



CHICAGO ETHICAL HUMANIST

Newsletter of the ETHICAL HUMANIST SOCIETY OF CHICAGO

SEPTEMBER 2017

Welcome to Our New Season of Sunday Morning Programs



GEOFFREY STONE, a professor of law at the University of Chicago, returns to open our new season on **Sunday, September 10th**. His topic is “**Sex and the Constitution**.” Stone will explore how Americans, and especially the Supreme Court, have navigated through

the divisive issues of contraception, abortion, obscenity, and marriage, and how they are deeply bound to religious beliefs and traditions.

RENEE ENGELN, a professor of psychology at Northwestern University, speaks **Sunday, September 17th** on “**Beauty**



Sick: How Our Focus on Looks Hurts Girls and Women.” Engeln will reveal the shocking toll that the obsession on appearance and beauty takes on girls and women—mentally, emotionally, physically, and financially.

PETER HAYES, a retired professor of history at Northwestern University, speaks **Sunday, September 24th**, on “**Why? Explaining the Holocaust**.” Hayes will discuss how the notorious Nazi death camps of the 1940s were a shocking result of both world politics and historic anti-semitism. He will warn that what happened could have dangerous implications for the future.



Other Society Events

• Our **Second Saturday Coffeehouse**, hosted by *Vicki Elberfeld*, is on **September 9th**. We welcome back cellist and composer **Ian Maksin**, who will present a unique solo program that includes J. S. Bach cello suites, Mississippi blues, bossa nova, and folk songs from Persia, the Balkans, and the Caucasus. A suggested donation of \$8–\$12 includes refreshments. Enjoy a relaxing musical evening with us.

• Our **Book Group**, led by *Chris Martin* and *Sue Sherman*, meets on **Sunday, September 10th**, at 12:15 p.m. We’ll discuss *Rhinoceres*, a 1959 play by *Eugene Ionescu* that explores the mentality of those who join fascist movements. Part of the “theater of the absurd,” the play examines conformity and how the residents of a small provincial French town slowly turn into large-nosed beasts.

The Book Group meets again on **Sunday, October 1st**, to discuss *The Glass Castle*, an eloquent memoir by *Jeanette Walls* on her early life with an alcoholic father and artist mother. We’ll compare the book to the current movie.

• Our **Film Discussion group**, led by *John Ungashick*, meets on **Monday, September 11th**, at 7:15 p.m. We’ve again chosen two current films, *The Big Sick* is a comedic but serious autobiographical tale that explores the family issues in an intercultural romance. It was directed by Michael Showalter, with Kumail Nanjiani, Zoe Kazan, and Holly Hunter. *An Inconvenient Sequel: Truth to Power* is a powerful film narrated by Al Gore that documents the growing threat of climate change. It was directed by Bonni Cohen

and Jon Shenk. Our fallback film is *Wind River*.

• Our **Creative Writers group**, led by *Sue Sherman*, meets on **Sunday, September 17th**, at 12:15 p.m. In this first meeting since the August 28th Showcase program, we’ll again share our short, original works. Newcomers are welcome.

Recent Sunday Programs

• **Rick Guthmann**, a family physician and Society member, spoke **July 9th** on “**Evidence-Based Medicine: What It Is, How It Works, and Its Limitations**.” Kara Malenfant was moderator.

Rick began by posing the scientific question, “How do we know what we know?” He then reviewed evidence-based medicine (EBM), which integrates clinical experience with the latest research data, and that dates back to the 5th Century B.C.E. He cited the later work by Avicenna on kidney stones and John Snow’s epidemiological study of cholera. It wasn’t until 1992, he noted, that EBM, aided by computers, was recognized as the standard in medical practice.

Rick explained that EBM methodology consists of first asking a patient about their symptoms, then applying all

(Recent Sunday Programs continued on page 2)

The meetinghouse of the Society is at **7574 N. Lincoln Ave., Skokie**. Sunday programs start at **10:30 a.m.** A social hour follows. For parking, use our lot, spaces at the adjoining store, Howard St. or Jerome St., or the lot at the Albany Bank. If you need transportation, call the office by 1 p.m., Friday—we’ll try to get a ride for you.

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available evidence to patient care. A big step in EBM, he added, have been random control trials, such as on the efficacy of hormone replacement therapy for menopausal women. But he warned against the bias of research sponsored by industry. Pointing out that EBM decision-making is also limited by the physician's and the patient's values, he urged that patients ask questions and be self-advocates.

• **Victoria Shannon**, a Society member and professor of English at DePaul University, spoke **July 16th** on **"Hidden Voices, Hidden Pioneers: LGBT History Before Stonewall."** Pattie Mackenzie was moderator.

Victoria called it "a myth" that the gay rights movement began only after the infamous 1969 police raid on New York City's Stonewall Inn and the ensuing, unprecedented mass protests against the harassment and criminalization of the LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) community. She detailed the early history of LGBT activism in the U.S., and cited the "eye-opening, symbolic shift" in attitudes toward sex during World War II.

With ironic humor, Victoria condemned the entrapments and arrests of homosexuals and the Congressional investigations of so-called "perverts" in the U.S. government in the 1950s. She hailed the "super-courageous" LGBT community as it fought back, led by organizations such as the Mattachine Society. Victoria pointed to major victories, such as the success in 1958 of the lawsuit against the U.S. Postal Service ban on "obscene" mailings. She especially noted the later removal of homosexuality from the American Psychiatric Association's manual on mental disorders.

• **Drew Bekius**, a former Baptist minister and new president of The Clergy Project, spoke **July 23rd** on **"When Preachers Aren't Believers: The Work of The Clergy Project."** Katie Merrell was moderator.

Bekius said how "excited I am" to be involved in the transition of religious professionals into non-believers. Some, he added, are still "in the closet," because they fear losing their jobs, their income, their families, and even their self-identity. In sermon-like passion, he recounted his own path from degrees at the Moody Bible Institute and in divinity studies, as an enthusiastic Baptist minister, and then to leaving the clergy as he gradually became a non-believer. "I left to rediscover my faith," he said.

Bekius praised the seminal role of prominent writers and philosophers Richard Dawkins and Dan Barker in founding The Clergy Project, which he described as a supportive online community that offers hope, encouragement, and services such as counseling, transitional assistance, and hardship grants. He noted that CP participants are from all over the world, with most from the religious tradition of Christianity. He emphasized that to protect them from retaliation by the evangelical right, membership is confidential.

• **Julia Julstrom Agoyo**, a graduate of our Sunday School, spoke **July 30th** on **"Today's Southeast Asia: My Experience from a Fulbright Grant Year."** Her father, Steve Julstrom, was moderator.

Julia described her working in and traveling through southeast Asia last year, after graduating with a degree in international studies from the University of Iowa. She skimmed through the often-violent history of each country she briefly visited, including Malaysia, Thailand, Myanmar, Vietnam, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Brunei, Laos, Cambodia, and Indonesia. She noted that people she met were fascinated by our own tumultuous presidential election.

Julia focused mainly on her several months in Malaysia. "I was greatly impressed by the country's multiculturalism," she said. While there, Julia noted, she provided English language support and organized immigration and deforestation classes. She pointed to the various activities she put together, including extra-curricular projects in fashions, dance, recycling, eco-education, and speaking and poetry competitions. Her power-point presentation highlighted the smiling faces and enthusiasm of the many youngsters she encountered.

• **Glenda Kenyon**, a Society member and professional property manager, spoke **August 6th** on **"Fair Housing: Why You Should Be Engaged."** Shari Pollack was moderator.

Glenda outlined the history of fair housing legislation in the U.S., the difficulties in enforcement, and its current effects on property management. Based on her own job experience, she discussed advertising, processing of housing applicants, touring properties with potential residents, communicating with residents, and hiring and training staff.

Glenda hailed the Fair Housing Act of 1968 as part of the broader civil rights movement. She cited the history of discriminatory real estate practices such as redlining, steering applicants to segregated neighborhoods, and inciting "white flight." Referring to her own parents as an example, she noted the difficulty in finding suitable housing for biracial families. Current issues of housing discrimination, she said, stem mostly from our "believing that what's been done already is enough." She called for "a change in our culture" and urged us "to welcome our new neighbors" and "to get involved!"

The **Ethical Humanist Society of Chicago**, founded in 1882, is a chapter of the American Humanist Association.

Officers & Trustees: Katherine Ross, President; Matt Cole, Vice President; Ray Berg, Secretary; Katie Merrell, Treasurer; Svetlana Bekman, Glenda Kenyon, Kim McWhorter, Sue Sherman, Ed Thompson.

Sunday School Director: Katherine Ross

Office Administrator: Sharon Appelquist

Newsletter Editor: Alan Kimmel

Ethical Officers: Matt Cole, Glenda Kenyon, Katie Merrell

Notices and Announcements

• *Sharing Thoughts* is what we're calling a new column of personal commentary by members—on any philosophical, religious, or political topic related to ethical humanism. Look for the first one—by Society newsletter editor Alan Kimmel, with his brief thoughts about optimism.

• The regular **coffee and social hour** after our Sunday morning programs resumes this month. We'll enjoy chatting over snacks brought by our members, using a schedule corresponding to last names: 1st Sunday, A–D; 2nd Sunday, E–K; 3rd Sunday, L–P; 4th Sunday, Q–Z. Cheers, everyone!

• Our **Women's Group**, led by *Chris Martin*, meets for coffee and conversation at 10:00 a.m., *Saturday, September 16th*, in the comfortable *Curt's Café*, 2922 Central St., in Evanston. No reservation needed. Just come as you are.

• Our next **soup kitchens** are for lunch at the 2nd Baptist Church on *Monday, October 2nd*, 10:00 a.m.–1:30 p.m., and for dinner at *St. Paul's Church* on *Sunday, October 22nd*, 1:00–4:30 p.m. Both are in Evanston. We need a dozen volunteers to join friends both old and new to cook and serve a hot, nutritious meal for our less fortunate neighbors. A sign-up sheet is on the hallway bulletin board. Or email Marilee Cole at marileesgarden@comcast.net. Thanks!

• Check our **YouTube channel**. We update it with videos of recent speakers—like Tom Tressor, Ali Rizvi, or Jeff Bone.

• **Visiting the Society for the first time?** By coming to a Sunday morning program? By enrolling your child in our secular Sunday School? By taking part in one of our activities and interest groups? Welcome to the caring humanist congregation you may have been looking for. At our monthly Newcomers Chat, you can find out more about the Society and consider becoming a member. If you have any questions, please email joinus@ethicalhuman.org.

• **Getting married? Naming your baby? Having a memorial service?** Our Ethical Officiants are trained to perform weddings, baby namings, and memorial services. For a caring, secular ceremony, inquire at our office.

• **Join one of our hard-working committees**—like Sunday School, Ethical Action, Sunday Program, Hospitality, Building, Caring, Development, Membership, Publicity, Audio-Visual, and Adult Education. Are you interested? To contact committee chairs, call Sharon Appelquist at the office.

• **Public transportation** to our Sunday meetings is easy. A #290 bus leaves the Howard L station at 9:30 a.m. and goes to Touhy and Cicero, a short walk to our building. A return #290 bus to Howard leaves Touhy and Cicero at 1:20 p.m. The Skokie Swift's Oakton St. station is nearby.

• **Rent space in our building**—for a party, meeting, class, concert, ceremony, or special event. It's easy. One room or more. Reasonable prices. Contact our office for details.

Sunday School Scoop . . .

Welcome to all our new and returning families for the Golden Rule Sunday School this fall. We have another fun year ahead! Our first event is the annual Back-to-Sunday School Potluck Picnic, on Saturday, September 9th, at my home. It's the day before Sunday School begins, on September 10th. We'll play some getting-to-know-you games and hear what everyone did over the summer.

This year we're going to explore truth—how we know what is true or real, with many activities, science experiments, projects, and crafts. Bring your questions! Are there things you've wondered about? Our first Sunday School Parents meeting is after the September 10th program, at 12:15. We have important things to discuss, so please make every effort to have at least one parent attend.

Many thanks to the families and the Ethical Action Committee, who took over lunch packing for the Lincoln Park Community Shelter during the summer. The Sunday School will be back in charge of lunch packing, beginning October 1st. Mark your calendars for our annual Fall Children's Fair on October 15th. You won't want to miss it! See you in Sunday School!

—**Katherine Ross, Director**

Sharing Thoughts . . .

I've been asked why I am an optimist. My response is that there is no other choice for me. The alternative would be unacceptable despair. More accurately, I suppose, is that because the future is unpredictable, I could instead be called a "hopist." This is because I have an almost religious fervor in believing that logic and reason, grounded in science, point to a world in which democracy, decency, and cooperation—not tyranny, fear, and unbridled competition, will rule humanity.

Some of my friends are borderline cynics. They see the persisting scourges of poverty, bigotry, and war as immutable and unsolvable. Like my father used to tell me, "You can't change human nature." Yet, as an ethical humanist, I believe that humankind will eventually come to its senses. The seven and half billion of us who live in this world need a positive vision. Cynicism and hopelessness should have no place in our lives. And that's why I must be an optimist.

—**Alan Kimmel**

WHO WE ARE

The Ethical Humanist Society of Chicago is a self-governing, inclusive, caring community—providing a home to those who seek a rational, compassionate philosophy of life without regard to belief or non-belief in a supreme being.

We focus on the ethical values that bring people together, not on the beliefs that keep people apart.

We celebrate births, conduct wedding ceremonies, and host memorial services. We provide for the ethical education of our children, based on rational, critical thinking.

We believe in working together for a better world, and strive to act so as to bring out the best in others and thereby in ourselves.

ETHICAL HUMANIST SOCIETY

SEPTEMBER 2017 CALENDAR

The office of the Society is open every weekday - 10 am to 2 pm.
Call 847-677-3334 with any questions.

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					1	2
10:30 NO PROGRAM 3	4	5	6	7	8	9 2ND SATURDAY COFFEEHOUSE 8:00 p.m.
10:30 GEOFFREY STONE “Sex and the Constitution” 12:15 - Book Group: <i>Rhinoceros</i> 10	FILM DISCUSSION GROUP 11 7:15 p.m.	12	BOARD OF TRUSTEES 13 7:15 p.m.	14	15	16 WOMEN’S GROUP 10 a.m.
10:30 RENEE ENGELN “Beauty Sick: How Our Focus on Looks Hurts Girls and Women” 12:15 - Creative Writers 17	18	19	20	21	22	23
10:30 PETER HAYES “Why? Explaining the Holocaust” 12:15 - Sunday Program Committee 24	Golden Rule Sunday School: Sundays, 10:30 a.m. to Noon Sundays next month: Oct. 1: Jacqueline Battalora; Oct. 8 Janet Heimlich; Oct. 15: Marc Ayers; Oct. 22: Canice John Prendergast; Oct. 29: Sharon Welch					30

ETHICAL HUMANIST SOCIETY OF CHICAGO

7574 N. Lincoln Avenue, Skokie, IL 60077-3335
 Phone: (847) 677-3334; Fax: (847) 677-3335
 Web Site: www.EthicalHumanist Society.org
 E-mail: office@ethicalhuman.org

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