

Ethical Views

Vol. 126, No. 7 Newsletter of the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia

Sunday Platforms

Sunday, March 4, 2012

Apocalyptic Environmentalism: Is the End Near?

Hugh Taft-Morales, Leader of the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia

Many environmental activists warn that ignoring climate change is leading to dramatic ecological and humanitarian catastrophe. Some say we've already passed the tipping point - that rising sea levels and collapsed ecosystems will threaten our very survival. How do we process such challenging predictions? Do we take comfort in critics who denounce these activists as exaggerating Cassandras? Or has the horror of ecological apocalypse driven our species into nearly suicidal denial? What's a humanist to do?

Sunday, March 11, 2012

Poverty, and Why I (Still) Believe We Can Do Something About It

Judith Renyi, Executive Director, Mayor Nutter's Commission on Literacy

Mayor Michael Nutter recently appointed Dr. Rényi to her current position to address adult readiness for work in the new knowledge economy. She was most recently Dean of the Schools of Graduate and Professional Studies at Rosemont College. Previous positions include Vice President for Academic Affairs at the American College of Education, President of the NEA Foundation for the Improvement of Education, and founding Executive Director of the Philadelphia Partnership for Education.

After three decades of working to reform public schooling so that all children can get the education they need, I concede defeat. I have been defeated by intractable resistance to making all schools great schools. For decades we have watched as 10-15,000 Philadelphia students drop out of high school. In Philadelphia, nearly one out of every two adults is functioning at a low-literate level. That removes two-thirds of them from any hope of gainful employment. So why am I still an optimist?

Sunday, March 18, 2012

Can Capitalism Be Fixed?

Hugh Taft-Morales, Leader of the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia

The Occupy Movement feels like a cry of anguish and a plea for justice. It results from seeing greed rule and people suffer. What should we do? Is capitalism so broken that we need to replace it? Can it be fixed through oversight and regulation? Can it be saved from within through responsible stewardship? Explore these questions and more with Ethical Culture Leader Hugh Taft-Morales.

Sunday, March 25, 2012

Spring Festival

Members of the Education Committee, Terry Marian Martin-Murley, Chair

It's spring! It's spring! The bird is on the wing! Time for the Spring Festival at the Ethical Society, with music, dance, poetry, and celebration of this time of renewal. Weather permitting, an invasion of the Square is not out of the question.



**"Get to Know Us" Social,
Sunday, March 4,
7:00-8:30 PM**

Come learn about the history and philosophy of Ethical Humanism. Leader Hugh Taft-Morales will offer about a 30-minute presentation followed by reflections from members on what Ethical Humanism means to them. We will then open it up to a lively question and answer period. The evening offers those new to ethical humanism a chance to learn more about it in a relaxed atmosphere. Wine and cheese will be served! Open to the public - please RSVP to: leaderhugh@phillyethics.org

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Top Ten Reasons to Attend The Reason Rally on March 24 in Washington!

Hugh Taft-Morales

In discussions with visitors from Europe attending humanist meetings like those of the International Humanist and Ethical Union, I often ask them, "What surprises you most about the United States?" I have been impressed with one common response: the power of religious fundamentalism. Perhaps never before in our history has this force been politically so well organized or so effective.

Admittedly, the fact that the fundamentalists were behind Prohibition in the 1920's is testament to their strength a hundred years ago. The new wave of religious extremism, however, is more shocking given the liberal assumption that despite our flaws, the United States is a modern, tolerant, and educated nation. Here in the city upon a hill (yes, I know it is a religious metaphor -- the irony is intended) religious intolerance is growing. Evolution is dismissed as "merely a theory," women's control of their bodies is being attacked, and believers in the end-times promote apocalyptic foreign policy.

But there is hope. A wide variety of people are resisting irrational and dangerous fundamentalism. Under many banners -- humanism (religious and secular) rationalism, secularism, atheism, agnosticism, freethought, and skepticism -- they are gathering at the National Mall in Washington, DC, on March 24th. While Ethical Humanism has its own particular unique history and philosophy, we can work together with this broad coalition to resist the violation of separation of church and state by the religious right and to support reason and common sense.

Those of you who made it to the first of our Great Thinkers Series - our own little Philadelphia contribution to reason - know that I set up the stage

to look like a talk-show set. So, in honor of one of my daydreams to be the next David Letterman, I offer you my "Top Ten Reasons to Attend the Reason Rally!" Drum roll, please...

- **Reason number 10 to attend the Reason Rally: Ben's Chili Bowl!** Check it out at 1213 U Street, NW, Washington, DC. The best chili since 1958. Now you can eat where the President eats! There are veggie chiliburgers and hot dogs too.
- **Reason number 9: D.C. ain't that far away.** With gas prices as they are, why not take a vacation close to home - make a weekend out of it. Try carpooling.
- **Reason number 8: Have coffee and bagels at Hugh's home** before going down to the rally. We live a pleasant half-mile walk from the Takoma Metro Station which can whisk you down to within a half mile of the rally in 14 minutes. We aren't far from I-95 and it's much easier and cheaper to park near our house than to park downtown. RSVP to: LeaderHugh@phillyethics.org so that I have enough coffee and bagels!
- **Reason number 7:** This may be the **world's largest gathering of freethinkers and non-believers!** (Yeah, you could be a little part of history.)
- **Reason number 6:** The **excitement of the unexpected:** with so many freethinkers in one place you never know what may happen.
- **Reason number 5:** This is a great **chance to explain to others what is unique about Ethical Humanism** -- our focus on deed before creed, our explicit non-theism, our naturalistic humanism, our congregational warmth, and the support we give each other

and our relationships. As a movement, Ethical Humanism shares many values with our friends who identify as atheists, agnostics, freethinkers, engaged Buddhists, Unitarian Universalists, deists, secular humanists, and more. But we are a distinct and unique lineament in humanism that should be better understood. This is our chance to be ambassadors for Ethical Culture!

- **Reason number 4: Sightseeing!** (Have you seen the new MLK Jr. memorial yet?)
- **Reason number 3:** It's a great opportunity to **remember all the other great moments on the National Mall**, such as King's "I Have a Dream" speech, numerous civil rights marches, and the inauguration of many presidents.
- **Reason number 2:** There is a **great lineup** of speakers including: Richard Dawkins, author of *The Selfish Gene*, *The Blind Watchmaker*, *The God Delusion*, and *The Greatest Show on Earth*; Adam Savage, co-host of *Mythbusters*; PZ Myers, blogger at Pharyngula; Taslima Nasrin, activist for gender equality, free thought, and human rights and author of more than thirty books; Lawrence Krauss, author, most recently of the New York Times bestseller, *A Universe From Nothing: Why There is Something Rather Than Nothing*; Hemant Mehta, "The Friendly Atheist" and chair of Foundation Beyond Belief; David Silverman, President of American Atheists; Roy Speckhardt, Executive Director of the American Humanist Association; and Rep. Pete Stark, the first openly atheistic member of Congress.
- **The number one reason to attend the Reason Rally: Reason is a good thing!** <>

EHSOP Enters the Virtual World



With some trepidation, I have recently increased the Society's exposure on the Internet by updating our Facebook page and uploading videos of Hugh's platforms (and special performances including the gorilla act) to YouTube. Since I've been operating on the theory of learning by doing, these efforts are not without kinks of various kinds, simply because I have not figured out how to do things in a seamless way like linking one site with another. The corollary of the theory is that doing something is better than doing nothing. So I am offering these modest efforts thus far.

For the curious, here's how to catch up with EHSOP activities online:

Both Facebook and YouTube can be accessed under "Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia." On YouTube other key words will access many of our items, plus supposedly related items that were not uploaded by us. (Use Hugh Taft-Morales, phillyethics, ethical humanism, etc.)

A new volunteer, **Vince McKenna**, has established a Meet-up account which is currently being used for signing up younger people to attend the Great Thinkers Series. It's already attracted a number of sign-ups for the Ben Franklin Great Thinkers event last month. You can access this account at: <http://www.meetup.com/Ethical-Humanist-Society-of-Philadelphia>

For our own website page, go to: <http://www.phillyethics.org>, where you can find basic information about the Society, as well as an archive of Ethical Views, all updated by webmaster **Nick Sanders**.

If you do look at our uploaded material, it would be helpful if you would comment, indicating "like" or a more lengthy observation to make us look as active and vibrant as we are.

--Betsy Lightbourn

Ethics on the Square: Sunday, March 18, 7:00 PM

Great Thinkers and Social Reform: Ideas in Action:
"Du Bois, Inclusion, and Power"



W. E. B. Du Bois

Hugh Taft-Morales will lead a discussion with **Prof. David McBride**, Pennsylvania State University, regarding the importance of W. E. B. Du Bois, a visionary sociologist, philosopher, activist, and Philadelphian. We will begin the evening discussing Du Bois's groundbreaking work, *The Philadelphia Negro*. As part of our program, **Prof. Amy Hillier**, University of Pennsylvania, will speak about a research, education and outreach project, "Mapping the Du Bois Philadelphia Negro," and offer creative ways to teach about DuBois. Free and open to the public.

This is the third in a series of stimulating conversations about some of the American thinkers connected to humanism and freethought.

Camp Linden Volunteer Day: Saturday March 24

Please join the Camp Linden Committee and other EHSOP members for a day in the outdoors doing good, old-fashioned physical labor at our beautiful camp in West Chester. Rides available from Rittenhouse Square, departing 10:00 AM. If driving yourself, please try to arrive 10:30 to 11:00. Our major task will be painting the bath house. For information, call Jeffrey at 215-327-4579. The rain date is March 31.

"The Day the Universe Changed," Installment #7

**Monday, March 19,
7:30-9:30PM**

**A philosophically fun video
and
discussion series**



Come view and discuss a video series by James Burke, "The Day the Universe Changed." Burke entertainingly explores links between knowledge and reality. Join Ethical Culture Leader Hugh Taft-Morales Monday, for this seventh installment called, "What the Doctor Ordered: Social Impacts of New Medical Knowledge." Free and open to the public.

WORLDLY WISDOM: Discussion of Mrs. Dalloway



**Tuesday,
March 20, 7:00 PM**

Led by Terry Martin-Murley

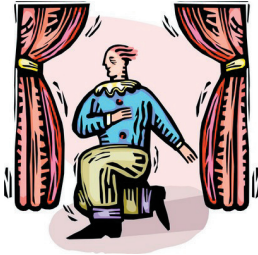
QUOTE-UNQUOTE

PERCENTAGE DECREASE IN THE MEDIAN U.S. INCOME DURING THE "GREAT RECESSION": 3.2

DURING THE SUBSEQUENT "RECOVERY": 6.7

PORTION OF INCOME GROWTH SINCE THE RECESSION GOING TO CORPORATE PROFITS: 9/10

--HARPER'S INDEX --



More Drama at the Ethical

1. We are repeating our one-act playwriting contest of 2011, and announcements have now gone out locally and nationally. Scripts will be arriving March 2 through May 2, and a panel of readers is needed to pick the winners. Contact Pat McGeever at patethical@gmail.com to volunteer.

2. On Sundays this summer we will be doing readings of the runner-up script from 2011 (July 15) and of a short play for improv (date TBA). If you have the chops and the urge to perform, contact Pat.

Kate Esposito Announces B'Earth Day Party for Camp Linden So SAVE THE DATE!



I was happy back in 1970 when the first Earth Day was proclaimed for April 22nd since it was my birthday. Normally, I like to let my birthday just pass by with little to no fanfare, and I do NOT like or want presents, but this year I'm thinking, LET'S PARTY!

So, the plan, still in formulation, is a Pot Luck event on **Sunday, April 22nd at 2:00 p.m.** at the Society. \$10.00 if you bring something to eat, \$15.00 if you don't, and the proceeds will go to the camp. Any extra donations will be greatly appreciated.

We're hoping to do some folk or square dancing, have a Flying Screaming Monkey contest, play Earth Games and do some of the activities and play some of the games the campers experience at Camp Linden. Also, we'll eat. There will be stickers and prizes too! So, come along, grab your monkey and let loose for Camp Linden, and help make this year better than ever for the kids.

Hugh goes ape; members go bananas. Must be Darwin Day.

--Betsy Lightbourn

When he signed on to this job as our Leader, Hugh vowed to take Ethical Humanism out onto the Square. Little did we imagine the exact scenario that occurred at the Darwin Day Celebration on February 4. After warning us that we would be "following a monkey," our "special guest gorilla" led a group of about 25 of us out on to Rittenhouse Square where we joined him in singing "The First DNA" to the tune of "The First Noel," punctuated with a few gorilla sounds.

After singing, the "gorilla" cavorted around the Square engaging in a simian manner with occupants before returning to the Ethical. The performance was the finale of an evening of evolutionarily themed song and games designed to emphasize the importance of Darwin and evolutionary thought today.

Pictured: (1) Hugh Taft-Morales (gorilla), with Leonard Weeks and Sharon Wallis; (2) back inside, guests treat themselves to banana splits while the gorilla chomps on just bananas; (3) gorilla dances with a female of the species. (She was a doll.)

Catch the warbling on video: http://youtu.be/hoolw_CLd9U.



Photographs by Betsy Lightbourn

Will there be debates?

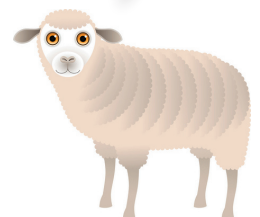


Announcing Upcoming Elections of the Board of Trustees of the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia at the Annual Membership Meeting on **Sunday, May 20th!**

The positions of President, Vice-President and three trustees are open. If you are a Society member interested in serving on the Board of Trustees, contact Terry Martin-Murley, chair of the Nominating Committee, at terry.murley@verizon.com. Your request for candidacy must be submitted in writing no later than one month before the Annual Meeting.

I think we've been upstaged.

Me too.



March 2012

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2 Submissions open for 2012 one-act playwriting contest	3
*4 11:00 a.m. <i>Apocalyptic nvironmentalism: Is the End Near?</i> Hugh Taft-Morales Get-to-Know-Us Social 7:30PM	5	6	7 Meetings 6:30 p.m. Education Committee 7:30 p.m. Ethical Action Committee	8	9	10
*11 11:00 a.m. <i>Poverty, and Why I (Still) Believe We Can Do Something About It</i> Judith Renyi	12	13 <i>Pennsylvanians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty Meeting</i> 7:00pm	14 Meetings 6:30 p.m. Finance Committee 7:30 p.m. Community Committee	15	16	17
*1811:00 a.m. <i>Can Capitalism Be Fixed?</i> Hugh Taft-Morales 7:00 PM Ethics on the Square "Dubois, Inclusion & Power"	19 7:30 p.m. The Day the Universe Changed Hugh Taft- Morales	20 7:00 PM WORDLY WISDOM: Mrs. Dalloway Terry Martin- Murley	21 Meetings 6:30 p.m. EHSoP Board	22  Amnesty International 7:00 p.m.	23	24 Reason Rally in DC 10:00a.m. Camp Linden Volunteer Day
25 11:00 a.m. Spring Festival	26	27	28 Meeting 7:00 p.m. Camp Linden Meeting	29	30	31 Rain date for Camp Linden

*Child care provided
during all platforms



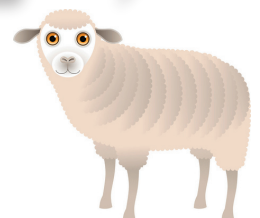
MARCH BIRTHDAYS

04 Terry Martin-Murley
11 Lew Wilkinson
19 Christa Vanderbilt
23 Susan Jo Klein
26 Ruth Ann Dubb

I think
we've been
upstaged.
Again!



That's
too
ba-a-a-d.



Ethical Views is published monthly
except July and August.

Editor, Pat McGeever
Layout, Janice Moore
Production, Dotti Wesley
Web Master, Nick Sanders

**Ethical Humanist Society
of Philadelphia**

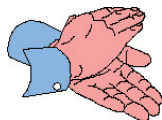
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(215) 735 - 3456
office@phillyethics.org
www.phillyethics.org



SUNDAY MORNING VOLUNTEERS



**Flower Dedications - David
Ralston, Coordinator**

March 4 - Lyle Murley: "For
Terry's birthday"

March 11 - T.B.A.

March 18 - Jim Cummings:
"Dedicated to my wife Adlyn"

March 25 - Jeffrey Dubb: "To
honor Ruth Ann's birthday"

**Ushers - Betsy Lightbourn,
Coordinator**

March 4 - Jim Cummings &
Nick Sanders

March 11 - T.B.A.

March 18 - T.B.A.

March 25 - Bill & Sandy Coffey*



*Bill and Sandy have committed
themselves once a month through the
end of May

Greeters - Ken Greiff, Coordinator

March 4

March 11 - T.B.A.

March 18

March 25



**Coffee Hour Lunch
Cleanup**

March 4 - Groups A-E (& John
McCormick)

March 11 - Groups F-K (& Bill & Sandy
Coffey)

March 18 - Groups L-O

March 25 - Groups P-Z

***Ethical Humanist Society
of Philadelphia***

1906 South Rittenhouse Square
Philadelphia, PA 19103