



ETHICAL VIEWS



November 2020 Vol. 135, No. 3 Newsletter of the Philadelphia Ethical Society

Remember that clocks fall back on Sunday, November 1, and note that two platforms have early start times.

During COVID-19, all platforms are held on Zoom and may be accessed by going to www.tiny.cc/phillyethics

SUNDAY PLATFORMS

Please turn to page 3 for platform descriptions.

Sunday, November 1, 10:30AM

Sacred Democracy, hosted by the Baltimore Ethical Society, Hugh Taft-Morales, Leader, Philadelphia Ethical Society

Sunday, November 8, 11:00AM

2020 in Historical Context: Election and Beyond, Anne Berg, Assistant Professor of History, University of Pennsylvania

Sunday, November 15, 11:00AM

Defund the Police, AEU-wide platform hosted by RYSEC, Alex S. Vitale, Professor of Sociology, Brooklyn College, and Visiting Professor at London Southbank University

Sunday, November 22, 11:00AM

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

Sunday, November 29, 10:30AM

Ethical Culture, Psychotherapy, and My Grandmother the Spy, hosted by the Baltimore Ethical Society, Hugh Taft-Morales, Leader, PES

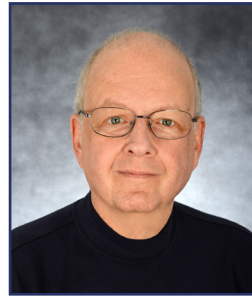
Preview of December Platform

Sunday, December 6, 11:00AM

Women and Literature, Hugh Taft-Morales, Leader, Philadelphia Ethical Society

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Living in Interesting Times



On November 1st, I will reach my 75th birthday, and what a year it's been. The past seven months have been unlike any other in my lifetime. The biggest challenge has been the inability to socialize with friends and family. One of the things I've truly enjoyed has

been my involvement with others in the Ethical Society. Since I joined almost ten years ago, I've made so many new friends, and I've enjoyed working with like-minded people to help make our world a better place for all.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Due to circumstances beyond our control, our Jim Cummings project is now on hold. We have enjoyed reading about Jim's life story, and hope to continue the series sometime in the future.

For more about this newsletter and what we're hoping for in the future, please refer to the Editor's Desk article on page 6.

Philadelphia Ethical Society welcomes the public to attend our platforms and events listed on page 7.

SUNDAY PLATFORM DESCRIPTIONS

Sunday, November 1, 10:30AM

***Sacred Democracy*, hosted by the Baltimore Ethical Society, Hugh Taft-Morales, Leader, PES**

For many Ethical Humanists, the collective effort to assure that our system of government honors the worth of every person is as close as we get to a “sacred” quest. In this context, the term holds only secular meaning indicating veneration of the democratic process. William Mackintire Salter, who served as Leader at Ethical Societies in Chicago and Philadelphia a century ago, saw democracy as sacred only when it treats every individual as precious and of inherent worth. On the brink of our election, with democracy being challenged by apathy, economic inequality, racial injustice, and voter repression, what does it mean to say that our form of government is sacred?



Sunday, November 8, 11:00AM

***2020 in Historical Context: Election and Beyond*, Anne Berg, Assistant Professor of History, University of Pennsylvania**

Anne Berg will reflect on some of the parallels and differences between late Weimar Germany and the current election season in 2020 America. Since the outcome of the election may still be inconclusive when she speaks, events and developments yet to unfold will determine the precise nature of the argument presented. Regardless of the outcome, Berg will speak about how crisis rhetoric, economic hardship, political polarization, street clashes, conspiratorial thinking, and distrust in democratic institutions, combined in the politics of late Weimar Germany to result in the surrender of power to Hitler and the Nazi party.



Berg was born and raised in Germany, completed her undergraduate degree in history and psychology at Rutgers University and her PhD at the University of Michigan. She studies the histories of waste and recycling, film and cities, racism and genocide. Her

first book, *On Screen and Off: Hamburg and the Making of the Nazi City* is under contract with the University of Pennsylvania Press. Berg has published articles on the history of waste in Nazi Germany, the United States and South Africa. Her current book project examines the disturbing connections between waste management and genocide in the Third Reich.

Sunday, November 15, 11:00AM

***Defund the Police*, AEU-wide platform hosted by RYSEC, Alex S. Vitale, Professor of Sociology, Brooklyn College, and Visiting Professor at London Southbank University**

Alex Vitale has researched and written about the future of policing for 30 years. In this talk, hosted by Riverdale-Yonkers Society for Ethical Culture, Vitale will explain the “defund the police” movement and its relationship to the long struggle for racial and economic justice.

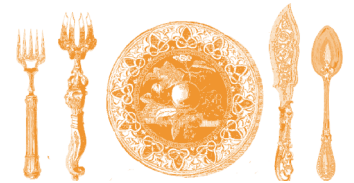


Vitale is the author of *City of Disorder: How the Quality of Life Campaign Transformed New York Politics and The End of Policing*. His writings on policing have appeared in numerous publications including *Police Practice and Research*, *Mobilization*, *Contemporary Sociology*, *The New York Times*, *Washington Post* and *The Guardian*. He has also appeared on CNN, MSNBC, CNBC, NPR, PBS, Democracy Now, and The Daily Show with Trevor Noah.

Sunday, November 22, 11:00AM

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

While we cannot break bread together in person, get your brunch ready and join the PES members and friends for a virtual **Humanist Thanksgiving**. Music, readings, and conversation will help us experience and share our gratitude at this distant-yet-shared 11:00AM meal.



Email Hugh at LeaderHugh@phillyethics.org if you want to do a reading. Prizes awarded for the “most colorful brunch plate.” This contest will take place at exactly 11:10AM, so have your plate ready for display on Zoom!

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SUNDAY PLATFORM DESCRIPTIONS CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

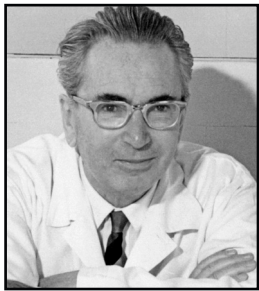
Sunday, November 29, 10:30AM

***Ethical Culture, Psychotherapy, and My Grandmother the Spy*, hosted by the Baltimore Ethical Society, Hugh Taft-Morales, Leader, PES, (previously delivered at PES in 2013)**

The Victorian Felix Adler was not a big fan of therapeutic exploration of the psyche; he resisted what he considered a narcissistic invasion of the private world. Today, however, counseling is an important part of Ethical Culture. It nourishes our ethical relationships and our congregational life. Two counseling orientations that resonate with Ethical Culture are those of Alfred Adler and of existential therapists



such as Victor Frankel. Hugh Taft-Morales will explore the inspirational power of these orientations while weaving an amazing tale of his own family's psychotherapeutic adventures.



**Preview of December Platform
Sunday, December 6, 11:00AM
Women and Literature, Hugh Taft-Morales,
Leader, PES**

Hugh Taft-Morales explores women and literature as a way to celebrate our Tree of Knowledge tradition brought to us by our friends at the Freethought Society! Time to start thinking about the books that have been meaningful to you this year.



PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Continued from page 1

Now, with COVID, we are sort of reinventing the wheel, learning how to navigate in the virtual world, which in no way compares to being together in person. But as someone (in)famous once said, "It is what it is." Unfortunately, I don't see any possibility of meeting under one roof until sometime in 2021. That being said, we all have to continue our work and not let COVID defeat us. Please join me in this continuing journey. There are sure to be lots more surprises along the way.

During the past few months, we have been exploring long-range planning. Our previous attempts have met with little success. The new effort is being led by a professional with many years of long-range planning experience. Our first step was to conduct a survey, which went extremely well. The survey received almost sixty responses from active members, plus several responses from our friends who attend our platforms and programs. In addition, we received some completed surveys from former members. Once the surveys are compiled, we'll have a framework to begin our journey. Our goal is to grow and make the Ethical Society stronger, so that generations to come can learn how to build a peace-filled world.

**I want to thank our
members for all the
hard work done to
help get out the vote.**

Last month I talked about reaching out to others in a virtual way. Please be creative; pick up your phone, or your pen, or your bullhorn. Finally, I hope everyone will be able to vote, either in person or by mail. We need to restore civility and sanity in our government. I want to thank our members for all the hard work done to help get out the vote.

Please stay well, and if there is any way we can support you, don't hesitate to let us know.

Bob Bueding
bbueding@phillyethics.org

THINKING ABOUT THE LATE RUTH BADER GINSBURG

submitted by PES Member Stan Horwtiz

As I sat down to write this column, a news alert appeared on my iPhone about Ruth Bader Ginsburg's death. My plan was to write this column about the 19th Amendment, but I decided to dedicate this column to RBG. The news of her death hit me hard! Upon hearing the news, I thought about the exhibit at the National Museum of American Jewish History, where I learned about RBG's career as a feminist, judge, lawyer, mother, and wife.

Ruth Bader Ginsburg will go down in history along feminist icons such as Susan B. Anthony as one of history's most accomplished American feminists. We recently celebrated the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment which allows women to vote. We have Susan B. Anthony to thank for passage of that amendment. Justice Ginsburg also achieved historic wins for feminism.

Thanks to *Notorious RBG*, as she is widely known, women can open credit card accounts in their own name and they have the same rights as men to education at every level. When she was a law professor, RBG fought for pay equality for herself and her fellow female law professors. RBG was also a passionate defender of the rights of the LGBTQ community, undocumented immigrants, disabled people, and voting rights.

In terms of racism, RGB's role in history is nuanced. She recognized that barriers to voting disproportionately disenfranchise black voters. That is what motivated her to fiercely defend voting rights in the United States Supreme Court, but her record on racism is mixed.



During a TV interview with Katy Couric, RBG said she thought that Colin Kaepernick's kneeling during the National Anthem before NFL games was "silly," but legal. In that interview, she didn't acknowledge what Kaepernick was trying to convey. RBG later expressed regret at making that comment, but she still did not address Kaepernick's concerns about racism among police.

Like all of us, RBG was a flawed human being, but she got along with everyone. People need to understand that none of us, including RBG, is superhuman. RBG clearly had issues accepting her own mortality and her opposition to voting laws that disenfranchise people of color should be recognized as an indication

that she opposed racism. Perhaps RGB's

biggest flaw was her failure to recognize her own mortality. In fact, she planned to officiate at a wedding on the day of her death. She had asked the bride and groom two days earlier to postpone the wedding because of her illness, so it is obvious that RBG did not recognize her own mortality.

Being anti-racist is not a state of being, but a journey. I am on that journey, doing my best to become as anti-racist as possible. From the brief amount I have read about Ruth Bader Ginsburg, I can see that she was also traveling on the same journey. In fact, the wedding RGB intended to officiate on the day she died was for Eric Motley (a prominent black conservative political commentator and Executive Director of the Aspen Institute). Eric and his wife Hannah are an interracial couple. RGB, who is a close friend of Eric's offered to officiate at their wedding.

MEMBER NOTE

PES member Jim Cooke shared that his wife Janet passed away on October 1. Janet and Jim joined the Ethical Society in 2013, but they left Philadelphia a couple of years ago to live in Portland, closer to their daughters Jennifer and Joanna, and two grandchildren.

Jim was able to be at Janet's bedside when she died. Feel free to contact Jim via mail, e-mail, or phone to share your condolences.

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LEADER'S COLUMN Embodied Wisdom



Recently I have begun thinking about the wisdom of the body – not knowledge about the body, not cognitive understanding, not empirically collected data. It's not about physical survival or about medical knowledge. It's probably not something we learned in school. I am increasingly interested in, and appreciation of, **embodied wisdom**.

We all have access to this resource literally inside us. It's in our sinews, our arteries, our nervous system. This wisdom doesn't come in precise words or distinct thoughts, but rather through impulses and intuitions. Its most ancient form often emanates from our brain stem and is expressed through fight or flight responses. It's inherited from ancestors, perhaps all the way back thousands of years to the time of the first anatomically modern *Homo sapiens*. Those are some deep roots!

"Well," you might think, "Hugh's gone off the deep end. Maybe he's contracted the virus and a fever is muddling his brain." While COVID has made us all more aware of where we put our bodies, what air we breathe, and what symptoms we worry we are beginning to feel, my growing interest is not due to pandemic-induced delirium. I am simply trying to understand a different kind of wisdom taught by Resmaa Menakem in his book, *My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies*.

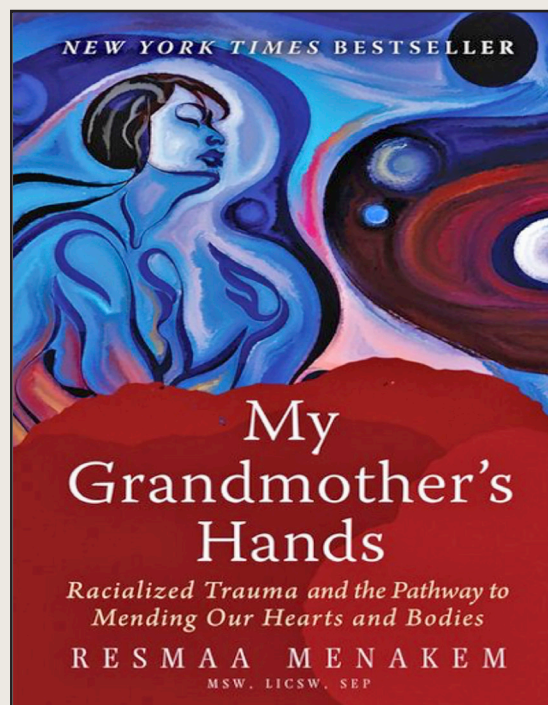
As a disclaimer, I have just begun Menakem's book. It is not a quick read. This is not because it is overly academic or dense. It's because he urges readers to pause throughout the book and engage in exercises to identify embodied trauma. I am following his directions, despite my tendency to gobble up words and move on. I am trying to silence my mind so as to hear my body. (As a part of that effort, I've been doing more yoga.)

For Menakem, uncovering trauma is a form of wisdom. He focuses on trauma related to race, specifically white body supremacy. I am drawn professionally and personally to issues of race, but currently I am trying to wrap my head around the whole notion of epigenetics – a form of genetic memory passed down through generations that affects how we think and move through the world today. Decades ago, when studying the theories of the Soviet scientist Trofim Lysenko, I lumped his discredited, unscientific theories together with epigenetics and threw them all in the garbage.

Over the past twenty years, however, support for more scientifically-grounded theories of genetic memory has grown, and so has my interest. I doubt that I will ever abandon my personal predilection toward skepticism and intellectualism. But as the world seems more gripped by irrationality – whether involving racism, authoritarianism, or suicidal-anti-environmentalism – I feel the need to access other forms of knowledge. These times call for bringing out our best from deep within us. Thanks to Resmaa Menakem, I seek to harvest more embodied wisdom.

Hugh Taft-Morales

Epigenetics – a form of genetic memory passed down through generations that affects how we think and move through the world today.



SEEING WHAT LIES WITHIN by Henry Pashkow

Look at what's in our newsletter. You'll see platform descriptions, and bios of the speakers. You'll see a list of birthdays, committee meetings, events, and lots more. You'll see articles written by our very own members, including our President and our Leader, covering a wide range of topics of concern to our readers. You may get snippets of these things elsewhere, but here, in this newsletter, you'll see them all in one place. Taken together, it's a repository, and as such it's noteworthy, in our increasingly fractured and virtual world.

Let's look at what our writers do, for example. They raise concerns of interest to our members, as they bring us into their view of the world. They share their stories and points of view with us as a means of doing so. The common currency is their felt experience. And in this very effort to share this felt

experience with us, this gift to us, combined with the effort of all who collaborate to put this newsletter together, they touch on a commonality we all share deep within, a hope for the better, something that touches us all.

So, take it as an opportunity. Share what's meaningful to you. If you write, use the newsletter as a means of staying connected with our PES community. You have the talent as much as anyone else; don't let anybody tell you otherwise. It's no more and no less than another way to engage more completely in that good fight we're all in the midst of. We will all benefit.

You've got it, so use it, share it. Let's bring it to the fore, let's see it flower.



Ethical Views editorial meeting, including from left to right: Henry Pashkow, Celeste Hardester, Cheryl Desmond, Nick Sanders, Betsy Lightbourn, and Bob Buediing.



UPCOMING EVENTS

ALL EVENTS ARE VIA ZOOM.COM
UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED

Sunday, November 1, 7:00PM:

Introduction to Ethical Humanism

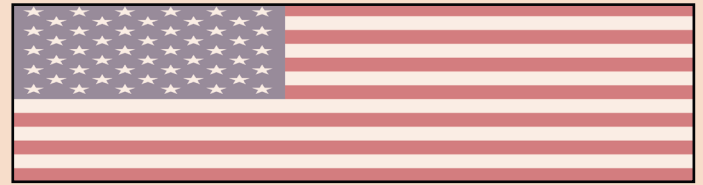
Hugh Taft-Morales hosts an Introduction to Ethical Humanism virtually on ZOOM. Join him for a 30-minute presentation followed by a casual Q and A about this 144-year old expression of congregational humanism. This month, in honor of our election, he'll share how his commitment to Ethical Humanism informs his approach to politics.



Tuesday, November 10, 5:00 - 6:30PM

Post Election Highs and Lows

Join Hugh and members of Ethical Societies in Baltimore and Philadelphia as we process our feelings regarding election results one week after election day. Given the uncertainty of events, this gathering will be adapted to the needs of the respondents.



Wednesday, November 4, 12:30 – 1:45pm

Lunch with Hugh

Philadelphia Ethical Society members are invited to join Hugh for a virtual lunchtime discussion as we gather for mutual support in the wake of election day. This is mainly a space to support each other, especially since the results of the election may not be known by this time.



Monday, November 16, 5:30-7:00PM

Discussion of Alex Vitale's "Defund the Police"

Join Hugh Taft-Morales and members of the Philly and Baltimore Ethical Societies in a lively discussion of "Defund the Police," the platform address given by Alex Vitale the day before, November 15, hosted by the Riverdale-Yonkers Society for Ethical Culture. If you missed his presentation, you can still attend this November 16 discussion with Hugh. Email LeaderHugh@phillyethics.org if you would like suggestions of articles to read by Vitale.

PES Fall Office Hours

Society Administrator Cheryl will be in the office every Wednesday from 10 AM to 6 PM. Phone calls and in-person appointments are welcome during that time.

Email business will be conducted remotely Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 9 to 11 AM.

215-735-3456 office@phillyethics.org

November Birthdays

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

"The ignorance of one voter in a democracy impairs the security of all."

~ John Kennedy

"Voting isn't the most we can do. But it is the least."

~ Gloria Steinem



SUNDAY SERVICES

11:00 A.M.

Ethical Views is published monthly
except July and August.

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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.

Building Committee
Michael Black-Smith,
Next Meeting Monday,
November 25, 2:00 PM

End Racism Task Force
Sylvia Metzler, Meets
every fourth Saturday
11:00 AM -12:00 PM

Camp Linden
Jeffrey Dubb,
Next Meeting TBD

Ethical Action Committee
Nick Sanders, Meets on
every third Monday,
3:30 - 5:00PM

Communication Committee
Drew Snyder,
Next Meeting TBD

Finance Committee
Vincent Russo,
Meets every second
Wednesday, 5:00 PM

Education Committee
Betsy Lightbourn, Meets
every first Wednesday,
3:00PM

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



Sylvia Metzler, participating in a demonstration in the fight against racism organized by the Brandywine Peace Community, P.O.Box 29674, Philadelphia, PA 19144.

See www.brandywinepeace.com
or call 215 843 4827 for more information

Of the photo, Sylvia reports: The "Union Solider" at solitary rest atop the monument, so reminiscent of the Civil War memorials in most Pennsylvania and Virginia towns, has stood there since 1883, and the block on which he stands is a piece of granite from Devil's Den at Gettysburg Battlefield.