

# Ethical Views

April 2013

Vol. 127, No. 8 Newsletter of the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia

## Sunday Platforms

**Sunday, April 7, 2013, 11:00 AM**

***Ethical Ecology and Indigenous People***

**Hugh Taft-Morales, Leader,  
Humanist Society of Philadelphia**

As we approach our 43<sup>rd</sup> Earth Day, the tragic irony of our nation's relations with American Indians is clear: a most abused cultural group, marginalized and segregated, holds the key to our survival and the future of our land, water and air. Without a revolution of *respect toward nature*, we may be committing suicide of the species. How can we better integrate the people and the wisdom of indigenous populations so as to acknowledge the past and save the future? How can Ethical Humanism's commitment to relationships contribute to this cause? Hugh Taft-Morales explores these questions and shares his newfound appreciation for the Lenape people of the Delaware Valley.

**Sunday, April 14, 2013, 11:00 AM**

***The State of LGBT Civil Rights in Pennsylvania***

**Ted Martin, Executive Director of  
Equality Pennsylvania**

Mr. Martin's address will briefly discuss the state of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender civil rights in Pennsylvania, how these issues are regarded in the General Assembly and what people can do to effect change.

Ted Martin is the Executive Director of Equality Pennsylvania, the state's lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) political advocacy organization. He is also a native Pennsylvanian, a longtime LGBT activist and non-profit professional. Martin has worked in several varied administrative and

communications capacities over the past two decades. Starting his career as a Legislative Assistant and the Deputy Chief of Staff of a subcommittee of the Education and Labor Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives, Martin has subsequently worked in the fields of architectural preservation, communications and marketing. He is also a busy volunteer, and serves on the boards of several non-profit organizations. In 2011, Martin was named a Person of the Year by the Philadelphia Gay News. He and his husband, Dwayne, reside in Camp Hill outside Harrisburg and were married on June 19, 2008 in La Jolla, California.

**Sunday, April 21, 2013, 11:00 AM**

***Membership Platform 2013***

***Testimonials of Belonging***

There are many reasons to belong to the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia. We are a supportive community that helps navigate the ups and downs of life. We offer opportunities to work together in ethical action to build social justice. We seek deep and meaningful humanist inspiration so we can bring out our best and honor the worth of others. Come hear members share their stories about what it means to belong to our community at 1906 South Rittenhouse Square, at Camp Linden, and beyond.

**Sunday, April 28, 2013, 11:00 AM**

***Moving Beyond the Fallacy of Sustainability Education***

**Paul A. Morgan, Professor of  
Education, West Chester University  
of Pennsylvania**

Sustainability education is rapidly becoming mainstream in K-12 and higher education, yet this "success" is undercut by a fallacy: that sustainability is a normal challenge that can be

addressed using familiar tools and strategies (such as education) instead of a 'game changer' that calls into question fundamental cultural assumptions and institutions, including formal education itself. This is like rearranging deck chairs on the sinking *Titanic*, which points to the ultimate futility of trying to reform a failing system. Put simply, there is a faith that steady progress in school and university greening will eventually (and magically) get us to our goal. The practical effect is that precious energy and attention are focused on the relatively comfortable work of "less unsustainability" (i.e. deck chairs). Grappling with the fallacy of sustainability education entails first redirecting attention to the enormous gap between the scale of the challenge and even our best responses to it. It then challenges us to focus on the immensely creative work of developing methods and strategies that have the potential to catalyze *real* social and cultural transformation. This

*(Continued on page 3)*



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# Leader's Column



## Apathy About Wealth Inequality

Hugh Taft-Morales

How is it that Americans seem almost inured to the economic inequality that makes a mockery of our nation's alleged dedication to opportunity and fairness? Over the past three decades, those in the lower half in terms of wealth have become poorer and those in the top 1 percent have seen huge gains.



As two respected authors report, "Most scholars agree that wealth inequality in the United States is at historic highs, with some estimates suggesting that the top 1% of Americans hold nearly 50% of the wealth, topping even the levels seen just before the Great Depression in the 1920's." And yet, most people think that wealth is *more* equitably distributed than in the Roaring Twenties. Why are we so apathetic about inequality?



A Youtube video about wealth inequality in the United States sent to

me by Nick Sanders last week offers one intriguing answer. On this topic I had seen some videos, heard some speeches, and read countless articles, but this video impressed me deeply. It has supposedly gone viral, garnering more than 3 million views. It's based on an article entitled, "Building a Better America - One Wealth Quintile at a Time," by the two authors quoted above - Michael I. Norton of Harvard Business School, and Dan Ariely, a psychology professor at Duke.

Published in a 2011 edition of *Perspectives on Psychology Science*, the article reported how Americans responded to two questions. One question was about what individuals *assumed was the reality* about the distribution of wealth in the country. Although this is a bit oversimplified, responses basically painted a portrait of a country where the wealthiest were much better off than those on the bottom half of the economic ladder. It was a portrait consistent with America's self-image of a land of competition that rewarded the few and at the expense of the many, but at least in this portrait even the worse off got a small share of the American pie.

A second question concerned what Americans thought was the *ideal* distribution of wealth. *This* portrait was far more equitable. It indicated a more just distribution of wealth which, while still allowing for great differences between the very rich and very poor, offered the middle class a pretty good life and provided the worst off with at least the basic necessities. It was reassuring to see that most Americans prefer more equitable distribution. But if that is the case, why aren't things getting better, or, more urgently, why are they continuing to get worse? The answer may be that our assumptions about reality are far from reality itself!

The *reality* about the wealth distribution in the land of the free is that inequality is *much* greater than Americans assume.

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Part of this is because people are familiar with *income* inequality, which is much less dramatic than wealth inequality. For example, according to Norton and Ariely, "the top 1 percent has about twice as large a share of the national wealth as it does of national income." We continue, however, to see the situation as much more equal than it actually is.

So even if Americans had the will to work for moving from the current reality towards the ideal, they have a lot further to go than they think. When I watched the video, I was embarrassed to be a citizen of a country so seemingly ignorant of such basic injustice. I know I haven't done enough to address this situation, other than speaking out about the obscene level of inequality and supporting services for the marginalized. The Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia is fighting to permanently restore general assistance welfare in Pennsylvania. And, we are also trying to support various offshoots of *Occupy Philly*, such as *Mutual Democratic Unions* and *RootStrikers/Money Out of Politics*.

I am meeting with representatives of both groups in the next few weeks to explore how best to support more compassionate and just approaches to economic growth in our country. This past January, Sheppard, a leader in the *Philly RootStrikers* circles, invited me to speak at a rally against corporate personhood on the anniversary of the *Citizens United* ruling. My words were, of course, just words. There is much real work that needs to get done. It is crucial, important work that often feels so weighty that I turn to more mundane and easily achievable tasks.

In an effort to reinvigorate myself, and perhaps inspire you, I will end this



column with some of what I shared on a very cold January 18, 2013, with a small crowd in Love Park:

*My name is Hugh Taft-Morales, and I am leader of a group down at 1906 Rittenhouse Square, known as the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia. Since 1885 the Ethical Society has offered humanist inspiration to people trying to build social justice and make a more humane world.*

*I want to read to you part of a speech given by a Mrs. Mary Elizabeth Lease born in Ridgeway, Pennsylvania: "Wall Street owns the country. It is no longer a government of the people, by the people, and for the people, but a government of Wall Street, by Wall Street, and for Wall Street. The great common people of this country are slaves, and monopoly is the master. Our laws are the output of a system which clothes rascals in robes and honesty in rags.... The people are at bay; let the bloodhounds of money who dogged us thus far beware."*

*Sound familiar? Mary Lease, an activist in the Populist Party, said this over a hundred years ago! We're saying the same thing today. Are we going to wait another 100 years for change??*

*I could afford it physically; I live a comfortable life. But today in the richest nation on the planet, where billions of dollars in corporate bailouts save the careers and reputations of the very rich, nearly 50 million men, women and children live under the poverty line. In this great land of promise, CEO's earn almost 400 times what their workers make, the richest 1% owns 33% of our nation's wealth, but we slash funds for schools and social services. We allow for corporate tax dodging and loopholes, but somehow right here in Philadelphia we can't afford a measly \$205 in General Assistance to help out the most economically marginalized friends and neighbors! These facts are morally obscene! How can they be true? Power. Political power. Most specifically, the political power of money.*

*Corporate influence in Washington has dominated our history for centuries. Now, given the Supreme Court's decision in Citizens United, Congressional office doors are wide open for business. Lobbyists swarm the halls of the Senate and the House. The 10 billion dollars corporations spent on last year's elections was down payment for "business as usual."*

*Some argue that the ruling in Citizens United defended free speech. The way the game is rigged today, there's nothing free about it. You've got to pay to play. They tell us corporations are persons! Well, this is one strange kind of person: a person without moral conscience and addicted to greed. These corporate characters are more like ethical zombies serving the interests of the 1%.*

*We know systemic injustice when we see it, and it is all around us. Today the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia stands with Philly RootStrikers, Common Cause, Public Citizen, Penn PIRG, and other groups demanding justice. But most of all, we stand with those most marginalized by a system that cares more about profits than people. Let's take back our democracy now!*



I urge you to help us take back democracy by teaching others about the state of wealth inequality in America by sharing the video that got me started writing this column. It can be seen at the following URL: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QPKKQnijnsM&feature=player\\_embedded](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QPKKQnijnsM&feature=player_embedded). It may infuriate you, as it did me. But maybe we need a bit more fury! How else are we going to overcome the apathy that keeps us from working harder to move from a very grim reality to an ideal distribution of wealth that brings out the best in us all?

## Sunday Platforms *(Cont'd. from p. 1)*

presentation highlights the approach that one certificate program in Education for Sustainability is taking in order to help students grapple with the fallacy of sustainability education. The program aims to resist forms of delusional sustainability work that make needed transformations less likely by focusing energy and attention on the relatively comfortable work of 'less unsustainability' instead of the difficult, unprecedented work of making a sustainable future possible.

Dr. Paul Morgan's campus and scholarly work are devoted to exploring the historical precedents, philosophical rationale, and practical means of reorienting educational institutions toward sustainability. He is the Director of West Chester University's undergraduate and graduate certificate programs in Education for Sustainability (EFS) and currently serves as the University's Sustainability Coordinator. Dr. Morgan is a Professor in the Department of Professional & Secondary Education, a member of the University's Sustainability Advisory Council, and the faculty advisor for the University's environmental organization, EARTH. Dr. Morgan holds a B.A. degree in Political Science from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (1985), and a Ph.D. in Philosophy and Education from Columbia University, Teachers College (1998).

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### Quote-Unquote

I spent most of my money on women and drink and like a fool I squandered the rest.

-Benny Hill

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# Happenings

## *Steps of Courage* at the Ethical Society

Bettina Hoerlin and John McCormick



**Bettina Hoerlin signs copy of her book, *Steps of Courage: My Parents' Journey from Nazi Germany to America*, following her Platform presentation, on March 10. She raised issues she grappled with as she uncovered the secrets of her parents' lives, choices they made, and spoke of how, ultimately, we all seek to integrate our heritage with the present.**



Bettina Hoerlin discusses the romance between her mother, a Jew, and her father, an Aryan, during Hitler's reign of terror. Their improbable marriage and immigration to the United States -- a universal tale of courage and love was shaped by some of the most profound markers of the 20th century: Hitler's Germany, the American immigrant experience, and threats of nuclear annihilation during the Cold War.

*Photographs by Betsy Lightbourn*



# Announcements

## Roy Zimmerman: Wake-Up Call!

Monday, April 1, 7:30 PM



There is no one like Roy Zimmerman! His hilarious, rhyme-intensive songs are incisive calls to action, smart, savvy and undeniable. Roy brings the sting of satire to the struggle for Peace and Social Justice. Hugh will attend, hoping to learn some of his songs for future EHSOP occasions! Roy's songs have been heard on HBO and Showtime, and he's been profiled on NPR's "All Things Considered." Come hear songs such as "Abstain With Me," "I Want a Marriage Like They Had In the Bible," and "I Approve This Message." Check him out on YouTube!

This event is co-sponsored by the Freethought Society  
Admission is \$18 or pay what you can (students, half price).



### Introduction to Ethical Humanism

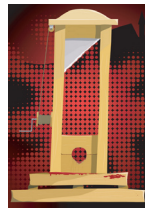
Sunday, April 7, 7:00 PM

Come learn about Ethical Humanism. Leader Hugh Taft-Morales discusses the history and philosophy of Ethical Humanism, focusing on **ethical relationships**. Members and first-time visitors will share questions and reflections over wine and cheese.

Open to the public.

Please RSVP to:

[leaderhugh@phillyethics.org](mailto:leaderhugh@phillyethics.org).



### Constitution at Work: Capital Punishment, Monday, April 8, 7:00 PM

Our Monday evening *Constitution at Work* series continues as Leader Hugh Taft-Morales discusses issues at the crossroads of constitutional law and ethics with University of Pennsylvania Law Professor Kim Roosevelt. Our April installment considers the death penalty and questions including: what is the current legal status of capital punishment, and what does the future hold? Should we consider it "cruel and unusual punishment?"

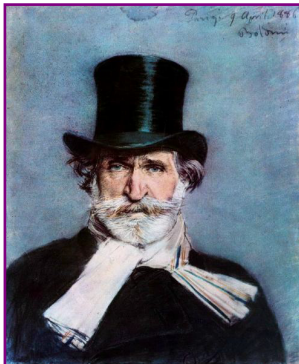
### Fun with Western Philosophy: Exploring Reality, Mind, and Meaning

Tuesday nights, April 9 and April 23,  
7:00-9:00PM

On April 9 we will explore "Questions of Mind," including theories of truth,



and the source and limits of knowledge.



### Viva Verdi! Friday, April 19, 6:30 PM. 200 years and counting

200th birthday celebration for Giuseppe Verdi!

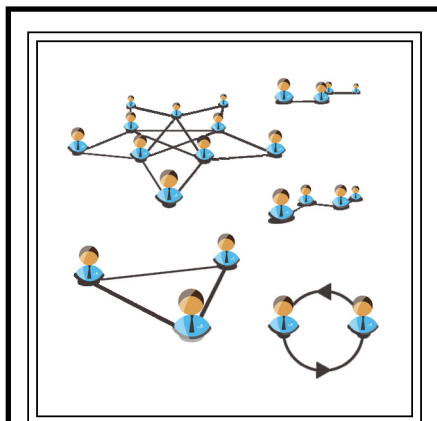
Tell us your favorite opera story and come prepared to benefit from the Mediterranean diet, with Italian food and wine! We gather for music, food, fun and opera games. *La Traviata*, *La Forza del Destino*, *Aida*, and *Il Trovatore* are among his "greatest hits." Perhaps we can find an aria for you to sing along! You can come as a favorite opera character or just be yourself. We'll be signing you up for dishes to bring. \$10 with food to share, \$15 without.

## On View – Robert R. Allen

A reception for the EHSOP's inaugural art exhibition will take place on Sunday, April 21<sup>st</sup> from 12 noon to 2:00 p.m. in the Collier Room. The first artist to be shown will be member, Bob Allen.

You have probably seen him around the Society drawing in a notebook or sketchbook with a blue ballpoint pen. His subject matter – not your everyday fare – is conceived “from my unconscious” where dwell many never-before-seen creatures living in worlds of complex patterns.

Stop by to see Bob and his excellent work – and the EHSOP's new exhibition space!



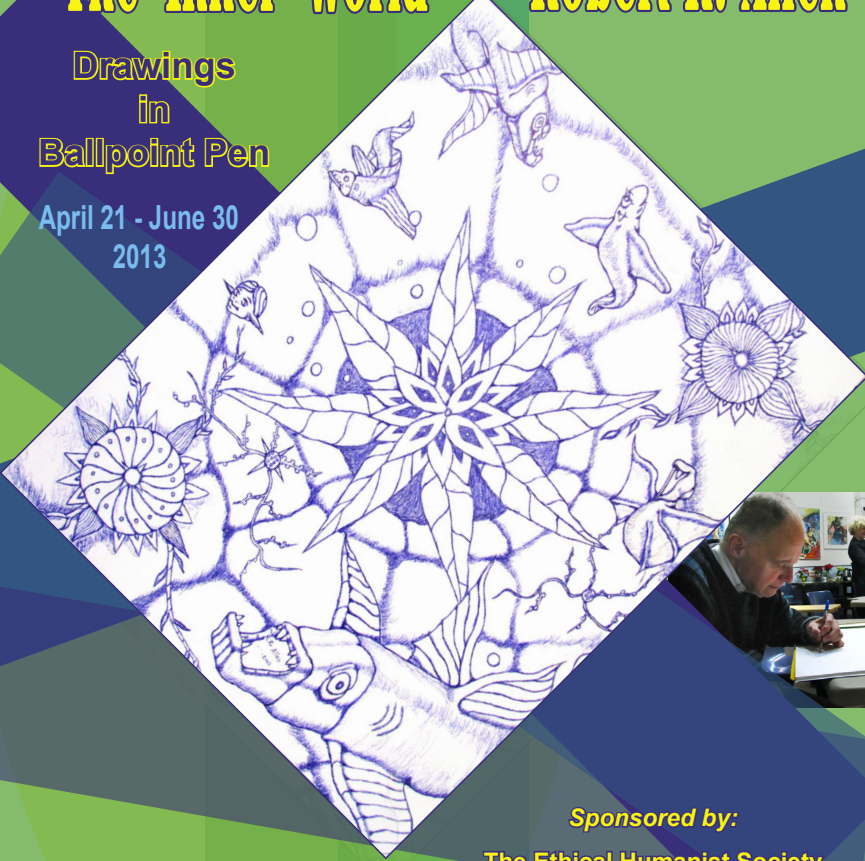
### DEMOCRACY ON TRIAL Monday, April 22, 7:00 PM

Our public forum discussion series, “Democracy on Trial,” continues. Come ready to learn, share, and help craft a more constructive dialogue for democracy. This installment focuses on “Social Evolution.” We start with the questions: “What is the best society? How do we build a society that is more harmonious, more successful, and, in short, works better?”

# The Inner World of Robert R. Allen

Drawings  
in  
Ballpoint Pen

April 21 - June 30  
2013




Sponsored by:  
The Ethical Humanist Society  
of Philadelphia

Opening: Sunday, April 21  
12:00 - 2:00 p.m.

1906 So. Rittenhouse Sq.  
Philadelphia, PA 19103

For available exhibition times,  
please call: 215-735-3456



### Fun with Western Philosophy: Exploring Reality, Mind, and Meaning

Tuesday nights,  
April 9 and April 23,  
7:00-9:00PM

On April 23 we will conclude with “Living Philosophically: Questions of Meaning” when we examine the philosophy of self and various themes in existentialism.



**PREVIEW:**  
Submissions to Ethical  
One-Act Playwriting  
Contest Close May 2.

Then our stellar  
committee (some seats  
still available, hint, hint)  
begins judging.

Contact Pat McGeever  
at [patethical@gmail.com](mailto:patethical@gmail.com)  
or near the grub on  
Sundays.

# April 2013

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						<b>2</b>
	<b>1</b> 7:30 PM Wake-up Call! Concert Roy Zimmerman	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b> <b>Meetings</b> 6:30 p.m. Education Committee 7:45 p.m. Ethical Action Committee	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>*7</b> 11:00 AM <i>Ethical Ecology and Indigenous People</i> Hugh Taft-Morales 7:00 PM - Intro to Ethical Humanism Hugh Taft-Morales	<b>8</b> 7:00 PM Const. at Work: Capital Punishment T-Morales/Roosevelt	<b>9</b> 7:00PM <i>Pennsylvanians for Alternatives to Death Penalty</i> 7-9:00 PM Fun with Philosophy Hugh Taft-Morales	<b>10</b> <b>Meetings</b> 6:30 p.m. Finance Committee 7:30 p.m. Communications Cmte.	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>*14</b> 11:00 AM <i>State of LGBT Civil Rights in PA</i> Ted Martin	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b> <b>Meeting</b> 6:30 P.M. Board of Trustees	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b> 6:30 PM <i>Viva Verdi!</i> Giuseppe's friends	<b>20</b>
<b>*21</b> 11:00 AM <i>Testimonials of Belonging</i> EHSoP Members 12:00-2:00 PM Art Opening & Reception Robert R. Allen	<b>22</b> 7:00 PM Democracy on Trial	<b>23</b> 7-9:00 PM Fun with Philosophy Hugh Taft-Morales	<b>24</b> <b>Meeting</b> 7:00 p.m. Camp Linden Meeting	<b>25</b>  <b>Amnesty International</b> 7:00 p.m.	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>*28</b> 11:00 AM <i>The Fallacy of Sustainability</i> Prof. Paul Morgan	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>			<b>MAY 2</b> Submissions to Play Contest Close patethical@gmail.com	

\*Child care provided during all platforms



## April Birthdays

21 - Henry Pashkow (see "Flowers" for details)  
22 - Kate Esposito  
25 - Chuck Hinson



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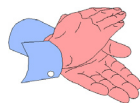
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of Philadelphia**

Hugh Taft-Morales, Leader

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**SUNDAY SERVICE**



**Hosts** - Coordinated by Nick Sanders

April 7 - Temma and Arnold Fishman

April 14 - Garry O'Rourke and John McCormick

April 21 - Ken Greiff and Henry Pashkow

April 28 - Bill and Sandy Coffey



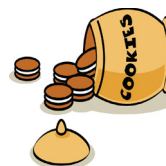
**Flowers** Coordinated  
by David Ralston

April 7- "Ode to Spring," Bill and Sandy Coffey

April 14 - "Happy Birthday, Aissia," Linda Richardson

April 21 - "In honor of my 73rd Birthday which is today," Henry Pashkow

April 28 - "In honor of my mother's birthday," Ron Coburn



**Coffee Hour**,  
Coordinated by Ken Greiff

April 7- Group A-E

April 14 - Group F-K

April 21 - Group L-O

April 28 - Group P-Z

**Ethical Humanist Society  
of Philadelphia**

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Philadelphia, PA 19103