

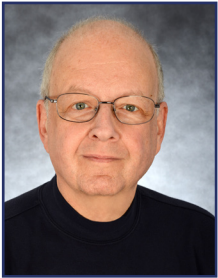


ETHICAL VIEWS



January 2021 Vol. 135, No. 5 Newsletter of the Philadelphia Ethical Society

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN New Beginnings



Well, here we are at the beginning of 2021. We can now look at 2020 in the rearview mirror.

The year 2020 was a one of surprises and new adventure, to say the least. It also had some sadness: we lost three members. Hopefully, during this New Year

we will have time to remember those who have gone before us.

Who would have thought our lives would change so drastically this past March? But it did, on March 15. We had no idea how long this would last. A month or two? Here we are nine months later, starving for human interaction.

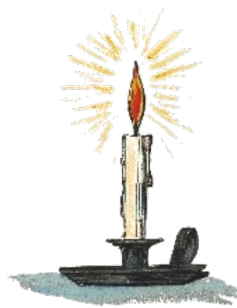
Continued on page 3

SUNDAY PLATFORMS

Please turn to page 2 for full platform descriptions.

Sunday, January 3, 11:00AM **Memorial Sunday: Memories and Gratitude**

Honor loved ones, colleagues, and historical heroes who have died in body but are alive in our hearts and minds.



Sunday, January 10, 11:00AM **Road Trip to RYSEC "Indigenizing" Environmental Justice, Dina Gilio-Whitaker, lecturer of American Indian Studies at California State University**

How does the indigenous perspective and history inform how we think about environmental ethics and environmental justice?



Sunday, January 17, 11:00AM

Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing, Hugh Taft-Morales, Leader, Philadelphia Ethical Society

Through the history of this important song, known as the Black National Anthem, Hugh will explore what we can draw from it today.

Sunday, January 24, 11:00AM

Rediscovering Our Humanity: Reading the Classics Behind Bars and Beyond, Emily Allen-Hornblower, Classics Professor, Rutgers University

A public conversation with mass incarceration survivors Nafeesah Goldsmith and Marquis McCray.

Sunday, January 31, 11:00AM

All American Ethical Union platform, United States Congressman Jamie Raskin, Democrat, Maryland, 8th District

Rep. Raskin was among the group of congressional progressives that pushed for the impeachment inquiry into President Trump.

Preview of February Platform

Sunday, February 7, 11:00AM *Thanks to Pandemic Responders*

For a year of deliveries, service workers, medical staff, and more, we share gratitude for your work.

On the banner: Earth and moon in their relative sizes.

Philadelphia Ethical Society invites the public to attend our platforms and events listed on page 2.

SUNDAY PLATFORM DESCRIPTIONS

All platforms are held on Zoom and may be accessed by going to www.tiny.cc/phillyethics

Sunday, January 3, 11:00AM

Memorial Sunday: Memories and Gratitude

2020 was a particularly difficult year. We lost so much due to the pandemic. We lost those who died of COVID-19, and we lost connection with many people and places we love. In the middle of winter, our burdens are heavy. Join members of the Ethical Society when we counter the loss by joyously lifting up our memories of and gratitude for those who have died. Join Hugh Taft-Morales in sharing our gratitude for those we lost, whether family, friends, or luminaries.

The platform will begin with a short introductory meditation program, *Mindfulness: Present Moment Awareness*, led by Susana Mayer, Ph.D., who refers us to the following link for more information:

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/mindfulness>.

Sunday, January 10, 11:00AM

Road Trip to RYSEC

“Indigenizing” Environmental Justice, Dina Gilio-Whitaker, lecturer of American Indian Studies at California State University



How does the indigenous perspective and history inform how we think about environmental ethics and environmental justice? When in graduate school, guest speaker Dina Gilio-Whitaker noticed that American Indians were not included in environmental justice scholarship. “The frameworks and histories that formulate that literature really don’t address the histories of colonialism in this country, and tribal sovereignty and nationhood. What does environmental justice look like through the lens of settler colonialism?” How does that go beyond the lens of environmental racism?

Dina Gilio-Whitaker (Colville Confederated Tribes) is a lecturer of American Indian Studies at California State University San Marcos, and an independent consultant and educator in environmental justice policy planning. As a public intellectual, Gilio-Whitaker brings her scholarship into focus as an award-winning journalist, contributing to numerous

online outlets including *Indian Country Today*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and *High Country News*. She is co-author with Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz of *All the Real Indians Died Off and 20 Other Myths About Native Americans* (2016) and, released in 2019, *As Long as Grass Grows: The Indigenous Fight for Environmental Justice from Colonization to Standing Rock*.

Sunday, January 17, 11:00AM

Lift Ev’ry Voice and Sing, Hugh Taft-Morales, Leader, Philadelphia Ethical Society

Hugh Taft-Morales remembers how conscious he was of racial identity the first time he was in a multi-racial group singing *Lift Ev’ry Voice and Sing*. Nicknamed *The Black National Anthem*, the song prompted most Black singers to tilt up their heads and sing loud and proud, while white singers – himself included – struggled to feign familiarity with the song.

Through the history of this important song, Hugh will explore what we can draw from it today to help us make sense of racial identity, patriotism, and the role of white activism in the Black Lives Matter movement.



Lyricist and composer, brothers James Weldon Johnson and John Rosamond Johnson.

Sunday, January 24, 11:00AM

Rediscovering Our Humanity: Reading the Classics Behind Bars and Beyond, Emily Allen-Hornblower, Classics Professor, Rutgers University



Emily Allen-Hornblower will moderate a public conversation with mass incarceration survivors Nafeesah Goldsmith and Marquis McCray. The program will include excerpts from Greek tragedies to ground the discussion about the role of the emotions in our lives, and

the Humanity we all share. The ancient works will serve as an opening for dialogue regarding the life of the incarcerated before, during, and after prison, and the interconnectedness between all of us that storytelling and classical literature can bring to light.

Continued on page 3

SUNDAY PLATFORMS

continued

Emily Allen-Hornblower is Associate Professor of Classics at Rutgers University. Her book *From Agent to Spectator: Witnessing the Aftermath in Ancient Greek Epic and Tragedy* (2016) center on ancient (and modern) portrayals of the human and factors of connection and disconnection between individuals and groups. She has been an on-air consultant for national television (History Channel) and NPR. Allen-Hornblower has also taught in medium and maximum-security prisons in New Jersey for five years, as part of NJSTEP (Scholarship and Transformative Education in Prisons).

Sunday, January 31, 11:00AM

**All American Ethical Union platform,
United States Congressman Jamie Raskin,
Democrat, Maryland, 8th District**

Jamin Ben "Jamie" Raskin is an American author and U.S. Representative (D-MD). Rep. Raskin was among the group of congressional progressives that pushed for the impeachment inquiry into President Trump. He says, "The fact that the Republican senators behaved ... like members of a religious cult, does not render our decision a foolish one. We stood up for the Constitution."



Rep. Raskin is the co-chair of the Congressional Freethought Caucus initiated by Rep. Jared Huffman (D-CA). "My hope for the CFC," explains Rep Huffman, "is to be identified ... as a counterweight to those pushing the country toward theocracy."

Preview of February Platform

Sunday, February 7, 11:00AM

Thanks to Pandemic Responders

For a year of deliveries, service workers, medical staff, and more, we share gratitude for your work.

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

continued from page 1

Now we can't do much of anything in person, our congregation can't congregate, and our committees are destined to the same fate. It left me wondering what it would be like in a pre-internet world.

But one of the wonderful things about our Society is that we have all learned how to survive in a virtual world. We have maintained interaction with our fellow members and friends. Our technology has allowed us to be connected online. But it's not the same with Zoom. It's leading to changes. We are thinking, though, that when the pandemic is behind us, we will explore live streaming our platforms and programs. Some good will come out of so much pain.

During the past year we have had some financial challenges; our 100-year-old building on Rittenhouse Square needs constant attention, and unfortunately, our rental income is currently non-existent. We do have two permanent tenants, which has helped to pay some of our bills. I want to personally thank all who have made additional pledges. We are getting ready for our 2021 pledge meeting (online) and we'll be asking for your support once again.

It seems there is light at the end of this tunnel. I think we have a few more months of darkness, but with the advent of a vaccine we can begin to heal. As hard as 2020 was, we've learned how to stay together in a virtual world. I'm a natural optimist, so my vision is in-person get togethers by Autumn, 2021. That will be cause for celebration!

I wish everyone a happy, healthy 2021. Please be careful, wear your mask, wash your hands, maintain social distance. Here's to a new normal in the New Year.

Best wishes! Bob Bueding
bbueding@phillyethics.org



The Sad Sack Snowman sitting on a bench in Rittenhouse Square holding his heart, saving a space for you. From Leigh Buchanan

LEADER'S COLUMN Chess Renaissance: The Make-Believe World of *The Queen's Gambit*



Though it's been a while, the chess board is up in my home once again! Two decades ago, when I was the "chess coach" for Edmund Burke School, the board was out more regularly, but it took a Netflix series to revive this practice. While you may think a television show is insufficiently intellectual fodder for an Ethical

Culture Leader's column, think again! Chess is complex. According to German grandmaster Robert Hübner, "People who claim they understand chess actually don't." Blaise Pascal, the brilliant physicist and mathematician, said, "Chess is the gymnasium of the mind." Another brilliant physicist, my father Horace Taft, worked out in that intellectual gym.

Though my father was often too preoccupied by physics to be distracted by child rearing, I fondly remember him teaching me chess. Clearly the game's mathematical complexity appealed to him. Just try to wrap your head around these numbers from co-founder of *The Chess World* (<https://thechessworld.com/start-here/>), Yury Markushin: "After each player makes just one move there are 400 different positions possible! After 2 moves – about 72,000 positions possible. After 3 moves – 9 million. After 4 moves – 288 billion positions can arise on a chess board." That would even blow the mind of physicist Carl Sagan, author of the book, *Billions and Billions*.

But my father succeeded more fully in teaching the magic of chess to his namesake, my brother Horace Taft. He explained the game's complexity in more prosaic terms: "There's more possible positions on a chess board than [there are] stars in the universe." That's what my brother told reporters at the *Greenfield Reporter* when he was interviewed about chess. Horace can whip me at chess thanks to more lessons from our father. He understands that after five to six moves, you're probably playing a position you've never played before.

That's why chess masters can destroy average players so quickly. As Greenfield Library Chess Club member Bill Hazlett put it, "I look at chess as a war game. Anything less is checkers, and checkers is for kids."

But one particular fictional kid preferred chess. The young Beth Harmon played by Anya Taylor-Joy in *The Queen's Gambit* competes against older players and she wins almost all of the battles. If you like rooting for the underdog, this one's for you!

I do want to bring up an ethical point about *The Queen's Gambit*. (Yes, there is an ethical point – this is Ethical Views after all!) One of the things I loved most of all about this series is that within a male-dominated sphere there were few creepy men preying on the mind or body of Beth Harmon. Netflix offers up a seven-episode treat of relatively misogynist-free drama. Unfortunately, that's not like the real-life chess world. Alas, the real-life chess circles are as sexist as the rest of society.

Monica Hesse explained this reality in the November 24th *Washington Post*. She wrote about Judit Polgar, the only woman to have ranked in the chess top 10, who said she was regularly mocked and disparaged by male players. According to Polgar, the men in the Netflix series were "too nice." Perhaps Walter Tevis, who wrote the book on which this video series is based, didn't know any better. Nevertheless, I liked the series and agree with Hesse: "it was jarring and thrilling to watch a woman move through her world and just be so ... safe."

Thanks to *The Queen's Gambit*, chess books sales rose over 600%! I wonder how many parents are filling pandemic-seclusion by dusting off their chess boards and teaching their children. As we anticipate the inauguration of the first woman Vice President, I wonder how many of these children are girls. Wouldn't it be nice if thousands of girls now learning chess thanks to Netflix could excel in this ancient game free of age-old sexism? That's some make-believe I want to see become real.

Please note: The article by Bethonie Butler, "The Queen's Gambit" is mesmerizing, but there's one glaring problem," which is a race-related critique about Queen's Gambit, will be discussed in the next Leader's column in honor of Black History Month.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/arts-entertainment/2020/11/03/queens-gambit-jolene/>

MEMBER RESPONSE

by Betsy Lightbourn

As I was reading Hugh's column on *The Queen's Gambit*, my eyes immediately focused on the knight chess piece mounted above my desk which I had acquired in the mid 1970s from a British Museum visit. I remembered that it was a replica from a 12th century set housed in the British Museum collections, but not much more. A cursory research on the internet identified my knight as belonging to the storied Lewis Chessmen set, named for the discovery in 1831 of the pieces at or near the Isle of Lewis, in the Outer Hebrides of Scotland. The seventy-nine pieces they found belong to at least five sets. They were divided between the British Museum and

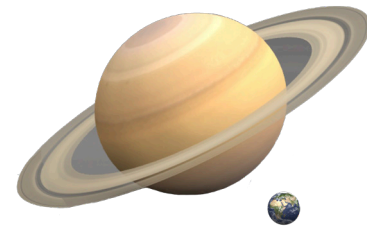


Although designed for war, the knight piece portraying a slightly emaciated figure -- especially the legs and feet-- atop a pony with its mane in its face, seems hardly battle ready.

the National Museum of Scotland. While the British Museum claims the pieces were probably made in Trondheim, 12th century capital of Norway, some prominent Icelanders have claimed that the pieces originated in Iceland because it was only there that bishops were called by that name at the time.

Furthermore, the Icelanders claim that an artist known as Margret the Adroit carved the pieces. She was a priest's wife who assisted Bishop

Pall by carving beautiful gifts for his colleagues including a bishop's crozier of walrus ivory "carved so skillfully that no one in Iceland had seen such artistry before." (Icelandic Saga of Bishop Pall.) The identification of Margret the Adroit as the carver of the Lewis Chessman has been supported by science writer Nancy Marie Brown in *Ivory Vikings, the Most Famous Chessmen in the World and the Woman Who Made Them* (2015), which I have just begun to read.



Saturn and Earth in their relative sizes.

QUOTABLE

Rabbi Sherwin Wine,
founding figure in
Humanistic Judaism:

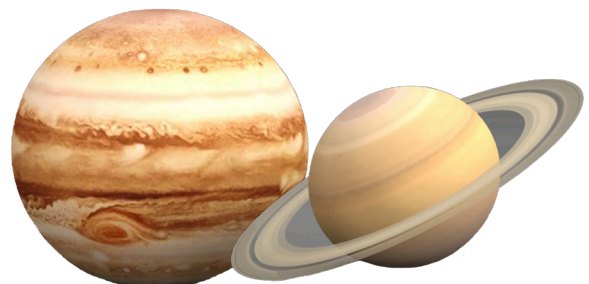
"To live without an awareness of one's true being is to linger in darkness.

To live with an acceptance of one's real feelings and desires is to bask in the light.

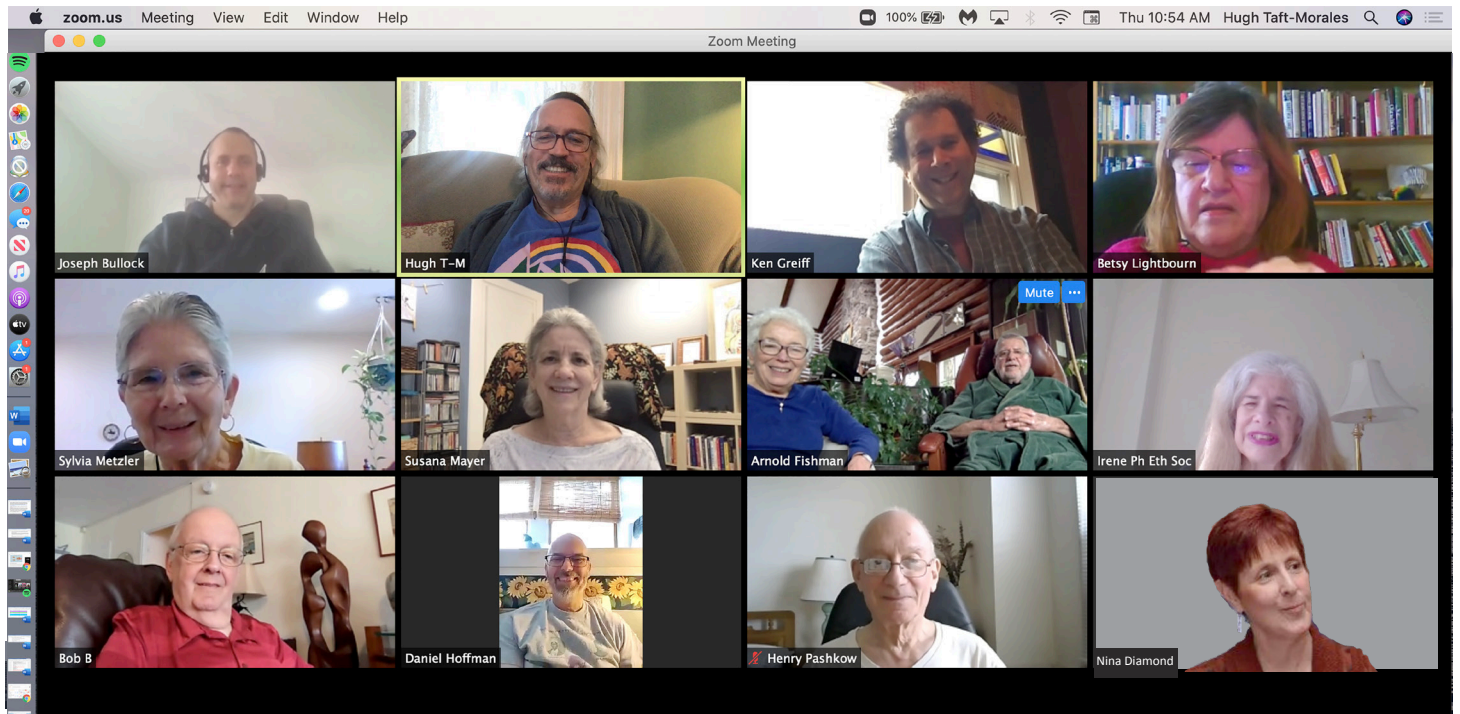
Others walk in the night and are illuminated by the light of their self-understanding."

January Birthdays

10	Carol Love
14	Lyle Murley
21	Ken Greiff
30	Lelah Marie



Jupiter and Saturn in their relative sizes. They visually aligned, from Earth's vantage, on Dec. 15, 2020.



Philadelphia Ethical Society Members participate in a talkback via Zoom.



Bob Steinfort (aka Robert Edwin) singing a feminist anthem, "Wind Song" by Crosby & Edwin at our Dec. 6 platform.



Childless cape on the fence "COVID 19 times." Unclaimed Property. From Betsy Lightbourn



Covid 19 Times: Taking advantage of these unlocked gates along the north side of JFK Blvd. toward 30th Street to socially distance among the trees in this gated community. From Betsy Lightbourn



UPCOMING EVENTS

The following events are held on Zoom and may be accessed by going to www.tiny.cc/ethical-hugh

Sunday, January 3, 7:00pm:

Introduction to Ethical Humanism

Join Hugh Taft-Morales for a brief presentation about the philosophy, history, and current congregational life of Ethical Humanism. This month Hugh will add some reflections about New Year's resolutions!

Tuesday, January 12, 12:30pm

Lunch with Hugh

Join Hugh and members of the Philadelphia Ethical Society for casual conversation about ways to bring out our best during a pandemic-affected holiday period. Zoom invite will be sent in our Weekly Bulletin, or email LeaderHugh@phillyethics.org.



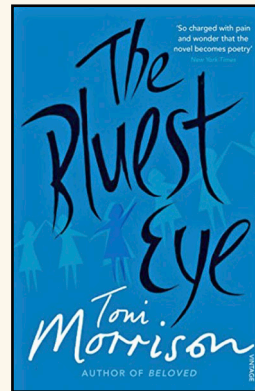
Saturday, January 30, 11:30AM-12:15PM -

New Book Discussion with Hugh Taft-Morales

Join Hugh for the first of his twelve 2021 book discussions of books by women writers. In January, Hugh will lead a dialogue about *The Bluest Eye*, by Toni Morrison. This 1970 classic generated many book banning controversies. Read the book and join our discussion to find out why! To join the book discussion, please email Hugh so he knows to expect you. LeaderHugh@phillyethics.org

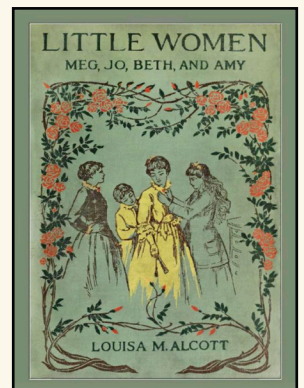
2021 BOOK DISCUSSION READING LIST
Focusing on books by women, Hugh Taft-Morales will be leading 12 book discussions throughout 2021. Here are the first four books on the list:

JANUARY
THE BLUEST EYE
Toni Morrison

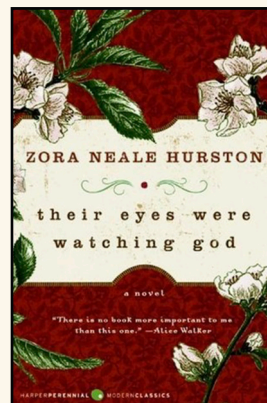


FEBRUARY

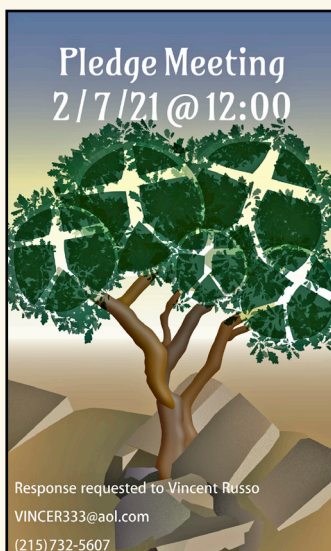
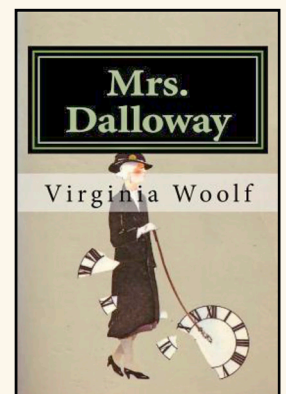
LITTLE WOMEN
Louisa May Alcott



MARCH
THEIR EYES WERE WATCHING GOD
Zora Neale Hurston



APRIL
MRS. DALLOWAY
Virginia Woolf



Save the date: Sunday, February 7, 12 noon-1:00PM – Our Members Virtual Pledge Luncheon

Following our Feb. 7 platform program, join us for our Members Virtual Pledge Luncheon (BYOL – Bring Your Own Lunch). We'd love to thank you for your continued support and share with you a bit about our financial health. While we can't lure you with virtuals, there'll be some fun too.

Respond to Vince Russo at vincer333@aol.com



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 TBD

Camp Linden
Jeffrey Dubb,
Next Meeting TBD

Communication Committee
Drew Snyder,
Next Meeting TBD

Education Committee
Betsy Lightbourn, Meets
every first Wednesday,
3:00 - 4:00PM

End Racism Task Force
Sylvia Metzler, Meets
Saturday, Jan. 16th
11:00 AM -12:30 PM

Ethical Action Committee
Nick Sanders, Meets on
Monday, Jan. 11th,
3:30 - 5:00PM

Finance Committee
Vincent Russo,
Meets Wednesday,
Jan. 13th, 5:00 PM

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