

ETHICAL VIEWS



February 2018

Vol. 132, No. 6 Newsletter of the Philadelphia Ethical Society

Sunday Platforms

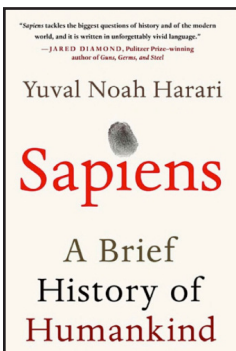
Sunday, Feb. 4, 11:00 AM

Making Sense of Sapiens:

Humans and Humanism

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

Yuval Noah Harari, in his book *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind*, proposes that three revolutions – cognitive, agricultural,



and scientific – have shaped what we have become as a species. Hugh Taft-Morales explores what we as humanists can draw from Harari that can

make us more self-aware and able to chart our future development.

Sunday, Feb. 11, 11:00 AM

Impolitic Politics: Free Speech, Censorship, and Civility on Campus in the Age of Trump

**Jonathan Zimmerman,
Professor, History of Education,
University of Pennsylvania**

From immigration restriction and the Russia investigation to health care and taxation, our era has witnessed possibly unprecedented levels of political polarization and recrimination. On our airwaves and the Internet, especially, Americans shout past each other in a 24/7 deluge of snark and invective. That creates new challenges for our universities, which are supposed to expand our knowledge of the world and also teach the skills and virtues of democratic citizenship: reason, tolerance, and informed

participation. But many of our campuses have not stepped up to this task; instead, they have echoed or even accelerated the polarized tenor of our moment. This talk will critique the spirit of contemporary campus politics and also provide suggestions for improving it.

Jonathan Zimmerman is a former Peace Corps volunteer, and author of *Campus Politics: What Everyone Needs to Know*, and six other books. He is also a frequent contributor to the Philadelphia Inquirer, the Washington Post, and other popular newspapers and magazines.



Sunday, Feb. 18, 11:00 AM

#MeToo, Men, and

Responsibility

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

It's a sad fact that the #MeToo movement surprised men more than women. Sexual harassment and assault have scarred the lives of most women in one way or another. Until this recent wave of revelations, most men were, at best, oblivious of the plight of their mothers, daughters, and wives, or heedlessly blind to the impact of their own harassing and abusive behavior. How does the #MeToo movement affect the identity and social responsibility of men? Hugh Taft-Morales explores how we can best honor the courage fueling the #MeToo movement and honor the worth of all women.

Sunday, Feb. 25, 11:00 AM

"Raw Life" Meets the Law: Race, Politics, and Hip Hop's Role in the Quest for Justice

**Donald F. Tibbs, Professor of
Law, Thomas R. Kline School
of Law, Drexel University**

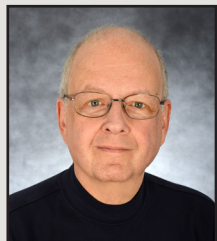
Post-colonial theorist Achille Mbembe described "raw life" as "a time for black suffering where life and death are so entangled that it is no longer possible to distinguish them." Contemporaneously, the shooting deaths of unarmed black men exposes the "Raw Life" of reconciling black innocence within American law and order. The diffusion of black liberation struggles, and the embrace of colorblindness as a normative approach to "fixing" American racial issues have allowed the state to regain its power over the human spirit, and reclaim its power over re-producing a political, social, and legal anti-Black agenda. This presentation discusses that Hip Hop's voice, when juxtaposed against the American Constitution, remains a valid critique of how "Raw Life" intersects with the racial politics present in American legal culture.

At Drexel, Donald F. Tibbs teaches Criminal Law, Criminal Procedure, and special topics in Critical Race Theory, Race and the Law, and Hip Hop and the Law.

Sunday Ethical Education for Kids (SEEK) will meet during platforms on February 4th and 18th. If you have questions, please contact Nick Sanders, nick@phillyethics.org

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

"We Don't Wait for the Future. We Build It." – *Verizon.Inc.*



*Bob Bueding,
President,
Philadelphia
Ethical Society*

When was the last time you were inspired by the phone company? What is the successor to old Ma Bell trying to tell us? We live in very challenging times, but we need to make the effort to build a better world for all of us. So where do we start?

When I joined the Philadelphia Ethical Society some six years ago, I discovered, after attending several platforms, that I had found a new home where I could learn and grow. I also

quickly learned that the Society is an active force in the social justice movement. Not only have I made many new friends, but my eyes have been opened to better understand the problems facing our fraught world.

When you immerse yourself in Ethical culture, you realize how fragile our world is. Every day we breathe the air, we drink the water, and we navigate our historic city. We must think about whether the air we breathe is safe and the water we drink is clean. These are basics, but basics can change our lives.

Ethical Culture teaches us to be hands-on, that's why we're so involved in social justice issues. I hope Ethical Society members and those who are considering joining our ranks will ponder what good you can do as an individual or part of a larger group. Your participation is your contribution to the task of building a stronger world where we can all live in harmony.



While writing this column, I learned of the passing of one of our dear members, Bertha Waters. Bertha's tenure with our Society was the longest of any current member. She was a loving family member of a very large family and an amazing social justice advocate. We loved having Bertha in our midst, we learned and laughed with her. Her memory will be lasting. Let's make Bertha proud and keep the work and the fight moving forward. That way we won't be waiting for the future. We'll be building it.

~ Bob

bbueding@phillyethics.org

**Sunday March 4,
Noon -1:30 at PES:
PLEDGE LUNCHEON
Save the Date -
It takes a hive to build
an Ethical Society!**

All PES members should show up for food and fun and doing what we need to do to keep our humanist hive alive! Make sure you RSVP to the invitation that you should have already received!"

Beehives by Michael Black-Smith



LEADER'S COLUMN

The Start of the Overbrook Youth Environmental Stewards



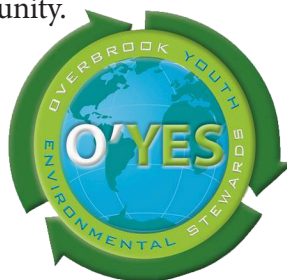
*Hugh Taft-Morales,
Leader, Philadelphia
Ethical Society*

I want to report the progress of an exciting partnership between the Ethical Society and the Overbrook Environmental Education Center (OEEC). Along with other non-profit and government groups, the Ethical Society is helping support the Overbrook Youth Environmental Stewards, a program for students in grades 9-12 known as O'YES for short. A generous grant from a PES member offers support for this program, and member Christian Hayden volunteered to serve on the O'YES Advisory Board.

Led by Program Manager Jerome Shabazz, who spoke at a PES platform last May, the Advisory Committee has already selected 16 O'YES participants and three alternates. They attend six Philadelphia County High Schools: Carver Engineering & Science, Overbrook High, Parkway West High, Science Leadership Academy (at Beeber), Randolph Vocational and West Philadelphia High.

Christian reports that at their meeting of November 27, the Advisory Board reviewed a 173-page draft curriculum covering a wide range of environmental topics. I recently reviewed the curriculum and was impressed with both its breadth and its potential appeal to young learners. (Two

copies of the curriculum are in the administration office. Feel free to borrow them.) It covers a wide range of environmental subjects, from understanding recycling programs to managing domestic toxins to storm water management, this last one of particular importance to urban areas. In each curricular section, interesting discussion topics and hands-on activities are designed to keep the youth engaged. For example, one assignment allows students to calculate their own personal energy usage. There are also map exercises, field trips, and environmental projects that students get to design and carry out in the community.



I was also impressed with the inclusion of various life skills above and beyond strictly environmental issues. Participants are taught general media literacy, such as how to interpret news programs critically and how to read maps and charts. Students are instructed in resume writing, something new to many of the students, but of vital importance to their futures. Near the end of the curriculum there is a "College and Career Paths" primer to help students understand how to pursue various environmentally focused degree programs at local college - programs that would most likely lead to a career.

Another aspect of the curriculum I liked is that it begins and ends with the topic of "Environmental Justice", which happens to be the theme for the 2018 American Ethical Union

Assembly in Albuquerque. It cites the EPA definition of environmental justice as "the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies." Unfortunately, as the O'YES students will discover, poorer citizens are often both most adversely affected by lax enforcement of environmental regulations, and laws that place profits over people. These citizens are given scant opportunity to create effective and safe environmental standards.

One of my hopes for 2018 is that PES will develop our own environmental impact statement. How might we as an institution become more responsible environmentalists? What cleaning products should we buy so as to do the least damage to our environment and those who spend time here? How should we handle recycling? Might we consider using ceramic mugs for coffee hour rather than disposables? Some of these answers are in the O'YES curriculum.

When I started becoming involved in environmentalism, I remember one popular mantra: "Think globally. Act Locally." The O'YES program is designed to equip at least a small cohort of local young people with the confidence, skills, and global awareness to become environmental leaders. I hope that as the program progresses we can invite these young people to share some of their knowledge with the PES community, and that more PES members can find other ways to support this unique empowerment program right here in Philadelphia.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Sunday, February 4, 4:00 PM

Intro to Ethical Humanism

(NOTE: Earlier time than other months!)

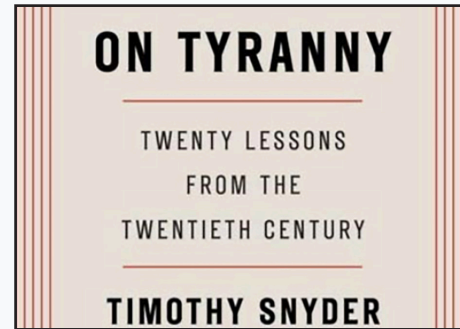
Hugh Taft-Morales invites you to come for an informal discussion of Ethical Humanism and life at the Philadelphia Ethical Society. He will review the philosophy and history of the Ethical Culture movement over wine and cheese, and answer any and all questions about our alternative to traditional religion. Please RSVP to LeaderHugh@phillyethics.org so Hugh knows you are coming!



Monday, February 5, 7:00 PM
Continued Examination of Tyranny in the United States

– If you missed the summer program about this important book, or if you believe that current events demand we examine it more closely, come discuss Timothy Snyder's book *On Tyranny*. Hugh and PES member Mostafa Younesie host this examination of learning about the totalitarianism of last century so as to bring out the best of our country

today. Autocratic tendencies in the executive branch, attacks on



responsible reporting of facts, and the use of fear and warmongering to control public opinion threaten our future as a democratic state.

Special SEMINAR

Saturday, Feb. 17, 10:30 - Noon
The Economics Lens for a More Ethical Society with PES MEMBER Srikant Gopal

In these times of social polarization, can we agree on shared, objective realities? The field of economics offers a way: most social, political and cultural problems can ultimately be distilled into fundamental economic questions. What are the different ways to allocate limited resources between competing individuals and interests? Who does a better job at this – the markets or the government? Viewing issues through an economics

lens should allow us to agree on which choices lead to the most effective outcomes for society as a whole. With this objective, shared view of reality, debates on which ethical choices society should make can hopefully become more constructive.

In this first 90-minute seminar style class, we will survey some basic tools of economics at a high level, attempt to frame current hot-button issues as economics issues and explore all the possible ways we could allocate scarce resources using real world examples.

(Future classes will expand the discussion into topics like socialism, healthcare, immigration etc. as well as shed some “economics” light on curious phenomena like mail-in rebates, “free” public radio, price bargaining at car dealerships, airline variable pricing and many more). The tone of the class will be more intellectual than academic, and the style will be informal and highly participatory. No pre-reading is required, just bring your interest and perspectives!



The class is free and open to the public, but you must register by emailing course leader Srikant Gopal at srikant.gopalakr@gmail.com by Feb 15th.

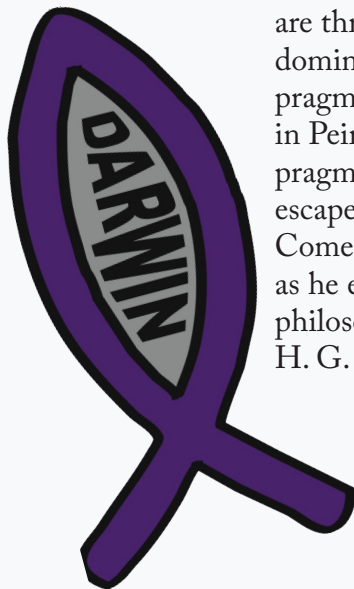
The first class is scheduled for Sat. Feb. 17 10:30AM-noon. Future classes to be scheduled, but you need not attend all classes.

ANNOUNCEMENTS CONTINUED

Srikant has a managerial economics and business background holds an MBA from the Kelley School of Business at Indiana University, Bloomington, and has been a member of PES for the last two years.

Sunday, Feb. 18, 6:30-9:00 PM DARWIN DAY PARTY -

Find February overly drab? Want an excuse to have a party? Do you like to celebrate, in Roy Zimmerman's words, "the heretical theory of the development of life on earth over millions of years by means of spontaneous genetic mutation?" Then come to our Darwin Day party! This casual gathering of evolved beings will feature a pot luck dinner (BYOB), some songs, and a quiz game. Anyone who comes in creative evolutionary costume will have a chance to win prizes! RSVP to jeffrey.dubb@gmail.com by Feb. 16 and tell him what your pot-luck contribution will be!



Wednesday, Feb. 28, 7:00 PM Pluralism, Pragmatism, and American Democracy: a discussion and book signing with H. G. Callaway

Free and open to the public. In his 2017 book, *Pluralism, Pragmatism, and American Democracy: A Minority Report*, H. G. Callaway offers a series of



essays exploring threats to the intellectual and moral integrity of American thought. Confronted by both a growing relativism that actually breeds authoritarianism in society (as is evident

in policies of the current administration) and by the eclipse of democratic ideals due to identity politics and interest groups, the future of true democracy and public dialogue are threatened. Given current dominant perspectives on the pragmatic tradition as found in Peirce, James, and Dewey, pragmatism may not help us escape our current malaise. Come join Hugh Taft-Morales as he explores these important philosophical insights of scholar H. G. Callaway.

Sunday, March 4, Noon - 1:30 Pledge Luncheon - Save the Date

It takes a hive to build an Ethical Society! All PES members should show up for food and fun and doing what we need to do to keep our humanist hive alive! Make sure you RSVP to the invitation that you should have already received!"

Thursday, June 7 -

Sunday, June 10: 2018 AEU Assembly in Albuquerque, New Mexico Seeds for the Future: Environmental Justice and Ethical Culture

We must help stop the environmental degradation of inner cities, poor rural areas, and places where many indigenous people live. Come learn more about environmental justice so we can plant seeds that grow into effective activism for the benefit of everyone now and in the future.

For more information, go to: <https://aeu.org/event/aeu-103rd-assembly/>

To arrange another tour of the Mother Bethel AME church, possibly in late Spring, please contact Sylvia Metzler or Nick Sanders or the editor of this newsletter. hpashkow@gmail.com

FROM OUR MEMBERS

Remembering Bertha

from Carol Love

1964 was the year Bertha Waters joined the Ethical Society. It was the year her seventh and last child, Nica was born. She came to the Ethical Society to hear a psychologist she liked and encountered Leader Kenneth Smith and the ethical movement. The churches she had investigated did not capture her loyalties as did the humanist philosophy.

Bertha started attending meetings of the ladies auxiliary in early 1963. They were picking a secretary – “So-and-so is expecting so we shouldn’t pick her – how about Bertha?” they said. Bertha always laughed about telling them she was “suspecting she was expecting”. Thereafter, all of her children either attended or taught in the Ethical Sunday school and her husband Lester ushered and participated in many of the same committees as Bertha.

Ethical Humanism is a spiritual home for us, but it is an equally important stimulus to our social conscience. Bertha was deeply involved in the Public Action committee and co-chaired the Community Action committee. But there is so much more. She was on the Religious Education committee and the Rose Rappaport Long committee - reading hundreds of essays to help select students who would receive scholarships. Then she ran the newsletter when Ken left and had to take a day off from work to do this each month. The Platform and Education committees were

fortunate to have her for almost all her early years at the Society. And of course she supported Camp Linden from the beginning. She twice spent a number of years on the Hadley Committee, which was first to bring a jazz festival to the Kennett Square area, as well as helping acquire prominent African-American speakers. Bertha was a member of the Board of Trustees for several terms. She also displayed her Thespian talents and cooked many a dish for our socials as well as the African dinner at her home and offered slices of her special Lane cake for the service auction. As if raising seven children wasn’t



Photo by Nick Sanders

enough, Bertha was actively involved in many community organizations such as the Parents Union for Public Schools and the Belmont Community Improvement Association. She commuted to Harrisburg daily as the Equity Coordinator for the Department of Education. This was after graduating from Temple *summa cum laude* and then from Bryn Mawr with an MSW. She and Lester took the family on many camping trips and participated in the AEU camping weekends. Bertha was always ready to take in anyone needing a place to stay including her invalid brother in his final years. She marched in many demonstrations including the first Martin Luther King March on Washington. She

went to Washington to attend the 50th anniversary march commemorating that first march, and, had it not been to a bout of illness, she would have marched in that one too! She was a pioneer in the fight for economic and social justice and was an early supporter of gay and lesbian rights. She participated in UPENN’s Women’s Center, the Community College of Philadelphia’s Early Childhood Advisory Council, and the Bread and Roses community fund. She was a lifelong member of the NAACP. She received awards from the National Organization for Women, Bryn Mawr College Graduate School, and many more. She was very active in politics and the anti-war movement.

And most important to many of us, Bertha was a mentor to everyone who came her way. She didn’t so much give advice as listen and teach. She lived her ethical values to the very end and was enthusiastic about participating in as many Ethical Society celebrations as she could. To this end Bertha and I came to the Ethical Society together for many, many years when she could no longer drive. As she pointed out in a little poem she wrote for me, we camped and picnicked and partied and enjoyed the Phillies together. We even took three trips to Jamaica! She will be sorely missed but I am so glad I was her friend for over 50 years.



Photo by Bob Bueding



FEBRUARY 2018



Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
4 11:00 AM <i>Making Sense of Sapiens: Humans and Humanism</i> 4:00 p.m.: <i>Intro to Ethical Humanism</i>	5 7:00 PM <i>Continued Examination of Tyranny in the United States</i>	6	7 PES MEETING: 6:30 PM Education Committee	8	9	10
11 11:00 AM <i>Impolitic Politics, Jonathan Zimmerman</i>	12	13	14 PES MEETINGS 5:30 PM Finance Committee 6:30 PM Ethical Action Committee	15	16	17 10:30 AM - Noon <i>The Economics Lens for a More Ethical Society</i>
18 11:00 AM <i>#MeToo, Men, and Responsibility</i> 6:30 - 9:00 PM DARWIN DAY PARTY	19	20	21 6:30 PM PES Board of Trustees	22 7:00 PM Amnesty International Meeting http://amnestyeastpa.	23	24
25 11:00 AM <i>"Raw Life" Meets the Law Donald F. Tibbs,</i>	26	27	28 PES MEETING 5:30 PM Camp Linden Committee 7:00 PM <i>Pluralism, Pragmatism, and American Democracy</i>			

QUOTABLE

Reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them.

David Hume
Moral Philosophy

Member Erik Younge reads Martin Luther King's *A Gift of Love* at the January 14 Platform.
 Photo by Betsy Lightbourn



**From the PES
ENDING RACISM TASK FORCE:
*Traveling With the
Wind at My Back***

submitted by Sylvia Metsler

A biker friend told me recently that he prided himself with how fast and far he had just ridden on his bicycle. It wasn't till much later that he realized how much of a tail wind he had had. That reminds me of the story of two fish talking. "Don't you like the quality of the water today?" asks one. "What's water?" replied the other. Both stories remind me of white privilege. Most of us white folks are so immersed in it that we don't even recognize or appreciate it. In my opinion, that also could apply to our unconscious or implicit bias towards people of color. I still surprise myself with thoughts of intellectual superiority of whites over Blacks. I recently thought of a way to make me more aware of the water I am swimming in. I framed and hung a picture of a group of Black women marching down the hallway from the film *Hidden Figures*. They were all brilliant engineers and mathematicians who worked for our space program. I look at it every day to help root out my stubborn prejudices.

A few Sundays ago, I decided to bring my "Hidden Figures" wall hanging to our platform at the Ethical Society and show it during the weekly announcement of the Ending Racism Task Force (ERTF). I took a few minutes to talk about how common implicit bias/racism is in so many white people. I talked about the difference between prejudice and racism. In our white dominated society, power is often added to prejudice against people of color. This can happen on both a personal and an institutional level. That means that many people of color are denied jobs, raises, admission

to schools, and receive negative judgments in courts and maltreatment by police.

Now we come to the hard part. I had quite a few responses and reactions to what I said that Sunday morning. A white woman approached me and told me that she was very appreciative of both what I had said and of how I said it. I then approached a Black woman and asked for her feedback. She told me that it meant so much to her that she cried and then thanked me for what I had shared. Yet another white woman told me that she also appreciated my message.

Then I received some feedback from four white men. "You made me furious with what you said this morning." "I



**Hidden Figures Mathematicians
Mary Jackson Dorothy Vaughan Katherine Johnson**

think you are too hard on yourself." "It sounded like you were scolding us." "I don't agree that the way to combat racism is to make people feel guilty."

Maybe white women, most of whom have experienced some form of sexism, are more able to "feel the water" or the wind at our backs. That does not mean we are free of racist thoughts and feelings sometimes, but that we can be more aware. It may be difficult for many white men to understand the privilege that they have since they rarely experience oppression and discrimination because of their whiteness. On the

other hand, women of color, both gay and straight, have long been in the forefront of working to end oppression.

I wonder too about our reactions to the very words "racist and racism". They conjure up the KKK, and the use of the "N" word and sheer hatred. I have never encountered any of that at PES But I have heard many things said that I consider racist. I wonder what our readers think of the mission statement of the ERTF, which is a subcommittee of the Ethical Action Committee.

The goals of the ending racism task force include understanding and admitting to white privilege and ending racism, be it individual, group and/or systemic, by motivating ourselves and our congregation to unlearn personal biases and work to undo racism throughout society.

The ERTF has a resource list that we would be happy to share with anyone who is interested. I just heard about and read a pertinent article from the Washington Post of 11-3-17 entitled "I'm the Descendant of a Founding Father and I have Two Black Daughters and I am Racist." Some of our readers may be interested in the Harvard Implicit Bias Test.

I thought a lot about what my goal would be in writing this particular story. I do not want to "be too hard on myself" or anyone else and I certainly do not want to be running guilt trips.

Instead I hope it will provoke some discussions about race, racism and privilege ; that we will all take a more honest and deep look into the water we are swimming in; that we will take some actions in 2018 to end racism in ourselves and society. Wouldn't it be great if we all traveled with the wind at our backs?



SUNDAY SERVICES

11:00 A.M. September
through June

Ethical Views is published monthly
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Flowers Coordinated by Sally Redlener



February 4 - Floral
Dedication is from Nina
Diamond "Thinking of my cousin
Andrea Beth Isserlis, and her
devoted daughter Ellen Belitzky.""

HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY: toward
PEACE." -From Betsy Lightbourn. In
loving memory of my mother Marion
Valentine Lightbourn, and Dale
Drews, the love of my life.

-From Sally Redlener
Happy Valentine's day to my
children, Ruth & Nicol &
grandchildren Joshua, Aliyah, &
Jack

February 18 - From Nick Sanders,
"Thank goodness for Darwin's
showing the way."

February 25 - This Sunday's Floral
Dedication is from Maureen
Pielli, "Happy Birthday to my
Mother Jo Kelly Dillon."

Coffee Hour Coordinators



February 4 - Kate Esposito.
Last names: A-E
February 11- Ken Greiff
Last names: F-K
February 18 - Garry O'Rourke
Last names: L-Q
February 25 - Harry Thorn
Last names: R-Z

Hosts Coordinated by John Marshall

Sunday hosts greet and orient
members and visitors and make
a valuable contribution to the
community. If you'd like to help out,
please contact John Marshall.

For suggestions regarding this
newsletter, contact Henry Pashkow
hpashkow@gmail.com

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

2 Sally Redlener
3 Arnold Fishman
18 Vince Russo
18 Lauren Strong

amazonsmile
Org Central

The Philadelphia Ethical
Society participates in the
Amazon Smile program.
When you complete Amazon's
easy sign up, a small
percentage of every
purchase you make is
returned to PES.
Shop at our link here:
[smile.amazon.com/
ch/23-1356235](https://smile.amazon.com/ch/23-1356235).



PES members and friends joined thousands that flooded the
Benjamin Franklin Parkway in Philadelphia at the Women's March
January 20 and heard recently deceased member Bertha Waters,
civil rights activist and advocate for equity honored at the moment
of silence. Pictured from left to right: Kate Esposito, Sharon Wallis,
Bob Steinfort, Betsy Lightbourn, Harry Thorn, and Cheryl Desmond.

Photo by Faith Steinfort