

WES Express

Monthly Newsletter of the Washington Ethical Society

February 2015

Upcoming Platforms – Join us at 11am

Sunday, February 1 “To Do My Duty” Amanda Poppei, Senior Leader. As we begin our exploration of the theme of Duty & Commitment, Amanda will explore what it means to live from our deepest commitments, our deepest values. What does it mean to be committed to causes that might not succeed? How do we act out of duty—and joy—in our relationships with others? Music from the Buzek Family Band.

Sunday, February 8 “Pay Attention to Love Day” Amanda Poppei, Senior Leader. In our annual celebration of all kinds of love, Amanda will think about commitment. We sometimes say that love takes work—what does that mean? Is it good or bad? And how does that relate to all our relationships, not just our romantic ones? Music from the WES Chorus led by Bailey Whiteman.

Sunday, February 15 “To What Do I Have a Duty?” Bailey Whiteman, Chorus Director. Duty is an easy concept for some, and a hard one for many. Join WES Chorus Director Bailey Whiteman as she steps away from her usual corner of the room to talk about the training she is receiving with the UUA’s Music Leader Certification Program, and how duty-based ethics inform her work and personal life. She will raise a lot of questions, perhaps provide a few answers, and help us explore duty and what it can mean in each of our lives. Music by the DC Labor Chorus.

Sunday, February 22 “Poetically Dwelling on Earth as a Mortal” The Rev. Dr. Carl Gregg, Minister, Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Frederick. Carl will explore this way of being in the world as one (among many) possible paths for this month’s theme of *Duty & Commitment*. Carl will trace a route there by way of Ludwig Feuerbach, an incredibly influential 19th-century skeptical theologian, whose thought (although still deeply relevant) has been largely forgotten. As Friedrich Engels, Marx’s famous collaborator, said, after Feuerbach’s landmark book was published, “we all became Feuerbachians.” (Bonus fact: the English translation of Feuerbach’s book was done by George Eliot, author of the classic novel *Middlemarch*.) Music from the WES Chorus led by Bailey Whiteman.

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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.

ethicalsociety.org

February Theme: Duty and Commitment

Amanda Poppei, Senior Leader

Most of us don't like it when we're told we have to do our Duty...and fear of Commitment is a national pastime, if you believe romantic comedies. So what do these heavy words have to do with us? Aren't we the community that invites you to believe what you like, show up when you want, and affirm that nothing terrible will happen to you if you don't?

And we are that community – kind of. We are also a community that invites you to do the hard work of articulating your own deepest values, to stay engaged in our life together even when things get hard, and to hold, both for ourselves and for others, the moral compass we need to live good and beautiful lives.

Oof. No wonder Felix Adler, the founder of Ethical Culture, wrote a book called "The Religion of Duty." It turns out that a non-traditional religious movement like Ethical Culture actually carries with it a significant element of commitment. The difference, I think, is that the sense of commitment, of duty, is internal. It's about how we feel, the inner voice, about living in a way that makes our community and us proud.

As you consider Duty & Commitment over the month of February, you might consider what it means to you to be committed to WES, or to Ethical Culture. And to what, beyond the place and the movement, are you committed in the deepest way? Is it to a value? A belief? World community? What duty do you hold as a human being? I am looking forward to exploring this with you!



Amanda Poppei,
Senior Leader

*Ways to engage with
February's theme:
Duty and Commitment*

February platforms

Story for All Ages
February 1
*The Story of Nancy
Jennison*

Share the plate –
WES Teens' Choice

WES News

Summer Delegation to WES sister community - El Rodeo, El Salvador

Teens and Adults Welcome!

Wednesday, June 24 - Sunday July 5, 2015

What are you doing this summer? Why not consider joining the WES delegation to El Rodeo? Traveling to this small remote village will expand your mind and open your heart. You will experience the breathtaking beauty of the rural highlands and the generosity of the subsistence farmers who live there. Through in-country training and cultural immersion, you'll learn about the history, the politics, the economics of poverty and the tenacity of the human spirit. Want to know more? Come to one of the two Information Sessions scheduled after platform in the Social Hall on February 1 and February 22.

The delegate fee is \$800, plus airfare (typically \$600- \$700). Applications are due on March 1 with a \$100 deposit.

Many past participants have been able to raise funds to offset the cost of the trip. Contact Peggy Goetz for more information.

Questions? Contact Peggy Goetz at peggykgoetz@gmail.com or Ross Wells at Rosswells@starpower.net.

Appreciation for the Giving Tree Program

Thank you to all WES members who participated in the Giving Tree program and provided at least 85 gifts to family members of some of the neediest families in Montgomery County – families with special-needs children and families that face many financial challenges. These gifts have put smiles on so many children over the years and this year the sister of Joy (pictured with her mom) wrote a following beautiful thank you to WES. You should know that many families appreciate your generosity.

Show WES some love by helping the Auction Committee with the next auction.

Bring in your baskets, big bowls, designer pots, festive bins...anything that would make a fetching basket container that can be used for the auction.



WES Immigration Action of the Month

One Saturday a month is all it takes to help immigrant applicants fill out the paperwork for their citizenship applications or apply for the DACA program that allows young people who meet certain criteria to stay legally in the U.S. for two years and extend to three years.

Send an email to Molly Gavin at CASA of Maryland to be notified of the Saturday training session, which enables you to begin helping that very day. There's no obligation to come on a regular basis so it's easy to fit into your calendar.

Act now: mgavin@casamd.org

Judith Johnson and Patti Absher can tell you about their positive experiences.

Back by popular demand! – Are We There Yet?

Beth Baker and Julie Campbell will again facilitate their discussion group aimed at people in the second half of life. The group will explore the topic of growing older. Each session will include short readings and the chance to discuss how we can be more intentional about the next chapter of our lives. How do we break through our fears and denial about getting old? What is research showing about living well in old age? How do we find meaning in this stage of life? Facilitated by Beth Baker and Julie Campbell. Meets at the Campbells, 2601 Klingle Rd., NW, Washington, DC, for four Sundays, 3:15-5:00, February 22, March 1, March 8, and March 15. Light refreshments. For more information and to sign up, contact juliecampbell@aol.com. The group is limited to 20 participants – there are only 5 spaces left.

The Created Equal Video Series Explores the African American Experience

This month, the series of videos about the African American Experience will continue at WES. The videos are:

- *Freedom Summer*, about the summer of 1964, which brought hundreds of college students into the Deep South to join local people in registering voters and creating Freedom Schools and saw the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party challenge the delegation of the segregationist Mississippi Democratic Party at the Democratic National Convention (February 1);
- *Slavery by Another Name*, which shows how forced labor continued after the reconstruction era, well into the 20th Century (February 8);
- *The Loving Story*, about how the love of an interracial couple and their determination to live in the place they knew as home led to the Supreme Court case that made interracial marriage legal throughout the nation (February 15); and
- *The Abolitionists*, which tells the stories of both black and white leaders in the struggle against slavery before the Civil War (February 22).

The *Created Equal Series* is part of the *Bridging Cultures* initiative of the National Endowment for the Humanities, produced in partnership with the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History to encourage public conversations about the changing meanings of freedom and equality in America.

After scenes from each film, there will be opportunities to ask questions of special guests who have in-depth knowledge of what is portrayed, often through their own

personal experiences, and time for community discussion. We will all go away better informed about these important parts of America's civil rights struggle and inspired by the people portrayed who stepped up and made a difference.

Sundays February 1, 8, and 22 at 7 p.m.

All programs are free and open to the community. For more information, contact June Fair at 301-254-7045 or JuneLFair@gmail.com.

News from the AEU

My Thoughts – Karen Elliott

AEU Board Member,

Member the Baltimore Ethical Society

In the summer of 1996, I attended the first lay Leadership Summer School organized for lay leaders in Ethical Societies by our national organization, the *American Ethical Union*. At that time, I had been a member of the Baltimore Ethical Society for about four years (and had served on its board for that same number of years). There was a lot I did not know about the Ethical Union before, and even after, Summer School.

Beginning in 1997, I made a point to attend every AEU Assembly and each time I attended Assembly I learned a little more about the national organization. I met people who were active with committees such as ethical education, ethical action, and even information technology (my own professional field). I learned about the amazing work that our "sister" organization, now called the *National Ethical Service*, does at the United Nations as a registered and well-respected NGO (non-governmental organization). I heard people talk about how they had infused their lives with ethics – sometimes in simple, every-day things but also responding ethically with bravery in the face of potential financial loss or even physical danger. I left each Assembly newly inspired to do my best to live an ethical (as well as an Ethical) life.

Sometimes I was asked to work on the national level but I was busy in Baltimore; raising a child as a single mother, supporting my "home" society, and doing work in my community that is an important part of my ethical life. I didn't see how I could fit that much more into an already jam-packed day and still have time for sleep, family, friends and my writing life. But finally, 14 years after I attended Summer School in the beautiful mountains of North Carolina, I said "yes" to national service with the AEU. I ran for and was elected to our Board of Directors for the first time four years ago and I've never looked back.

I am someone who mostly lives life without regrets or "what ifs" but as I write these words I wonder what wonderful experiences I might have missed out on by saying "no" for all of those years. As I learn more and more about the Ethical Movement – both its history and its people, past and present – I am continuously re-inspired and invigorated by the thoughts of what our movement has helped to create in this world, and of what we can offer to it today. Our society is in need of ethical education for all ages – and in need of frequent reminders of the truth in Felix Adler's adage that we "Act so as to bring out the best in each other" because in doing so we become so much more our own best – more compassionate, more focused on living our values, and more one of those people who contributes a positive presence in their daily lives as a benefit to the entire world.

As our world has developed the internet and other technologies to bring people together who physically are miles and cultures apart, the Ethical Movement's emphasis on relationships and attribution of human worth to each individual can help to create a new worldwide community of people who together and individually are working to make our shared world a better place. Our Ethical Societies provide a place in which people can do that work. And our Union – the American Ethical Union – can provide the network and shared resources to support more and more Societies in that important and fulfilling work of building a better, more ethical world.

Coming up at WES

Sunday, February 1

Created Equal Video Series, 7 pm, WES Main Hall. The Washington Ethical Society will screen *Freedom Summer*, a documentary about the summer of 1964, which brought hundreds of college students into the Deep South to join local people in registering voters and creating Freedom Schools and saw the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party challenge the delegation of the segregationist state Democratic Party at the Democratic National Convention. The film is part of a series on the African American experience. For more information see page 4.

Information Session on the Summer Delegation to WES's sister community - El Rodeo, El Salvador, after Platform, WES Social Hall. See article on page 3.

Tuesday, February 3

Skeptical Spirituality Reading Group, 7 pm, Adler Study. Join writer Sigfried Gold on the first Tuesday of each month to discuss spirituality and spiritual practices from a skeptical viewpoint. By "skeptical," Sigfried means: 1) doubting or rejecting the existence of supernatural forces and phenomena, and 2) bringing an open-minded but critical eye to any practice we consider. Our primary aim will be to explore spiritual ideas and practices that, if they can survive critical analysis, might support our ethical aspirations and promote a deep sense of purpose and meaning.

Friday, February 6

First Friday Discussion Lunch, 12:30-2:00 pm, Social Hall. Judith Johnson will talk with us about *Living in Japan*, focusing on realities of living abroad, traveling alone overseas, and Japanese culture. Please bring a sandwich for yourself and any lunch extra you might like to share and arrive early enough so that we can begin lunch and a go-round at 12:30. Contact: Marty Brockway (ewbrocs@rcn.com).

Sunday, February 8

New Member Welcome Ceremony, during platform.

Biology Discussion Group, 12:45-2 pm, Library. We will continue the discussion of *Evolution in Four Dimensions: Genetic, Epigenetic, Behavioral, and Symbolic Variation in the History of Life* (second edition, 2014) by Eva Jablonka and Marion Lamb. For more information contact Barbara Searle: bsearle70@msn.com.

WES Bookgroup, 2 pm. Please join us as we discuss Lois Lowry's 1994 Newbery Medal winning novel, *The Giver*. One of the most influential novels of our time, *The Giver* is a haunting story centered on twelve-year-old Jonas, who's seemingly

ideal, if colorless, world of conformity and contentment suddenly reveals dark and complex secrets when he is assigned to be his community's Receiver of Memory. Younger readers (ages 9 and up) are encouraged to attend and join the conversation. Jeff Weinfeld and Nilam Patel will host - 9705 Lawson Pl, Silver Spring. For more information, contact Tony Nam: tonyknam@yahoo.com

Created Equal Video Series, WES Main Hall, 7 pm. The Washington Ethical Society will screen *Slavery by Another Name*, a documentary which shows how forced labor continued after the reconstruction era, well into the 20th Century. The film is part of a series on the African American experience. For more information see page 4.

Thursday, February 12

Board Meeting, 7 pm, Library. All WES members are welcome to attend monthly Board meetings. Every other month, they are held on Sundays after platform to encourage guests! Agenda and materials may be found before the meeting in the Members' Access section of the website, www.ethicalsociety.org.

Sunday, February 15

Schmoozapaloosa, after platform, Main Hall. WES continues our lunch on every 3rd 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!

Created Equal Video Series, WES Main Hall, 7 pm. The Washington Ethical Society will screen *The Loving Story*, a documentary about how the love of an interracial couple and their determination to live in the place they knew as home led to the Supreme Court case that made interracial marriage legal throughout the nation. For more information see page 4.

Sunday, February 22

Are We There Yet? Discussion Group, 3:15-5pm, Julie Campbell's home. See the article on page 4.

Created Equal Video Series, WES Main Hall, 7 pm. The Washington Ethical Society will screen *The Abolitionists*, a documentary that tells the stories of both black and white leaders in the struggle against slavery before the Civil War. The film is the final part of a series on the African American Experience. After each film, you will have the opportunity to ask questions of special guests who have in depth knowledge of what is portrayed, often through their own personal experiences, and there will be time for community discussion. For more information, contact June Fair at 301-254-7045.

Information Session on the Summer Delegation to WES sister community - El Rodeo, El Salvador, after Platform, WES Social Hall. See article on page 3.

Sunday, March 1

Capital Campaign Event for New Members, 7pm, Home of Loretta Neumann and Dan Smith. Members who have joined since our successful *Burn the Mortgage, Ignite the Future Capital Campaign* are invited to a dessert party to learn about the campaign and how it has influenced our community.