



Ethical Views



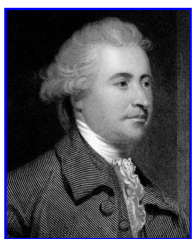
November 2015 Vol. 130, No. 3 Newsletter of the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia

Sunday Platforms November 2015

Sunday, November 1, 11:00 AM

Manners and Morals

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



The philosopher and politician Edmund Burke defended manners as fundamental to our ethical lives. He claimed that, "Manners are of more importance than laws.

Manners are what vex or soothe, corrupt or purify, exalt or debase, barbarize or refine us, by a constant, steady, uniform, insensible operation, like that of the air we breathe in." Is there a connection between the erosion of civility and unethical behavior? What, if anything, do *South Park*, talk radio, and online bullying say about the state of ethics in America? Leader Hugh Taft-Morales tries to explore this without sounding too cranky and old-fashioned.



Sunday, November 8, 11:00 AM

U.S. Asylum and Sanctuary: Déjà vu all over again

Linda Rabben

The U.S. government's refusal in the 1980s to recognize Central Americans as refugees led to the Sanctuary Movement. In 2015 Central Americans flee civil conflict and mass violence, only to be denied asylum in the United States. Today the New Sanctuary Movement seeks to help undocumented workers of many nationalities to stay with their families in the USA. Meanwhile lawyers, advocacy groups

and communities struggle to change government policy toward Central American asylum seekers. Linda Rabben traces the evolving meaning of sanctuary and asylum over the past 30 years.

Linda Rabben is an anthropologist, author, and human rights activist. She did field research in Brazil over a 25-year period and worked on human rights, environmental and international development issues for Amnesty International, the Rainforest Foundation and other NGOs. Her six published books include *Give Refuge to the Stranger: The Past, Present and Future of Sanctuary*. The University of Washington Press will publish a second edition in 2016. She speaks about human rights at churches, universities, community events, and advocacy organizations. She has published articles in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and many other publications.



Sunday, November 15, 11:00 AM
Humanist Thanksgiving

Come for our delicious annual Humanist Thanksgiving feast! We will celebrate community and nature's bounty with music, readings, and poetry. Please bring \$15 to contribute, or \$10 if you contribute a dish. We will also pass a collection plate and half the money contributed will go to a local non-profit that helps feed the hungry. Kindly RSVP by November 11 by emailing Betsy Lightbourn at elisalight@gmail.com.



Sunday, November 22, 11:00 AM
What Does Global Warming Have To Do With Racism?
James White

One of the great strengths of the emerging climate justice movement is its emphasis on solidarity with "Front-line Communities". The devastation wrought by storms Katrina and Sandy made horribly clear that those most oppressed by our society's institutional racism are hurt first and worst by the growing disaster that is global warming. The response of the Bronx Ethical Society to these challenges has been to develop Bronx Climate Justice North. In alliance with South Bronx United and other organizations with dedicated Latino and African-American leadership, they are mobilizing a struggle to empower and employ many brothers and sisters to renovate buildings at genuine living wages. The goal is 100% renewable energy in New York by 2030. Only by uniting can they win



Jim White is Leader Emeritus of the Essex County (N.Y.) Society for Ethical Culture and the recently retired Leader of the Riverdale

Yonkers Society for Ethical Culture. He serves on the steering committees of Bronx Climate Justice North and Congregations for Justice and Peace in Harlem, as well as on the Ethical Action Committee of the American Ethical Union. Jim still practices as a full-time pro bono mental health lawyer and is married to the singer Eileen Karlson. Together they enjoy greatly their families, including four grandchildren, so far!

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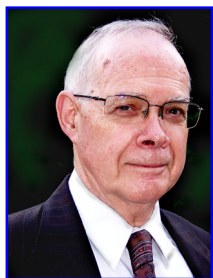
Sunday, November 29, 11:00 AM

Exploring Camp Linden

For 100 years the Society has supported and conducted a children's program at Camp Linden, a 51-acre site on Brandywine Creek near West Chester, Pennsylvania. Learn about the camp program through a video presentation and discussion with members of the Camp Linden Committee covering a variety of questions, including those you may have. Who are the children who attend camp? What is the purpose of the program? What are the activities and methods we use to achieve this purpose? Is there any evidence that children benefit from our efforts? What does the committee do? How is the camp funded? If interested, how could you become personally involved?



President's Corner



"Grounded"

Nick Sanders

In August, my wife and I moved. For the dozen or so years before we moved, I looked in my leisure moments through a bedroom window at squirrels racing and jumping between huge, centuries-old trees, and through my basement office window at spider webs in the morning sun, spun in the little garden my wife cultivated in our 12-by-12 front yard. Once I even saw a hummingbird hover in front of my basement window—about three feet in front of me—picking off spiders or something from the webs there!

We are now residing on the 10th floor—higher than I have ever had a home

(though not higher than I've worked or vacationed). But still, in my leisure moments, I now look down on the street below, with cars at toy size. My vantage point is higher than any building around me to the north and somewhat to the west. I can see across the city in those directions for probably ten or twelve miles. On Sundays, I can even see the plume of cloudy vapor released from the Limerick nuclear plant, some 45 miles away. Some evenings I can also see helicopters with spotlights as they hover over North Philadelphia. And even though I can look out of my home for some distance, I see considerably fewer trees than previously. I see few birds. And for over a month in my new home, I have not seen one spider!

Thus, I now have an increased disconnection from more basic, non-human nature. Also, living in a large condominium complex, I have more contact with humans. There are halls and elevators to share as I get from my living space to the out-of-doors. Because I have an uneasy feeling about these changes, I have been reflecting on what difference this move to a new and very different residence implies for my perspective on life more generally. It is much more human-species-focused.

Related to this reflection, I have gotten back to reading a reconsideration of the

issue of overpopulation, *Life on the Brink* (2012), edited by Philip Cafaro and Eileen Crist. This book takes me back to the 1980s' wager that economist Julian Simon made with sociologist Paul Ehrlich, in reaction to Ehrlich's book, *The Population Bomb*. The wager was about the change in the price of mutually-agreed-upon commodities over the upcoming decade. The reasoning was that if population were increasing too fast for limited resources—as Ehrlich had argued, then the prices of all or most of these commodities would increase. However, if innovation, necessitated by the increasing depletion of these commodities, met or even surpassed the need—as Simon proposed they would—then the price should remain the same, or even decrease. When



the decade had lapsed, it was obvious that Simon had won the bet. In fact, human ingenuity in this case resulted in a decrease of almost one-half the price of the commodities. Since then, environmentalists have pretty much ignored the issue of running out of needed resources, and with it the issue of human overpopulation.



However, as I am reading in *Life on the Brink*, I am reminded that human population growth is an important environmental issue for reasons other than increasingly limited resources. Primary for me among these other reasons is the resulting extinction of other species and the issue of decreasing biodiversity. This book presents reports by six researchers, including World Watch Institute's Lester Brown, tracing the various human activities that have a negative effect on the existence of other species. The activities are summarized by the eminent sociobiologist E.O. Wilson, as follows: habitat destruction, overharvesting, pollution, and invasive species—each multiplied by a fifth factor, human population increase.

Thinking back to Simon's wager with Ehrlich, I am wondering whether a wager regarding the resulting number of new species might come of this concern for overpopulation by humans: Evolutionary forces might create species to fill the niches left when the impacted species goes extinct. Thus, if the negative impact of human population growth were gradual enough, maybe there would not be much, if any, decline in the number of species. However, there would definitely be a change in our environment, which would result in challenges of adjusting to a new web of life in which humans would find

(Continued next page 4)

The Outset of a Spiritual Journey

Christian Hayden

This report from Christian, an EHSoP member, comes to us from Northern Ghana after his first two months with the Humanist Service Corps (HSC), a project of the Foundation Beyond Belief.

Philadelphia is never far from my heart, mind, or body. I regard this city and the Ethical Culture community as much of the reason I am here and why I have been able to thrive. I do many of the things I did in Philadelphia: laugh at children, cycle through the main street with little regard for safety, drink the local water daily, and flirt with food servers. Baltimore Avenue never seems far away.

But what about the changes that everyone says you have on these journeys? I do feel some, some in terms of perspective, some in terms of connecting. I am more sensitive to issues of water, electricity, and even feminism. I wrestle with my identity as a Black American while here I am viewed by some more as a white person. Also I am diving into learning the language. (For more on that go to appliedsentience.com and search 'Hayden').

If anything I want to be shaped more, so I am accepting invitations towards that end—a friend of mine brought me a Koran, and I am slowly accumulating more Ghanaian attire. I chose to take this journey because I felt challenged and empowered to answer big questions. As I write to you, the questions concerning humanism are the closest to my heart: "How could I contribute to a global conversation on humanism? How could I continue to grow as a humanist and inspire others to grow as well?"

You might say I am in the "Richard Kiniry School of Humanism," that the sacredness of our ideals should be matched by the sacredness of our actions. That ritual that speaks to our beliefs and our yearnings is needed. Divorced from my humanist community, I began asking myself how to feel that void and can it serve as an example to other humanists?

In a sense I have assumed spiritual practice. One that, to borrow a line from bell hooks, "links transforming consciousness to efforts (that) transform structures."

The original quote refers to social change, but I think it also applies to praxis that Ethical Humanists seek to achieve. Every Sunday, I cycle 12 km to a community which opened itself to women accused of being witches, who were outcast from their communities, sometimes with threats of being beaten or worse. Their livelihoods and their families and their lives were left behind. Every Sunday, I or one of my teammates fetch water for an elder among the accused for whom the tenuousness of a short term solution is becoming more urgent and dire as she is becoming too weak to fetch water on her own. And the walk, depending on the time of year and how much the borehole has to offer, is .3 kilometers or 2 kilometers. The third option is a mountainous hike to the river. The woman we fetch for is over 80 years old.

Now, under no pretenses do I believe this is the most important aspect of the work I do. I am not sure if I am even helping, but maybe, in the absurdity of what I am doing (men do not typically carry water), the absurdity of the situation of the women can shine through.

I tell people that Ghana is my church. More specifically going to Kukuo on Sundays is now my church. The long walk to fetch water is my prayer. It is my fast, a pilgrimage within a pilgrimage. It does nothing but reorient me and remind me that suffering and strength are not mutually exclusive. It is my reminder that help is not being there but being there is its own work. It shows me that water and its scarcity and its cruelty and its necessity should not be far from my mind. For a lack of a better term, it humbles me. Naawuni ti kom, pa>ba ti kom (God gives water, the women give water).

Once people see me consistently, see me struggle, maybe they might trust me and dialogue with me. They might see my prayer as something that resonates with their own. And maybe we might struggle together toward a better path. I get called a humanist missionary because I am less shy about sharing and talking about humanism

and also I refer to it as my faith. I do not like the label missionary because of the problematic relationship to the history of colonization, but I do look forward to the day my symbols, my ideals that I consider holy, are afforded a similar weight or deference but not, of course, bound to the supernatural. But that, I believe, is our responsibility. We have to communicate through our actions and dialogue, how we live our faith. Thank you for listening. I look forward to sharing more with you from this journey. ◇



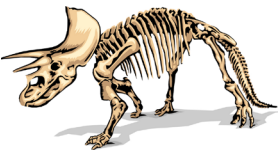
Christian talks with Ghanaian children



Carrying Water

President's Corner (Cont'd. from page 2)

toward coexistence with humans, but others might be resistant to humans (as we have learned that bacteria that cause illness in humans can become resistant to our antibiotics).



At this point, I felt impelled to look for what *Life on the Brink*

proposed as solutions to the twin results of continued population growth: the certainty of species extinction, and the perhaps more unsettling possibility of evolutionary changes. The book has six chapters by different contributors on the topic of solutions. Three of these solutions to human population growth have to do with reducing births by family planning and use of contraception. Another would place boundaries on where humans are allowed to live—with adequate separation between these locales (“Island Civilizations”) to allow for non-human species’ existence. A fifth proposes a declaration of rights of non-human species, somewhat like a basis for a largely expanded “Endangered Species Act.” And the remaining chapter puts forward the notion that limiting immigration into countries will result in appropriate limits for the sending countries as well as the receiving ones.

I imagine that you can think of other, at least partial solutions to the sheer numbers of humans resulting in extinction of other species. I certainly can. However, I was somewhat surprised and relieved that none of the distinguished contributors in this book focused on what I understand to be a substantial cause of overpopulation: the fact that people are living longer. Thus, there was no solution relating to getting rid of the older ones of us to cope with this problem (whew!). But I do remain concerned that growth of our species is doing away with other species that are integral parts of our more familiar web of life.

A side thought, too, is that calling myself a “humanist” should not set me against other species. I should endeavor

to bring out “the best in myself, the best in others, and the best for all of life.” However, while I have a handle on bringing out the best in myself and the best in others—as a humanist, I am looking for some direction in bringing out the best for all of life—which seems imperiled by the increasing numbers of my fellow human beings!!



Happenings

Common Ground conference note

On October 8 Hugh Taft-Morales joined his Ethical Culture clergy colleagues Bart Worden (Executive Director of the American Ethical Union, and Leader of the Ethical Culture Society of Westchester), Anne Klaeysen (Leader of the New York Society for Ethical Culture), and Emily Newman (AEU Communications Coordinator) at the 2015 Common Ground Conference at Rutgers University. The conference focused on contributing to social progress by creating understanding and cooperation between religious believers and secular humanists. Hugh’s presentation discussed Ethical Culture’s nontheism and “deed-before-creed” pragmatism as tools to foster such understanding and cooperation. The highlight for him, however, was sitting on a panel next to the grandson of Mahatma Gandhi!



Announcements

Introduction to Ethical Humanism

Sunday, November 1, 7:00 PM



Want to know more about the history, philosophy and community of Ethical Humanism? Join Hugh Taft-Morales, Leader of the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia, and share wine, cheese, and conversation in a relaxed environment. Please RSVP to leaderhugh@phillyethics.org.

Quote-Unquote

Rate of homicides of black men
in major U.S. urban areas: 52
per 100,000

Of police officers in the same
areas: 3 per 100,000
-Harper's Index

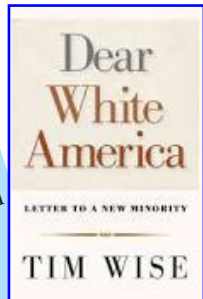


Monday, November 16, 6:30 PM

Exploring White Privilege video + discussion



We will watch selections from a DVD by Tim Wise followed by a discussion. Tim Wise, an anti-racist activist, urges us to engage in anti-racism activism. Are you a “white ally” in this work? Do you want to be? Does the term “white ally” even make sense? Wise has given speeches at over 600 college campuses, trained teachers, corporations, non-profits and police about dismantling white racism. He is the author of numerous books, including *White Like Me: Reflections on Race from a Privileged Son* and *Dear White America: Letter to a New Minority*.



Sunday, November 29, 3:00 P.M.
Musical Migrations

The collaboration for music concerts grows between the Ethical Humanist Society and the Fine Art Music Company, in MUSIC AT ETHICAL~CONCERTS ON THE SQUARE. The season opened in the main hall successfully in September with AN ARGENTINE MUSICAL. From November through June, Saturday evening and Sunday afternoon programs include fascinating musical works with themes such as an environmental MUSICAL ODE TO EARTH, a rich and luscious RUSSIAN SALON, a miraculous story with heart-touching sounds in ARMENIA'S ARK OF MUSIC, and some intimate Wednesday evening recitals featuring flute, violin, and piano.

Our next concert, MUSICAL MIGRATIONS, features clarinet, violin, viola, cello and piano, in compelling works by Central and East European composers Zoltán Kodály, Béla Bartók, Erno Dohnanyi, and Aram Khachaturian. Come hear the power of folk traditions cultivated by more great composers who widened the world of classical music.

Concert flyers and season brochures are available. Performance details are at: www.FineArtMusicCompany.com

Announcements

(Continued)

Sunday, December 6

Launching the Tree of Knowledge for Freethinking Kids

Since the Tree of Knowledge celebrates the 10th anniversary of the “Intelligent Design” court case (Tammy Katzmilller *et al.* vs. Dover Area School District), it is an especially good time for the EHSoP to launch the first Tree of Knowledge for Freethinking Kids to accompany its larger parent Tree of Knowledge now in its fifth year of residence in the Society’s foyer. The new Tree of Knowledge, decorated largely by kids, under the direction of members Dan Hoffman and Kim McKay, will include cover ornaments of specific books for young people, as well as handcrafted ornaments inspired by those books. In addition, this Education Committee project will offer an opportunity for members and friends to make cash donations to a yet to be determined organization (i.e., school or other nonprofit) that supports children’s literacy. This promises to be a great project for young freethinking readers—children, grandchildren, and friends’ children are all welcome—to participate in an ornament-making session to be scheduled in November and in the tree-trimming ceremony, December 6. For further information, contact Betsy Lightbourn at elisalight726@gmail.com.



Save the Date!

Sunday, January 17, noon, EHSoP
Community Pledge Luncheon

Mark your calendar for a most important annual event at the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia, right after a shortened platform. That is when we will gather for our Community Pledge Luncheon to celebrate and recommit ourselves to growing Ethical Humanism in Philadelphia! Come for a delicious lunch courtesy of the Pledge Team, and help support our jewel of a community here at 1906 Rittenhouse Square.



November 2015

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 11:00 a.m. <i>Manners and Morals</i> Hugh Taft-Morales	2	3	4 Meeting 6:30 p.m. Education Committee	5	6	7
7:00 PM Intro to Ethical Humanism						
8 11:00 a.m. <i>U.S. Asylum and Sanctuary: Déjà vu all over again</i> Linda Rabben	9	10	11 Meetings 5:30 p.m. Finance Committee 6:30 p.m. Ethical Action Committee	12 6:30 PM Center Cty Philly HLAA P. McGeever	13	14
15 11:00 a.m. <i>Humanist Thanksgiving</i>	16 6:30 PM Exploring White Privilege film, discussion Tim Wise	17	18 Meeting 7:00 p.m. EHSOP Board	19  7:00PM Amnesty Intl.	20	21
22 11:00 a.m. <i>What does global warming have to do with racism?</i> James White	23	24	25 Meeting 7:00 p.m. Camp Linden Committee	26	27	28
29 11:00 a.m. <i>Exploring Camp Linden</i> 3:00 p.m. Musical Migrations concert	30					

NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS



1 - Bob Bueding
 7 - Irene Putzer
 21 - Linda Waters Richardson
 29 - Howard Peer

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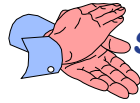
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SUNDAY SERVICES



Hosts - Coordinated by
Lelah Marie

Nov. 1 - Sandy Coffey and Sally
Redlener

Nov. 8 - Sylvia Metzler and Betsy
Lightbourn

Nov. 15 - Nina Diamond and Bob
Bueding

Nov. 22 - Terry and Lyle Murley

Nov. 29 - Don Munson and Steve
Bremner



Flowers - Coordinated by
David Ralston

Nov. 1 - Temma and Arnold
Fishman wish grandson Robin a
very happy sixth birthday.

Nov. 8 - In honor of Terry
and Lyle Murley's thirty-ninth
wedding anniversary

Nov. 15 - Bob Bueding in memory
of his parents Raya and Ernest

Nov. 22 - Harry Thorn with
dedication to working for a good
November 2016

Nov. 29 - Doris Leicher wishes
happy birthday to her wonderful
husband Howard.



Coffee Hour Coordinators

Nov. 1 - John Marshall

Nov. 8 - Ken Greiff

Nov. 22 - Harry Thorn

Nov. 29 - Ken's cookies (5th Sun.)

***Ethical Humanist Society
of Philadelphia***

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