



The Ethical Humanist

Newsletter of the ETHICAL SOCIETY OF BOSTON

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April 2014

Dr. James O'Connell, ESB's 2014 Humanist of the Year

On Sunday, April 13th, Dr. James O'Connell, President of Boston Healthcare for the Homeless (bhchp.org), will be celebrated as recipient of our Humanist of the Year award. Dr. O'Connell won our hearts when, in his December, '13 lecture, he presented the homeless population in photos, commenting on their individual lives and common tribulations. Most apparent was his selfless focus on the humanitarian effort he has tirelessly promoted for this population.



Dr. O'Connell helped found BHCHP in 1985, after completing his residency at Mass General Hospital. As President, he supports the Board of Directors in setting strategic direction for the organization and advocates for public policies and programs to address the needs of homeless people. He maintains a busy clinical practice in one of the program's hospital-based clinics, on the streets, and in the BHCHP van, caring for Boston's homeless population.

Dr. O'Connell lectures and publishes extensively; he is editor of *The Healthcare of Homeless Persons - A Manual of Communicable Diseases and Common Problems in Shelters and on the Streets* – one of the most widely used texts on healthcare

issues of the homeless. He is a graduate of the University of Notre Dame, earned his medical degree from Harvard Medical School, and holds a master's degree in Philosophy and Theology from Cambridge University in England.

For an insightful look into the world of Dr. O'Connell, go to <http://www.wbur.org/2012/11/27/dr-jim-oconnell> to hear/read Sacha Pfeiffer's WBUR feature, *Visionaries: Dr. Jim O'Connell, Provider of Healthcare to the Homeless*.

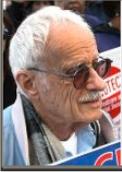
Voting Reforms Are On the Way

On April 27, our speaker will be Erin O'Brien, professor of political science at UMass Boston. In a talk entitled "*We're Number 42: Voter Access in Massachusetts*", Dr. O'Brien will be discussing recent developments in the laws that influence voter registration and access.

This winter, the Massachusetts Senate passed a comprehensive bill to modernize elections. The bill includes provisions for "early voting", as well as online voter registration, election day registration, and post-election auditing of voting machines.



We anticipate Dr. O'Brien will have much to say about these reforms, and how they could make Massachusetts a leader, rather than a laggard on this important issue.



The Way It Is (?)

Marvin Miller

Work

If it had no effect on your income, would you do (or have done) the work you do (or did)? If your work is in the arts, sciences, professions, sports, public service, caring, a skilled craft, or a business that you own or manage, it's likely that your answer would be yes. Otherwise it would probably be no. "Otherwise" includes most work done by most of the world's people most of the time. The link between work and income is what keeps most people doing what they do.

At the beginning of the chapter on vocations in the book "An Ethical Philosophy of Life" by Felix Adler, the founder of Ethical Culture, Dr. Adler makes clear his view that the everyday work that most people do does not qualify as a vocation. He suggests that the terms "vocational education" and "vocational guidance" as used in schools are incorrect. Only the kinds of work indicated above would qualify as such.

Play is what we do because we enjoy doing it; work is what we do for the sake of its result. Some activities are both, such as playing music or sports professionally. Some kinds of activity are work or play depending on the situation. When we go for a walk in our walking group, walking is play; when we walk to the store in bad weather to get the food we need for our next meal, it's work. The distinction between work and play isn't necessarily sharp: sometimes there is satisfaction from successfully completing work. Some of our folk songs and stories celebrate mythical workers, like the railroad builder John Henry and the logger Paul Bunyan. Others celebrate work itself, like "Sixteen Tons" and "Banana Boat".

IBM used to have a slogan "Machines should work; people should think." It seems an ironic slogan, given the fact that the work that the

people at IBM were doing was building machines that store and process information, itself a good definition of thinking. Many inventions reduce the amount of work that people have to do. Examples are machines for harvesting crops and paving roads.

The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 23, says "Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favorable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment." We can't read the minds of those who wrote this Article, but we can speculate that they had in mind the wages earned by working, the satisfaction from making a meaningful contribution to society. As we look at unemployment rates and working conditions across the country and around the world, we see that this right is currently far from being realized.

A recent controversial report by the Congressional Budget Office said that the Affordable Care Act will result in a decrease in the number of hours worked in the U.S. Opponents of the law deplore this effect; its proponents claim it's positive, allowing those who leave jobs they don't want to be in but remain in solely to keep their health insurance

A long article in the Feb. 9 2014 Boston Globe titled "Money for All" resurrected the 1970s idea of a guaranteed minimum income or a negative income tax. This would mitigate the hardship associated with unemployment and give businesses an incentive to make work more attractive.

Continued on Page 7

Building a Sustainable and Diverse Community

Andrea Perrault

The Board of Trustees of the Ethical Society of Boston is engaging with members to expand the reach of the Society through a concentrated strategic planning effort, and it is critical for all of us to reflect on what we believe our community should have as a focus. While we've recognized for many years that our ranks have not grown and our current membership is not able to maintain a consistent level of activities, we have not really concentrated on what changes we must undertake.

Certain activities have been sustained – Sunday meetings, movie viewings, and courses on topics related to ethical issues – others have fallen by the wayside largely due to the inability of enough members to take on leadership roles.

Another key fact is that our “age” demographic keeps shifting upward, without new younger members joining the Society. With the move into the Humanist Hub, we have an opportunity to chart a new path. We must not waste this opportunity, and it must be integral to our strategic planning activities which will continue into next year.

Our collaboration with the Humanists at Harvard is still in its infancy as they have just started their activities in the spring 2014 semester, and we are the first “tenants”. Greg Epstein has reported that as they become more settled in their priority activities, they'll be much better equipped to discuss with us how to build collaboration. So far, there have been some overlapping activities, some of them planned and others coincidental. We planned to have James Croft address the Ethical Society at our first meeting at the Humanist Hub – that was very successful in drawing people from both groups as James is active in both. He has promised to address us again before he leaves in the late spring/summer to move to St. Louis where he'll be an Ethical

Culture Leader in Training. The memorial service honoring Tom Ferrick brought both our communities together again, as Tom had roles in each organization.

A beneficial but unexpected point of collaboration exists in the fact that the Humanists at Harvard are engaged in a volunteer activity to aid the homeless this semester and the Humanist of the Year for the Ethical Society of Boston is Dr. James O'Connell, founder and President of Healthcare for the Homeless. These are good beginnings, but our collaborative efforts must continue both consciously and continuously to build the humanist community in Boston.

A few ways that we at ESB can continue the positive start we've had in 2014 include the following:

- Solidifying our role as a partner at the Humanist Hub.
- Engaging in joint planning for programs throughout the year.
- Taking on leadership roles that support collaboration in activities, projects, and in promoting and building the Humanist Hub in Boston.
- Continuing our strategic planning effort.
- Making at least a two year commitment to building the capacity of the ESB.
- Dedicating funding to continue the effort.
- Investigating the possibility of adding staff to our organization.

In collaborating with the Humanists at Harvard, we have a joint interest in assuring that the “age” demographic of the humanist community in Boston is diverse. By drawing people of different classes, races, and genders to our new home, we may be able to ensure that the humanist tradition in the area will extend for many years.



Ethical Action

Families Against Mandatory Minimums - <http://famm.org>

In March, Barbara Dougan of FAMM [spoke to ESB](#) about the problem of mandatory minimum sentences for drug crimes, which overcrowd our prisons with non-violent offenders, and destroy the lives of disadvantaged individuals.

FAMM has a variety of ways to get involved. You can make a donation, join their mailing list to stay up to date on sentencing laws, and learn how to advocate for change.

Visit <http://famm.org/get-involved/> for details.



Mothers Out Front - <http://www.mothersoutfront.org/>

Mothers Out Front is an activist organization that is working on climate issues. From their site:

We have watched our leaders at every level fail to take action to address the growing climate crisis. We are mobilizing our energies and talents to build a movement that will be a force for change, beginning in our own communities and moving throughout the country and, eventually, the world. Our goal is to transition our society away from fossil fuels to clean energy, where there is an option to elect clean energy.

To learn how you can get involved, visit their web site at <http://www.mothersoutfront.org/>.



Move to Amend - <http://gbmta.org>

Move to Amend is a national organization with a local chapter in Greater Boston. Several ESB members are active in this group. The fundamental principles of the group are:

- Corporations are not people, and
- Money is not speech.

The group advocates changes to the Constitution that would deny corporations the rights that are granted to individuals. They further believe that it is in the best interests of the nation to allow Congress to regulate excessive election spending.

The group holds monthly meetings, usually in Cambridge. Visit <http://gbmta.org> for updates.



Ethical Action

Jobs with Justice - <http://www.jwj.org/>

In March, Gillian Mason of *Jobs with Justice* [spoke to ESB](#) about the campaign to raise the minimum wage in Massachusetts. The organization is fighting for workers rights and a just economy. It is working to improve labor practices of large employers like Walmart, to further protections for immigrant workers, to transform the long-term care system in the country, and to reform student debt.

To get involved with Jobs with Justice, visit their site at: <http://www.jwj.org/take-action>.



Boston Healthcare for the Homeless - <http://www.bhchp.org>

Dr. James O'Connell, is the President of this organization that has been providing healthcare for homeless men, women, and children since 1985.

The organization welcomes volunteers. From their site:

Volunteers can serve on-site in our clinics, respite care facility, administrative offices or research department and off site organizing donation drives that gather essential items that BHCHP's doctors, nurses and case managers will be able to distribute to our patients.

To learn more, go to:

<http://www.bhchp.org/volunteeropportunities.htm>



Compassion and Choices

<https://www.compassionandchoices.org/>

Compassion and Choices is a national organization that is "committed to helping everyone have the best death possible."

In Massachusetts, Compassion and Choices is working on legislation that would offer end of life choices. ESB has advocated for the passage of this legislation.

To get involved, visit <https://www.compassionandchoices.org/what-you-can-do/>

compassion & choices

Sunday Lectures in April

April 6

Dr. Ellen Fitzpatrick, Professor of History, College of Liberal Arts, University of New Hampshire

Letters to Jackie: Condolences from a Grieving Nation

Ellen Fitzpatrick will speak about her new book, *Letters to Jackie: Condolences from a Grieving Nation*, which has received much critical acclaim.

April 13

James O'Connell, M.D., Humanist of the Year 2014

Dr. O'Connell will share information about the mission and work of Boston Healthcare for the Homeless and his personal history in the founding and operation of the organization.

April 20

James Croft, Humanist Community at Harvard

Speaking for Earth: Carl Sagan's Scientific Spirituality

Carl Sagan was a noted scientist and popularizer of science - but was he more than that? Is it right to call him "spiritual"? In this presentation James Croft will argue that Sagan can rightly be understood as a spiritual figure, with a view of science and humanity which is not just true but awesome, inspiring, and filled with wonder.

April 27

Dr. Erin O'Brien, Professor of Political Science, University of Massachusetts at Boston

We're Number 42: Voter Access in Massachusetts

The "liberal hotbed" of Massachusetts ranks near the bottom of the fifty states when it comes to how easy it is for citizens to legally cast a ballot. This talk will examine the state of voter access in the Bay State, the socio-economic and racial bias in voter turnout, as well as the legislative action which could alter this state of affairs.

Rap on Tap

"\$35 a gig." "white cork" "I was an opener for Bandwagon"

Why did America fail

Bucking John Bubbles, Baby Lawrence, Chuck Green, tapping sapphire-silver "Shim Sham",
Cholly Atkins, Honi Coles' subtle silk-spun soft shoe.

The Nicholas Brothers, The Handsome Four Steps,
PhD's danced and danced and danced soaring into
space and height.

Camden Richman unwraps it all,
coolly taps her drum roll: "Jam with Honi".

Elaine Mountleigh



Work - Marvin Miller *(continued from Page 2)*

It would be a step toward realizing the right stated in Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: "Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and his family." But, since this would weaken the bargaining power of businesses relative to their workers, we are unlikely to see it enacted soon.

Save the Date

On May 11, Julian Aygeman of Tufts University will deliver the first Roseland Memorial Lecture in honor of Ed Roseland.

Cambridge Open Studios - April 26 & 27

From 12-6 PM, member Martha Werman exhibits at 19 Donnell St in Cambridge. For other artists in the city, see http://www2.cambridgema.gov/cac/community/cambridge_open_studios.cfm

Hospitality and Refreshment Schedule

Those who come to the Sunday platform meeting are asked to contribute some food item to the refreshment table, according to the first letter of their last name.

| | | |
|--------|------------------|-------|
| Week 1 | Sunday, April 6 | A - C |
| Week 2 | Sunday, April 13 | D - K |
| Week 3 | Sunday, April 20 | L - O |
| Week 4 | Sunday, April 27 | P - Z |

The Ethical Movement

Ethical Culture is a humanistic religious and educational movement working to create a better world through ethical actions. We are dedicated to the ideal that the highest value is human worth and that our relationships to each other are of greatest ethical concern. Our commitment is to the worth and dignity of the individual and to treating each human being so as to bring out the best in him or her. Members join together in ethical societies to assist each other in developing ethical ideas and ideals...to celebrate life's joys and support each other through life's crises.

Information About the Society**Officers for 2013/2014**

| | | |
|----------------|-----------------|----------------|
| President | Andrea Perrault | (781) 593-5794 |
| Vice President | Ingrid Kisiuk | (617) 332-7109 |
| Treasurer | Terry Goldzier | (617) 232-7704 |
| Secretary | Margo Woods | (781) 646-6059 |

Other Board Members

Donald Aharonian, Peter Ames,
Cathy Haskell, Fred Hewett

| | | |
|-------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Archivist | Brian King | (781) 581-6104 |
| Caring Committee | Marline Miller | (617) 244-1471 |
| Ethical Action | Margo Woods | (781) 646-6059 |
| Membership | | |
| Music | Ingrid Kisiuk Izabella Mazhbits | (617) 332-7109 (617) 731-1089 |
| Newsletter | Fred Hewett Martha Werman | (617) 945-0396 (617) 497-7888 |
| Officiant | Katrina Scott | (617) 965-3067 |
| Open/Close Words | Betty Latner | (617) 277-7122 |
| Program Comm. | Andrea Perrault | (781) 593-5794 |
| Publicity | John Lampert | (617) 923-8550 |
| Finance Committee | | |
| Sunday Bulletin | Susan Caulfield | (617) 547-6085 |
| Website | Fred Hewett | (617) 945-0396 |

Groups Around the Society

| | | |
|---------------|--------------------|----------------|
| Book Group | Mildred Siegel | (617) 731-4829 |
| Movie Group | Marline Miller | (617) 244-1471 |
| Walking Group | Doris Berger | (617) 277-1839 |
| 9:30 Forum | Carolyn Nalbandian | (617) 268-0814 |

E-mail bostonethical@Verizon.net for all print and e-mail newsletter requests (subscriptions, changes and cancellations)

Website: www.bostonethical.org

| ~ Program Schedule for April 2014 ~ <i>(Details on Page 6)</i> | |
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| April 6 | Ellen Fitzpatrick <i>Letters to Jackie: Condolences from a Grieving Nation</i> |
| April 13 | James O’Connell <i>Humanist of the Year 2014</i> |
| Attention! Work on the elevator at 30 JFK St begins April 14th. Please refer to our website for updates on where we will be meeting after that. | |
| April 20 | James Croft <i>Speaking for Earth: Carl Sagan's Scientific Spirituality</i> |
| April 27 | Erin O’Brien <i>We’re Number 42: Voter Access in Massachusetts</i> |
| Sunday Meetings are held at 10:00 AM, 30 JFK Street, Cambridge, MA | |

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