



# ETHICAL VIEWS



June 2021 Vol. 135, No. 10 Newsletter of the Philadelphia Ethical Society

## THE SUMMER EDITION

### Summer Sundays on the Square

This summer, the Philadelphia Ethical Society, always a popular destination for members, friends, and fellow travelers, will offer a series of relaxed but stimulating programs in a variety of formats presented mostly by Leader Hugh Taft-Morales and society members coordinated through the Education Committee. While we miss our home on Rittenhouse Square – where we seek to become informed, inspired, and engaged -- we continue to recreate our virtual stage on zoom with the following Sunday platforms:

## JUNE

**Sunday, June 6, 11:00AM**  
***Aging, Ageism, and Change: How to Move Forward,***  
**Sylvia Metzler, PES Member**



This program is for everyone – older adults, their children and grandchildren. Sylvia, who has recently moved from her home in Philadelphia to

the Protestant Home for the Aged will discuss her decision to move, and her transition with the added challenge of a pandemic.

**Sunday, June 13, 11:00AM**  
***My Musical Evolution from Christian to Humanist,***  
**Robert Edwin Steinfort, PES Member and Musician**

In the late 1970s, Bob began writing the Synergy Series of Worship Experiences. As a nationally recognized church musician, he wanted to encourage Christian communities to interact more horizontally (personal human relationships) than vertically (God/Jesus Christ/Holy Spirit). He is now rewriting the Synergy Series from a humanist perspective. Come join Bob to listen to and sing along with his new versions without all the “God Talk.”



**Sunday, June 20, 11:00AM**  
***Ethical Page Turners,***  
**Betsy Lightbourn, PES Member and Education Committee Chair**

Betsy will facilitate a discussion on books read during the pandemic that our reviewers found inspirational and/or helped them through the pandemic.



**Sunday, June 27, 11:00AM**  
***Parable of the Sower,***  
**Octavia Butler, Hugh Taft-Morales, Leader, Philadelphia Ethical Society**

Octavia Butler, a science fiction writer who died in 2006, presented a vision of the near future that felt prescient. By the mid 2020s American Society is breaking down due to climate change, economic stagnation, wealth disparity and racism. It is a difficult prospect to behold, yet not one to turn away from. Butler was one of the best known among the few African American writers in the field.

## JULY

**Sunday, July 4**  
**Holiday - No Platform**

**Sunday, July 11, 11:00AM**  
***Leading and Learning During a Pandemic- What I Learned About Ethical Culture and Myself in 2021,***  
**Christian Hayden, PES Member and Leader in Training**

Christian Hayden has a unique distinction: he is the first and only Leader in Training to do a fully remote internship. Christian will share some of his experiences, challenges, and insights that he gathered from learning how to be clergy in a pandemic.

*Platforms continued on page 2*

## IN THIS ISSUE

Summer is often a time of transition, no less so this year, as we work upon the OUR PATH FORWARD effort (see more under the President's Column).

**Philadelphia Ethical Society invites the public to attend our platforms and events. Click [HERE](#) for the link.**

# JULY CONT.

## Sunday, July 18, 12:00 Noon *Annual Camp Linden Picnic*



YES, we're getting together again, for the first time in more than a year. And we'll be doing it in one of the most beautiful spots in the world.

No zoom program scheduled. If picnic is rained out, program for July 25 will take place and picnic will be postponed until July 25. Email Jeffrey Dubb for details. [jeffrey.dubb@gmail.com](mailto:jeffrey.dubb@gmail.com)

## Sunday, July 25, 11:00AM *Half of a Yellow Sun* by Chimamanda Ngozi: Book Discussion, Hugh Taft-Morales, Leader, PES

A tremendously evocative novel of the promise, hope, and dismaying aftermath of the war that was Biafra's fervent struggle to establish an independent republic in Nigeria. Published in 2006



# AUGUST

## Sunday, August 1, 11:00AM *The Wastefulness of Racism* Nick Sanders, PES member and former President

Most people know that racism is unethical because of the impact it has on people of color. But do you realize it also diminishes the chances of human flourishing and even survival? Nick will elaborate on this much less considered framing of racism and what it implies for ending racism.

Sunday, August 8, 11:00AM

## All AEU Platform: *The Truth About America.*

For details about this AEU Annual Assembly see the June 5 listing in Events.



## Sunday, August 15, 10:30AM *Reflections on A Wizard of Earthsea*, by Ursula Le Guin

Margaret Atwood called *A Wizard of Earthsea* one of the "wellsprings of fantasy literature. Originally received as a children's book, it has become a favorite of many sci-fans. Hugh will reflect on the creativity, philosophy, and ethics offered in this work by Ursula K. Le Guin.

## Sunday, August 22, 11:00AM *Planting Our Future: Seeding Ethical Culture in a Rural Valley* Pattie Arduini, President Susquehanna Valley Ethical Soc.

SVES is located in Lewisburg, PA a picturesque rural community situated along the Susquehanna River and home to Bucknell University. Learn how SVES came to be, its struggles and successes, and what the future holds for this Ethical Culture Society in Central PA.

## Sunday, August 29, 11:00AM *"Truth and Healing"* through poetry by Black authors

Poems by Maya Angelou, Gwendolyn Brooks, Langston Hughes, Jerico Brown and others as presented by members of the Ending Racism Task Force. How can poetry serve to enlighten us and move us to heal racial trauma?

# UPCOMING EVENTS

All events are offered online. Join all programs and meetings at [www.tiny.cc/phillyethics](http://www.tiny.cc/phillyethics)

## Tuesday, June 1, 5:30pm Book discussion on *The House of the Spirits*, by Isabel Allende

If you missed May's discussion of this marvelous debut novel by Isabel Allende, you have a second chance to join Hugh and members of the Baltimore Ethical Society on Zoom.

Saturday June 5-Aug. 8

**Addressing the Whole Truth About America** The AEU's 106th Assembly will be held virtually with various workshops and business working sessions throughout the summer, ending with the AEU Business Meeting on August 7 and the All Society Platform on August 8. Check out the list of events [HERE](#). Register in advance here: [REGISTER](#)

## Sunday, June 6, 2:00PM – Judging Another as Good or Bad

Hosted by the *Interfaith Institute of Long Island* (IFI), PES Leader Hugh Taft-Morales will join Rabbi Jay Rosenbaum, Rev. Tristan J. Salley, and Sr. Zainab Bey for a panel discussion moderated by Ethical Culture Leader Arthur Dobrin. To register and receive a PDF of a case study to be discussed, email [faroquekhan@outlook.com](mailto:faroquekhan@outlook.com) or call/text to 551-234-1213.

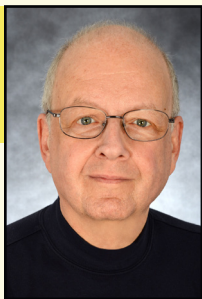
## Monday, June 28, 5:30PM – Book discussion on *Parable of the Sower*, by Octavia Butler

Following the platform of June 27, Hugh will host this book discussion in his series of fiction books by women authors.

**Monday, July 26, 5:30PM – Book discussion on *Half of a Yellow Sun*, by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie** Following the platform of July 25, Hugh will host a this book discussion in his series of fiction books by women authors.

**Monday, August 16, 5:30PM A Wizard of Earthsea, Ursula K. Le Guin** Following the platform of August 15, Hugh will host a this book discussion in his series of fiction books by women authors.





## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN A New Beginning

I've been a proud member of the Philadelphia Ethical Society for almost eleven years. For the past seven I've been pleased to be a member of the Board of Directors, and for the last five years I've served as your president. It has been an honor to represent our membership. Now it's time for me to step aside. On July 1, 2021 there will be new leadership and some new Board members.

We have a strong and vibrant community at PES. The fall season will usher in some changes. Our Leader Hugh Taft-Morales will be with us in a newly defined role. Hugh's love of teaching will be

evident as we move forward. In addition, we hope to add some administrative assistance for Cheryl, who basically keeps our organization on track behind the scenes. Cheryl, we can't thank you enough!

Another new endeavor we have started is "Our Path Forward". Over the past six months the Board has been working with a professional to forge a sustainable plan to build and strengthen our organization. If you're not yet involved, please consider joining the effort. We need new ideas and energy.

I plan to take it easy for a while, although I will remain on a few

committees. I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has been a member of the Board, and all our members who serve on various committees. I also want to thank Henry Pashkow, who edits our *Ethical Views*. Henry has decided to take a break, so there will be new leadership at our publication. If you get the chance, please give Henry your thanks.

I wish all our Board members and committee members the best of success. Let me repeat (one more time): Get involved. Help to shape the future of our community.

~ Best, Bob Bueding  
[bbueding@phillyethics.org](mailto:bbueding@phillyethics.org)

## SUMMER BIRTHDAYS

### JUNE

- 3 Temma Fishman
- 3 Zia Okocha
- 7 Janice Moore
- 14 Arthur Pielli
- 22 Sylvia Goldman



Helios as the personification of midday



### JULY

- 2 Eric Clausen
- 4 Uncle Sam (245th)
- 9 John McGormick
- 9 Harry Thorn
- 10 Sylvia Metzler
- 13 Dan Hoffman
- 17 Mike Black-Smith
- 22 Marvin Liebman
- 26 Betsy Lightbourn
- 26 Sharon Wallis

### AUGUST

- 4 Leslie Williams
- 6 Kim McKay
- 7 Stan Horwitz
- 13 Felix Adler (170th)
- 14 Ilse Sakheim



Center: Hesperus as personification of evening.

Above: Diana as the personification of night,

All by Anton Raphael Mengs, 1728-1779

## LEADER'S COLUMN    Poison in the Bloodstream of Our Democracy



Let me be clear, politicians from all political parties lie. I have spoken out in the past against lies from Democrats – from President Obama’s overly-optimistic statement that everyone could keep their health plan after the passage of the Affordable Care Act, to the ridiculous claim by President Clinton that he “did not have sex with that woman,” to the misinformation President Johnson cranked out that led to the deaths of thousands of soldiers and innocent Vietnamese. But “the big lie” dominating today’s news headlines continues to be sustained mainly by Republicans.

But not all Republicans. On May 3rd, 2020, Representative Liz Cheney was once again one of the only Republicans to defend the legitimacy of the 2020 election process. She said Trump’s “big lie” that the election was “stolen” was “a poison in the bloodstream of our democracy.” She voted to impeach the President for encouraging the deadly insurrection at the Capitol. Back in February, when the horrific insurrection was still fresh in people’s minds, Republicans voted 145-61 in an anonymous vote to allow her to retain her #3 leadership position.

Now, things have become more ominous. As Trump schemes his political resurrection from Mar-a-lago, Republicans, without the shield of anonymity, are sacrificing Cheney to defend the big lie. While Republican election officials and Republican-appointed judges uncovered no substantial evidence to doubt the election, Republican Congressional leaders are demanding a loyalty oath to Trump, not truth.

Before Trump was elected, I spoke about lying in the campaign. [[Feb. 2016, The Press, Lies, and Politics](#)] I called on the press to stop this dangerous trend. I invoked the spirits of Edward R. Murrow and Katherine Graham, journalistic heroes who defeated the misinformation machines behind Joseph McCarthy and Richard Nixon. But the media, underfunded and no longer trusted by the public, seem no match for today’s political distortion.

This began to be clear to me back on January 22, 2017, when I heard White House advisor Kellyanne Conway turn “demonstrable falsehoods” into “alternative facts.” That was just the beginning. While administrations have issued lies in the past, few have done it so blatantly in the face of contrary evidence. As columnist Richard Cohen puts it, “they lie with abandon and, when caught, double down. You could call it the art of the deal.”

Ah yes, the art of the deal – the title of Trump’s 1987 book in which he promotes bravado, exaggeration, and playing to people’s fantasies as “a very effective form of promotion.” While he claimed that such “truthful hyperbole” was “innocent,” he is guilty of lying from the bully pulpit. Fact checkers from the Washington Post calculated that he gave 30,573 false or misleading statements while president. This staggering number indicates that the poison may be becoming lethal.

Like many of you, I held out hope that Rep. Jamie Raskin and the rest of the impeachment team would help resurrect truth as a political virtue. Yet, despite mountains of evidence on public record and effective prosecution, Trump was not convicted. And the big lie lives on, no thanks to House Republican Leader Kevin McCarthy. Clearly the ex-president’s fundraising power is part of McCarthy’s plan to take back the House and seize the speaker’s gavel. Given the surge of voter repression in state after state, this plan might work for McCarthy. But how much more poison can the nation take?

This summer I will spend time working to detox our nation. I’m not sure what my modest contribution will be, but I will fight the growing addiction to irrationality and disregard for evidence coursing through our body politic. I will call on people of good will from both political parties, but particularly from the Republican party, to defeat “the big lie” that fuels so many violent conspiracy theories. While George Conway and others in the anti-Trump Lincoln Project are worried about the end of the Republican party, we in Ethical Culture must help leach out the poison in the very bloodstream of democracy.

Hugh Taft-Morales  
Leader, Philadelphia Ethical Society

## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK The Inside Story, As It Were

After four years, I'm stepping aside as editor of our newsletter. Before stepping off the podium I'd like to share a few stories about how I changed *Ethical Views* and *Ethical Views* changed me. The entire enterprise took a lot of effort on my part. It wasn't all roses, let me tell you. I got into some disputes with others about who had final say and it wasn't always me. Nor should it have been. I don't regret a minute of it. There are a lot of different tasks that go with the

The Board ultimately pulled me back to 8 pages. And for good reasons.

At first I tried to set strict deadlines. That was impossible. Platform descriptions were often late, again, for good reason. Speakers didn't submit their copy in time. Then, some articles were late, but those I wanted. On occasion there was empty space I needed to fill. I gave writers extra time to fill it or I wrote a filler myself. And I slid down the slippery slope at

Often, I see my tenure as editor of a volunteer organization in constant flux as akin to parachuting out of an airplane with a snag in the parachute, flailing as I came down, and landing in a tree, looking down, wondering how I would ever shimmy down to solid ground before the end of the month. So much for control.

Often, I enjoyed the flight.

And once Celeste, our fine layout



job. Simply put, I get the submissions and work with our layout person to get them into allowable space. That's an oversimplification, of course. Some articles are suitable and others aren't and they all have to fit within a space requirement that can be the editor's friend or enemy. I had to wrestle with those I rejected, at times. But I was driven by a goal, and that goal was to encourage more members to write.

And they did. Different people responded to my plea to write. To sweeten the pot I left the final editorial decision to the writer. Quality of writing or conformity to style was never uppermost in my mind. It's not a 'professional' newsletter. Participation is rooted in Ethical Culture. That led me to extend the scope of EV a little beyond what may have been its original intentions, requiring additional pages. In so doing I managed to irritate some and confuse others as to what to expect.

the bottom of which all thought of maintaining an enforceable deadline was a passing fancy.

I got permission to write my own editorials. That was a surprise. To my knowledge no editor had done this before. It occurred to me that I was granted this privilege because it came at a time when nobody else wanted the job. The demon in me was set loose. I wrote a lot of articles on a variety of subjects that were way out of line, but rejected them myself. I settled for a wordy digression on how I kicked the Ambien habit. When I look back upon that, I shake my head in disbelief. That has nothing to do with Ethical Culture.

As embarrassed as I am by this, I see it now as one step along the way to change. And change I did. What I wrote afterwards was germane to Ethical Culture in its broadest sense. I hope that's so. That's not so bad an outcome when I think of it that way.

person, put together an attractive edition composed of content, graphics, good pictures, and articles, I was proud of our work together.

I developed some fine working relationships. My relationship with Celeste is a case in point. I strengthened my relationships with others. The people I worked with assessed my rough copy and gave me good critical advice. This vital exchange of views is primary to Ethical culture.

So, what's EV now and where's it going? I think the arrangement under which I worked with others, good as it often was, needs tuning up – a job I leave to the incoming editor, a position to be filled by the Board.

And I'll close with a thank you for letting me do a job that was frustrating, stimulating, disputatious, satisfying, all in one.

Henry Pashkow,  
PES Member



## LETTING THE PAST BE PAST

by Leigh Buchanan, PES Member

For most of my life I believed myself uniquely free of racism. Like most incredible superpowers, this color-blindness came with an origin story.

I grew up in Washington D.C., in the 1960s, not far from Embassy Row. In elementary school I had two good friends with fathers high up in ambassadorial staffs: one from Nigeria and one from Ghana. Their homes were gorgeous: the walls bedecked with vibrant paintings from their native countries. Even at home on weekday afternoons their mothers wore long silky dresses with bold prints.

My best friend, Diane, also was Black, the daughter of a corporate lawyer. We lived in the same building; but her apartment was much larger than ours and boasted the very best and biggest of every consumer electronic product then known to man. The families of all three friends employed maids.

In comparison my home and the homes of most of my white friends were drab, messy. To my embarrassment, my mother sometimes collected me from play dates wearing a housedress. Tremendous poverty existed (still exists) in Washington—particularly in some neighborhoods around the Capitol. But whether through chance or my parents' design I never saw it.

The message I internalized: Black people are wealthier and more respected within the wider society than are white people. It wasn't until sixth grade when I sat with my visiting grandmother watching *All in the Family* that I understood most of the country believed the opposite.

The impressions formed in childhood are powerful. Until recently I've claimed my anomalous early experiences immunized me against racism. I thought I'd make a great case study. If only the sociologists could get a load of me!

In the last five years, as I've learned more about unconscious racism, that smugness has unraveled. In my relations with Black friends and associates I now recognize a tendency to patronize and make assumptions. I give myself more mental backslaps for great conversations with Black acquaintances than for similar exchanges with white ones. (I'm an

introvert and so consider it a win whenever I talk to anyone I don't know well.) I was secretly relieved when my husband urged me to curtail early morning jogs that took me to poor Black neighborhoods in North Philly. Clearly, growing up in a looking glass version of America's racial divide was no match for five decades' exposure to the ugly reality.

I'm embarrassed now that I once claimed to be exempt from bias. I don't know whether I ever fully believed in my own exceptionalism; but I'm pretty sure the folks to whom I told my story didn't. That misguided conviction excused me for years from doing the hard work encouraged by Ethical Humanists. With each new headline and study the country has learned more about racism's myriad manifestations and pernicious effects. Meanwhile I've acted like an AP student who placed out of that class.

That background likely explains my empathy with the PES members who responded critically to a survey recently conducted by the Ending Racism Task Force. (I edited a report about the results, which will be released to the entire congregation soon.) Members are united in criticizing pervasive and systemic racism in Greater Philadelphia. But when asked about their personal implicit biases and about racism within the congregation, a minority downplayed their existence and expressed discomfort with the suggestion that discomfort is warranted.

Most members acknowledged their struggles and committed to improvement. But others felt bombarded by anti-racism messaging and resented the implication that they might be guilty of white privilege. While the majority reported growing awareness of their own inherent bias, some described themselves as color blind and guiltless in the perpetuation of racism.

To advance the conversation with those members—and throughout the congregation—the ERTF proposes adopting a more thoughtful use of language and sensitive but frank dialogue. As someone still recovering from the bruises incurred by falling off my own pedestal, I appreciate that consideration. And I hope that frankness takes higher priority. I don't expect it to be fun: candid self-reflection rarely is. On the bright side, it is almost always interesting.

*Leigh Buchanan is a longtime business journalist for publications including Inc. Magazine and The Harvard Business Review. She is now a member and future Ethical Society Editor of our newsletter.*

## BEHIND THE SCENES

### THE BASEMENT RENEWAL - IT TOOK A VILLAGE by Cheryl Desmond, Society Administrator

On October 3, 2018, I went down to the basement to investigate a “dead” phone line, and to my surprise, I found the plaster and mesh ceiling structure hanging off in pieces and lying smashed on the floor. Thus began a 30-month journey of contracting and repair. Several things happened at the outset, insurance people were called, structural and asbestos evaluations were done, and funds were raised. Bringing in a demolition and clean-up contractor was an immediate need.

One of the first decisions was to remove all the asbestos steam pipe insulation throughout the entire basement. This was not an easy decision and there were differing viewpoints, but what I think prevailed was the view that the removal was a payment towards the future. Our successors will never need to worry about asbestos again. The additional cost of the full removal came out of the regular 2019 building repair budget.

Another early decision that shaped the final project was removing wooden paneling in front of the radiators on the two side walls. Mike Black-Smith had a great time demolishing those beat-up old partitions.

Moving forward there were various ideas from Mike, Kate Esposito, and myself about what should be done with the space. Did PES need a theater, meeting space, more classrooms? What would bring in rental income and what would the budget allow us to do? Discussion followed about room plans and layout, but for now, the original L-shape floor plan has been retained, giving us flexibility for future use.

The next phase project used excellent contractors who did a seamless repair of the ceiling, and masons who re-stuccoed the wall along the west side. After that, Mike and I stepped in again and I spent my pandemic summer of 2020 (while socially distant) painting walls, ceiling, pipes and trim. We opted for carpet tiles for the flooring to ensure easy maintenance, and found a discounted supplier for the gray pattern that I chose.

Today, the Ethical Society has an attractive and easy to

maintain flex space on the lower level. The area nearest to the back door will serve as a “Green Room” for Auditorium concerts and shows, while the larger area with 60 padded folding chairs (a great deal I found on Craigslist) can accommodate classes, meetings, and performances.

Many people had a share in this work, contractor advice was invaluable, and so personally and on behalf of the Ethical Society, I want to extend our most sincere thanks to the following people. Thank You each and every one!



#### FUNDERS

Eric Clausen, whose significant gift spurred members to match

#### VOLUNTEERS

Manny Hoffman, ably coached by Dan Hoffman, ceiling painting  
Alec Hersh, wall and ceiling painting, and carpet installation  
Mike Black-Smith, job site clean-out, project drawings, asbestos project management, steam pipe insulation, and carpet installation

#### STAFF

Greg Williams, masonry repairs  
Cheryl Desmond, project design and finish selection, contractor management, and painting

#### Valuable advice also provided by:

Ferguson Plumbing, Woodland Building Supply, Keim Mineral Coatings and last but not least, the PES Building Committee





## 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

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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,  
Wednesday June 23rd  
5:00 PM

**End Racism Task Force**  
Sylvia Metzler, Meets  
Saturday, June 19th,  
11:00 AM

**Camp Linden**  
Jeffrey Dubb,  
Next Meeting TBD

**Ethical Action Committee**  
Denise Marks, Meets on  
Monday, June 21st, 3:00 PM

**Communication Committee**  
Drew Snyder,  
Wednesday June 16th  
5:00 PM

**Finance Committee**  
Vincent Russo,  
Meets Wednesday,  
June 9th, 5:00 PM

**Education Committee**  
Betsy Lightbourn,  
Next Meeting TBD

Join all programs and meetings  
at [www.tiny.cc/phillyethics](http://www.tiny.cc/phillyethics)

For suggestions regarding this newsletter,  
contact Henry Pashkow  
[hpashkow@gmail.com](mailto:hpashkow@gmail.com)

## PHOTO FROM YESTERYEAR:

*Where was this crazy photo taken?*

a) Above Philadelphia's City Hall.

b) Above Washington D.C.,  
where Kate was about to drop a  
love bomb.

c) At the Overbrook Environmental  
Center, pre-mask era.

