



ETHICAL VIEWS



September 2020 Vol. 135, No. 1 Newsletter of the Philadelphia Ethical Society

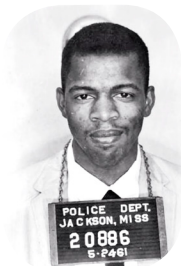
SUNDAY PLATFORMS

In honor of the Women's Right to Vote Centennial this 2020, September's guest speakers will speak to both the historic movement that began in Seneca Falls in the fight for women's right to vote led by Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and the accomplishments of Philadelphia's Black women who expanded what equality means in everyday life. For details on each platform, read more on page three.

– Betsy Lightbourn,
Education Committee Chair

Sunday, September 6, 11:00AM
Platform Address

The Joy and Perseverance of John Lewis, Hugh Taft-Morales, Leader,
Philadelphia Ethical Society

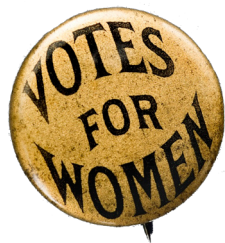


Sunday, September 13, 11:00AM
Philadelphia's Black Women Leaders and the Ethic of Equality, Allener M. Baker-Rogers and Fasaha Traylor, authors of *They Carried Us*

Sunday, September 20, 11:00AM

Environmental Info Wars and Michael Moore

Hugh Taft-Morales, Leader,
Philadelphia Ethical Society



Sunday, September 27, 11:00AM

A Visit from Susan B. Anthony (Performance)
Marjorie Goldman, Actor

Please turn to page 3 for platform descriptions.

LEADER'S COLUMN

Taking the Long View



As I return to a new season at PES, I am glad that I am returning in the midst of a long-range planning process. We've tried this a couple of times during my tenure without success. Taking the "long view," however, is important for institutions and individuals alike. Thanks to a generous offer from Anne Marie Gold, PES is working to bring into focus our communal "long view."

One of the things I most appreciate about my usual trips to the north shore of the St. Lawrence River each summer are the vistas from the bluffs that overlook the seaway. My eyes sweep the horizon of water and see the hills 12 miles across on the opposite shore. The physical long view brings me both deep relaxation and a sense of timelessness. The long view of my gaze helps me contemplate where I've been and where I am going. It helps me get a long view of time.

Continued on page 5

EDITOR'S NOTE

As we approach our new season, you will see a new look to our newsletter. We must limit it eight pages, but content will not suffer. We'll continue to feature articles of interest written by our very own people, dedicated to the beliefs we cherish. The common thread running through it is the commitment that keeps us together, fighting the good fight.

– Henry Pashkow

Please join our online events at the scheduled times by visiting tiny.cc/phillyethics

A SON PAYS HOMAGE TO HIS FATHER – PART I

**By Gaston Cummings,
as told to Sally Redlener and Henry Pashkow**

**JIM CUMMINGS
JUNE 14, 1920-JULY 29, 2020**

My father, Jim Cummings, was born in the island nation of Trinidad and Tobago, a British colony, on June 14, 1920. He was the second of six children born to Edwin Cummings and Irene Gabriel. The family was poor. Dad's father,



Edwin, was a day laborer who struggled constantly to support a growing family. Financial necessity led him to seek work in Venezuela, seven miles away by boat. Just getting there and then working there illegally was dangerous. Illegal workers could be imprisoned for as long as five years, if caught.

Before leaving Trinidad, Edwin and his wife Irene, forced by their indigent circumstances, placed their five younger children in the Belmont Orphanage, a Catholic orphanage, in Trinidad. Elsie, the oldest child, lived at home. Dad's mother, Irene, visited him and his younger brothers weekly at the orphanage. That was no easy trek. Getting from one place to another was not as simple as now. But the nuns at Belmont, though strict, were devoted to education. They instilled in Dad a lifelong respect for education and a love of learning.

Then a strange and most curious event occurred while Dad and his brothers were celebrating a Saint's Holy Day in the village, under the nuns' supervision. He saw his father, large as life. His mother had said he had died in Venezuela. She insisted upon it. But there he was, in the flesh. His mother refused to believe him, and refused to talk further about it.

This had to be resolved. So in the middle of the following week, the nuns gathered Dad and his brothers together and brought them all to a meeting area. And there indeed was his father. At subsequent

visits, his father recounted his recent experience to his boys, and asked about his wife, who was now living in another part of Trinidad with her lover. His father decided to go there and check things out. Navigating the antiquated public transportation system to that part of the island was difficult, and expensive. But his father went there, mostly by foot. And they talked, but the family did not reunite. His father found work, but died tragically, under unknown circumstances. It's not easy to adjust to trauma like that.

Please allow me to digress and talk about racism, as it was in a different place, a different era, a different world. Dad did talk about it on occasion, though not often. It was so ingrained into colonial society that it was often dismissed or taken as just how things were. It was so built into the very sinews of the muscle and bone of the people who lived there, that the way they walked around was no more than a snapshot of what was going on within them, though they might not have been conscious of it. And the determining factor was skin color. The lighter you were, the closer you were to the existing white power structure. Dad and his family were dark.

Now his father was dead, and his mother gone. Dad wanted a religious burial for his father at the Catholic cemetery, where the family had a plot. But the priests had their own idea as to which services were to be offered, to whom and at which price. And Dad and his family, perennially hard pressed for money, had no choice but the cheapest, an abbreviated service at the back, near the entrance to the building. This left a bad taste in his mouth, which eventually led to his disenchantment with the church.

The thread of this story will be continued in the next issue of this newsletter.

**Above: Jim Cummings celebrating his 99th birthday in 2019 with his son Gaston to his left.
Below: Jim's daughters Maureen Cummings-Spickler on his right and Elizabeth Cummings on his left.**

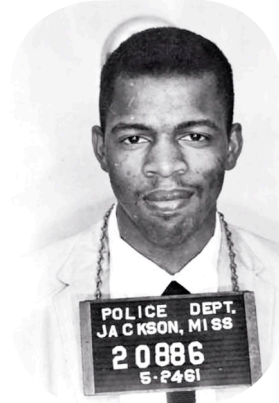


SUNDAY PLATFORM DESCRIPTIONS

Sunday, September 6, 11:00AM

The Joy and Perseverance of John Lewis, Hugh Taft-Morales, Leader, Philadelphia Ethical Society

Ten days before he died, Rep. John Lewis stood at Black Lives Matter Plaza opposite the White House looking as determined as he did at 23 years old speaking at the March on Washington. All his life his gentle persona belied his strength, courage, and resiliency. Even when a storm threatened to tear his aunt's home from the earth, John Lewis "walked with the wind," hand-in-hand with 14 other children to hold down each corner when it began to lift. As the whirlwind of current events threaten to tear apart our foundation, let us remember some lessons taught by someone Barack Obama eulogized as "a man of pure joy and unbreakable perseverance."



Sunday, September 13, 11:00AM

Philadelphia's Black Women Leaders and the Ethic of Equality, Allener M. Baker-Rogers and Fasaha T aylor, authors of They Carried Us

Americans believe our Declaration of Independence and Constitution are rooted in the idea of equality. But from 1619 to the current day, the United States never embraced an ethic of equality: it fell to those who were excluded from those documents' ideals to define what equality means in everyday life.



The women of *They Carried Us* were driven by that ethic, aiming to expand those who were "equal." Whether surmounting the obstacles of race, gender or both, their practice of equality changed the sectors in which they worked and the city at large. Website: www.theycarriedus.org

Sunday, September 20, 11:00AM

Environmental Info Wars and Michael Moore Hugh Taft-Morales, Leader, Philadelphia Ethical Society

Michael Moore has a well-earned reputation for rocking the boat – for challenging the NRA, the health care industry, General Motors, and capitalism in general. He, along with director Jeff Gibbs outraged many progressives when he criticized the environmental movement in his 2019 documentary, *Planet of the Humans*. Given the urgency of environmental stewardship, Hugh Taft-Morales investigates this controversy. Did Moore do a public service by creating this work, or did the film set environmentalism back through its claim that environmental groups were in the pocket of financiers from corporate America?



Sunday, September 27, 11:00AM

A Visit from Susan B. Anthony (Performance) Marjorie Goldman, Actor

Susan B. Anthony takes you back to 1883, when the struggle for woman suffrage was well underway. Miss Anthony will share some details about her life and upbringing, but will also do her best to convince you to join her in the cause of equal rights for all. A highlight of the presentation is the story of her arrest, trial and conviction for the alleged crime of voting in 1872. There will be ample time for questions and answers after her presentation. Website: www.mwgoldman.com.



THE MAIL THE COUNT THE VOTE

**From Ending Racism Task Force
by Kate Esposito**

There are many attacks in this war on democracy that especially take aim at people of color. The insidious nature of these assaults has terrible implications, as they make the ongoing task of creating a more perfect union for all of us difficult and onerous.

First, let's look at voting. Congressman John Lewis said, "The vote is the most powerful nonviolent tool we have." He referred to Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act as its "heart and soul." Nullified by the Supreme Court in 2013, it had mandated that any change in voting practices would have to undergo pre-clearance by the U.S. Attorney General or the U.S. District Court in D.C. in nine states, seven in the deep South, and parts of seven others. This cancellation cleared the way for pernicious voter suppression efforts like Voter ID laws, closing polling places in black, brown and college communities, purging voter rolls, challenging eligibility and shortening early voting periods.

Chief Justice John Roberts wrote that the formula was "based on decades-old data and eradicated practices." While in her dissent, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg compared the decision to getting rid of pre-clearance to "throwing away your umbrella in a rainstorm because you are not getting wet."

The latest effort to de-legitimize voting by mail by the Trump Administration, especially during a pandemic, is further proof that voter suppression is alive and well. His enabler, Postmaster General appointee, Louis DeJoy, is a Trump supporter and campaign contributor.

In a July 31 *USA Today* article Mark Dimondstein, president of the American Postal Workers Union,

said DeJoy had "instituted policies over the last week or two that have reduced the amount of hours of work the employees are performing, reduced the hours of many retail operations, and changed transportation schedules so that if a truck is not full, it doesn't go." He added that the changes in policy are directly responsible for unprecedented delays.

He added that under normal circumstances, mail-in voting is an air-tight system, despite Trump's recent attacks on it.

Trump is also threatening to issue an Executive Order to curtail voting by mail. According to an April 28th article in *The Hill*, there have been only one hundred forty-three cases of fraud using mailed ballots over the last 20 years.

Lastly there's the Census.

The Washington Post reported on August 9th that Census advocates warn that the Trump

administration's decision to end the constitutionally mandated count a month earlier than planned will result in a dramatic undercount of Black and Latino communities across the country, which could have grave effects on federal funding and political representation in their neighborhoods. They point in particular

to alarmingly low response rates in places such as the Rio Grande Valley in Texas and the Bronx in New York.

These diabolical efforts to suppress the vote is a closed-loop attempt, not even poorly disguised during a pandemic, to fulfill Trump's self-serving prophecy of a rigged election that he hopes will work to his advantage and democracy's demise. The census undercount will hurt communities that are not part of his base, but are in great need of economic justice and political representation.

Once again, people of color are at risk of being disenfranchised and cheated.

Our postcard writing campaign is now winding down, but there will be an opportunity to participate by phone bank. Stay tuned!



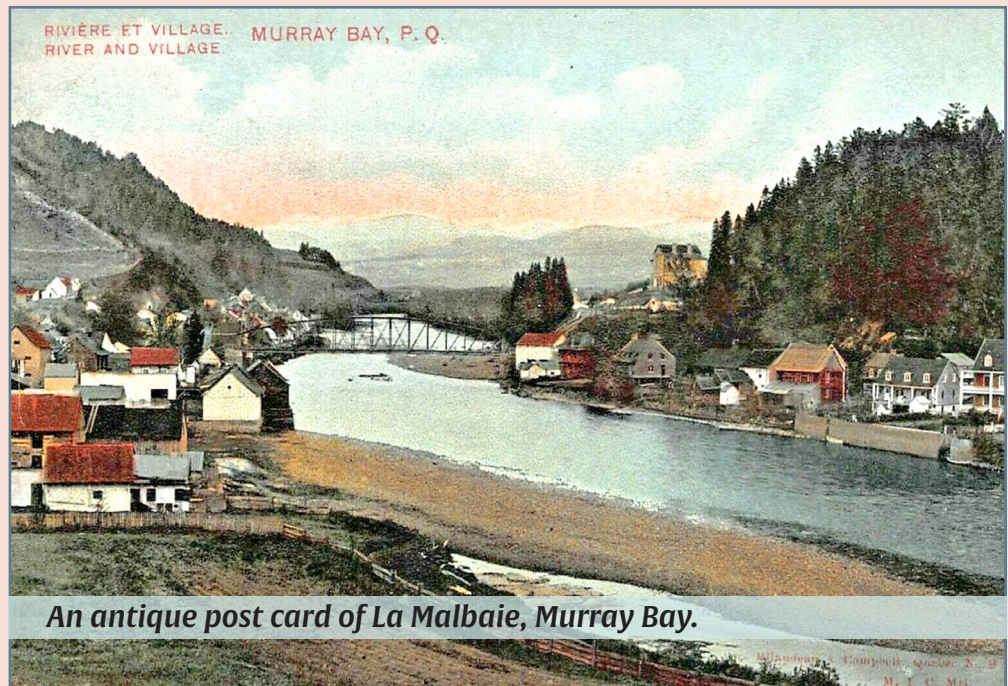
LEADER'S COLUMN Taking the Long View

My usual time away invites looking backwards to memories of 60 years that come alive in the sparkling of the river. It's not lost on me that the official motto of Quebec is "Je me souviens" (I remember.) Printed on their license plates, the motto becomes a mantra as I drive north toward this magical region I fell in love with as a child called Charlevoix. But I also have used time up in Quebec to look ahead to what programs and projects I want to take up in the fall. How can I grow more fully into my role as humanist clergy?

The specific town I settle in is called "Murray Bay" by some summer visitors, though I prefer La Malbaie, as year-long residents call it. Separated from it by the pandemic this summer, I've tried to conjure up the spiritual energy this place gives me. I imagine the perspective that I gain there. My great grandfather was right when he said over a century ago, "Murray Bay is a state of mind."

For me, the state of mind is full of the constantly changing color of the river and sky. In it echoes the sound of buoys and sea gulls and far-off train whistles. It's a state of mind full of family and friends and hikes on rocky beaches or hillside pastures. These memories ground me, center me, and inspire me to face the future with joy.

In a way, the Ethical Society is exploring the same paradox. The long-range planning involves sharing what we care most about in our community. Our memories of good works and warm feelings of the past help sharpen our focus on our future. This summer numerous one-on-one and small group conversations inevitably touch on where we've been as a community, where we are, and where we want to go. Our 135 years of history in Philadelphia inform our collective conversation. Though this year we cannot ask advice from Jim Cummings, or Bertha Waters, or Richard Kiniry, we can bring them to our mind to help guide us forward.



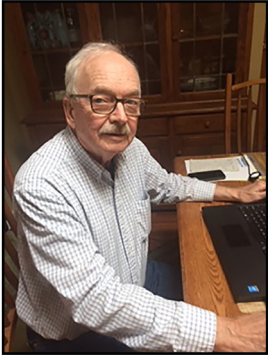
Why is it so important to bring the past into the present to create the future? I believe it is because the long view keeps things in perspective. It reminds us that we've met challenges in the past. We've struggled through the hard work of building ethical community and come out strong. Hopefully this long view will bring us all the inspiration to build a brighter future.

The pandemic has deprived us all of things that inspire us. We all need to find new ways to nurture new ideas and new energy to help us move forward. Our communal success will depend, in large part, on how well each of us brings to our mind's eye "the long view." We can read on our website about our mission - about being "a humanist congregation dedicated to honoring the worth and dignity of every human being, cultivating character, nurturing ethical relationships and caring networks, building community capacity and social justice." This important and noble mission will best be served if we remember our long and noble history and our efforts to make the world a better place. We will fulfill this mission best if, somehow, we can bring to our head and hearts "the long view."

Hugh Taft-Morales,
Leader, Philadelphia Ethical Society

AMERICAN ETHICAL UNION ASSEMBLY

by PES Member John McCormick



This year the AEU held its 105th Assembly virtually for the first time. Originally it was to have been held in conjunction with the World Humanist Congress in Miami. When this became impossible due to the pandemic, planning quickly shifted to having a Zoom meeting.

The first sessions began in early July and were focused on issues that required delegates to approve the budget, bylaws changes, resolutions and a proposal for the 2021 Assembly. There were also sessions to meet the Board candidates. These were followed by educational sessions devoted to the “zoom boom”, racial trauma, rooting out racism and community building.

A few highlights will be mentioned, but for further details please go to the AEU website, aeu.org. For PES members, the most important highlight was the election of our devoted member Linda Richardson to a full 3 year term on the AEU Board. A bylaws change that might be of general interest eliminated the categories of “circle” and “fellowship.” We now refer to all of our member groups as “societies.” A resolution supporting “Death with Dignity” urges each society to support related legislation in their own state as appropriate. The “Black Lives Matter to the AEU” resolution calls for reaffirmation of the 5 AEU resolutions passed since 2015 concerning racial justice, mass incarceration, systemic racism, reparations, environmental racism and voter suppression.

In another important decision, the 106th Assembly in 2021 will again be virtual. Given the success of the 105th Assembly, you can expect the 2021 Assembly to be a rewarding experience, easy to attend and not to be missed.

Here is the link for the resolution: <https://aeu.org/resource/2020-supporting-death-with-dignity/>

Here's the link to the BLM statement: <https://aeu.org/resource/black-lives-matter-to-aeu/>



*Betsy and Ben Franklin reach across
time and space*



Over the summer, Aijee Cello's beautiful music reverberated through Rittenhouse Square making queuing for vegetables a pleasurable experience. Aijee says that art and music are the universal languages that everyone can understand and communicate.



UPCOMING EVENTS

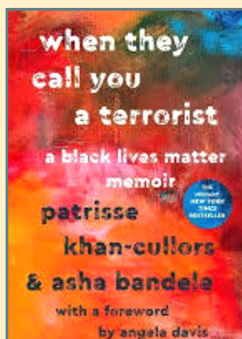
ALL EVENTS ARE VIA ZOOM.COM
UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED

Wednesday, September 9, 1230PM: Lunch with Hugh As we ease back into our program season, let's bring Philly and Baltimore Ethical Societies together for one more "Lunch with Hugh," a casual conversation with Hugh about life, the past summer, and the future. Get your lunch and Zoom in.



Book discussion – Thursday, September 24 6:00-7:15PM and Saturday, September 26, 9:45-11:00AM. When they Call you a Terrorist

Patrisse Kahn-Cullors – a book discussion with Hugh Taft-Morales Join me for a discussion of the book that had the greatest impact for me this summer, Patrisse Cullors-Kahn's *When they Call you a Terrorist*. Although I've heard her stories before, the casual grace of the writing made crystal clear the urgency of anti-racism work.



PEACE DAY PHILLY EVENTS

September 2020 marks 10 years for Peace Day Philly, which has included over 170 programs related to personal, local and global peace. The Philadelphia Ethical Society has been critical to PDP's growth and sustainment over the years, and the PDP core team is very grateful. Join us at some of these virtual events that will be offered September 15-21.

For a full list of events, updated regularly, go to: <http://www.peacedayphilly.org/events>. Please share with your networks!

Wednesday, 9/16, 5:00-6:30pm: Immigrant Youth and Their Right to Peace and Security,

Panel discussion, including Flores Exhibits;

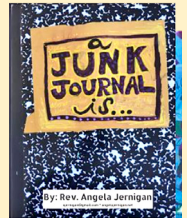
offered by Penn's School of Social Policy & Practice: <https://bit.ly/ontheborderpeace>

Wednesday, 9/16, 6:30-8:30pm: Democracy Circle, The Rising Cost of Systemic Racism, by the Peace Center: <https://bit.ly/democracycastle>



Thursday, 9/17, 5:00-7:00pm: Interfaith Ally Workshop, offered in collaboration with Interfaith Philadelphia: <https://bit.ly/InterfaithAlly>

Saturday, 9/19, 3:30-5:00pm: Junk Journaling for Peace, In community with others helps us to connect authentically and compassionately with people across ages and other lines of difference. <https://bit.ly/junkjournaling>



Sunday, 9/20, 7:00-8:30pm: Loving-Kindness Meditation, offered by the Chenrezig Tibetan Buddhist Center of Philadelphia: <https://bit.ly/loving-kindnessMeditation>

Monday, 9/21, 5:00-6:30pm: South Sudanese Journeys: The Long Road to a New Home, offered in collaboration with the Sawa Sawa Network: <https://bit.ly/SSudanRefugees>



Monday, 9/21, 7:00-8:30pm: Using A Moment to Fuel A Movement: Individual and Collective Action through Pandemics, Protests & Politics: <https://bit.ly/MomentToMovementPeaceDay>

THE FLORES EXHIBITS



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
Michael Black-Smith, Vice President
Vincent Russo, Treasurer
John Marshall, Secretary
Susan O'Connell
Ron Coburn
Drew Snyder
(215) 735 - 3456
office@phillyethics.org
www.phillyethics.org

PHILADELPHIA ETHICAL SOCIETY COMMITTEES

Our Society is sustained by all of its volunteers who serve on the many committees that fulfill our purpose and guide our decisions. The following generous members serve as chairs.

Ethical Action Committee
Nick Sanders. Next Meeting
Mon. Sept 21, 3:30 - 5PM

End Racism Task Force
Sylvia Metzler. Next
Meeting Sat. Sept 26 11AM -
12PM

Finance Committee
Vincent Russo. Next
Meeting Wed. Sept. 9 5PM

Communication Committee
Drew Snyder. TBD

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

Building Committee
Michael Black-Smith. Next
Meeting Wed. Sept. 23
2PM-3PM

Education Committee
Betsy Lightbourn

Camp Linden
Jeffrey Dubb

September Birthdays

11 David McDevitt
14 Tom Carroll
18 Susan O'Connell

CLOSING WORDS from Bob Bueding, President



Remember Queen Elizabeth's "annus horribilis" (terrible year)? Now her long-lost colony has one of its own. 2020 will go down in the record books as a nearly perfect storm. And we still don't know what November 3 will bring.

Our world as we knew it changed drastically in mid March. We couldn't come together, except virtually. Computers gave us that option, but nothing can replace being together in person. Given today's circumstances, I'm not sure when in-person gatherings will be possible again.

We've had to make many

adjustments to how we live our lives. Some of those adjustments involve our PES home on Rittenhouse Square. Cheryl Desmond, our administrator, has been working from home and spending one day per week in the office. She was able to navigate troubled waters to obtain a PPP grant from the government, which has helped us immensely. Because most of our rentals have dried up, our cash flow has become rather strained, so we thank many of our loyal members for accelerating their pledges and even sending additional gifts.

Now that we are moving into our fall season, we are planning many amazing platforms. We will continue to produce

timely offerings which will not disappoint. We owe a vote of thanks to our various committees which continue to work behind the scenes. Being a virtual society requires lots of coordination.

So please, stay in touch. Call someone you've not spoken with in a while. We are mostly an aging population. I'm concerned about the health of our members and guests. We need our relationships now more than ever. We have some challenging decisions to make, the most difficult being when we'll be able to get together again under one roof. I'm confident as time moves on that we'll come out of this stronger than before. I'd love to hear from you.

bbueding@phillyethics.org