

WES Express

Monthly Newsletter of the Washington Ethical Society

March 2016

Upcoming Platforms – Join us at 11am

Sunday, March 6. "I Wish I Knew How" Amanda Poppei, Senior Leader. As we begin our exploration of the theme of *Liberation*, Amanda will consider how we encounter freedom personally. What might each of us be seeking liberation from—perhaps including parts of ourselves? How do we seek that liberation while still honoring what is? Music from the WES Chorus.

Sunday, March 13. "Bending the Arc: Justice and Liberation in the 21st Century" Eugene Puryear, Activist and Author. "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice." A quote most associated with Dr. Martin Luther King but with an older provenance in the abolitionist movement, is often quoted, but not interrogated. What is "justice" in the first place? Is it the product of a process out of our control? What role should we be trying to play? How do all these questions and more intersect with the rising social justice movements of our current moment?

Sunday, March 20. All Music Sunday "Bending the Arc: A Journey in Music and Words" WES Chorus, Bailey Whiteman, Director. Throughout history, music has given strength and focus as people sought to change their situations, their communities, their countries, the world. Join the WES Chorus as we explore some of the liberation movements from the second half of the twentieth century, the voices that helped shape those movements, the music that lifted people up in the struggle, and how those voices and songs are still powerful in today's struggles to create more just societies.

Sunday, March 27. "I Wish WE Knew How" Amanda Poppei, Senior Leader. To close out our exploration of *Liberation*, Amanda will examine the idea of collective liberation and how we balance it with personal freedom and autonomy. What does it mean to be a community together when we are also our own individual selves? Music from pianist Perry Beider.

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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

Theme: Liberation

Amanda Poppei, Senior Leader

When I first started thinking about liberation, it was with the image of opening a cage—actually, it was the very specific image of Princess Jasmine in the movie *Aladdin*, throwing open the door to the cage where her little white birds are kept and watching them fly off into the sky. So often we think of liberation this way, I think, of the liberation of another, from birds out of a cage to the manumission of enslaved people and the Emancipation Proclamation—those acts, significant and necessary, that liberate.

But as I thought more, I shifted from the idea of liberating another to self-liberation, wondering if the act of liberating oneself was more radical, more meaningful. After all, Princess Jasmine opened the birds' cage because she herself dreamed of going outside the palace walls...and later that day she took her first steps over the wall and into the world (side note that Disney's version of self-liberation then includes falling in love with the first guy you meet...ah well, the image works up to a point).

We might each of us have some wall we'd like to scale, something we hope to be liberated from, and ultimately I think we are the most important factors in that liberation. From finding a way past fear or from some "stuckness" in our lives, to the work of social justice movements, we are the most necessary ingredients in our liberation. Sometimes, this means we are supporting actors for another's liberation; in the fall, I attended a fundraiser for the *Black Lives Matter* movement in the District and heard a young woman leader in that movement asking the white people in the room to trust her, to trust her leadership and her ability to know how to effect her own liberation. Throughout history, the strongest and most successful movements for expanded rights have been led by the very people who need liberation—by their strong self-determination and courage

So this month, I invite you to think about the places in your own life, perhaps very personally, where you seek to liberate yourself...and about the places where the world needs liberation, and how you can be an actor, supporting or otherwise, in that work. May we be not the opener of the cage, but the birds that fly free!



Ways to engage with
March's theme:
Liberation

March Platforms

[Explore the Theme:
Liberation](#)

Story for All Ages:

*Christina Katerina and
the Box*
by Patricia Lee Gauch

Share the Plate:
*Washington Interfaith
Network (WIN)*

From Your Board of Trustees:

By Lindsay Lucke and Danna Pope

Early in February, the Board facilitated a mid-year retreat to plan for the coming 12 to 18 months. As described in the WES By-laws, "the Board organizes an annual *Mid-Year Planning Retreat* to ensure that WES activities and expenditures align with a near-term strategic vision." Sixteen lay leaders, including the Board members, and two staffers attended.

At last year's mid-year retreat, the Board, Amanda and lay leaders in attendance set *Focus Goals*, which gave us our task for this year: assess how successful the *Focus Goals* have been in moving us toward our *Ends* (as you may recall, the *Ends* are the statements we have set for ourselves as a "north star" by which to navigate). The main lesson was that nine goals were too many to truly focus on, so we sought to reduce the number.

Interwoven in this discussion was our experience of growth right now. The literature on congregational growth suggests that certain changes must occur, including a minimum *Average Sunday Attendance* (ASA, or all "bodies in the building"), for the next stage of WES' development. We need to be able to accommodate 225 people on an average Sunday morning in order to push beyond what is referred to in congregational literature as the "awkward size," which WES is currently in, and achieve a new sustainable and stable level.

Our community has been committed to growth for a number of years (or decades, depending on who you ask). The question at the retreat then became, which of the *Focus Goals* will help us build capacity so that we can be comfortable at a new and larger size.

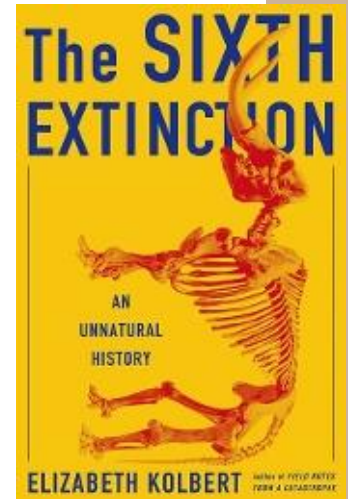
The final draft of the narrowed down *Focus Goals* for 2016-2017 is imminent. The "dropped" focus goals from this past year will be revisited in the next year or two, depending on how progress goes this year. In the meantime, plans are proceeding for moving to two platforms on Sunday mornings during the months of April and May.

Those of us on the Board hope everyone feels free to talk with us about your joys, challenges, concerns, and aspirations during the transition. These changes mean that we all will be experimenting, and having new experiences. The Board wants to support the wonderful people in this community as we grow together.

WES News

Biology Reading Group/Earth Ethics Team Joint Book Reading - The Sixth Extinction

This month on March 20, the Biology Reading Group will join with the Earth Ethics Team to explore *The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History* by Elizabeth Kolbert. The Earth has suffered through five mass extinctions, including the one that killed the dinosaurs. This book shows how climate change is now causing a sixth mass extinction. All are welcome. It is not necessary to read the book, though it helps. We will meet at 1pm in the WES Social Hall. Bring your Schmoozapalooza plate or brown-bag lunch. For more information, contact Barbara Searle, bsearle70@msn.com. (Note, the WES Book Club will also be reading *The Sixth Extinction* for July 2016. Please see their schedule on page 7.)



Hear About the Refugee Crisis and How You can Help. by Judith Johnson

The Immigration FilmFest last year had 1600 people at 15 events including two events at WES. We will be even larger this year. Put the dates on your calendar: October 20-23, 2016.



We welcome you to come to a planning meeting on March 12 from 10am – 12pm. The place has not been determined. Let Judith Johnson know you are thinking of coming, and she will send you the location.

Do you have film screening talents? Join a group in early June to screen films for the festival. If you would like to volunteer in some capacity, let us know what you would like to do. See our website: <http://www.immigrationfilmfest.org>

Come and join the discussion about refugees and learn more.

judithheron@gmail.com 301-431-0862.

Community Stewardship Dinner

WES members and spouses are warmly invited to our *Community Stewardship Dinner* on Saturday, March 12. Socializing starts at 5:30pm, followed by a catered dinner at 6:00. If you haven't already RSVP'd to Julie Campbell (juliecampbell@aol.com; 202-244-0206) please do so quickly and mention any dietary restrictions. And to reserve childcare, please contact Melissa Sinclair at melissas@ethicalsociety.org.

In addition to kicking off our annual budget drive for 2016-17, the dinner promises fun and entertainment and a first look at exciting new goals and plans for the coming year.

For those who simply cannot attend the March 12 dinner, four limited-seating alternatives are offered: Lunch on March 13, brunch or wine and hors d'oeuvres on March 19, and dinner (adults only) on March 20. Again, please contact Julie Campbell to get more details and RSVP.

Coming Up at WES

Wednesday, March 2

Small Group: Explore the Theme, 7-8:30pm. This is a drop-in small group for anyone and everyone! Newcomers and longtime members are invited, any Wednesday in March, to participate in a small group discussion around the theme of the month, *Liberation*. Each week will feature a different focus and a different leader for the group. The format will encourage reflection and connection. No need to RSVP, just come join us! Meet the group leader in the WES Main Office. The meeting will be in the Adler Study or the Leader's Office.

Friday, March 4

Parents' Night Out, 6-10pm. The Teen Group is hosting a *Parents' Night Out* in the double classroom. There will be crafts, games, and pizza. (If your child has dietary restrictions, feel free to pack a sack lunch for them.) The cost is \$30/child (+\$10/sibling). To reserve your spot, email Robyn Kravitz (RobynK@ethicalsociety.org).

Sunday, March 6

Growth Conversation, 9:30-10:30am, Social Hall. Join Amanda and Melissa for a conversation about WES' growth, hear more about the plan for two platforms starting in April, and add to the vision for our future.

Newcomers' Q and A, 12:30pm, Library. New to WES? Join us for this informal gathering to learn a little about who we are and what we do here, and to get your questions answered!

Monday, March 7

Mindfulness Meeting, 7:30-9pm, Social Hall. This group meets monthly (first Mondays) for people interested in practicing meditation and living with mindfulness—or for anyone wanting to find out more about these topics. We explore both practices and ideas. Contact Trish Weil at trishweil@juno.com or Ann Baker at annlouisebaker@gmail.com.

Wednesday, March 9

Small Group: Explore the Theme, 7-8:30pm. See the description for March 2.

Thursday, March 10

Working for Racial Equity, 6:30-9:30pm, WES Library. 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 continue our discussion of plans for shorter term and longer term projects, including Restorative Justice, Muslim solidarity, and deepening our existing work. If you aren't on the WRE listserv or have any questions, please email Danna Pope.

Saturday, March 12

Immigration FilmFest: Hear about the Refugee Crisis and How You Can Help, 10am-12pm, place TBA. The Immigration FilmFest last year had 1600 people at 15 events including two events at WES. We will be even larger this year. Put the dates on your calendar: October 20-23, 2016. As we begin to prepare, we will meet to talk about how the FilmFest can engage with the refugee crisis. Let Judith Johnson know you are thinking of coming, and she will send you the location. Do you have film screening talents? Join a group to screen films for the festival. If you would like to volunteer in some capacity, let us know what you would like to do. See our website: www.immigrationfilmfest.org. Come and join the discussion about refugees and learn more. judithheron@gmail.com 301-431-0862.

Community Stewardship Dinner, Main Hall. WES members and spouses are warmly invited to our Community Stewardship Dinner. Socializing starts at 5:30pm, followed by a catered dinner at 6pm. If you haven't already RSVP'd to Julie Campbell (juliecampbell@aol.com; 202-244-0206) please do so quickly and mention any dietary restrictions. And to reserve childcare, please contact Melissa Sinclair at melissas@ethicalsociety.org

Sunday, March 13

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

Teen Waffle Bar, 12:30, Main Hall. Every second Sunday of the month the Teens will offer waffles and an assortment of toppings for WES members and friends. Waffle ingredients and toppings are purchased through waffle bar proceeds. Remaining funds go to the Teen group for Service trips. Free will donation.

Wednesday, March 16

Small Group: Explore the Theme, 7-8:30pm. See the description for March 2.

Friday, March 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) or Shan Evans (sevens4406@yahoo.com) for more details.

Saturday, March 19

Young@WES Happy Hour, Denizens' Brewing Company, 7pm. Join other young(ish) adults (most attendees range between early 20s and late 30s) for a chance to connect and enjoy great food and brews. Contact Thomas Allen at thomas8allen@gmail.com with questions. When you get to the bar, ask for Danna Pope—she is the day-of contact!

Sunday, March 20

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!

Biology Reading Group/Earth Ethics Team, "The Sixth Extinction," 1 pm, WES Social Hall. We will explore *The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History*, by Elizabeth Kolbert. The Earth has suffered through five mass extinctions, including the one that killed the dinosaurs. This book shows how climate change is now causing a sixth mass extinction. All are welcome. It is not necessary to read the book, though it helps. Bring your Schmoozapalooza plate or brown-bag lunch. For more information, contact Barbara Searle, bsearle70@msn.com.

WES Book Group, after platform during Schmoozapalooza. Please join us for conversation and connection! The book this month is *Go Set a Watchman* by Harper Lee.

Black Lives Matter: My Story, Kenny Wiley, 2pm, Main Hall. Hear from Unitarian Universalist Black Lives Matter activist Kenny Wiley about his story.

Monday, March 21

Adult Education Meeting, 7 pm, Adler Study. We meet monthly to discuss upcoming Adult Education classes and workshops. Come help us plan what we can offer in the future and when. We are also open to multi-generation classes.

Wednesday, March 23

Small Group: Explore the Theme, 7-8:30pm. See the description for March 2.

Wednesday, March 30

Small Group: Explore the Theme, 7-8:30pm. See the description for March 2.

The Book Club Schedule

The Book Club meets the third Sunday of the Month at WES after Platform during the Schmoozapalooza. These are the books we will discuss:

March - *Go Set a Watchman*, Harper Lee

April - *Hunger Games* (first book), Suzanne Collins

May - *Kimjongilia: A True Story of Romance and Sacrifice in North Korea*, Victor Fox

June - *Romantic Outlaws: The Extraordinary Lives of Mary Wollstonecraft And her daughter, Mary Shelley*, Charlotte Gordon

July - *Sixth Extinction*, Elizabeth Kolbert