



Ethical Views

December 2008 Vol. 123, No. 4 Newsletter of the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia

Platforms

Sunday, December 7, 2008

Gifts, Love and Your Credit Card

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

It's the season to feel pressured into buying stuff for loved ones and almost strangers. We have to balance expectations with our honest feelings and we can come up with a variety of excuses for giving or not giving – some genuine and others phony. What approach to gift giving is true to your own values and still says you care?

Sunday, December 14, 2008

Civic Engagement: Once in a Generation Opportunity for Meaningful Volunteerism

Speaker: Pedro Rodriguez, Executive Director of the Action Alliance of Senior Citizens of Greater Philadelphia, 1999-2007; currently heading Pennsylvania's Health Care 4 All coalition-building campaign

Over the past five years, aging professionals, political and government leaders and the non-profit sector have been dreaming of an avalanche of volunteer participation by the retiring baby boomers. Much of the discussion has centered on getting retirees to provide virtually free labor to social service organizations. But Rodriguez believes this is a not-to-be-missed opportunity to harness the immense power and experience of this retiring generation to help us solve pressing social problems while providing them with a unique opportunity to reshape America and the world.

Sunday, December 21, 2008

Winter Solstice Celebration

Join us as we use candlelight, poetry and music to celebrate the Winter Solstice. Our members and friends will come together to honor the essential core of the holiday season - community, love for life together with family, friends and all humankind. All are welcome.

Sunday, December 28, 2008

No Service



President's Message

United We Stand

by Temma Fishman

The election of Barack Obama as president is cause for much celebration among nontheists, progressives, minorities, environmentalists and lovers of peace through diplomacy. Celebration is in order, but not complacency. President-elect Obama and members of Congress will be under pressure to do the bidding of corporations, hard-line conservatives and the religious right, who remain influential.

Sectarianism has become a hallmark of public policy, oftentimes creeping in unchallenged. Intelligent Design has been foisted upon American children in science classes in many public schools as an alternate "theory" to evolution. According to one poll, 51 percent of Americans do not believe in evolution. Some polls report higher percentages. At a time when the threats of global warming and pollution cry out for

informed action, many of us lack understanding of the natural world.

Children and adults are compelled to say the words "one nation under god" when pledging allegiance to the American flag – an insidious assault on separation of church and state that crept in in 1954 as a response to the perceived godlessness of the "red menace" in the McCarthy era.

The right to choose has been under siege, and is only one Supreme Court justice away from falling. For a blissful period, this right was considered by some as having been won once and for all. Sex education in the public schools has been hamstrung by a minority who think that "abstinence only" is a workable solution to preventing teen pregnancy and preparing children for their role as adults.

Freethinkers, atheists, agnostics, nontheists and humanists suffer the sting of discrimination. Major candidates in this last election were tripping over themselves to prove how godly they are. Some of us are afraid to declare our nontheism in "mixed

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President's Message (Cont'd.)

company". I felt especially constrained as a teacher in a public school, where doubting traditional belief is not well tolerated. But Matthew La Clair, a high school student in Kearny, NJ, had the courage to confront his science teacher, who was preaching Genesis dogma in his classes. Matthew endured threats and censure from neighbors, teachers and fellow-students. He was given the Ethical Hero Award by the American Ethical Union in 2007.

President Bush instituted a National Day of Prayer, reinforcing the notion that belief in god and patriotism must be linked. Representative Pete Stark demonstrated great courage when he "came out" as a freethinker. The American Humanist Association honored him as Humanist of the Year in 2007. At the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia, on the National Day of Prayer in May, we hold a Day of Caring, in which we provide meals for the needy. We join in principle with other groups, like the Secular Coalition of America, an affiliate of the American Ethical Union, whose members hold blood drives in celebration of a Day of Reason.

We can keep alive our determination to make the world a better place by doing our own work and also by affiliating with groups who work for causes we embrace – even if we don't agree with all their terminology.

Ethical Humanists are a tiny voice in the dark wilderness. At this time, there are only about 2,000 of us in the United States. We can keep alive our determination to make the world a better place by doing our own work and also by affiliating with groups who work for causes we embrace – even if we don't agree with all their terminology.

On our Ethical Action website (www.phillyethics.org), you will find links to organizations with whom we share a kindred spirit. We hosted events and speakers from the Freethought Society of Greater Philadelphia,

whose president, Sally Cramer, is our Camp Linden caretaker. We connect to Amnesty International through member Ron Coburn, who brings letters of concern on human rights abuses for us to read and sign.

Lately, our Board of Trustees has been seeking input and support from our members as we consider affiliation with PhillyCoR (Greater Philadelphia Coalition of Reason). PhillyCoR promotes rationalism, scientific inquiry, and "freedom of religion for peoples of all life stances through promotion of church-state separation," as their literature states. In October, PhillyCoR participated in a food drive for Philabundance, a function of their Secular Service Club. On November 8, they joined our members in a leaf cleanup day at Camp Linden.

Reason must prevail over propaganda if we are to survive. With the hope of the new Obama administration, we have the chance to create a humanitarian world. With the strength of like-minded groups, we have the chance to be more effective and increase our numbers. The promise of a new era shines on all of us. But, we cannot do it alone. ◇



The Other Inconvenient Truth *By Ruth Ann Dubb*

Al Gore's movie "An Inconvenient Truth" was a profound film that showed, graphically, the dire problems of global warming and won the former VP the Nobel Prize. It served to raise the collective consciousness on the subject and even got the attention of the bureaucrats in Washington. For reasons we can only guess, however, it failed to address the activity that contributes more to the ruination of the earth's atmosphere than any other performed by human beings.

In 2006, the United Nations Agricultural Organization published a report stating that the raising of livestock for human meat consumption produces more harmful greenhouse gases than all modes of transportation put together.

This includes cars, trucks, SUVs, boats and airplanes. Most of what you hear and read about lightening your carbon footprint usually revolves around what type of car you are driving. The fact is, however, that giving up or at least lessening your consumption of meat is a far more effective way to do the right thing for the planet.

Here are some other pertinent facts for you to ponder as you think about changing from your usual choice of a hamburger to a delicious veggie burger or some other vegetable type of protein.

- Switching to a vegan diet is 50% more effective in reducing greenhouse gases than trading in your regular car for a hybrid.
- Eliminating meat from your diet reduces personal annual greenhouse gas emissions by 1.5 tons. Sixty-some Ethical Society Members times 1.5 tons is a big number!
- Thousands of acres of rain forests are destroyed every day for animal grazing.
- More than half of the water consumed in the world is used to raise animals (all kinds of animals, pigs, chickens, etc.).
- A vegetarian diet for one person requires 300 gallons of water per day.
- A meat based diet for one person requires 4000 gallons of water per day.
- Pollution: run off from factory farms pollutes our rivers and lakes more than all other industrial sources combined.

With all of these factors to consider, it is important for each of us to do our part and make a serious effort to think about our daily food selections. Every moment of every day, with the choices that we make, we have the power to invent the future. The car that we drive, the energy sources we use and the food that we consume all contribute to either the wellbeing or the continued ruination of this planet that we all share.

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The Other Inconvenient Truth

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While it might seem that it is a big challenge to give up a meat-based diet, the rewards for doing so are immense. Not only does the earth benefit, but also according to The American Cancer Society and other major health organizations, reduced consumption of animal products contributes to better health and lessens the incidence of disease.

It is a joyful and liberating experience to enjoy a meal in which the food that you have consumed has not harmed the environment by contributing to greenhouse emissions. A meatless meal, which has not been complicit with the cruel confinement and slaughter of an animal and has contributed to your good health, is the benchmark of eating with true and honest integrity.



As Ethical Humanists we must address this issue head-on. Our goal is to bring out the best in others. What better way to do this than by encouraging healthy dietary choices that will support not only our own health and wellbeing but also the health of the planet? As ethical people, we are obliged to make choices that are ethical.

President-elect Barack Obama, with his historic victory and his uplifting ideals and optimism, has awakened us to the possibility of a better America. He has called upon all of us for our help and cooperation. The time is right for us to head in a new direction.

As Americans, we can show the world that we are committed to doing our share. We can demonstrate that we do not want to continue to add to the problem of global warming. By eliminating or at least by limiting our meat consumption, we are sending this message. Let us hitch our dreams and aspirations to Barack Obama's star and have our actions and our choice of sustenance reflect our desire to do everything possible to create a more beautiful world. ◇



SCHOOL FOR ETHICS

INTRODUCTION TO ETHICAL HUMANISM - The Ethical Humanist Society is part of a 132-year old Ethical Culture Movement. We are a humanist religious fellowship. This workshop is a chance to delve into that history and philosophy. We attempt to offer the "big picture" of Ethical Humanism and provide opportunities for questions. Interested visitors, newcomers and members are invited to examine our approach to living as we look at our core ideas – the intrinsic worth of every human being, naturalism, nontheism and ethics as a way of life.

— Led by Richard Kiniry
Sunday, December 7, 1:30 p.m.

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 of the month
Next meeting: December 9 – 7:30 p.m.

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 class, through 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, the Bahamas) to the "War on Terrorism". Members, friends and the curious are invited. The book is available in paperback. We will be reviewing chapters four and five and previewing chapters six ten for the next meeting.

First Wednesdays of the month –
Next meeting, December 3, 7:30 p.m.

Exit Zero

 On Saturday, December 27th, the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia (EHSOP) will host our annual **Before New Year's Party** (BNYP) as a fund-raiser for the Society. (Please see the flyer in this issue for more information.)

The Society is pleased to announce that this year's entertainment will be a **c o n c e r t** performed by **Exit Zero**, a Philadelphia-based singing duet/group with deep roots in the Philadelphia folk and jazz music community.



Lead singer **Linda Battiste** has performed her solo material at Philadelphia venues for the past 20 years, while also providing lead and back up vocals for live performances and studio recordings for various local singers/songwriters. As a past member of the *Anna Crusis Women's Choir*, she's had the privilege to work with many empowered and talented artists to create works of art that promote social change and personal transformation. Linda also performs regularly with local rock band **NOWAYOUT**.

Guitarist **Abraham Dubb** has performed at local coffee houses, providing back up guitar rhythms for live performances and studio recordings for various local singers/songwriters. In May 2005, Abraham joined a local retro-country band called *Hank's Cadillac* (who entertained us at last year's BNYP), playing local venues such as the North Star Bar, the Khyber, and Milkboy Coffee House. The band also gained exposure opening for national acts such as The Bellamy Brothers and The Pure Prairie League. Abraham is a regular performer at the 23rd Street Café Tuesday night Jam Session hosted by "Father John" D'Amico. A local Philadelphia tradition since 1988, hundreds of Jazz musicians and vocalists come to sit in from around the world. ◇



Celebration of the 60th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights



Wednesday, December 10

at the Ethical Humanist Society beginning at 6 PM

Music - South African singer and guitarist Sharon Katz of Grammy-nominated Peace Train, activists well-known for providing specialized violence prevention and character education programs in Africa and in conflict zones around the world.

Speaker - Christiaan Morssink, the current president of the United Nations Association of Greater Philadelphia will talk about the Declaration as a moral compass for the world's "way of doing business" and will discuss how the new U.S. administration can demonstrate by word and deed a strong respect for the Declaration.

A few poems will be read by participants. On the spot inspirations will be encouraged.

Free copies of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Cash bar, free finger food, no cost to attend

Sponsoring organizations

United Nations Association of Greater Philadelphia
Philadelphia Chapter of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
Philadelphia Global Water Initiative
Center of African Studies University of Pennsylvania
Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia
CARE Action Network
UPenn UNICEF



IN MEMORIAM GLADYS HUBER

Gladys Huber and her husband, Mark discovered the Society in 1953. She was an active member of her Pennsauken, New Jersey community and of the Ethical Society. Both Hubers were accomplished musicians; Gladys played the viola and continued to play in a Tuesday chamber music group for over 45 years. Mark played the cello. Mark died of a heart attack in 1981. Gladys died peacefully at her daughter's home at the age of 95 years while a dear friend played the violin. Richard Kiniry led her memorial service on Saturday, November 15.



IN MEMORIAM MADELEINE SURINGAR











Madeleine Suringar joined the Society in 1999. She was born in Prague and brought an international flair to all her endeavors. Madeleine was fluent in four languages and actively supported many causes including the International Criminal Court and the United Nations Association. Her memorial service was held in her daughter's home on Sunday, November 9.

We will honor the memories of Madeleine and Gladys at our Memorial Sunday Service to be held January 4, 2009 at 11 AM.

Tribute and Friendship Fund

Traditionally, members of the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia have marked the passing of other members or members of their families by donations to the Tribute and Friendship Fund. It is a lovely way to honor those who, like us, see our Society as an important part of our lives and of the community we serve. An engraved card is sent to the family of the deceased indicating that a donation was made and a thank you card is sent to the donor. (The amount is not specified in the card to the deceased's family.) Keep the Tribute and Friendship Fund in mind as a way to remember a lost friend as well as to support our Society.

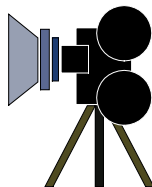
December 2008

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3 6:30 p.m. Finance Committee Meeting Class - 7:30 p.m. A People's History of the U.S.	4	5	6
7 10:45 a.m. - Weston Room Ethics for Children 11:00 a.m. Platform: <i>Gifts, Love & Your Credit Card</i> Richard L. Kiniry 1:30 p.m. Class - Intro to Ethical Humanism	8  Dale Drews Jesse Zelnick	9 Class The Idea of God 7:30 p.m.	10 Meetings - Weston Room 6:30 p.m. Education Committee 7:45 p.m. Ethical Action Committee	11  Ron Coburn	12	13
14 10:45 a.m. - Weston Room Ethics for Children 11:00 a.m. Platform: Civic Engagement: Once in a Generation Opportunity for Meaningful Volunteerism Pedro Rodriguez	15  Richard Kiniry	16  Roberta Wood	17 Meetings - Weston Room 6:30 p.m. Executive Committee 7:30 p.m. Board of Trustees	18 Thursday Night Talkies 7:00 p.m.  Amnesty Int'l. Mtg. Weston Room 7:00 p.m.	19	20
21 Winter Solstice Celebration  Bertha Waters	22	23  Bob Moore	24	25	26	27  Party Before New Year's 7:00 p.m.
28 No Service  Carol Anne Riddle	29	30	31			 Birthdays

Thursday Night Talkies

7:00 p.m. December 18, 2008

Arithmetic, Population, and Energy
Dr. Albert Bartlett, Professor of Physics
(retired)
University of Colorado at Boulder



In an entertaining and informative discussion of a serious issue Dr. Bartlett manages to unravel the mysteries of the exponential function and explain simply how it has profound effects on our daily lives and the lives of our heirs. His exposition can change the way you view the world forever.

Movie, discussion, popcorn and soda pop.

Invitation to New Greeters

The Community Committee is trying a new approach to greeting newcomers. We wish to broaden the effort by encouraging as many members as possible to take a turn as the greeter. Please help us with this very important task. You can sign up to greet with Terry Martin-Murley. This endeavor will require significant member participation to be successful, so now is a good time to step up and do your part. Further instructions will follow.

— Ken Greiff
Community Committee Chair



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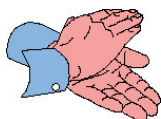
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(215) 735 - 3456
office@phillyethics.org
www.phillyethics.org



SUNDAY MORNING VOLUNTEERS

Flower Dedications - Ramona Ward, Chair

Dec 7 - Tom Carroll: "In honor of his Aunt Ethel, who lived a good life and died at the age of 104."

Dec 14 - Irene Putzer: "Happy Birthday to Richard Kiniry as he reaches another milestone!"

Dec 21 - Arnold & Temma Fishman: "In loving memory of Esther Wolf, Temma's mother."

Ushers - Betsy Lightborn, Chair

Dec 7 -
Dec 14- T.B.A.
Dec 21-

Greeters

Dec 7 -
Dec 14- T.B.A.
Dec 21-

Coffee Hour Lunch

Dec 7 - Group A-E
Dec 14- Group F-L
Dec 21- Group M-P

Photo credits

*Except for photograph on page 3 of
Linda Battiste and Abraham Dubb, all
photographs in this issue
by Janice R. Moore*

**Ethical Humanist Society
of Philadelphia**
1906 South Rittenhouse Square
Philadelphia, PA 19103