

WES Express

Monthly Newsletter of the Washington Ethical Society

July/August 2015

Upcoming Platforms – Join us at 11am

Sunday, July 5. "Toward a Humanist Spirituality" Hugh Taft-Morales, Leader, Baltimore Ethical Society and Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia. A growing number of people today yearn for something more than mundane experiences of everyday life but without the trappings of dogma and bureaucracy. How should humanists best approach the word "spiritual"? Is it a danger to reason because, as the founder of Ethical Culture, Felix Adler, said, it is often "a synonym of muddled thought and misty emotionalism"? Or can naturalistic forms of spirituality found in Spinoza, John Dewey, and Carl Sagan enliven humanism today? Music by Doris Justis.

Sunday, July 12. "Laughter, Comedy and Spirit: Not as Distinct As You Might First Think" Jamila Bey. The experience of coming together with others in order to better understand oneself and the world around us can be a powerful event. Often, people are moved to great insights and understandings, and the occasional belly laugh doesn't hurt either! From the court jester who pointed out problems to the social and political commentary of Jon Stewart and Chris Rock, there's a long tradition of laughing to keep from crying, and laughing to better appreciate the reality of life. Some might even say that laughter isn't only medicine; it's spiritual food as well! (Jamila Bey is an African-American journalist and public speaker.)

Sunday, July 19. " Self-Transformation and Spiritual Endeavor" Sigfried Gold. Following decades of psychotherapy, medication, and diets Sigfried Gold "found religion" through Twelve-Step recovery and Buddhist meditation. Remaining an atheist, Sigfried wonders and writes about how God and spirituality operate in people's lives. What can spiritual practices offer to help us? Music by Josh Blinder.

Table of Contents

Upcoming Platforms.....	1
Theme Exploration	3
Board Column	4
WES News.....	5
Felix and Friends	6
Coming Up at WES	6

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

Sunday, July 26. "Multigenerational Service" led by the Sunday School and Teens. Tony Nam will officiate. Music from the kids.

Sunday, August 2. "What I Learned on Sabbatical" Amanda Poppei, Senior Leader. Music by LEA.

Sunday, August 9. "Secularism 2.0" Rev. Dr. Kendyl Gibbons, Senior Minister of All Souls Unitarian Universalist Church in Kansas City. New York Times columnist David Brooks recently laid out a charter for what he called "building better secularists." How might his thinking, and our response to it, inform the growth of our Humanist communities?

Sunday, August 16. "Ask Me Anything" Amanda Poppei, Senior Leader.

Sundays, August 23 and 30. To Be Announced. Please read our Weekly e-News or check the [WES web site](#).

Thanks From Our Friends in El Salvador

In April, WES received the following letter from Elvis Zavala. We would like to share it with the members now.

First of all, I want to thank you for so much kindness with us in our tour of your country.

Believe me that it was very important to me to know how you and your families live and that you all are thinking about our community, which is far away territorially, but close in spirit.

I also think about how comfortable you are, it's an enormous difference and how you all leave this comfort zone to visit us and struggle together with us to look for projects that make us happy. I admire this whole effort so much and am grateful to you for it.

Thank you WES community for all your support to my community and I don't want to miss the opportunity to directly thank the wonderful people like my other USA mother Lola and her companero Steve [the Skolniks provided home hospitality and transportation], and Peggy, Ross, Susan, Pam, Guillermmo, Karen and their families as well [the WES Global Connections committee], if I forgot someone I hope you will forgive me.

It was a fantastic trip, the cold was great and we combated it with the human warmth of so many people that were part of this beautiful experience.

Thank you for everything. A hug, attentively (*sic*),
Elvis Zavala.

Theme: Summer

Bailey Whiteman, Chorus Director

Hello everyone! I hope you are having a wonderful summer. It feels like it goes even faster now than it did when I was a child, which makes me a bit melancholy, but I'm trying just to enjoy the days as they come, rather than rush ahead to the end.

With the chorus on break right now, I find myself wondering what you are up to. Do you get some time to slow down? Or is the summer a busier time for you? Whatever you are up to, I'm thinking about you, and knowing how glad I'll be to see you in August.

Meanwhile, for me, it's a time to rejuvenate, while reflecting on last year's work, and preparing for the next. For the second summer in a row, I will attend the *Unitarian Universalist Musicians Network* conference, this year in Boston. In addition, I will continue my work in the *Music Leader Certification Program*, jointly administered by the UUMN and the UUA (Unitarian Universalist Association.) I am so grateful for the support WES has provided, enabling me to pursue this study for your and my benefit.

The *Music Leader Certification Program*, or MLCP, is a three-year course of study, with six class modules, plus three professional days. Last year, I took *Leading a Rehearsal* and *Care and Ethics* and *Music as Story – Gazing into Mystery, History, and Beyond*. As you may recall from my [February platform](#), I learned a huge amount in the *Care and Ethics* module, including how to care better for myself, as well as how to think about caring for all of you. I also spent a lot of time thinking about *duty ethics*, and how that school of thought does and doesn't apply to my life and to my work. Members of the chorus would probably tell you I grew a great deal based on the rehearsal leading class, but then there is always more to do! Add in the discussion about folk music, as well as the goals I set for my own growth this year, and I can hardly express how much the first year of the program changed me.

Now I am knee-deep in study for this summer's courses: *Leadership of Congregational Singing*, *Toward Multicultural Competence*, and *Sexually Healthy Congregations*. The reading is intense, my self-inquiry is going full-steam, and I can't wait to see what more I can learn. If you have questions about what I'm learning, or hope for how I might grow, please do let me know. I'm always happy to talk about music at WES, and how music can help us all connect to one another. With that in mind, I'll sign off, singing songs about all that's in my heart, and hoping you are singing too.



Bailey Whiteman,
Chorus Director

Ways to engage:

Reflect on the themes of 2014-15, at home and with the community on Sundays July 26 and August 30.

From Your Board of Trustees

By Adam Goldberg, WES Board of Trustees

As many of you know, I'm currently on an extended vacation with my daughter Imogen, who is visiting from Australia. In fact, I'm taking advantage of a sabbatical program at work that we call renewal. I'm "only" getting six weeks off, but I can tell already, just barely two weeks in, that it has been fantastic for my morale and peace of mind, and given me a much needed break from the pressures of work in a way that a normal vacation can't provide. I'm sure that when I get back to the office my enthusiasm for the job will be renewed, which is surely why the program was established in the first place.

At WES we're going through a sabbatical period ourselves, with Amanda out until August. I'm hopeful that she's experiencing the same sort of benefits I'm getting, though of course I can't say for sure because the whole idea of the sabbatical is to really get away, without contact with the people back at work. I haven't been in contact with Amanda, just as I haven't been in touch with the people at my office. So, we just have to trust that the time off will give her a sense of renewal that will bring her back to us refreshed and energized.

It's an important time for her. A Senior Leader doesn't just work 9 to 5, and we can all imagine how the pressures of a position like that can wear on you. I'm happy for her that she's getting this time off, just as I'm glad to have the time I'm getting away from work. I'm convinced it's good for her, but I also believe that it's good for WES too.

Yes, her presence is missed. But while she's gone, WES members are stretching themselves to ensure that we keep the "WES experience" going strong. Since we always rely heavily on the volunteer efforts of our members, this might be a good time for many of us to learn about new things we can do for WES even when Amanda returns. We're also bringing in a whole host of guest speakers that provide a different perspective, and trying new things at platform, all of which may give us great ideas for things to do as we move forward. And, at least in my case, this is a chance to relearn just why we value Amanda's day-to-day presence so much.

I know from my own sabbatical experience the importance of this time for Amanda, so I respect her time away, but I'll still be happy when we've finally gotten her back!

WES News

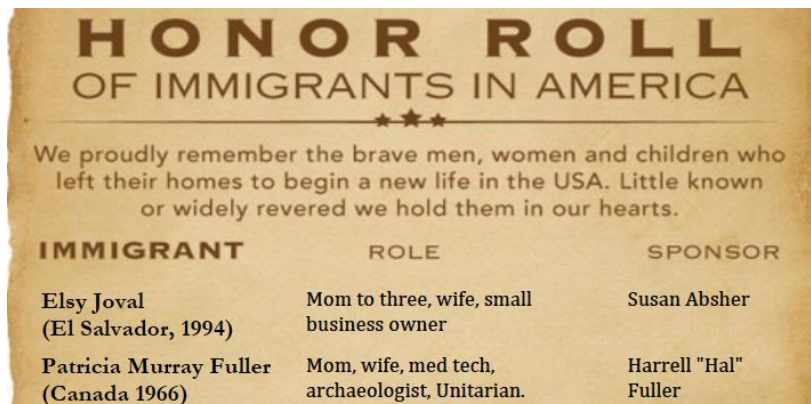
Greater Washington Immigration Film Festival

Films, long and short, from North Carolina to Germany tell immigrants' stories at the second annual *Immigration FilmFest*, Oct. 22-23-24-25.

WES and 15 other locations will screen movies that spotlight immigrants and refugees around the globe. The program committee has screened more than 140 films. Local teams at WES and at 10 other sponsoring organizations reviewed the best of these.

Featured films will be announced July 19 at [Everbrite](#), the electronic box office. Post-film discussions among the filmmakers, immigrant experts and the audience will explore the films' themes. Tickets can be reserved ahead, \$6 and \$4. Early ticketing is recommended since many venues have limited seating.

In the meantime, readers are invited to explore the new feature, *Honor Roll of America's Immigrants*, on the [Immigration FilmFest website](#). For a small contribution one may name an immigrant, country of origin, occupation and the name of the nominator. [Take a peek](#) and see whom you know on the Honor Roll.



**HONOR ROLL
OF IMMIGRANTS IN AMERICA**

We proudly remember the brave men, women and children who left their homes to begin a new life in the USA. Little known or widely revered we hold them in our hearts.

IMMIGRANT	ROLE	SPONSOR
Elsy Joval (El Salvador, 1994)	Mom to three, wife, small business owner	Susan Absher
Patricia Murray Fuller (Canada 1966)	Mom, wife, med tech, archaeologist, Unitarian.	Harrell "Hal" Fuller

WES members Patti Absher and Judith Johnson are founders and leaders of the Immigration FilmFest. Julie Campbell and Nancy Sorden also play major roles this year. Eleven other faith congregations have joined forces with WES to produce the four-day event. UUA's Fund for Social Responsibility, the UUSJ and the DC Humanities Council have contributed funding for 2015.

Felix and Friends

This is the anniversary edition of this column, which kicked off in the July/August 2014 issue with a quotation suggested by Lynne Waymon. Here are a several more of Lynne's favorites from Felix Adler:

~~~~~

*"An Ethical Society cannot succeed by presenting lectures, by devising rituals, or even by establishing social service projects and good works, however indispensable these may be. The Ethical Society's mission is to give birth to personalities who have attained for themselves an abiding ethical faith and are aflame with it."*

~~~~~

"The greatest disease in modern society is lack of purpose."

~~~~~

*"The vice that underlies all vices is that people hold each other cheaply, and worse, that in our innermost being, we hold ourselves cheaply as well."*

~~~~~

Want to suggest a quote for this space? Write us at wes@ethicalsociety.org.

Coming up at WES

Friday, July 3

First Friday Group is on recess until September 4.

Sunday, July 5

Newcomers' Q and A, 12:30pm, Library. Bring your coffee, cookies, and questions to this informal gathering! Meet a member of WES and learn more about WES and what it means to be part of our community.

Friday, July 17

Still Thirsty After All These Years, 5:30-7:30pm, 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 the month. Please contact Nancy McGuire (nkmontheroad@yahoo.com) or Shan Evans (sevans4406@yahoo.com) for more details.

Sunday, August 2

Newcomers' Q and A, 12:30pm, Library. Bring your coffee, cookies, and questions to this informal gathering! Meet a member of WES and learn more about WES and what it means to be part of our community.

Friday, August 7

First Friday Group is on recess until September 4.

Friday, August 21

Still Thirsty After All These Years, 5:30-7:30pm, Austin Grill in Downtown Silver Spring. See July 17 for more information.

Friday, September 4

First Fridays, 12:30-1pm. Join WES members and friends who are retired or have a flexible work schedule for our monthly lunch discussion group. Our discussions are based sometimes on presentations from members or guests who have some special information to share, and sometimes on sharing within the group. We have enjoyed presentations from writers of poems, blogs, and novels; champions of social justice issues, historical celebrations, and healthful practices; members of intentional communities, service organizations, and performance groups; researchers on elder issues, happiness, and end of life planning; and many others. And we have shared ideas on poems and stories we have loved, holiday practices in our families, our solutions to common problems, our travels, and much more. We sometimes bring bag lunches and sometimes take turns bringing food to share with the group. To learn more, contact Marty Brockway, ewbrocs@rcn.com.

Links for eNewsletter:

Speakers:

[Sigfried Gold](#) and [LinkedIn](#)

[Rev. Dr. Kendyl Gibbons](#)

WES:

[Web Site](#)

[News Blog](#)

[Felix and Friends Blog](#)