



ETHICAL VIEWS



February 2021 Vol. 135, No. 6 Newsletter of the Philadelphia Ethical Society

SUNDAY PLATFORMS

Please turn to page 3 for full platform descriptions.

Sunday, February 7, 11:00AM

Thanks to Pandemic Responders,
Hugh Taft-Morales, Leader,
Philadelphia Ethical Society

Rewarding brave pandemic responders beyond simply saying, "Thank you for your service."



Sunday, February 14, 2:00PM

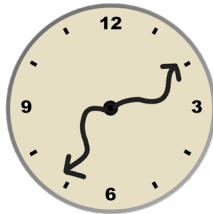
Does Money Matter in American Elections?, Robin Kolodny, Professor,
Political Science, Temple University

How money raised and spent on elections may be a poor indicator of candidate success.

Sunday, February 21, 11:00AM

Time Warps: The pandemic's effect on our sense of duration,
Hugh Taft-Morales, Leader, PES

For some time has moved slowly, for others quickly, and many feel both ways! Hugh offers some hints as to how to manage time in a way that supports full living.



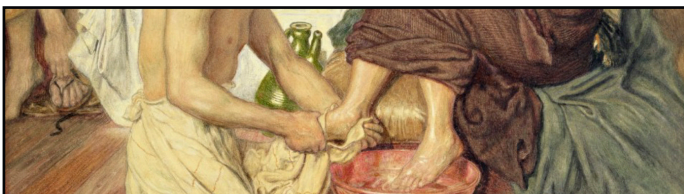
Sunday, February 28, 11:00AM

Speaker and topic not confirmed at publication time. We will update via the Weekly Bulletin.

Preview of March Platform

Sunday, March 7, 11:00AM

Being Wrong – The Virtues of Humility and Doubt
Hugh Taft-Morales, Leader, PES



LEADER'S COLUMN

Processing Our Political and Social Chaos



The day after the January 6th mob attack on the Capitol, I met with two dozen members of the Philadelphia and Baltimore Ethical Societies on Zoom. Given the results of the Senate races in Georgia followed by desecration of our most hallowed shrine to

democracy, many felt captive to a psychological rollercoaster. I wanted to offer space for mutual support to process our disparate and intense emotional reactions.

These reactions were as diverse and contradictory as we might expect given our unprecedented times. They included unpleasant experiences of surprise, shock, fear, stress, shame, upset, confusion, anger, sadness, and disappointment.

Continued on page 2

IN THIS ISSUE . . .

We are all now on the other side of one momentous event, and still thickly in the middle of another. How do things seem, looking back, acknowledging where we are, and imagining what the future might hold? Read some members' reflections on what they are making of these singular times.

On the banner: "Well-educated, vivacious, with determination shining from her sharp eyes, she threw herself singlehanded into the great Canadian pilgrimage when thousands of hunted black men hurried northward and crept beneath the protection of the lion's paw."

**– A description of Mary Ann Shadd Cary
by W.E.B. Dubois**

Philadelphia Ethical Society invites the public to attend our platforms and events listed on page 3.

LEADER'S COLUMN Processing Our Political and Social Chaos

Continued from page 1

But some also had more positive feelings of relief and hope that a new administration and Senate leadership were on the horizon. But the mob attack dominated. I shared with many the contradictory sense that I knew "something like this would happen," and yet it was "hard to believe what happened."

Given the swift pace of events, by the time this article is published in our February newsletter, who knows what will have occurred. Will Trump be removed from office or forced to resign? Will a president-gone-rogue start a nuclear war? Or will he simply retreat to Mar-a-Lago to curse and sulk, deprived of Twitter and evermore politically isolated? Given our political and social chaos, I would be foolish to try to predict.

Instead, let me propose this: the work ahead of us is great for there was no single cause for the egregious insult to our democratic system. To avoid similar occurrences, and to prevent them from fomenting another civil war, we will have to work on multiple fronts to rebuild respect for democratic norms.

We'll have to counter the anti-government mantra begun by Ronald Reagan, amplified by Newt Gingrich, manipulated by the Tea party, and ridden to power by Donald Trump. We'll have to reverse the slide into economic crisis gripping so many Americans – a crisis of desperation cycling out of control and surfacing in opioid addiction, crime, gun sales, and rage. We'll have to continue deconstructing racial animosity tracing back to the collective trauma of slavery and fueling recurring manifestations of white supremacy. After all, as one friend shared with me, the damage done to the Capitol is nothing compared to the devastation wreaked on communities of color and poor of all colors due to bigotry and unchecked capitalist greed.

Perhaps our most daunting challenge is to confront the cynical use of suffering, fear, anger, and hatred to gain political power. For all the hyperbolic comparisons of Trump to Hitler, both did use the misfortunes of people in difficult situations for self-aggrandizement and authoritarianism. Both provoked irrational and violent outbursts by demonizing "others." We have got to find a way to disempower such selfish and destructive Machiavellian methods.

For me, personally, to best transform suffering, fear, anger, and hatred into more constructive, or at least benign, public behavior, I must continue to work on myself. As I explained in my October newsletter column ("Resisting Reptilian Political Reactions"), I share our all-too-common human tendency towards tribalism. Watching rioters smash windows and defy Capitol police, righteous indignation swelled within me. I yearned to strike out, condemn, and vilify those "others" encouraged and directed by Trump to "go wild."

I forgive myself for having such feelings. And I will not condemn others for feeling the same. Judgment and condemnation can serve a purpose. But I know that in the long-run I cannot sustain my Ethical Culture work through a diet of divisive militancy. I believe that, in general, evil acts are caused by suffering. It's to that suffering that I want to tend. For that reason, I try to lean away from destructive anger and focus on transforming sadness and suffering into hope and resolve. I hope that we, guided by a fresh political opportunity, seek mutual solutions more than sectarian power. Mutual solutions will not arise overnight, but by the time you read these words, we'll know if we've begun to make progress.

Cultivating Our Resilient Community



2021
Pledge Meeting
2/7/21 @ 12:00

Directly after Platform on Zoom. 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 PLATFORM DESCRIPTIONS

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

Sunday, February 7, 11:00AM

Thanks to Pandemic Responders,
Hugh Taft-Morales, Leader,
Philadelphia Ethical Society

Almost a year into our pandemic crisis, millions of Americans have responded by working harder than ever and putting themselves in harm's way. They worked on the healthcare front line and on public transportation and as cashiers with minimal protection from a deadly virus. As one who remained safe mostly in a comfortable house, Hugh Taft-Morales explores how best to reward brave pandemic responders beyond simply saying, "Thank you for your service."

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Sunday, February 14, 2:00PM

Does Money Matter in American Elections?,
Robin Kolodny, Professor, Political Science,
Temple University



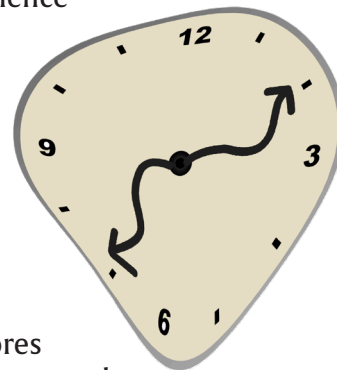
In the last two presidential elections (and nominating contests), money raised and spent on elections proved a poor indicator of candidate success. How can that be? This talk will explore the erosion of the campaign finance regulatory system, the emergence of low-cost communications technologies, and a potential new model for candidate recruitment and emergence.

Robin Kolodny received her Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science from Florida International University in 1985 and her Ph.D. in Political Science from the Johns Hopkins University in 1992. She is Professor and chair of Political Science at Temple University. Kolodny is the author of *Pursuing Majorities: Congressional Campaign Committees in American Politics* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1998). She is currently writing *The Fundamentals of Campaign Finance* with Diana Dwyre (California State University Chico).

Sunday, February 21, 11:00AM

Time Warps: The pandemic's effect on our sense of duration, Hugh Taft-Morales, Leader, PES

The pandemic has affected our perception of time, but not all people experience the warping the same way. For some time has moved slowly, for others quickly, and many feel both ways! What makes the minute hand move like molasses? What makes the days fly by? Hugh Taft-Morales explores various explanations for warped perceptions of time and offers some hints as to how to manage time in a way that supports full living.



Sunday, February 28, 11:00AM

Topic and Speaker yet to be determined

Speaker and topic not yet confirmed at publication time. The Education Committee has found that many speakers are unwilling to present their topic via zoom. We are continuing the search and will make an announcement via weekly updates when a solution has been found.

Preview of March Platform

Sunday, March 7, 11:00AM

Being Wrong – The Virtues of Humility and Doubt
Hugh Taft-Morales, Leader, PES

G R A T I T U D E

In Lieu of our tradition of FLOWERS, we offer this space for members to continue to make statements of gratitude in their personal lives, as citizens, or as members of PES. We would like one statement per week, as was done with the flowers tradition. Email us at hpashkow@gmail.com

A MIND IS A TERRIBLE THING TO WASTE

submitted by PES Member Nick Sanders

Seeing the movie *Hidden Figures* rerun on television (FX) recently, I was reminded of the United Negro College Fund's (UNCF's) TV campaign that came to the public in the 1970s, "a mind is a terrible thing to



waste." In case you did not see it or don't remember, *Hidden Figures* is about three African-

American women who made major contributions to the US effort to catch up with the Soviet Union in the race to show technological superiority by putting a man on the Moon.

The fact that women—especially African-American women—would be allowed to show what they could do in the white, male-dominated NASA organization was due primarily to the opening caused by the depletion of men in the US due to World War II. The constraints of a sexist and racist system were sufficiently relaxed to allow these women to apply their abilities. The impressive contributions of their minds were much less wasted.

Because I was not aware of the origin of the phrase "a mind is a terrible thing to waste," I did some "scholarly" research. I consulted a search engine on my internet browser. (Smile) I made this discovery: I found that the current version of the phrase goes like this: "A mind is a terrible thing to waste, but a wonderful thing to invest in."

The various forms of this UNCF campaign ad are presented by young African-American adults who are actual students, expressing aspirations for a positive future. The students finish the ads with the statement "I am your dividend."

The implication of being "your dividend" (i.e., a dividend for a donor to the UNCF) is, of course, that the payoff of a donation to the UNCF will result in a more productive economy of which the donor is a

beneficiary. However, I would go even further to point out that this dividend should be seen as broader than a more productive economy.

Because education in any society is an attempt to prepare individuals to relate to one another for the smooth functioning of the society, its impact goes beyond its economy to its legal system and cultural institutions. Especially in a society that is at least nominally democratic, shortchanging education on the basis of race is terribly wasteful.

Racism is not only unethical in individuals and societal systems. It should be seen more generally as a waste of human capabilities in efforts both to cope with the existential threats that humans face and to build a more positive future.



Katherine Johnson, Mary Jackson and Dorothy Vaughan, the three mathematicians who made history crossing gender and race lines in their roles with NASA to send Astronaut John Glenn to the moon.

From the Building committee

THE LEAST LOVED STAIR

by PES Member Michael Black-Smith

A long-standing item on our Building Committee's to-do list has been the small steel stair on the roof above the Assembly Room. This stair was in contention for being the saddest, least loved stair in Philadelphia! Though it forms a part of our egress routes – allowing theoretical fourth floor occupants to cross the roof to get to our building's fire stair – it had been quietly rusting away. Replacing the stair with a new one would be very expensive and the improbability of anyone being on the fourth floor during an emergency meant it kept getting pushed down the priority list. However, the Building Committee recently took a closer look and realized that, even though the landing and all the treads and risers were dangerously rusted-through, the underlying stair structure – the diagonal stringer beams and the landing's beams and posts are all still sound. Over the past few weeks – taking advantage of the building being even emptier than normal – I took the stair out of commission for a long-needed refurbishment.

I wasn't sure what would be required to take apart the circa 1929 steel construction so I schlepped my entire collection of tools up to the Society's roof. All the individual pieces of the stair were bolted together but decades of rust had effectively welded everything into one grimy piece. So much for wrenches and other tools meant for assembling/disassembling in a civilized fashion! The tools that proved most useful were my angle grinder – a handheld power tool that uses a spinning abrasive disc to cut and grind through steel – and a selection of crow bars and pry bars for twisting and popping

the old bolts out of their holes. It was dirty work, punctuated by frequent little victories as each deteriorated piece of steel would finally release its last hold on the structure – sometimes with an actual “POP!” Given my inability to do any kind of activity for a sustained period of time, this was a much slower process than it would have been otherwise. A demolition project that would normally take someone a day or two ended up taking me several weeks, but it was extremely satisfying along the way!

With all of the old steel pieces finally stacked to the side, I was able to drill holes for bolting on the new steps and landing pieces. In order to avoid rust for many decades to come, I went with welded and galvanized steel steps. As they are built of bar gratings, they provide excellent grip and will also let water pass through the horizontal surfaces instead of puddling and leading to corrosion. Next a vigorous sanding of the stair structure, then a coat of primer and two coats of a very hardy enamel paint. After re-attaching the new steps, the final part of the project was to build a step down to the roof surface. This small stair originally ended on a steel walkway, but with the walkway's removal years ago when a new rubber roof was installed, that last step was a doozy! A step built out of relatively soft pressure treated wood made sense so as not to damage the rubber roof it sits on.

A drawn-out, rusty, noisy project on the roof of 1906 South Rittenhouse Square but an enjoyable one and well worth it. See the pictures!



From the Editor's Desk

MISSING YOU, MISSING ME.

I love the English language for its richness and variety, and when best used its ability to convey our feelings and our treasured memories, and our thoughts to one another. But words by themselves, whether on paper, in common speech or otherwise, cannot bridge that no-man's-land between what lies deepest between ourselves. A coming into the presence of one another that's beyond words, that occurs in the interstices between speech and non-speech, ineffable quality that makes us fully human, is what's missing.

I took the physical world we once lived in for granted. It's gone for now. Gone is the world we grew up in, the physical intimacy we'd grown accustomed to, the embrace we'd taken for granted, a kiss, a quiet and supportive grasp upon one's shoulder, even a handshake.

All too often, in the world I share with other people, and with you, I find myself so reactive, so on edge, that I fear that what I say will not convey what I mean; it will offend someone, wound someone. All too often I say nothing. Zoom is what we rely on, for now. Zoom is the best we can do for now, but on Zoom I find myself tiptoeing around people who know me well, people with whom I've kidded in the past, afraid to offend, afraid to wound. Necessity requires this, for now.

We are fragile, we are strong! Our fully human selves will prevail, and we will be fully present to each other, again.

February Birthdays

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

"Our ethical faith enjoins us, then, first of all, to have a watchful regard for our own personal morality. I do not think sufficient attention has ever been paid to the cultivation of the highest humanity within ourselves."

S. BURNS WESTON - Founder of the Society for Ethical Culture in Philadelphia





UPCOMING EVENTS

ALL EVENTS ARE OFFERED
ONLINE THROUGH ZOOM

Sunday, February 7, 2:00pm:

Introduction to Ethical Humanism

PES Leader Hugh Taft-Morales will offer another Intro to Ethical Humanism at 2:00PM. This is particularly for newcomers, but all are welcome!. To attend, email Hugh at LeaderHugh@phillyethics.org

Tuesday, February 16, 12:30pm Lunch with Hugh

"Lunch with Hugh" will begin featuring a new brochure entitled, *The Magic of Humanism*. Written by James Croft, Leader of the Ethical Society of St. Louis, it explores six values central to humanism: truth, nature, community, growth, goodness, and justice. After a brief go-round, we'll share our thoughts on the first of these accessible 300-word entries entitled "Truth." They'll be plenty of time for casual socializing too! You can access this brochure here,

<https://ethicalstl.org/who-we-are/what-is-ethical-humanism/the-magic-of-humanism/> or you can email LeaderHugh@phillyethics.org.

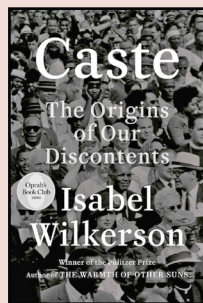


Thursday, Feb. 18, at 5:30:

Non-fiction Book Discussion: *Caste*, by Isabel Wilkerson.

Hugh Taft-Morales and members of the Philadelphia and Baltimore Ethical Societies will discuss this important new book. We will address the first half (Parts 1, 2, 3, and 4, pp. 3-260). We will discuss the rest of the book at 5:30PM on March 18th. Get your copy now! To join the book discussion, please email Hugh so he knows to expect you.

LeaderHugh@phillyethics.org



Saturday, February 27, 11:30AM-12:15PM: PES members discuss *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott, As part of Hugh's year-long "Women of Fiction Book Discussion,"

this is our second installment, held via Zoom. To join the book discussion, please email Hugh so he knows to expect you. LeaderHugh@phillyethics.org There will be an extra discussion with Baltimore Society members, Monday, March 1, at 5:00PM

Register for exploring Resmaa Menakem's *My Grandmother's Hands*, hosted by Sarah Tielemans.

Five Thursday sessions in March and April from 7:00-9:00PM* Members of the Ethical Societies in Philadelphia and Baltimore are invited to join a Circle engaging the book *My Grandmother's Hands* by Resmaa Menakem, MSW, LICSW, SEP. This is "the first self-discovery book to examine "white body supremacy in America from the perspective of trauma and body-centered psychology." We will work to understand intergenerational racial trauma, practice noticing where racial trauma has been embedded in our own bodies, as well as begin the work of healing. The Circle limited to ten people.

March 11 - Gathering/Creating Agreements & Shared Values
March 25 - Part I; April 8 - Part II; April 22 - Part III
May 6 - Closing Expressions of Gratitude and Commitments

* In order to best support ourselves and each other, you are asked to commit to attending all sessions. If you would like to be a part of Circle, please email Sarah at s.e.badgerow@gmail.com and include "My Grandmother's Hands" in the subject line.

The series is free to Ethical Society members. Donations of any size will help pay for Sarah's continuing education in humanism, and are gratefully accepted.

About Sarah: Sarah Tielemans is a Leader-in-Training in the Ethical Culture Movement. As a settler American who has been socialized as white in a white supremacist society, she is devoted to deconstructing her identity and uprooting the systems of injustice that exist within her. She practices humble curiosity as a path into deeper connection with others. Consistent with the philosophy of Adler, Sarah honors her spiritual aspect and seeks to enliven that in others. She believes that Joy is our birthright and Love is the perfect realization of our interconnectedness.



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

End Racism Task Force
Sylvia Metzler, Meets
Saturday, Feb. 20th
11:00 AM -12:30 PM

Camp Linden
Jeffrey Dubb,
Next Meeting TBD

Ethical Action Committee
Nick Sanders, Meets on
Monday, Feb. 8th,
3:30 - 5:00PM

Communication Committee
Drew Snyder,
Next Meeting TBD

Finance Committee
Vincent Russo,
Meets Wednesday,
Feb. 10th, 5:00 PM

Education Committee
Betsy Lightbourn, Meets
on Wednesday, Feb. 3
3:00 - 4:00PM

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



Michael Black-Smith, our
Building Committee Chair,
hard at work.