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New Ethical Culture Leader Professes A Faith in Ethical Humanism  
Hugh Taft-Morales to deliver inaugural address on Leadership Sept 18

The Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia (EHSOP) welcomes Hugh Taft-Morales as its first new religious leader in more than 20 years at 11:00 am, Sunday, September 18<sup>th</sup> when he will speak at the Society about how Ethical Culture values can nurture the diverse and shared leadership humanity needs to flourish in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The program will include a special welcome from the Society's oldest family, the Waters-Richardson family, who are African-Americans, and represent four generations of members active in both the society and the Philadelphia community.

Taft-Morales, 54, who lives in Takoma Park, MD, and will commute to Philadelphia, was attracted to the city's vibrancy and the rich heritage of the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia he discovered when he served as the Society's intern leader in 2009-10. "I sensed a deep yearning of many Society members to see the Society flourish, and the determination of lay leaders managing transitions so that the EHSP could continue to serve its Ethical Humanist mission." said Taft Morales. "All this is rooted in an impressive heritage, so enriched by Leader Emeritus Richard Kiniry's warmth of character, generosity of spirit, and eloquent passion for Ethical Humanism." As the 8<sup>th</sup> leader of the EHSP established by Ethical Culture founder Felix Adler in 1885, he succeeds retired leader Richard L. Kiniry, who will continue to serve the society as Leader Emeritus.

Selected unanimously as Leader by the Search Committee, the Board of Trustees, and members, Taft-Morales returns to a society eager to "roll up its sleeves and get to work" building for the future. As a humanist congregation that focuses on improving life in this world rather than preparing for the next, the Society hopes to attract the swelling numbers of American "nones" – the 15% who report "no religion", according to 2008 data in the American Religious Identification Survey.

In announcing new leadership, Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia President Temma Fishman said: "Although new to Leadership, Hugh is already a well-respected force in the Ethical Culture movement who brings invaluable experience promoting continued adult growth, compassionate interpersonal relationships, meaningful addresses, and social justice initiatives, all expressing the Society's mission through the work of its

board and committees. Hugh believes in joining forces with groups that are consonant with our humanist values to affect change. Working with Hugh we have a great opportunity before us to shape our Society's future."

Although Taft-Morales was raised in a secular environment, his great-grandfather, William Howard Taft, a Unitarian, was the only U. S. President to serve as president of a religious organization, the General Conference of Unitarian Churches from 1915 until 1925. A certified professional leader since 2010, Taft-Morales said he chose to embark on a career in Ethical Culture leadership because, "I felt a deep personal commitment and sense of calling that led me to leave a rewarding teaching career and dedicate myself to Ethical Humanism. My appreciation for the rich heritage of humanism nourishes my faith that we can all lead more ethical lives."

His faith grew in the 1990's when he and his wife Maureen sought out the Washington Ethical Society (WES) in the District of Columbia. They were not seeking a religion to follow, but rather a community that would support them living more ethical and fulfilling lives. Hugh became actively engaged, serving on the WES board and then as president of the board before enrolling in the Ethical Culture Leadership training program. In describing his convictions, he focuses on three themes in Ethical Culture: the worth of every person, the importance of ethical relationships, and placing deed before creed in building social justice.

Of Ethical Culture founder Felix Adler, Taft-Morales commented that although Adler dreamed big dreams, he never let them blind him to the practical requirements and mundane tasks necessary to improve human life. "As it was for Felix Adler, it is for us -- we reach for the stars by working in the trenches." He hopes to do so in his new position as Leader of the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia.