



# Ethical Views



January 2016

Vol. 130, No. 5 Newsletter of the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia

## Sunday Platforms

Starting in January: Ethical education classes during Platform on 1st and 4th Sundays for 5 to 12 year olds.

**Sunday, January 3, 11:00 AM**

***Memorial Sunday: Gratitude for the Past, Hope for the Future***

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



On the first Sunday of each year we at the Ethical Humanist Society remember those who have died. Members and guests are invited to share memories of loved ones or historical heroes no longer with us. This year you are encouraged to frame your words of remembrance for

those lost in the context of your hopes for the future. How have those no longer physically here inspired you to build a better world?

**Sunday, January 10, 11:00 AM**

***Submission versus Freedom in Contemporary Islam and Other Modern Ideologies***

**Khalid Y. Blankinship, Professor, Department of Religion, Temple University**

Islam today is often mischaracterized as both irrational and authoritarian, if not totalitarian.



Such claims depend on a narrow and ideologically-charged definition of rationality. Various Muslims have always viewed their own interpretations of Islam as rational and especially as means of liberation from authoritarianism, because God, mediated through text, is the

source of authority, and no hierarchy or interpretive authority can easily be articulated. This contrasts with materialism, which cuts off all appeals to authority beyond humans. From this starting point, the modern age has seen the establishment of unprecedented, extremely intrusive, and highly articulated and rationalized systems of control mediated through the state. These systems exist within the triad of nationalism, state, and people, and claim they are liberating. They are actually subordinating. While Islam cannot be viewed as any less rational than materialist systems, which also depend on unquestioned faith, it has proven less susceptible to appropriation for purposes of domination.

Khalid Yahya Blankinship is a historian and professor in the Religion Department at Temple University since 1990. His research includes *The End of the Jihad State: The Reign of Hishâm ibn 'Abd al-Malik and the Collapse of the Umayyads* and articles "Parity of Muslim and Western Concepts of Just War," 2011, and "Muslim 'Fundamentalism,' Salafism, Sufism, and Other Trends," 2014. Blankinship is fluent in both classical and Egyptian colloquial Arabic, has traveled widely in the Muslim world, including long residences in Egypt, Mecca, and Morocco, and also is known to and acquainted with many well-known Muslim religious scholars from around the world.

**Sunday, January 17, 11:00 AM**

***400 Years: How History Fuels My Anti-Racism***

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

Four hundred years is a long time. In 2019, three years from now, we will mark the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first time Africans were brought to this continent against their will. How can one possibly process the stunning

juxtaposition of systemic oppression of people of color in the context of expressions of noble democratic ideals? Hugh Taft-Morales shares his personal journey from minimization of this reality, through guilt and humility, to empowerment. Today he begins work on a project to mark the coming 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Come hear how he embraces anti-racism activism in a way that makes his life more meaningful and fulfilling.

**Sunday, January 24, 11:00 AM**

***Moving from Intention to Action***  
**Ami Dar, Executive Director of Idealist.org**



Every day many of us would like to respond in some

way to what's happening around us, but for a variety of reasons we don't. Think how many times you've felt this way. Now multiply that by every person who can recognize this feeling, and we are talking about millions of missed opportunities for action and collaboration every day. In his address, Ami will talk about how we

*(Continued next page)*

### In This Issue

- 1 - Sunday Platforms
- 2 - 3 President's Message
- 3 - 5 Happenings
- 5 - 6 Announcements
- 7 - Calendar; January Birthdays
- 8 - Sunday Services

## Platforms (Continued)

can close this gap between intention and action, locally and globally.

Ami Dar is the founder and executive director of Idealist.org. Launched in 1996, Idealist has become one of the most popular nonprofit resources on the web, connecting 100,000 organizations around the world with two million people every month. Ami was born in Jerusalem, grew up in Peru and Mexico, and lives in New York.

**Sunday, January 31, 11:00 AM**  
**What's the Deal in Harrisburg?**  
**Brian Sims, PA State Representative**  
**for the 182<sup>nd</sup> District (Center City,**  
**Philadelphia)**



Brian Sims is a distinguished policy attorney and civil rights advocate from Center-City Philadelphia. He is the first openly gay man

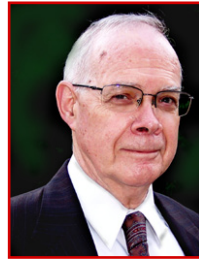
elected to Pennsylvania's House of Representatives. He has been a leading voice on issues ranging from civil rights to equal pay. Before serving in the state legislature, Representative Sims was a civil rights attorney, staff counsel at the Philadelphia Bar Association, chairman of Gay and Lesbian Lawyers of Philadelphia (GALLOP), and president of Equality Pennsylvania. He received his B.S. from Bloomsburg University, where he led the football team to a Division II national championship and became the first (and so far only) NCAA football captain to come out as gay. Representative Sims received his J.D. in International and Comparative Law from Michigan State University. <>

### Quote-Unquote

"You should always go to other people's funerals. Otherwise they won't come to yours."

-Yogi Berra

## President's Message



### *The New Jim Crow and Me*

Nick Sanders

Raised in Memphis, Tennessee and then Garland, Texas during the 1940s and 50s, I do not remember having any contact with people of color. In my high school days as I was abstractly questioning a variety of things as they were, I asked the highly-regarded minister of my church why we as Christians could not help to right things for "the colored people." As I recall, he said that we might alienate important members of our congregation.

This minister, however, was very helpful in recommending colleges that were at least 1,000 miles away from the South (which I was inclined to think was the only irrational part of the country). So I did move far away for college, where I first had an important interaction with a person of color: In Dayton, Ohio, I was warmly welcomed over the Thanksgiving holiday by the family of a fellow student who was "colored." On and on thereafter I had very positive contacts with persons of color. I remember especially my impressive supervisor (who was "colored") where I was a counselor in a home for some wonderful children recovering from rheumatic fever, most of whom were "colored." And later, after more schooling, when I was a faculty colleague of a very capable "Black" senior undergraduate student when our university shifted curriculum in response to the L A Watts riots to a study of "Black" literature and analysis.

Like the changes I had experienced with Blacks, I thought for a long time thereafter that I saw many signs that times were changing for the better with regard to Black-White relations in our society. Now though, due to some strong suggestions by some of my Ethical Society colleagues, I am reading Michelle Alexander's book, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*.

Alexander posits a system of racial discrimination in our "colorblind" legal systems that constitutes our society's way of allowing racist behavior to flourish in the contemporary U S. Despite signs of change (such as most notably twice electing a Black person as President), the overwhelming majority of Blacks in the U S are in the lowest rung of what she maintains is a caste system.

With laws now prohibiting discrimination in many aspects of economic and social life, Alexander has explored the ways in which a caste system that places most Blacks at the bottom can function. The key is the "war on drugs." This "war on drugs" has allowed widespread arrests of adolescents and young adults who are using dope as part of their newly acquired freedom in moving into adulthood (often in situations not well thought-through) and their equally young, entrepreneurial drug dealers. Allowing this focus on the non-violent crime of doing drugs, many more persons have been incarcerated, dramatically increasing prison populations.

Now, it seems generally agreed that drug use is at about the same level in Black and White populations. So why then are those in prison for drug-related crimes predominantly Blacks? That is a question that

*(Continued next page)*

Alexander sets out to answer in *The New Jim Crow*. In the third chapter of this book, "The Color of Justice," she describes a set of Supreme Court decisions that allow discretion at various levels of the judicial system--so long as race and other such factors are not explicitly stated. Police are allowed discretion in where to focus their drug investigations and whom to arrest. Prosecutors are allowed considerable leeway in what cases to prosecute and in pre-emptive selection of jurors. Legislators may decide what drugs carry what sentence --regardless of the different user population profiles that have been documented.

Being incarcerated, though, is only an early step in effectively establishing that a person is on a low rung of a caste system. The aftermath of having been in prison continues on, often lasting a lifetime of stigma. As has been well documented, opportunities for employment, housing, participation as a full-fledged citizen, and more personal relationships are sharply curtailed when one is an "ex-con."

Also, many publicly-supported welfare benefits for food, housing, and education are not available, and the formerly incarcerated person may be prevented from obtaining various licenses, including a driver's license. To add to the burden of "re-entry," ex-offenders are often forced to pay for various aspects of their trials and incarcerations. Given that Blacks are much more likely to be incarcerated for drug-related offenses than Whites, they are accordingly more likely to experience the aftermath of being incarcerated.

Having these points driven home in *The New Jim Crow*, my reading left me with a strong concern again to do right by Black people as a group. I was anxious to see if Michelle Alexander had any suggestions. In chapter 6, "The Fire This Time," she begins with an argument that the approaches from the past — calling out racial slurs, Confederate flags, and overt bigotry — while still important, are insufficient when there is a huge, discriminatory system such as the "war on drugs" that operates as a "colorblind" justice system. Instead, she discusses possible

ways to dismantle the system, all of which require a public consensus that the current system of mass incarceration affecting principally Blacks — but also poor Whites — is unjust and needs to be changed.

As you can tell from what I have said here, this book by Alexander has made a strong impression on me. I do realize that there have been some criticisms of it, and I have read several such reviews. I am continuing to read and listen to various takes on the theme of racial bias in the court, prison, and post-prison systems. However, I believe that the best way to move ahead in this aspect of building a more ethical culture is by spreading the word that we have a justice system that is colorblind in name only. Its outcomes imply that that characterization is clearly incorrect.

I hope you will read up on this issue, and maybe call me out on my thinking here. Then we can talk about it.

◇



---

## Happenings

### ***Celebrating the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Landmark "Intelligent Design" Case*** *Stan Horowitz, EHSoP Member*

December 6, 2015 was a special day for members of the Ethical Society because we joined the Freethought Society and the Delaware Valley Chapter of Americans United for Separation of Church & State to host an event to commemorate the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Intelligent Design court case that was tried in Dover, Pennsylvania. Some seventy people visited the Ethical Society on Rittenhouse Square to hear a series of interesting presentations and panel discussion about the landmark *Kitzmiller v. Dover School District* case. Ten years ago, Judge John E. Jones III, ruled that Intelligent Design is "not science." This case pitted parents, teachers, and students against the school board, stacked with science doubters, in a community just outside Harrisburg, PA. In a nation full of climate change deniers and young-earth creationists, Judge Jones' ruling reaffirmed the integrity of science education in America and prevented religious dogma masquerading as science from being smuggled into public schools.

(Continued next page)



*Celebration: 10th Anniversary of  
"Intelligent Design" Case (cont'd.)*

The emcees for this event were the Ethical Society's own Hugh Taft-Morales, Janice Rael of the Delaware Valley Chapter of Americans United for Separation of Church & State, and Margaret Downey of the Freethought Society. Kudos to all three for a job well done!

The event started off with the Society's weekly platform meeting, during which over 100 people heard Hugh give a thought-provoking talk, "The Integrity and Humility of Science." Hugh discussed some distinctions between science and religious faith and rightfully asserted that religious faith should not be permitted to influence science without empirical evidence.

After lunch, Hugh, Janice, and Margaret gave the opening remarks. Next were presentations by three legal professionals. Two were from the law firm Pepper Hamilton, LLP, which provided pro bono legal

services to Tammy Kitzmiller, the main plaintiff in this case.

The first presenter was attorney Eric Rothschild who discussed how he used science to refute the defense team's claim that Intelligent Design was based on scientific evidence, not biblical teachings. He gave an interesting overview of his arguments against the defense's expert witnesses, using examples from microbiology and immunology to make his case that Intelligent Design was not based on science.

Steve Harvey, who was also an attorney for the plaintiff, discussed the detective work he used to prove that a textbook the Dover School District intended to use to teach Intelligent Design was in fact written to teach Creationism. Steve also discussed his current work using the legal and political systems to defend those who feel that global warming is a major problem and is caused by human activity.

The fourth presenter was Lauri Lebo, who was the principal local journalist who covered this trial for a newspaper, the *York Daily Record*. Lauri also figured prominently in a documentary on this trial, called "Judgment Day: Intelligent Design on Trial." Lauri gave an interesting talk about her perspective as a reporter of the trial and how she responded to her editor's concern that she be unbiased. Lauri eventually wrote a book about this trial, *The Devil in Dover: An Insider's Story of Dogma vs. Darwin in Small-Town America*.

Next up on the agenda was a panel discussion. The panelists were the four presenters, Hedya Aryani, Steve Harvey, Lauri Lebo, and Eric Rothschild.

The day was capped off by a happy hour and closing ceremony. This was also an opportunity to buy an autographed copy of Lauri Lebo's book.

*(Continued next page)*



The panelists and organizers. From Left to Right: Hugh Taft-Morales, Janice Rael, Lauri Lebo, Eric Rothschild, Steve Harvey, Hedya Aryani, Margaret Downey



The panelists and guest. From Left to Right: Eric Rothschild, Lauri Lebo, David McDevitt, Steve Harvey

*Photographs by Stan Horowitz*

## Two Trees of Knowledge!

On December 6, we also decorated two Trees of Knowledge. Around our traditional tree, a project with the Freethought Society, we sang "If I Had a Book" to the tune of *If I Had a Hammer* with apologies to Lee Hays and Pete Seeger! One verse proclaimed, "If I taught science, I'd teach evolution; I'd teach what the facts are, not the controversy; Science fights danger, science gives warning; Science helps all of my brothers and my sisters, all over this land!"

Prior to that, during our morning program, Leader Hugh Taft-Morales introduced our Tree of Knowledge for Young Freethinkers. Manny Hoffman and Eliot and Ben Raynor, with the help of their parents, chose books to honor on their tree and create the ornaments based on the book covers. During platform they each shared why they chose the books they did, and had further conversation with members during coffee hour.



## Announcements



### Introduction to Ethical Humanism

January 3, 7:00PM

Leader Hugh Taft-Morales discusses the history and philosophy of Ethical Humanism. Open to the public, but please RSVP to:

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

Monday, January 4, 7:00 PM



### Identity: Who Do We Think We Are?

Co-sponsored by the Greater Philadelphia Thinking Society and EHSOP

Throughout 2015, we were challenged with questions pertaining to identity. From Rachel Dolezal to Caitlyn Jenner, from the Black Lives Matter movement to the question of what being American means, we have wrestled with matters of identity in new and paradigm-shifting ways.

The event will feature a short introductory framing of the subject (Andrea Buonincontro and Hugh Taft-Morales), small-group discussions, and a large-group discussion with all participants.

Main Topics: how we define our personal identity and how that affects our implicit biases and worldviews; how understanding what we value in our personal identity shapes how we interact with each other; horizontal and vertical group identity and the idea of belonging; contrasting concepts of self, based on autonomy and collectivism; identity as a social construct.

Light refreshments. For more information or to RSVP, go to: <http://www.meetup.com/thinkingsociety/events/227332831/>

Photographs by Stan Horowitz



**Tuesdays, January 12 and 19,  
7:00 P.M.**

## **Mass Incarceration and Black Families**

essential that we engage in ongoing study, dialogue and discernment. Hard copies of the article will be available at the Society after Platforms, or you can access the article online at: <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/10/theblackfamilyinthe-incarceration/403246/>. Please try to read the entire (long) article, but certainly be prepared for the evenings you come. RSVP to Kate at [kmesposit@gmail.com](mailto:kmesposit@gmail.com) or 609-273-0170. The article is divided into 9 sections. The schedule continues as follows:

Please join us to discuss Ta-Nehisi Coates' article from the October 2015 issue of *The Atlantic*, "The Black Family in the Age of Mass Incarceration." Members Linda and Aissia Richardson, Yumy Odom of the Frator Heru Institute and Kate Esposito will be leading small-group guided discussions. As part of our commitment to more fully understand the Black Lives Matter Movement, it is

**Sections V, VI and VII Tuesday, January 12 at 7:00 PM**

**Sections VIII and IX Tuesday, January 19 at 7:00 PM**



American politicians are now eager to disown a failed criminal justice system that has left the U.S. with the largest incarcerated population in the world. But they have failed to reckon with history. Fifty years after Daniel Patrick Moynihan's report "The Negro Family" tragically helped create this system, it is time to reclaim his original intent. In his October cover story, Ta-Nehisi Coates explores how mass incarceration has affected African American families. Coates is an American writer, journalist, and educator. He is a national correspondent for *The Atlantic*, where he writes about cultural, social and political issues, particularly as regards African Americans. He has worked for *The Village Voice*, *Washington City Paper*, and *Time Magazine*. He has contributed to *The New York Times Magazine*, *The Washington Post*, *The Washington Monthly*, *O*, and other publications. In 2008 he published a memoir, *The Beautiful Struggle: A Father, Two Sons, and an Unlikely Road to Manhood*. His second book, *Between the World and Me*, was released in July 2015 and has been nominated for a 2015 National Book Award for Nonfiction. He is one of this year's recipients of a "Genius Grant" from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.

**Sunday, January 17, 12:30 PM**

## **Members' Pledge Luncheon and Challenge Grant**

It takes a village to grow a flourishing garden! Please RSVP for the Pledge Luncheon. We hope every member will attend and enjoy the fun, food, and fellowship! This is the time for all of us to pledge to keep our garden of humanism growing. We have a great opportunity in that one member has offered a challenge grant that will multiply our individual generosity. For every \$2 increase above last year's pledge total, this member will donate an additional \$1, up to \$6000! So if we have \$12,000 more pledged in 2016 than we had in 2015, our society will receive the full challenge grant of \$6000. Please RSVP for the luncheon to [jeffrey.dubb@gmail.com](mailto:jeffrey.dubb@gmail.com). Speak with Vince Russo or John McCormick if you would like to know more.

**Thursday, January 21, 7:00 PM, Euripides x 2**

Lyle Murley will lead a discussion of two Euripides plays for the January Worldly Wisdom session, *Alcestis* and *Medea*. If you have questions please contact Terry Martin-Murley at [terry.murley@comcast.net](mailto:terry.murley@comcast.net).



**Saturday, February 6, 8:00 PM, Music at Ethical, "A RUSSIAN SALON"**

Our MUSIC AT ETHICAL concert series presented by the Fine Art Music Company and the Ethical Society continues on a (probably) cold winter's night in February, with "A RUSSIAN SALON." Music by Rachmaninoff, Tchaikovsky, Nikolai Medtner, Alexander Scriabin and others is surrounded by poetry (some in Russian!), thoughts and influences of the famous Russian poet, novelist and playwright, Alexander Sergeyevich Pushkin. Our pianists Rollin Wilber and Kasia Salwinski perform expansive solo works, and accompany mezzo-soprano Tatyana Rashkovsky, in provocative song. The concert will be repeated at Ivy Hall in Overbrook Farms on February 7, at 3:00 PM. \$20/members. Details at [www.FineArtMusicCompany.com](http://www.FineArtMusicCompany.com)

# January 2016

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3 11:00a.m. <b>Memorial Sunday</b> Hugh Taft-Morales	4 7:00 p.m. <b>Who Do We Think We Are?</b>	5	6 <b>Meetings</b> 6:30 p.m. Education Committee	7	8	9
10 11:00 a.m. <b>Submission v. Freedom in Contemporary Islam</b>  Khalid Y. Blankinship	11	12	13 <b>Meetings</b> 5:30p.m. Finance Committee 6:30p.m. Ethical Action Committee	14 6:30p.m. <b>HLAA Center City</b> P. McGeever	15	16
17 11:00 a.m. <b>400 Years</b> Hugh Taft-Morales	18	19	20 <b>Meetings</b> 7:00 p.m. EHSOP Board of Trustees	21 7:00 p.m. <b>Worldly Wisdom-Euripides</b>  7:00PM <b>Amnesty Intl.</b> Ron Coburn	22	23
24 11:00 a.m. <b>From Intention to Action</b>  Ami Dar	25	26	27 <b>Meeting</b> 6:45 p.m. Camp Linden Committee	28	29	30

31 11:00 a.m. <b>What's the Deal in Harrisburg?</b>  Brian Sims
---

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS	
10	Carol Love
11	Sandy Coffey
14	Lyle Murley
21	Ken Greiff
30	Lelah Marie

- **Coming Soon: (February 8th) Ethics on the Square: *Capitalism in Crisis!***
- Engaging ethical explorations of diverse perspectives on economics co-sponsored by the Temple University Fox School of Business and EHSOP.
- As part of the Ethical Society's history since 1885 of providing free, public, non-partisan educational opportunities to explore ethical issues, this 2016 series is intended to educate citizens about the ethical ramifications of economic policy. Mark your calendar for the first Monday evening, February 8 at 7:00 PM, featuring Prof. Barry Schwartz discussing "The Paradox of Consumer Choice." Prof. Schwartz will offer opening comments, followed by a brief conversation with Hugh Taft-Morales, and then questions from the audience.
- Future evenings in the spring and fall will cover topics including "Economics and the Environment," "Urban Planning and Ethical Economies," "Stewardship in Financial Services," "Poverty, Race and other Structural Roadblocks to Business Success," "Why Not Socialism?" "B-Corporations and Legalizing Ethical Economies," "Mega-Philanthropy versus Democracy," "Saving the Planet through Localism."

*Ethical Views* is published monthly  
except July and August.

*Editor*, Pat McGeever  
*Assistant Editor*, Steve Bremner  
*Layout*, Janice R. Moore  
*Production*, Ingrid Schafroth  
*Web Master*, Bob Moore

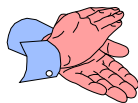
**Ethical Humanist Society  
of Philadelphia**

Hugh Taft-Morales, Leader

**Board of Trustees**

Nick Sanders, President  
Garry O'Rourke, Vice-President  
Henry Pashkow, Secretary  
John McCormick, Treasurer  
Bob Bueding  
Marta Guttenberg  
Betsy Lightbourn  
John Marshall  
Sally Redlener  
Linda Richardson

(215) 735 - 3456  
office@phillyethics.org  
[www.phillyethics.org](http://www.phillyethics.org)



**SUNDAY SERVICES**

**Hosts**

A message from Lelah Marie,  
Host Coordinator:



Please help make our Society  
a welcoming one; feeling  
welcome is essential. Through welcoming,  
informing, and assisting our friends  
and visitors, Ethical Society hosts also  
develop stronger relationships with other  
members. Let me know if you want to help.  
Members new to hosting are paired with  
members who have hosted many times.  
And whether you are a new member or old  
hand, in times of need I may ask you to be  
a Sunday morning host. Please contact me  
at [lelahmarie@gmail.com](mailto:lelahmarie@gmail.com).

Many thanks to the following people for  
hosting during November: Sandy Coffey,  
Sylvia Metzler, Sally Redlener, John  
Marshall, Garry O'Rourke, Henry Pashkow,  
Bob Bueding, Nick Sanders, and Don  
Munson.



Flowers Coordinated  
by David Ralston

January 3 - Carol Love: "For my (70th)  
birthday and all the other fine people  
born in January -- especially Martin  
Luther King"

January 10 - David Ralston: "Prosperity  
for Everyone in Our Society"

January 17 - Arnold and Temma Fishman:  
"In honor of our granddaughter Zoey's  
8th birthday"

January 24 - Nick Sanders: "In memory  
of my father Earl Sanders"

January 31 - Harry Thorn: "Dedicated  
to a good year for the upcoming  
election"



**Coffee Hour Coordinators**

January 4 - John McCormick  
January 10 - Ken Greiff  
January 17 - Garry O'Rourke  
January 24 - Harry Thorn  
January 31 - TBD

***Ethical Humanist Society  
of Philadelphia***

1906 South Rittenhouse Square  
Philadelphia, PA 19103