

# WES Express

Monthly Newsletter of the Washington Ethical Society

November 2015

## Upcoming Platforms – Join us at 11am

### Sunday, November 1. "Claiming Our Ancestors" Amanda Poppei, Senior Leader.

As we begin our exploration of *Ancestry*, Amanda will ask—who are our ancestors? How do we claim all that they are, including the hard and sometimes simply wrong choices they have made? What about those of us who don't know our ancestors? Join us for this thought-provoking platform. Music from the WES Chorus.

### Sunday, November 8. "Building Authentic Relationships"

**Joy McConnell, Consulting Leader, Ethical Humanist**

**Society of Asheville.** It is so easy, when one belongs to a congregation of "like minded people" to believe that we have all the answers, that we are right. Especially when we may have inherited that idea from our family and culture! How do we live in community in a way that honors diversity of opinions or philosophies of life, or political/social stances, a diversity of ancestries? Referring to Parker Palmer's book, *A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Toward an Undivided Life*, Joy will share her commitment to compassionate communication as well as some thoughts on how to create community in small groups.

### Sunday, November 15. "Our Human Legacy of Evil"

**Amanda Poppei, Senior Leader.** As we continue to explore *Ancestry*, how do we grapple with our broader ancestry—that of the human race? In particular, how do we come to terms with the evil that we have done and continue to do as people? Amanda will explore this challenge, and how it calls us to act now. Music from Josh Blinder.

**Sunday, November 22. Stone Soup Celebration.** Join us for one of our favorite annual traditions, as we retell the story of *Stone Soup*—but this time weaving in our theme of *Ancestry*. Will the travelers find the right recipe for their magic soup? Children, remember to bring a stone and vegetable for the pot! Join us as we explore in story and song, and then stay for the special Stone Soup lunch afterward.

### Sunday, November 29. "My Ancestry, Myself" WES Member Voices.

Join us as we close this month's theme of *Ancestry* by hearing from WES members about their own ancestry and how ancestry has influenced their lives. Music from singer/songwriter Herb Tyson.

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**The Washington Ethical Society is a humanistic congregation that affirms the worth of every person.**

We strive through our relationships to elicit the best in the human spirit.

With faith in human goodness, we appreciate each person's unique capacities. We joyfully celebrate together and

support each other through life. We nurture a sense of reverence and responsibility for each other and the earth.

We invite you to join our community of children and adults as we work for a world where love and justice cross all borders.

**[ethicalsociey.org](http://ethicalsociey.org)**

## **Theme: Ancestry**

**Amanda Poppei, Senior Leader**

Oh, family. Can't live with 'em, literally wouldn't be here without 'em.

It's the time of year when our thoughts often turn to family: to the family that we celebrate holidays with – or specifically choose not to, to the family we wish we had – or wish we even knew, to the family that used to be ours – and isn't anymore. As we begin our exploration of the theme of *Ancestry*, I am mindful of how complicated the idea of ancestors, relatives, family can be for us. November is *National Adoption Month*, a month of special import at WES where so many of our families include adopted and fostered children. Family becomes layered and nuanced, stretching far beyond the walls of our homes, and changing and shifting over the course of our lifetimes and even year-by-year.

Of course, our ancestors are not only our family members. Often we talk about ancestors as the people on whose shoulders we stand. That might include ethical heroes, caregivers, pioneers, and simply those who have loved us. Even with that wide a circle, our ancestors, and our feelings about them, can change over time. We discover that a beloved figure made some terrible choices. We learn that a hero's early history was tied into systems of oppression. We find that our own family benefitted from privilege denied to others. We learn about intricacies in our family system, or uncover secrets, that change how we feel about our own ancestry.

Nothing important is simple. No family circle is as neatly drawn as we might imagine it, and no revered ancestor as perfect as we wish. As we explore *Ancestry* together this month, we'll take a look at the good, the bad, and the simply silly...just wait until Stone Soup when our travelers read old recipes in their attempt to get the perfect meal.

Every exploration begins with naming. So this month, as we prepare for Thanksgiving and for the holidays that follow, I invite you to notice and name the ancestors around you. Will they be seated at your table? Are their pictures hanging on your wall? Do you tell their stories to your children or your friends – no matter how complicated those stories turn out to be? In many ways, we are the sum of those who have gone before. Here's to the complicated, interesting, layered joy of that.



Ways to engage with November's theme:  
*Ancestry*

November Platforms

[Explore the Theme:  
Ancestry](#)

Adult Ed Course,  
*Flourish*  
November 21

Story for All Ages:  
*The Name Jar*  
by Yangsook Choi

Share the Plate:  
*International  
Rescue Committee*

## **From Your Board of Trustees:**

### ***Proxy Voting and Confidence in the Wisdom of Prior Boards***

***By Lindsay Lucke, WES Board of Trustees***

Decision, decisions! So many details for the Board to consider. Take proxy voting. When was the last time you worried about what WES's policy on proxy voting should be? Never?

Your Board thinks about it. We bumped into a couple of issues: why can't one person hold two proxies, say for a married couple who are out of town? Why can't a person give proxies for two consecutive meetings?

Why are our by-laws restrictive in this way? It seems so unlikely that the community would get into some big fight that would necessitate such careful restriction.

What were they – the previous board members – thinking? There are two ways to ask this question. One implies genuine interest, curiosity, respectful inquiry. The other implies disbelief – maybe even with a touch of outrage – which is (blush) closer to where I started.

The Board decided to take a look at these questions, which are in the purview of our Governance Committee, headed by John Mulligan. John went back in the files to learn more, and found very thoughtful deliberation on these points.

Allowing a member to hold a maximum of one proxy assures that proxy votes will never be in the majority at a meeting - a significant point previous boards thought about.

Having a provision that prevents giving proxies at two consecutive meetings was a design choice to balance two points of view about democratic participation. The first is that community decisions require us to think, discuss and discern together. The second point of view is that of participation through having a vote, even when a member cannot attend.

The language in our bylaws balances these two points of view.

I was so impressed by the careful thinking of the previous board that handled these decisions. From now on, I am going to try harder to make sure that I am always in the respectful inquiry mode when I ask "what were they thinking?" Otherwise, I am likely to feel embarrassed by my own hubris (how often do you get to use that 50-cent word?).

# **WES News**



## **Mark your calendars: 9th Annual WES Auction Saturday, November 7**



## **Immigration Film Festival at WES**

The *Greater Washington Immigration Film Festival* was a great success thanks to many volunteers from WES including the Festival's co-chairs Judith Johnson and Patti Absher. The results are still coming in and we'll provide a final report in the December WES Express. However, attendance was up at least 65% over last year and the press coverage was amazing this year.



WES Senior Leader Amanda Poppei welcomes the public to WES for the GWIFF event on Friday, October 23.

If you want to read (or reread) the press coverage, there is a list of links at the end of this newsletter. Your editor particularly liked the following paragraph, which Giomar Silva wrote for Migrante 21:

*"She may not have noticed, but there is something very immigrant-like in the way Patti Absher and her friends decided to organize a film festival from scratch in 2014: They had no idea how to do it, they did not have the funds to do it and it was impossible to know what the outcome would be, yet they were absolutely determined to make it happen."*

## **Two Recipes for Stone Soup**

We're trying an experiment this year and adding a second option for Stone Soup Sunday. In addition to the usual Stone Soup multigenerational platform service at 11am, we'll also offer a mini-Stone Soup platform, from 10-10:30am. Both will happen on Sunday, November 22 — and all of us will gather after the 11am platform for lunch together at 12pm.

The mini-Stone Soup recipe may be just right for young children; it is shorter! Afterward we will offer learning and playtime for any kids not attending the 11am Stone Soup platform, in the Double Classrooms.

We will publish details during November and you can read them now [on this link.](#)



### **WIN Action with Mayor Bowser**

At the beginning of this year, the *Washington Interfaith Network* (WIN) asked D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser to put an emphasis upon ending homelessness, creating affordable housing, and increasing access to good jobs. She accepted those priorities. How is she doing? What can WES do to keep things moving toward these goals?



Packed house for Mayor Bowser's first participation in a WIN Action on January 8, 2015.

For the past 4 years, WES has been working with the *Washington Interfaith Network* on these vital issues. Thus, when Mayor Bowser agreed to attend an "action" with WIN on Thursday, November 19 at Covenant Baptist Church, 3845 S. Capitol St. SW, WES was eager to participate. This event will continue a process started at [an earlier event January 8](#) of this year. WES member Terry Smith gives the following description of a WIN action event:

An action consists of an event that involves a leader in a position of power and representatives of people who are affected by the exercise of that power. There is a certain dramatic tension in an action and the outcome is often not known ahead of time. Basically, the group of people being represented by the

action asks the leader to make a commitment to doing something and the leader responds. Usually, the "ask" is preceded by an effort to present the group's needs – e.g., testimony from someone who is homeless or a documentary about a family that is being displaced from their neighborhood by gentrification. Then the "ask" is made and the leader has an opportunity to respond.

An action is somewhat like a request, somewhat like a discussion, and somewhat like a transaction. Ideally, it leads to an agreement, but that does not always happen. There is an element of drama. Things can happen at the action that add to the meaning or substance of the agreement or that cause the leader to balk at the request.

Willing to help? Join the WES delegation to this event. Seating is at 6:30pm and it begins at 7pm. Contact Terry Smith, [tlsmt@msn.com](mailto:tlsmt@msn.com).

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## Felix and Friends

*We should teach our children nothing  
which they should ever need to unlearn;  
we should strive to transmit to them  
the best possessions, the truest thought, the noblest sentiments  
of the age in which we live.*

Felix Adler, *Life and Destiny*, 1903

Comments? You can share them on the [FelixAdlerAndFriends](#) Blog.

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## **Coming up at WES**

### **Sunday, November 1**

**Fall Membership Meeting, 6pm.** Join your fellow WES members for a potluck and our annual fall meeting. We will appoint a new member of the Lay Leadership and Development Committee, hear reports on growth and the Capital Campaign and mortgage, and spend time getting to know each other better. Moderator Jen Watson welcomes you to this evening. Please RSVP to Melissa at melissas@ethicalsociety.org if you need childcare.

### **Monday, November 2**

**Flourish! Class: Mindfulness Workshop, 7:30-9pm.** This workshop will offer experiences of various ways of cultivating mindfulness. Mindfulness and “being present” are buzz words in psychology, workplace, and spirituality circles now, but the practices are simple and at least as ancient as the Buddha. An understanding and practice of mindfulness can offer great benefits. These include greater awareness of the mind and inner self, more inner calm and less emotional reactivity, ability to let go of mental preoccupations and to relax body and mind, more compassion for self and others, and an understanding that our internal and external experience is in constant change. Intention and practice are key concepts at the heart of living mindfully. Along with other discussion topics and practices, Trish will offer a meditation technique for especially over-active minds. Ann will offer a further variety of mindfulness practices. Amanda will relate the teachings of mindfulness to some of our own Ethical Culture’s most cherished values.  
Facilitators: Ann Baker, Trish Weil, and Amanda Poppei. (This class is connected with our October theme of *Letting Go*)

### **Tuesday, November 3**

**Meditation Group, Adler Study, 7:30-9pm.** This group, which meets on first and third Tuesdays, is open to anyone interested in meditation. We will use an approach called *Recollective Awareness Meditation*, based on a form of *vipassanā*, which involves meditating with our thoughts, emotions, and sensations rather than considering them distractions. Afterwards we will recollect and reflect upon what happened during the meditation sitting. This experiential process introduces beginners to a meditation practice that is gentle and friendly from the outset, while it supports experienced meditators in bringing more awareness and compassion to their inner world. Sigfried Gold is a teacher in training with the *Skillful Meditation Project* and will be leading the group. Call or email him (301-775-3339, sigfried@sigfried.org) with questions. For more information about *Recollective Awareness Meditation*, see <http://skillfulmeditation.org/>.

### **Thursday, November 5**

**Valuing Differences Discussion Group, 7:30-9pm, Library.** This group meets monthly for an unstructured conversation about differences of race, gender identity, age, sexual orientation, etc., in our life space. It provides a safe place to ask

questions, express concerns, and maybe find some fundamental answers. Members of the group take turns leading the discussion. We plan to start each month with a theme or a topic, but current events and the concerns of those attending may take precedence over anything preplanned. Contact June Fair, [junelfair@gmail.com](mailto:junelfair@gmail.com), or Shan Evans, [sevans4406@yahoo.com](mailto:sevans4406@yahoo.com), for more information.

## **Friday, November 6**

**First Friday Lunch and Discussion Group, 12:30-2pm.** The November First Friday program will feature the films of the GWIFF (Greater Washington Immigration Film Festival) that took place October 22 – 25. Many of you will have attended one or more of these films, and we will be sharing our impressions of them as well as discussing what we learned. Please let the leaders know if you have a particular film that interests you so they can be sure to cover as many as possible in our time together. Please bring your own lunch, and a snack or dessert to share, and arrive early if you can, so that eating and the usual go-round can begin at 12:30.

## **Saturday, November 7**

### **WES Auction – Saturday Night Fever!**

**Fall Festival and Pumpkin Smash for Black Lives Matter, 10:30am-1pm, Cox Farms in Centreville, VA.** Cox Farms came under fire for a Black Lives Matter banner. Washington Ethical Society and several other congregations (including the UU congregation of Fairfax, where the Cox Farms family are members) will show our support and appreciation for hanging the sign. Come have a blast and spend some money to let Cox Farm know we support this message. Wear a WES shirt and a BLM pin if you have it.

## **Sunday, November 8**

**Board of Trustees Meeting, 12:45pm, Social Hall.** All are welcome to attend meetings of the Board of Trustees. Agenda and materials are available in the Members Access section of our website.

**The Biology Reading Group, after Platform, Library.** This month the group will conclude the reading of *Life's Engines: How Microbes Made Earth Habitable* by Paul Falkowski. Our next book is *Life on the Edge* by Johnjoe McFadden and Jim Al-Khalili. The group meets the second Sunday of each month in the WES library at 12:45. All are welcome. It is not necessary to read the book, though it helps. For more information contact Barbara Searle, [bsearle70@msn.com](mailto:bsearle70@msn.com).

## **Tuesday, November 10**

**Theme Brainstorming, 6:30pm, Social Hall.** Join WES program staff to brainstorm about the coming six months of themes. We have the themes for the year set, but we'd love to know what ideas they suggest to you. Come with poems, songs, stories, social justice ideas, and community events that connect for you with Resistance – Desire – Liberation – Creativity – Gifts – Simplicity. Artist in residence

Barry Galef will be on hand as well to soak up your ideas as he plans for art. All are welcome.

### **Thursday, November 12**

**Working for Racial Equity Strategy Meeting, 7-9pm, Adler Study.** Have you been learning about anti-racism work and Black Lives Matter, and wonder what the next step is for you and for WES? Join us to vision together! We will decide our regular meeting times and discuss what we would like to do over the next 6 months - 1 year. If you have an idea for an ongoing project, please bring it. If you aren't on the WRE listserv or have any questions, please email Danna Pope at [dannapope@gmail.com](mailto:dannapope@gmail.com).

### **Saturday, November 14**

**Young@WES Potluck, 4pm, Natalie and Justin Bend's Home.** All young adults are welcome to join in this potluck. Please RSVP to Natalie (and get directions to her home) at [natalienichole@gmail.com](mailto:natalienichole@gmail.com).

### **Sunday, November 15**

**Schmoozapalooza, after platform.** WES continues our lunch on every third Sunday for all who want to hang out after platform and gab with friends. Gather around tables in the Main Hall and keep on talking. Nosh on a great lunch, with vegetarian options always available. Requested donation \$5. Schmoozing with your friends and licking your fingers—what better way to keep on talking, parse the platform, and catch up!

**WES Book Group, after platform.** You are invited to read "Claire of the Sea Light" by Haitian-born novelist, Edwidge Danticat. The WES Book Club will meet to discuss it at the November 15 *Schmoozapalooza*. Look for the table marked Book Club.

### **Monday, November 16**

**Adult Education monthly meeting, 7 pm, Adler Study, WES.** Come join us for our open to membership monthly Adult Education meeting. We will finish our discussion on *Flourish* class possibilities for Winter/Spring, tying them to our monthly themes. We will explore multi-age group class possibilities as well as discussing our vision for Adult Ed.

### **Tuesday, November 17**

**Meditation Group, Adler Study, 7:30-9pm.** This group, which meets on first and third Tuesdays, is open to anyone interested in meditation. For more information, see the entry above for November 3.

### **Friday, November 18**

**Still Thirsty After All These Years, Austin Grill in Downtown Silver Spring.** This group is for WES adults beyond the demographics of the "Young and Thirsty" group, but still thirsty for connections, entertainment, and new experiences. We will

meet for Happy Hour on the third Friday of every month. Please contact Nancy McGuire ([nkmontheroad@yahoo.com](mailto:nkmontheroad@yahoo.com)) or Shan Evans ([sevans4406@yahoo.com](mailto:sevans4406@yahoo.com)) for more details.

### **Thursday, November 19**

**Young and Thirsty, 7pm, Right Proper Brewing Company, 624 T St NW.** All WES members, friends, and visitors who identify as young adults are welcome to join! To get connected to the Young@WES Facebook group please contact Natalie Bend at [natalienichole@gmail.com](mailto:natalienichole@gmail.com).

**WIN Action with Mayor Bowser, 7pm, Covenant Baptist Church, 3845 S. Capitol St. SW.** At the beginning of this year, the Washington Interfaith Network (WIN) asked D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser to put an emphasis upon ending homelessness, creating affordable housing, and increasing access to good jobs. She accepted those priorities. How is she doing? What can WIN do to keep things moving toward these goals? For more information, see the article on page 5. Would you join the WES delegation to this important event?  
Contact: Terry Smith, [tlsmt@msn.com](mailto:tlsmt@msn.com).

### **Friday, November 20**

**Still Thirsty After All These Years, Austin Grill in Downtown Silver Spring.** This group is for WES adults beyond the demographics of the "Young and Thirsty" group, but still thirsty for connections, entertainment, and new experiences. We will meet for Happy Hour on the third Friday of every month. Please contact Nancy McGuire ([nkmontheroad@yahoo.com](mailto:nkmontheroad@yahoo.com)) or Shan Evans ([sevans4406@yahoo.com](mailto:sevans4406@yahoo.com)) for more details.

### **Saturday, November 21**

**Flourish! Class: WES' Civil Rights History, 2-4pm.** Join this discussion of the Washington Ethical Society's past and present work on racial justice. Working with a timeline of WES' involvement in the Civil Rights Movement (available online this Fall), we will discuss how WES members have worked for racial justice in the District and nationwide and how that activism has evolved since WES' inception. Drawing on our own history, we will examine the past for perspective, lessons learned, and directions on future social action. Facilitators: Betsy Franz and Danna Pope. (Connected with our November theme of Ancestry.)

### **Sunday, November 22**

**Mini Stone Soup Platform Service, 10-10:30am.**

Any and all—and especially our younger, squirmier friends—are invited to join us for a mini-version of the regular Stone Soup Celebration offered at 11am. This mini-version will explore the Stone Soup story and provide an opportunity to contribute your stone and vegetable. We will all gather together for the Stone Soup lunch at 12pm. An alternative service learning and playtime will be available at 11am.

**Stone Soup Service-Learning and Playtime, 11am, Double Classrooms.** For any who participated in the mini Stone Soup at 10am, we offer this service-learning and playtime during the regular Stone Soup celebration platform. We will all gather together for the Stone Soup lunch at 12pm. Service learning will include making holiday cards for members of the Armed Services who are secular or non-traditionally religious.

**Needlework Group, 12:30pm, Senior Leader's Office.** Knitting ... crocheting ... even nalbinding ... do you do them? Do you want to? Come enjoy crafting and company the fourth Sunday of the month.

## **Tuesday, December 1**

**Meditation Group, Adler Study, 7:30-9pm.** This group, which meets on first and third Tuesdays, is open to anyone interested in meditation. For more information, see the entry above for November 3.

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## **eLinks for eNewsletter:**

### **Articles:**

[Washington Interfaith Network](#)

### **GWIFF:**

[David Montgomery's article in the Washington Post](#)

[Mark Lieberman's article in the Northwest Current \(see page 3\)](#)

[Karren Alenier's review of "Buen dia Ramon" and "On the Bride's Side"](#)

[Alberto Avendano's article in El Tiempo Latino \(Spanish\)](#)

[Alberto Avendano interviews GWIFF organizers \(Video\)](#)

[Alejandro Negron \(Hispanic Agenda\) interviews Rod Brana \(GWIFF\) \(Video\)](#)

[Amando Trull: "Dreamer Life in Spotlight at GWIFF"](#)

[Giomar Silva writes about GWIFF for Migrante 21](#)

### **WES:**

[Web Site](#)

[Facebook](#)

[Explore the Theme: Ancestry](#)

Blogs: [WES News](#) and [Felix Adler and Friends](#)