



ETHICAL VIEWS

October 2019 Vol. 134, No. 2 Newsletter of the Philadelphia Ethical Society



Sunday Platforms

Sunday, Oct. 6, 11:00 AM

The Uses of Humor

Hugh Taft-Morales, Leader,
Philadelphia Ethical Society



What are the ethical uses of humor? Humor is fun. It can provide important cathartic release of tension and bond groups together.

Humor can help us keep our perspective. But humor can also mock and degrade others. It can divide people and create an "in-group" and an "out-group." Hugh Taft-Morales explores the nature and abuses of humor.

Sunday, Oct. 13, 11:00 AM
Animal Rights, Human Security and Global Sustainability
Farah Siraj, Musician and Animal Rights Advocate

Farah Siraj, world renowned musician and animal rights advocate, will speak about the consequences of animal exploitation from an ethical, humanitarian and environmental standpoint, exploring the ways in which human exploitation of animals affects animals, humans, and our planet. She will also explore ways in which we can be part of the solution, and how we can extend our circle of compassion to nonhuman animals.

This event will also include a musical performance by Farah, combining animal rights and music.



Ambadress Farah Siraj balances a career that spans the United States, Europe and the Middle East. She has performed at some of the world's most prestigious platforms, including the United Nations, Nobel Prize Hall, World Economic Forum, The John F. Kennedy Center, Lincoln Center and MTV. For more info: farahsirajmusic@gmail.com

Sunday, Oct. 20, 11:00 AM
Urgency and Radicalism
Hugh Taft-Morales, Leader,
Philadelphia Ethical Society

How urgent are the crises we face? How radical should our responses be? What do different answers to these questions do to the cohesion

URGENCY AND RADICALISM

of communities? How should we react to extremism expressed by those who feel their very survival is threatened? Hugh Taft-Morales explores these questions through the historical lens of environmentalism and anti-racism, particularly focusing on radical environmental activists and the Black Panthers.

Oct. 27, 11:00 AM ***How to Think about Urban Density in a Changing City***

Inga Saffron Architectural Critic

Acclaimed Philadelphia Inquirer architectural critic since 1999, Inga Saffron will speak about the intersection between lively streets, affordability, equity and urban success in this city.



Photo: Library Company of Philadelphia

Inga Saffron is the architecture critic for the Philadelphia Inquirer and writes a weekly, Philadelphia-focused column on architecture, urban design and planning. Her work has been recognized with numerous awards, including the Pulitzer Prize for Criticism, the Vincent Scully Prize from the National Building Museum and a Loeb Fellowship from Harvard University's Graduate School of Design. For more info: isaffron@inquirer.com

NO SEEK program has been set up so far. If you are interested, please contact Nick Sanders

nick@phillyethics.org

LEADER'S COLUMN

THE LENS OF GRATITUDE

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

My opening talk this program season at the Ethical Society focused on gratitude, a sentiment that is all too fleeting in our lives. While I try to nurture it in myself, too often I fall into a “scarcity mindset” where I become preoccupied with what I don’t have. In my case – having the privilege of living a materially abundant life – what I feel that I don’t have enough of is time. The limits are clear, both regarding the number of hours in a day and the number of days in a lifetime. On both the mundane and existential level time is a most precious resource.

I wonder if this was what motivated one of my historical heroes, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, to write, “In normal life we hardly realize how much more we receive than we give, and life cannot be rich without such gratitude. It is so easy to overestimate the importance of our own achievements compared with what we owe to the help of others.” I wonder if his sense of what he owed to others was intensified due to his profound separation from them. You see, he wrote that phrase in a letter from prison where he spent his last days before being executed by the Nazis.

Bonhoeffer was a German pastor and founder of the Confessing Church who refused to stay silent about Nazi danger. After escaping to safety in the United States, he returned to Germany to comfort

those persecuted by Germany. He was imprisoned in Flossenbürg concentration camp only to be executed, hanged two weeks before his camp was liberated. The grace and dignity he exhibited in his life seemed to flow from a heart full of gratitude. What a gift he both received and shared in his life.

It’s a bit presumptuous even to consider comparing ourselves to such a person. But that is what we do with heroes, isn’t it? We are inspired by their ethical characteristics. Their moral commitment is ground on which we stand. They provide us with the strength to try to bring out the best of others and thus in ourselves.

While it is hardly sufficient, in this newsletter I want to express gratitude to the founders of Ethical Culture, Felix Adler and those who embraced his vision. By establishing a movement celebrating human goodness, Adler and others provided a non-theist alternative to religion that supports our yearning to live an ethical life. As with others who have died, however, they can no longer hear our “thank you.” Our expressions of gratitude can only be experienced by the living.

Let’s not wait until our final days to offer similar appreciation. Personally, I intend to try to see the world more continuously through the “lens of gratitude.” As my mother would tell me, each day is a gift, that’s why they call it the present. To my mother, and to all of you who support our community of moral inquiry and ethical responsibility, I offer my profound gratitude. Thank you for contributing to this noble quest for a better life for all.

POWER . . . At A Pivotal Point

by Kate Esposito

POWER (Philadelphians Organized to Witness Empower and Rebuild) was first organized in September 2011 and soon became one of the lead advocacy organizations in Philadelphia fighting to create a City of Opportunity That Works for All. With a strong moral voice emanating from many faith-based congregations, including the Ethical Society, we soon made our mark in helping win economic justice for workers at the airport, getting a fair funding formula for public schools established (but not YET fully funded) in PA, fighting for criminal justice reform, especially as evidenced in the non-partisan work done in the District Attorney campaign and raising the issue of health care in congressional districts outside of Philadelphia.

We were the lead organization in raising the wage for City employees and contract workers to \$15 by July 1, 2021. The work continues as we fight to fully fund our schools, end Stop and Frisk, demand that police treat Black and Brown communities with respect, and the criminal justice system is reformed. We are organizing against environmental racism and for the creation of green, sustainable jobs in communities that are ravaged by poverty.

We have grown in several counties throughout PA: Metro Philadelphia, Central PA and Lehigh Valley branches creating Communities of Opportunity That Work for All.

Now we are at a pivotal point. We face the challenge of this tremendous growth statewide and must reinvigorate organizing in Philadelphia, in older congregations and grow new members.

Continued on page 3

FROM PES MEMBERS

THE ROUGH EDGES OF CAPITALISM – Part II

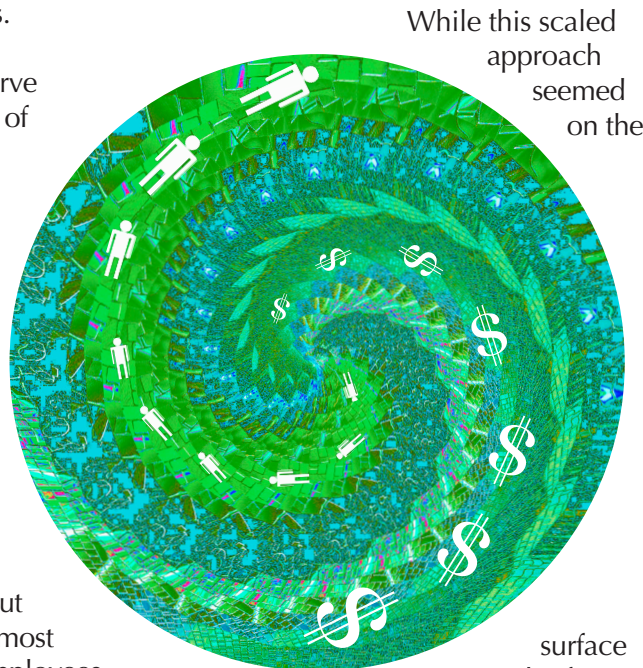
By Steve Gold

In the wake of the dot-com bust our business continued to struggle. Revenues were in free fall. Our once healthy balance sheet was now reflecting the liquidity problems we were facing. My options, limited by the circumstances described in Part 1 of this article, were either to lay off 25% of our workforce indefinitely or implement a wage roll back that would affect everyone but which would preserve their jobs.

A cut in pay would preserve jobs but increase the risk of losing those employees with essential and hard-to-replace skills. Of course, these also tended to be higher paid positions. We were a flat organization with no bloated hierarchy so scaling back on people or processes was never a practical idea. At the same time, it bothered me that the impact of a cut in pay would still be felt most among the lower paid employees who often had little or no savings and spent every paycheck on rent, food, and other essentials.

The pressure was on me to make a decision. (During those months the little bit of hair I still had turned gray although our daughter began driving at about the same time so I can't attribute the change entirely to business stress.) Actually, the immediate financial impact on my family of a decision to cut my compensation would be cushioned

somewhat by my wife's salary as a library director. It was the longer term consequences of personally guaranteeing our company's debt that was the cause of real concern. I decided to implement an across-the-board rollback in wages starting with totally suspending my own compensation and implementing a 30% cut in management and professional salaries. During this time – and before we imposed any reduction on our hourly-paid workers – we communicated openly and directly with all employees, explaining what was happening and why. Within a few pay periods of the initial rollback we had no alternative but to apply it to everyone else although at a lower rate of 10%.



While this scaled approach seemed on the

surface to be fair, it always troubled me ethically. That said, the aftermath suggested it was a better course for the business than a general layoff.

Through it all we lost one employee who quit in a fit of anger but everyone else stuck with us. I don't delude myself; I'm sure many may have been ready to jump ship had a better opportunity become available. But during the recession that ensued following the terrorist attacks on 9/11, few companies were hiring.

Within a year of implementing the rollback in payroll, business conditions stabilized enough to reinstate full pay and include a one-time "thanks-for-hanging-in-there" bonus. Although revenues had not fully recovered the business was once again on a sound footing.

The challenge that I describe – and my response to it – is hardly unique and leaves unanswered my ethical dilemma. Even when a tough business decision is necessary, how do you balance the differing consequences of your actions on the employees, all of whom are critical to the success of the business?

Continued from page 2

POWER . . . At A Pivotal Point

POWER leadership is implementing the 2019-2020 Reflection and Renewal Process that will help guide the next several years of our work together. Two "100+ Leader Gatherings" were held for clergy and lay leaders from across the region to examine where we've been, who we are and where we want to go.

How do we bring leaders together from all the branches and affirm shared values, as we decide how best to exercise power at the state level, educate and excite folks about the importance of being an explicitly anti-racist organization, create a plan for soliciting input from our congregations/communities on the big questions that face our organization and how decisions will be made using that input?

This is necessary work to build Dr. King's Beloved Community. Stay tuned as we will be coming to you with information from this process and asking. . . how POWERful are you?



ANNOUNCEMENTS

All events in PES building unless otherwise noted

Sunday, Oct. 6, 3:00pm Music for Good: "Transformations"

Award-winning classical



guitarist Aaron Larget-Caplan makes his Philadelphia debut with "Transformations," a solo program exploring the many ways in

which music transforms listeners. "Transformations" explores music inspired by myths, dance, paintings, and contemporary lullabies. This concert is the first in a new Philadelphia Ethical Society series, "Music for Good." 20% of all ticket sales support a charity of the artist's choice, and Aaron has chosen: HIAS – the world's oldest refugee agency providing services to all refugees in need of assistance, regardless of their national, ethnic, or religious background.

Sunday, Oct. 6, 7:00pm Intro to Ethical Humanism

This introduction to Ethical Humanism will focus some philosophical elements of our unique alternative to traditional religion, though there will be time for Q&A about our history and the society today. Open to all. Refreshments

served. RSVP to LeaderHugh@phillyethics.com but you can also just show up!

Monday Oct. 7, 7:00-9:00pm Greater Philadelphia Thinking Society: Planning Our Lives

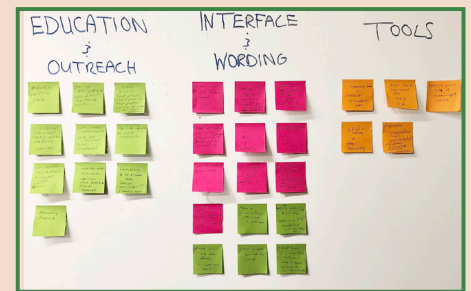
Elaine Lindy and Hugh Taft-Morales offer participants an opportunity to add some intentionality to their lives. Gather for this group thinking and planning event about planning forward steps regarding career, family, friends, finance, or health goals. Overcome the inertia that keeps us from considering where we want to be five years from now. Free and open to all. More information: <https://www.meetup.com/thinkingsociety/events/264276210/>



this work intended to help us better appreciate our history as a nation. The October discussion will focus on "Part Two: The People (1800-1865)." Free and open to the public. If you read the book, come help lead the discussion. If you didn't read the book, you can still attend, learn, and participate.

Monday, Oct.21, 7:00pm Responding to Our Climate Emergency: Community Brainstorming

What should our response be to science experts declaring that our climate is

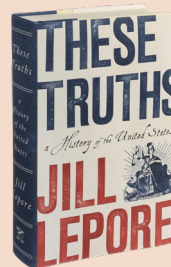


changing at an accelerated rate? While recycling and driving less are actions we can take as individuals, some believe that only radical systemic responses are worth considering. Around what systemic solutions should people of many backgrounds gather in order to foster substantive change?

This meeting builds upon Hugh Taft-Morales's

Tuesday, Oct. 8, 10, 7:00pm Book discussion of Chapters 5-8 of *These Truths: A History of the United States* by Jill Lepore.

Hugh Taft-Morales leads the second of four explorations of



Continued on page 5

ANNOUNCEMENTS continued

Sunday talks, "Racism, Peace, and Climate Justice" (9/22) and "Urgency and Radicalism" (10/20). POWER and Earth Quaker Action Team members have been invited to attend. We'll also have a report from the Sept. 18 POWER event at Arch Street Methodist Church, You can't talk about climate without talking about race. Come and join this important conversation. Begin crafting action plans for you and your communities!

**Thursday, Oct. 27, 2019
2:00pm Think Ethics –
Thoughtful conversations
about philosophy**

Join Alex Gutierrez, a senior at Haverford College majoring in philosophy, for three fall conversations. The series begins on Sunday, Oct. 27, at 2:00PM. Art and Ethics will be discussed. The group will address questions such as: What is the proper role of art in human life? How has art been used/viewed throughout history? What is the relationship between art and ethics? How is art used/viewed/displayed to this day? If art can influence people, what is the ethical way to use art?

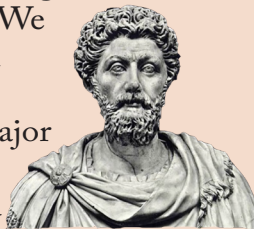
THE ARTS ETHICS

Other fall discussions are:
Sunday, Nov. 24, 2:00pm –
Social Media and Society

Sunday, December 22, 2:00pm
*Rethinking Communism: Marx
vs. Stalin*
Free and open to the public.

**Sunday, Oct. 27, 4:00pm
Philadelphia Stoics
discussion - Stoic Reading**

The resurgence of interest in Stoicism has prompted the publication of numerous books explaining the philosophy. We will discuss a reading from one of the major texts about Stoicism and consider how



we might apply the principles in our life. For details about the reading, please see the October 27 meeting announcement here: <https://www.meetup.com/Philadelphia-Stoics/>

FROM THE EDITOR FRAYED CONNECTIONS by Henry Pashkow

When I worked at the shelter I saw many homeless men rotating through the shelter system and back to the street. They came from untenable living situations and broken families. They were poorly educated men with limited work experience. Quite often they went AWOL before we had much of a chance to work with them.

Once they went AWOL, we stripped their beds and remade them for the next resident. I cut the lock on their lockers with a bolt cutter and stuffed their belongings in black heavy gauge trash bags and tagged and dated them and brought them up to the storage room. We kept them for a month or longer. There was only so much room in the storage room and once full we had to toss out the bags that had been in there the longest. They rarely returned to claim what belonged to them.

Occasionally I looked through what I had to throw away hoping to find a clue to what they deemed unworthy of keeping. Sometimes there were some mementos and occasionally a picture. There were a few baby pictures and a picture of some older people, probably family members.

Family and history had once bound these people together. Time and circumstance had shredded the connection. In one bag there were a few sheets of paper with some writing on them. I folded those up and tagged them with the man's name and put them in my desk drawer. I tried to read what had been written but much of it was illegible.

I kept these things hoping that someone would return for them. I refused to believe that those frayed connections were irremediable.

**From the PES
Ending Racism Task Force:**

ACTING OUT MICRO-AGGRESSION

submitted by John Marshall

PES member John Marshall writes about the well-attended event *Fragile Encounters*, when members of the ERTF (Ending Racism Task Force), inspired by Robin DiAngelo's book *White Fragility*, acted out real life scenarios of micro-aggressions illustrating implicit racial bias against people of color. John explains: white people are averse to being faced with examples of their racist behavior. The fact that it may be unintentional provides exoneration from facing the hurtful effects of this behavior. To illustrate and encourage discussion, several ERTF members presented three role-plays:



Scene 1. A white female patient and her sister-in-law arrive at a doctor's office for a first-time appointment. The patient acts surprised when they are introduced to a young black female

doctor. The patient starts quizzing the doctor about her qualifications. The doctor responds to the increasing intrusive questions in a professional manner. Afterwards, the sister-in-law confronts the patient about her behavior toward the doctor. The patient responds defensively by saying that she would have asked the same questions of any doctor, regardless of race because she is entitled to the best possible care.

Scene 2. During a discussion between an older white man and a younger black man, the white man displays black vernacular and an interest in outdated hip hop music. Also present is another white man. Despite uneasy non-verbal reactions

from the others, he fails to pick up on them and tone down his act. When the other white man later confronts him about this micro-aggression, he denies it by citing his knowledge of black culture. When called out on this, he becomes extremely defensive, feeling betrayed by his white friend, and angrily exits.

Scene 3. A black man is sitting alone at a restaurant table. A white waitress asks to take his order. The customer explains that he wants to wait until his friend arrives. A while later, the waitress impatiently asks again for his order. He says that his friend

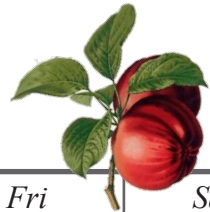
will be arriving soon. Then he asks to use the restroom. The waitress explodes, saying that the policy is to either

order something or leave. Bystanders say that there is no such policy, because they know that white people are not so treated. The black man agrees to that and stands up. The waitress exclaims that he is threatening her and calls the police. She cries and is comforted by customers.





OCTOBER 2019



Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
		1	2 PES MEETING: 6:30 PM Education Committee	3	4	5
6 11:00 AM <i>The Uses of Humor</i> Hugh Taft-Morales 3:00 PM Music for Good 7:00 PM: <i>Intro to Ethical Humanism</i>	7 7:00 PM Greater Phila Thinking Society Planning Our Lives Led by Hugh Taft-Morales, Elaine Lindy	8 7:00 PM Book Discussion <i>These Truths: A History of the U.S., Chapters 5-8</i> led by Hugh Taft-Morales	9 PES MEETINGS: 5:30 PM Finance Committee 6:30 PM Ethical Action Committee	10	11	12
13 11:00 AM <i>Animal Rights, Human Security and Global Sustainability</i>	14	15	16 PES MEETING: 6:30 PM PES Board of Trustees	17	18	19
20 9:30 AM: End Racism TF 11:00 AM <i>Urgency and Radicalism</i> Hugh Taft-Morales	21 7:00 PM Responding to Our Climate Emergency: Community Brainstorming	22	23 PES MEETINGS: 5:30 PM Building Committee 6:30 PM Camp Linden Committee	24 7:00 PM Amnesty International Meeting amnestyeastpa.org	25	26
27 11:00 AM <i>How to Think about Urban Density in a Changing City</i> 2:00 PM Think Ethics 4:00 -5:30 PM Philadelphia Stoics Stoic Reading	28	29	30	31		



Charlie McGeehan and Ismael Jimenez, who spoke about "Educating for a Just Society," at September 1st platform.

OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS

- 5 Jeffrey Dubb
- 10 Geoff Baker
- 12 Leonard Weeks
- 14 Doris Leicher

QUOTABLE

"The Earth is a 'solar-powered jukebox.'"

**- Gordon Hempton
(founder of the
One Square Inch of
Silence Foundation)**



SUNDAY SERVICES

11:00 A.M.

Ethical Views is published monthly
except July and August.

Executive Editor, Henry Pashkow
Copy Editor, Betsy Lightbourn
Web Master, Copy Editor, Nick Sanders
Layout, Celeste Hardester
Production, Cheryl Desmond

Philadelphia Ethical Society
1906 South Rittenhouse Square
Philadelphia, PA 19103

Hugh Taft-Morales, Leader
PES Board of Trustees
Bob Bueding, President
Betsy Lightbourn, Vice President
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Kate Esposito
Susan O'Connell
Michael Black-Smith
Ron Coburn
Drew Snyder
(215) 735 - 3456
office@phillyethics.org
www.phillyethics.org

Coffee Hour Coordinators



Oct. 6 - Kate Esposito
Last names: A-E
Oct. 13 - Ken Greiff
Last names: F-K
Oct. 20 - Garry O'Rourke
Last names: L-Q
Oct. 27 - 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.

Flowers Coordinated by Sally Redlener



Oct. 6 - from Nick Sanders
"Celebrating twenty years of sharing
life with my dear wife Molly"
Oct. 13 - from Harry Thorn
"Enjoying Fall colors during walks in
Penny Park Creek."

Oct. 20 - from Julie Van Noord
"With gratitude to the members of
the Philadelphia Ethical Society"

Oct. 27 - from Vince Russo
"Dedicated to the Philadelphia
Ethical Society"

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

Wider Community during October at the Philadelphia Ethical Society

- **The Alchemy of Spiritual Creativity: How to Enter Into and Sustain a State of Flow**
Saturday October 5th, 1-5 pm (doors 12.30).

*A workshop with the Conscious Performers Collective. All proceeds go to CPC's non-profit work.
Info and tickets at [eventbrite](https://www.eventbrite.com)*

- **Dominic Cheli, Pianist, presented by Morning Musicales, to benefit the Philadelphia Orchestra**
Thursday, October 10, 11 am – 12:30 pm

Tickets available at the door. Info and tickets online, or \$20 at the door.
<https://philorchvolunteers.org/event/morning-musicale-dominic-cheli/>

- **Birthing a Bill in PA: From Conception to Legislation, Thursday, October 17, 5:30 to 7:00 pm**
What's our Role as Ordinary Citizens? This interactive forum will guide you through the legislative process
by following the passage of a recently passed law. Learn how Harrisburg works from the perspective of our
panelists, a State Representative, a State Senator and an expert on understanding the structure of legislature
and advocacy issues. More info at protectelectphilly.com

<https://www.protectelectphilly.com/event-info/birthing-a-bill-in-pa-from-conception-to-legislation-1>

- **The Journey of Self-transformation: An exchange with Dr. Ravi Ravindra**
Friday, October 25, 8:00 pm

A presentation followed by questions, from the teachings of Christ; Indian
spiritual traditions, especially the Bhagavad Gita; and of Gurdjieff.

www.ravindra.ca