relationships and in the larger community to help create a better world." Today five of our members will reflect on how membership in the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia has affected their personal and professional lives.

Sunday, January 23, 2011

Nuclear Deterrence and Nuclear Abolition: An Ethical Inventory

Speaker: Tad Daley, Writing Fellow, International Physicians for the

Prevention of Nuclear War, former Policy Advisor and Speechwriter for Congressman Dennis Kucinich and the late US Senator Alan Cranston, and Author of *Apocalypse Never: Forging the Path to a Nuclear Weapon Free World*.



Tad Daley will argue that if our country decides that we're going to base our national security on "nuclear deterrence" for decades to come, then we

must resign ourselves to the reality that others will make the same choice too. And, consequently, that today's world of 9 nuclear-armed nations will head toward a world of 19 or 29 such nations. And, consequently, that it will then be only a matter of time before we witness the unfolding of the nuclear cataclysms described in

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Apocalypse Never's Chapter Three (nuclear terrorism), Chapter Four (accidental nuclear launches—wait until you hear how close we've already come to these), Chapter Five (nuclear crisis mismanagement—wait until you hear how close we've already come to this) or Chapter Six (intentional use according to carefully crafted nuclear weapons employment doctrines). Most importantly, he will directly tackle the ethical nature of basing our national security on a strategy that carries within it the possibility, however remote at any particular moment, of bringing about our own extinction by our own hands.

Sunday, January 30, 2011

Psychological Benefits of Ethical Humanism

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

Any religion can make you feel safe with an understanding of life even if it is totally nuts, but Ethical Humanism can be a platform for a sane way of understanding life. ◇



Thank you for your service.

Many thanks to those who rushed to ush from Oct. 3 to Dec. 5, namely Jim Cummings, Doris Dabrowski, Jeffrey Dubb, Michael Fiore, Arnold and Temma Fishman, Ken Greiff, Marta Guttenberg, Victoria Kent, Richard Kiniry, Garry O'Rouke, Nick Sanders and Harry Thorn.

In the coming weeks, we can use additional assistance in setting the stage for our Sunday morning Platforms. If you would like to serve our community by ushering either regularly or occasionally, please contact Betsy Lightbourn at elightbourn@verizon.net or 215-575-1128.



Leader's Message

Not Goodbye Yet

—Richard L. Kiniry

Well, as most of you know, I will be retiring in July of this year. What you may not know is that there is plenty of work to be done before I fade into the sunset. When the new Leader arrives you must be waiting at the door of a well-organized, financially healthy Ethical Humanist Society.

Every religious organization (except for those mega-churches with thousands of members and the resulting income) depends on volunteers willing to take on responsibility well beyond what is usually necessary with other member organizations. We may be a small group but there are functions that are required if we are to be a legitimate Ethical Society. All those functions need people not just to perform tasks but to take responsibilities for areas of the life of the Society.

Given the opportunity most of you pitch in when asked, but the more difficult day-to-day organizational work is too often going begging for an enthusiastic leader. It's normal for people not to want to go out on the limb of responsibility, especially in our judgmental society, but we in the Society are looking for abnormal people who are committed to the success of the Society and will lead with enthusiasm.

This gives me the opportunity to again encourage you all to make the Society work for you. For over twenty years I have been claiming that Ethical Humanism is not just a liberal religious alternative but a world view and life stance, a way of living that if honestly accepted can change your life or at least give you a boost toward better living. In a world of ritualistic religion, Ethical Societies are trying to get to the essential function of religion. And for me that means being a place where you take your life seriously from the perspective of a particular worldview.

We don't want to be just another normal religious group. Almost everything can be changed in the name of relevance to your and my life journey. Therefore I'm always hoping you will bring your needs into the Society and turn them into programs, workshops, events, discussions, speakers, etc. I hope if your needs are not being met you will come forward and find partners to create an activity to satisfy those needs.

Actually this is about me being worried about looking bad. If the new Leader, whose time with the Society will be more limited than mine has been, arrives to find important activities unattended he or she might start gossiping among other Leaders about how I left the Society in bad shape. So, do it for me. Join one of our committees and give it your best.

Classes



Ethics for Children

Each Sunday the Society offers a children's program at the same time as the Platform. Although this is a "one-room school house," we will have age-appropriate activities for all age groups. The underlying theme of the classroom will be the children's growing awareness of the world around them and developing an appreciation of all forms of life. Relationships with parents, siblings, animal and human friends and plant life are stressed. We have a certified teacher and will use the text "Love Your Neighbor."

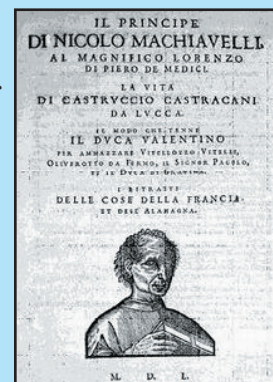
WORLDLY WISDOM

GREAT BOOKS AND THE MEANING OF LIFE

James Sloan Allen has created a humanist approach to the Great Books. His book, *Worldly Wisdom*, is a series of commentaries that follow human wisdom from Homer's *Iliad* to the works of Sartre and Martin Luther King. His focus is the humanist ideas that appear in all these historic writings. This is a chance for members and friends of the Society to read and discuss those books we meant to read earlier in life while following the course of humanist thinking through the ages. Another advantage of this reading group is we will have the opportunity to examine our own lives in the presence of ideas from around the world and through the ages.

This will be a monthly series with participants taking turns in leading the discussion. We will have copies of Allen's book to be lent to those leading the discussion and participants will be expected to have read at least part of the selection for that month.

Since the meetings are planned for the **third Tuesday of the month**, our next meeting will be **January 18 at 7:30 p.m.** We will be discussing Machiavelli's *The Prince*.



No Impact Man

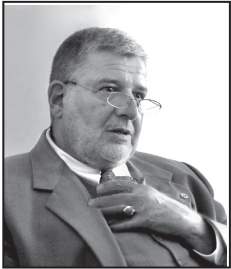
Here is a chance to picture your life as authentically environmentally correct. Colin Beavan and his family attempted to live one year with as little impact on the environment as possible. As they give up on TV, cars and take-out food and as they compost, eat local, walk and bicycle, they test the boundaries of their commitment to making a difference. In a book and movie, both entitled *No Impact Man*, Colin Beavan describes his one-year journey.

This is a chance to at least imagine how far you could go in lowering your global footprint. You can read the book or see the movie or do both and then we will have a discussion. We will show the movie twice—on **Sunday, January 9, 1:30 p.m.** and on **Monday, January 24, 7:30 p.m.**—and will hold the discussion on **Monday, February 13, 7:30 p.m.**



Editor's Note:

The following article appeared in the November issue of a New Jersey legal journal. Arnold thought it would interest members and friends of the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia, and I agreed to publish it in our newsletter as a kind of "letter to the editor," more of which I earnestly solicit.



Exoneration

By

Arnold Fishman

Last month the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia hosted Ray Krone as its featured Platform speaker. Ray is the Director of Communication and Training with Witness to Innocence. He was exonerated. He "lost" a decade of his life as an involuntary guest of the State of Arizona – three of those years on the lethal injection waiting list. This man fell through the screen that protects the innocent not once but twice. According to him, his first trial was a sham. But in his second trial, he was properly and vigorously defended. Subsequent DNA evidence, not only proved him innocent, but it led directly to the guilty party. So, once again the system failed.

The criminal justice system was created to protect the citizen from the arbitrary power of the Crown. That power now rests in the Executive Branch of state government. The power of the king went to the executive, but the power of the people went to the legislature. The legislature tells the state what the people want done, and the executive does it. Since it isn't that simple, the judicial branch acts as the referee. Disputes among the parties are resolved in the courts.

At its essence, the criminal justice system exists to intervene between the unjust excesses of the sovereign visited upon his innocent subjects. And by innocent I don't mean ultimately acquitted; I mean now, as a person accused. He

may get convicted someday, but until then he is innocent as he stands before you merely charged. And by unjust, I mean, since he is still innocent, what ever is done that imposes upon his freedom, while sometimes necessary, is by definition unjust.

The system has been hijacked. Its purpose has been converted from safeguarding the people into an institution whose primary function it is to convict the guilty. We want to make sure that retributive justice is applied as needed. We don't want the guilty to get away with it, and we want to send a message to all those who would transgress. This has occurred with the full cooperation of the "tough on crime" legislators and therefore (theoretically) on behalf of us. How this happened is above my pay scale, but it is in my not so humble opinion, intimately connected to an erosion of the presumption of innocence. Not even so much in the law, as in the minds of those both inside and outside the system. Polls show that jurors, when they are first filing into a courtroom and see the defendant, are asking themselves, "I wonder what he did?" And judges, the finders of both law and fact in the municipal courts where I practice, are forever asking, "What is your defense?" Let me translate that question for you. It means, "We both know your client is guilty as charged now tell me why should I find otherwise?" If the court is impressed with your reason the prosecutor may be called upon to respond, but *prima facie* your client is guilty. This perception is not without real consequences. It colors the minds and the resulting rulings from the bench on issues from, "May I have a continuance?" or, "What can I get in discovery?" to findings of probable cause and credibility.

His talk whetted my appetite. I schlepped my wife kicking and screaming to the Arden Theater in Philadelphia to see the play *The Exonerated* in which our own Andy Kushner plays an important part. He performs convincingly, and in no particular order, a bigoted sheriff,





an overly aggressive cop and an out of control prosecutor. The play has another connection to the CCBA. Esther Flaster, widow of the late Richard Flaster, our former member, directed it. It chronicles the stories of several men and a woman who were tried, convicted and sentenced to death for crimes they didn't commit. The realization that this could happen to anyone is both chilling and sobering.

Let's get back to Mr. Krone, the 100th person on death row to be exonerated – there have been many more since then. To pretend that no innocent person has been executed, is naive in the extreme. I waited around to ask him a question. I identified myself as a practicing attorney involved in the criminal justice system. I proposed that the structure contains various players and each tries hard to conscientiously do his job. My question was, "If there was one thing you had the power to change, what would it be?" Without any hesitation, he said, "We have to hold prosecutors responsible." He attributed evil motives to prosecutorial misconduct. He thought, "They just want to get reelected"; and "Prosecutors who lose capital murder cases don't get promotions." Sadly, in too many cases he may be right.

I, however, am close enough to the problem to understand that a trial takes on a life of its own. We are enculturated to believe that winning is better than losing. When we, myself included, get into a contest we like to win. It makes us feel good – much better than we feel when we lose. While that attitude may be supportable in a defense attorney, it is intolerable in the hands of the State. A prosecutor has the added burden of doing justice. A prosecutor must be scrupulous in wielding the power of the crown, and the finders of fact unflagging in presuming the innocence of the accused. Finally, with a system so subject to error, no punishment should be imposed that cannot be undone. The American criminal justice system is failing to fulfill its highest duty: to protect innocent people from wrongful convictions and death sentences.

(11/29/10 – Barrister January, 2011)

January 2011

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
*2 11:00 a.m. <i>Memorial Sunday</i> Richard L. Kiniry	3	4	5 Meeting 7:45 p.m. Ethical Action Committee	6	7	8
*9 11:00 a.m. <i>Bringing Human Rights Home</i> Sarah Paoletti & Ezgi Taboglu	10	11 <i>Pennsylvanians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty Meeting</i> 7:00pm	12 Meeting 6:30 p.m. Finance Committee	13	14	15
*16 11:00 a.m. <i>Living an Ethical Life: Members' Platform</i> Doris Dabrowski, Michael Fiore, Marta Guttenberg, Garry O'Rourke, Leonard Weeks	17	18 Class Worldly Wisdom 7:30 p.m.	19 Meetings 7:30 p.m. EHSOP Board	20  Amnesty International 7:00 p.m.	21	22
*23 11:00 a.m. <i>Nuclear Deterrence and Nuclear Abolition: An Ethical Inventory</i> Tad Daley	24 Movie- 7:30p.m. <i>No Impact Man</i> 	25	26 Meeting 7:00 p.m. Camp Linden Meeting	27	28	29
30 11:00 a.m. <i>Psychological Benefits of Ethical Humanism</i> Richard L. Kiniry	31					

*Child care provided during all platforms

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS	
January 10	Carol Love
January 14	Lyle Murley
January 21	Ken Greiff
January 29	Jordan Orange, M.D.

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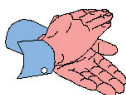
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SUNDAY MORNING VOLUNTEERS

**Flower Dedications - David Ralston,
Coordinator**

January 2—Carol and Jim Erb. In honor
of their 32nd wedding anniversary, Dec.
30, 2010

January 9—Carol Love. In honor of her
birthday, January 10, and in celebration
of her qualifying to receive medicare
and still being in relatively good shape.

January 16—Terry Martin Murley.
"Happy Birthday to my husband, Lyle
Murley"

January 23—Sharon Wallis and Leonard
Weeks. In honor of today's speaker,
Tad Daley, and his wife, Kitty Felde.

January 30—Garry O'Rourke—In honor
of a Happy New Year 2011.

Ushers - Betsy Lightbourn, Coordinator

January 2 T.B.A.

January 9

January 16

January 23

January 30



Greeters - Ken Greiff, Coordinator

January 2 T.B.A.

January 9

January 16

January 23

January 30



Coffee Hour Lunch

January 5 - Groups A-D

January 12- Groups E-K

January 19 - Groups L-O

January 23 - Groups P-Z

January 30 - Volunteers

***Ethical Humanist Society
of Philadelphia***

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