



# ETHICAL VIEWS



April 2022 Vol. 136, No. 8 Newsletter of the Philadelphia Ethical Society

## SUNDAY PLATFORMS

The public is welcome to join us



**Sunday, April 3, 11 AM**

### ***Joy of Living***

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

The French call it “*joie de vivre*,” a term that first appears in the pantheistic writings of Jules Michelet. Humanistic psychologist

Carl Rogers praises it as “spontaneous relaxed enjoyment” and “the quiet joy in being one’s self.” We see it in photos of the giggling delight that bonded Bishop Desmond Tutu and the Dalai Lama. How do we nurture this familiar yet elusive state of being in our lives? How do we give it to others?

**Sunday, April 10, 11 AM**

### ***Toward a Greater Inclusivity***

**Naomi Washington-Leapheart,  
Villanova University**

Rev. Washington-Leapheart, an adjunct professor of theology and religious studies at Villanova, is a Black-queer church girl, preacher, teacher, and activist. She develops spaces of spiritual candor, disruption, reflection, transformation, and action. Washington-Leapheart will speak about how to make faith-based organizations more inclusive.



**Sunday, April 17, 11 AM**

### ***Intergenerational Climate Justice***

**Hugh Taft-Morales, Leader**

What do young environmental activists think about the global catastrophe they’ve inherited? How do older Americans feel about leaving future generations with this existential threat? Hugh explores groups of people young (the Sunrise Movement) and seasoned (Third Act) grappling with climate change. And he shares his own reactions to Daniel Sherrell’s book, *Warmth: Coming of Age at the End of Our World* and the new film *Don’t Look Up*. How can we



Photo by Lorie Shaul

create a strong intergenerational movement demanding climate justice that protects the most vulnerable among us and the future of our species? (Vaccinated members wishing to attend this platform at 1906 Rittenhouse are invited to do so.)

**Sunday, April 24, 11 AM**

### ***Is Amazon the Future of Labor?***

**Rebecca Kolins Givan, Rutgers University**

From warehouses to delivery vans, Amazon workers are everywhere. With over a million employees, Amazon has become one of the country’s largest employers. Workers from Staten Island to Chicago to Bessemer, Alabama, are organizing and fighting back against physically demanding jobs that take place under constant surveillance and produce frequent injuries. Kolins Givan, associate professor of labor studies and employment relations at Rutgers, has published widely on work and worker representation in the United States and Europe. Is Amazon the future of work? she asks. The answer has major implications for organized labor.



## IN THIS ISSUE . . .

We celebrate Earth Day with a meditation on the generational toll of global warming; a report on local climate-justice actions; and a shoutout to our own patch of green, Camp Linden.

Join us just prior to each session at [www.tiny.cc/phillyethics](http://www.tiny.cc/phillyethics)

## FROM THE LEADER We Owe It to the Children

By Hugh Taft-Morales

I LOVE TRAVELING TO QUEBEC, CANADA, WHERE HALF A century ago my parents purchased a cottage. But as I grew older, owning that property seemed increasingly extravagant. I considered selling it and was surprised when my children disagreed. It was a bigger surprise when Sean (they/them), my eldest, said that, given climate change, land in a northern latitude near a seaway could prove to be a sanctuary for survival.

The omnipresence of catastrophic climate change is the subject of *Warmth: Coming of Age at the End of Our World*, which we will discuss at the Society this spring. Its millennial author, Daniel Sherrell, explores the existential crisis facing young adults considering whether to start a family. He frames the book as a letter to a potential future child. It is an expression of love wrapped up in advice about how to process what Sherrell calls “the Problem.”

Sean told me that their friends have had the same conversation when debating whether to bring new life into the world. Is “breeding future soldiers for the water wars” irresponsible? Sean conceded that more privileged future children would likely suffer less from brutal battles over resources. But Sean did make sure the house they bought was at least 100 feet above sea level.

Sherrell, like Sean, struggles with sadness, anger, and hopelessness over climate issues. A growing number of therapists specialize in “eco-anxiety, which can be paralyzing, according to research by [Panu Pihkala](#), an adjunct professor of environmental theology in Helsinki. But eco-anxiety is not a disease, says Pihkala. Rather, it is “an understandable reaction to the magnitude of the environmental problems that surround us.”

*Warmth*, although very poetic, is not an easy read. It starts with the story of David Buckel, a lawyer who, in 2018, burned himself to death in Brooklyn’s Prospect Park to protest “what we are doing to ourselves.” When Sherrell’s mother called that “early death by fossil fuel” crazy, the author disagreed. But Sherrell acknowledges that the act was ineffective because it was quickly lost in the ceaseless onslaught of news. It made him question the value of his own eco-activism. By addressing his potential child, Sherrell reanimates his commitment. “There is something about you in

particular that makes the weight of the Problem palpable,” he writes, “like it’s moved from my brain down into my bones.” Reading *Warmth* drove the problem deeper into my own bones. So, I turned to Sean for wisdom about millennial angst and the responsibilities of older generations.



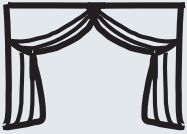
A 34-year-old nihilist with a sense of humor, Sean reminded me good-naturedly that “you had no right to bring them into this world” and so I bear great responsibility for their situation. After decades of earnest activism, Sean feels less optimistic about changing the world. Like me, they dutifully recycle plastics and conserve energy. But they believe that only a political sea change will make any real difference.

So, I hereby recommit to creating that sea change. I doubt I’ll overthrow the patriarchal capitalist system that dominates and destroys for short-term profit. But I promise not to fall into the trap—warned of by Sherrell—of “each generation abandoning the next to an increasingly impossible situation, waving goodbye and good luck.” As Sherrell points out, “true intergenerational justice demands more of us.”

*Hugh Taft-Morales is the Leader of the Philadelphia Ethical Society. Read more about Hugh’s love for the northern latitudes in his From the Leader column [here](#).*

*Note on the illustration: In Adolf Hirémy-Hirschl’s 1888 painting, “Ahasuerus at the End of the World,” the legendary wanderer is portrayed as “the last man in the polar wilderness, caught between the angel of hope and the specter of death,” explains artist [James Gurney](#). “Before him lies the personification of dead humanity.”*





## BEHIND THE SCENES

### A Generous New Endowment

by Cheryl Desmond

**I**SOMETIMES REFER TO THE PHILADELPHIA ETHICAL Society's financial support as a three-legged stool. We often talk about support from members and rental income. Typically, though, endowment income gets less attention. That changed last winter when, thanks to the generosity of member Eric Clausen, we added a significant new endowment fund for the first time in 90 years!

Our new Philadelphia Ethical Society Organizational Endowment is a vehicle for individual planned bequest contributions made as charitable gift annuities. It is held and managed by the **Philadelphia Foundation**, a community organization with a pool of several hundred permanent charitable trust funds intended to improve the quality of life in Greater Philadelphia.

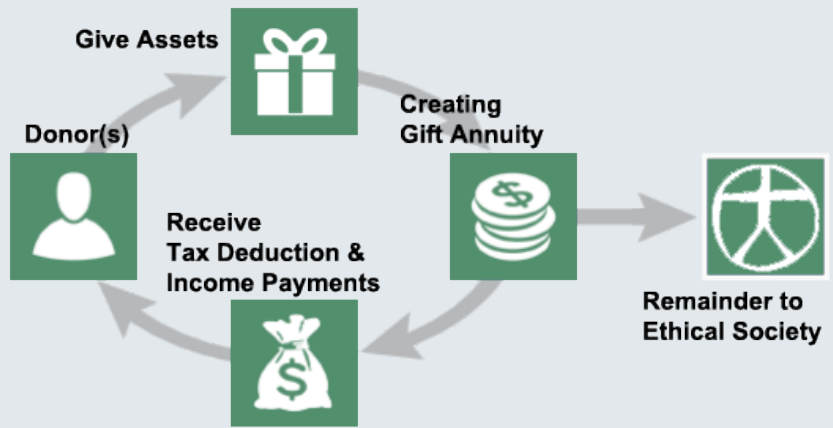
To get a clearer understanding of our new fund, I reached out to Eric. His comments have been condensed and lightly edited.

#### **Why did you choose the Philadelphia Foundation to hold and manage this fund?**

*PES endowment funds have historically earned mediocre rates of return. Also, the fund currently providing income for operating expenses is invested with an out-of-state investment manager. I felt PES funds should be invested with local managers and perform better.*

*I learned about the Philadelphia Foundation, which makes grants to support numerous area charitable causes and provides nonprofits the opportunity to offer members and friends charitable gift annuities. That latter feature provides tax deductions and attractive streams of income for annuity recipients, while also benefiting the designated nonprofits. Also, Philadelphia Foundation endowments historically have outperformed PES endowments.*

*In 2019 I established a small Philadelphia Foundation endowment fund—the Philadelphia Ethical Society S. Burns Weston Fund. It required less management time than what our Finance Committee spends discussing PES endowments. Subsequently, I helped PES set up the larger Philadelphia Ethical Society Organizational Endowment so the Finance Committee and Board of Trustees could see how it works.*



#### **What are your hopes for the future of this fund?**

*My first goal was to offer members charitable gift annuities, which can provide them with streams of retirement income much higher than from most investments, as well as tax deductions, and which also benefit PES. Charitable gift annuity payout rates and tax benefits are determined by the original contribution and annuity recipient's age, with the remaining principal going to PES at the end of the term.*

*My second goal was to encourage the Finance Committee to consider the Philadelphia Foundation as a place to invest PES endowment monies now with other managers. The decision to move funds must be made by the Board of Trustees based on a Finance Committee recommendation. My hope is that growing familiarity by the Finance Committee and Board with the Philadelphia Foundation will overcome any hesitation about that move.*

*My third goal was to make it easy for members to contribute to a PES endowment fund. The Philadelphia Foundation will also help members establish new endowment funds benefitting PES, either for restricted purposes or to honor a special person. For example, someone might want to establish an endowment supporting Camp Linden or the PES music program.*

Estate planning is not always at the forefront of our minds. But as I learned from Eric, through the Philadelphia Foundation we now have two new ways to support the Philadelphia Ethical Society. Donors may make a direct contribution to the S. Burns Weston Fund or create a charitable gift annuity, an option I am seriously considering. I urge readers to do so as well.

To learn more, consult the Society office or Finance Committee.

*Cheryl Desmond is the administrator of the Philadelphia Ethical Society.*



FOR ALMOST A CENTURY, THE PHILADELPHIA ETHICAL Society has been the steward of a precious little piece of Planet Earth known as Camp Linden. These 51 acres of natural beauty, located along the Brandywine Creek in rural Chester County, were donated to the Society in 1926 as a children's summer camp. Although we convene there for our annual picnic, Camp Linden's primary purpose remains to host a summer program that introduces inner-city children to the wonders of nature. With summer approaching, the Camp Linden Committee wants to remind long-time Society members—and inform new ones—of what we do, why we do it, and how all of you can get involved.

The Ethical Society partners with organizations that run day camps serving school-age children from low-income families. Over six weeks our partners bring the same group of children to Camp Linden on the same weekday for a program of environmental education and swimming.

At Camp Linden children from crowded urban settings are exposed to the sights, sounds, and sensations of the great outdoors and to the living creatures inhabiting our wooded campus and creek. That is beneficial in itself. A growing body of research links the lack of nature in the lives of today's children (**"nature-deficit disorder"**) to disturbing trends, including increased childhood obesity, attention disorders, and depression.

Each camp session begins with a discussion of Camp Linden Values. First, *value yourself*. Keep yourself safe and open to experience and learning. Second, *value other people*. That applies especially to your fellow campers. Keep them safe and help them learn. Third, *value Planet Earth and all living things*. That applies especially to the creatures you encounter at Camp

Linden. Learn from them and leave everything as you found it.

The goal of our environmental curriculum is to convey an age-appropriate understanding of the laws and processes of nature—which are truly amazing—and an appreciation of the challenges facing our planet. We accomplish this through short lessons and related activities. We also provide our partners with a list of resources to prepare campers for each week's subject matter. (More detailed information is available on the Camp Linden [page](#) of the Society web site.)

We depend on volunteers to plant and cultivate the garden, prepare the plots where campers will be planting, clear the trails, and perform other chores to get the property ready for the season. Work days are on Saturdays. We generally carpool from the Ethical Society building at 9 AM and return by 4 PM. Lunch is provided. Volunteers work with our paid staff when camp is in session.

As for the financials, Camp Linden is not part of the regular Ethical Society budget. Rather, it is financed by grants from charitable trusts (specifically, the Schreiber Family Fund and the Rose Rappaport Long Fund) and by individual contributions to Friends of Camp Linden. We do not charge our partners, although we do expect them to supply the campers' lunches and cover the cost of transportation.

You can support this program by making a financial contribution to Friends of Camp Linden. And, of course, you are welcome to join the Committee. We hope to see you soon, among the trees.

Sharon Wallis is Camp Linden Program Director.



## ***The Ethical Society bylaws define the mission of the Camp Linden Committee as follows:***

*(1) to provide a camp experience for inner-city children and youth that promotes appreciation of the natural world, acknowledges the intrinsic worth of all human beings, and encourages campers to develop self-reliance, integrity, and ethical relationships;*

*(2) to provide an opportunity for members of the Society to carry out their commitment to ethical action by supporting Camp Linden through volunteer efforts and financial contributions;*

*(3) to provide a place where Society members and other humanistic organizations can hold events and retreats; and*

*(4) to serve as responsible stewards of the land and preserve it as a place to commune with the natural world.*

## **FROM THE ENDING RACISM TASK FORCE**

### **Think Global. Catch Up on What's Happening Local.**

*By John Marshall*

THE THEME OF THIS YEAR'S EARTH DAY, ON APRIL 22, IS "Invest in Our Planet." The event's organizer, Earthday.org, is working with more than 150,000 partners in around 192 countries to build environmental democracy. Its mission is to diversify, educate, and activate the environmental movement worldwide.

With all the global attention, it seems like a good time to review local and regional actions that address the intersection of environmentalism and racial justice. Many of Philadelphia's low-income communities and communities of color are located in industrial neighborhoods or near major roadways that emit pollution regularly. Climate change will only worsen those conditions.

POWER Interfaith is a group of local and regional congregations working toward racial justice in areas including the economy, education, and the environment. Its Environmental Working Group is engaged with the Philadelphia City Government's Office of Sustainability. Specifically, they are working to create a vision for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's local Government Advisory Commission to give paid positions to residents who have experienced environmental burdens.

POWER also is an active party in the ongoing review of PGW's capital budget. Previously there was zero transparency. But for public hearings over Zoom during the winter, the Philadelphia Gas Commission clarified in writing that PGW must respond to requests for information from the active parties and that POWER would be able to cross-examine witnesses. (At

the most recent hearing, on March 8, POWER was not allowed to respond because the whole challenge to PGW was brought on the alliance's behalf.)

The Pennsylvania State Government's Climate Equity Table seeks to unite urban, rural, and suburban communities for climate and environmental justice. Members of the Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus have made these issues a statewide priority by introducing two bills. The first would codify the Environmental Justice Advisory Board within the Department of Environmental Protection. This entity would be made up of community members and health experts focused on protecting the health of communities with environmental risks.

The second bill calls for the creation of an Office of Just Transition as part of PGW's move from fossil fuel to renewable energy. "Just Transition" is a framework for ensuring that workers and others are not harmed—and, in fact, benefit—from such shifts. The pandemic and rising automation have resulted in mass unemployment and displaced workers in our local communities. The transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy would create good jobs in industries such as solarization and weatherization.

The Philadelphia Ethical Society is affiliated with POWER Interfaith. As a member of the Society, I have enjoyed POWER's fellowship and efforts to make this world a better place.

*John Marshall is a member of the Ending Racism Task Force of the Philadelphia Ethical Society*

## THIS IS US A Film about Science and a Film-Star Scientist Back from the Dead

**W**HAT BETTER WAY FOR A RATIONALIST ORGANIZATION to celebrate Women's History Month than with a salute to pioneering women in science? Following a hybrid Sunday platform on March 20, the Community Committee hosted its inaugural in-person event: a screening of *Hidden Figures*, the 2016 film about three Black women mathematicians who played a crucial part in NASA's early space program.

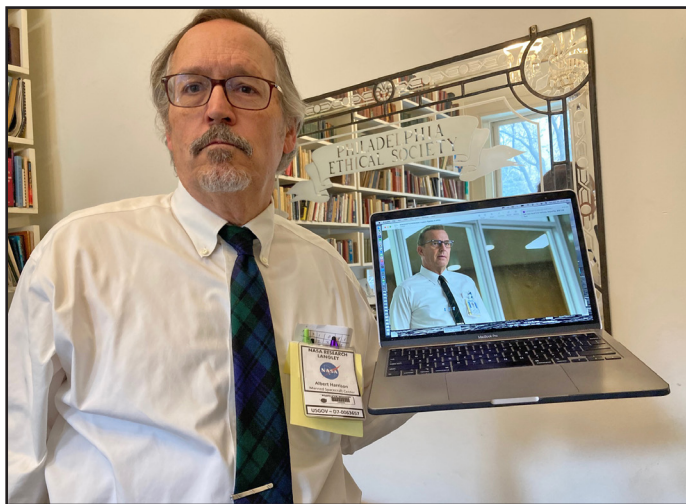
Before the film, close to 20 Society members milled around the auditorium at 1906 Rittenhouse, plying their wits against an assortment of science- and space-themed brain teasers provided by Ruth and Barry Dubinsky. (Ruth is chairperson of the new Community Committee and—working with Community Life Coordinator Reva Stover and others—an organizer of the event.) Barry, dressed in a homemade Gandolph the Gray Halloween costume, demonstrated how to guess someone's birthday with

a technique that is also a fun way to teach binary arithmetic. Other stations presented metal and wooden puzzles that test proficiency in spatial relationships. Drew Snyder, it turns out, is proficient at material challenges as well as digital ones.

After the movie, surprise guest Hedy Lamarr was kind enough to return from the dead for an interview with Hugh. The Austrian-American movie star explained how, in 1941, she co-invented a wireless technology that underlies today's Bluetooth, WiFi, and GPS systems. Several members remarked that the flirtatious Hedy, who also talked about Hitler and Hollywood, bore a striking resemblance to Society member Kate Esposito. At the end, some of the puzzles and *Hidden Figures* paraphernalia were given away as door prizes. Fingers crossed that Covid counts continue their decline, allowing us to hold more events like this one.



**Mod magic:** Ruth (Hippie Chick) & Barry (the Wizard) Dubinsky.



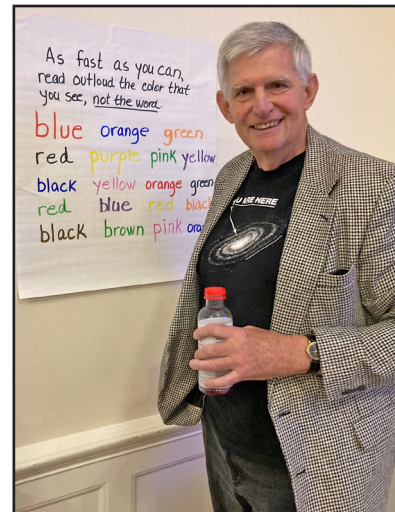
**Rocket man:** Leader Hugh came as Al Harrison, head of the Space Task Group in *Hidden Figures*.



**(Left) Open sesame:** Drew Snyder solved the interlocking ring puzzle in 30 seconds.

**(Right) Scientist and seductress:** Hedy Lamarr had never heard of Kate Esposito but thought she sounded charming.

**(Far right) Sense of perspective:** Robert Steinfort in his favorite science-themed shirt.







# UPCOMING EVENTS

We are meeting again in person. Except when we are on Zoom. Sometimes we're doing both. Oh dear. Be sure to check the listing.



**Saturday, April 2 (rain date April 9)**

## Camp Linden Volunteer Day

We will carpool from the Society building at 9 AM; or you can meet us at the camp at around 10:15 AM. Tools and lunch are provided. RSVP to [Sharon Wallis](#) or [Henry Pashkow](#).



*Volunteering: Sylvia Metzler teaches campers about bees.*

**Sunday, April 3, 7-8:15 PM**

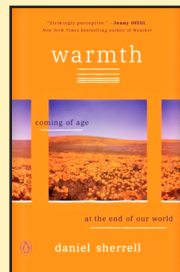
## Introduction to Ethical Humanism

Bring your friends to discuss the history, philosophy, and community of Ethical Humanism, a congregational non-theist movement dedicated to living closer to our ethical ideals. (Zoom and in-person)

**Monday, April 4, 5:30 PM**

## April book discussion: *Warmth: Coming of Age at the End of Our World* by Daniel Sherrell

We'll discuss Daniel Sherrell's *Warmth: Coming of Age at the End of Our World*, which inspired Hugh's April 17th morning address. This book, by a climate activist, is an emotional exploration of climate change as experienced both physically and existentially by different generations. Feel free to come even if you haven't read it. (Zoom)



We will discuss this book in-person on Sunday, April 17, at 4 PM.



**Monday, April 18, 7-8:30 PM**

## *The Ethical Lens: Surviving Incarceration and Reentry*

In the first of a new series of Ethical Society conversations, Leader Hugh Taft-Morales interviews J. Jondhi Harrell, founder of TCRC Community Healing Center, about the personal, spiritual, and social resources needed to remain whole while in prison. How can people make it through our retributive system, reset their lives, and reenter society with the best chances of flourishing? Harrell will discuss how he coped with

25 years of incarceration, the challenges of transition to freedom, and the future of reentry in Philadelphia. (In-person)

In May and June, *The Ethical Lens* will host Philadelphia Councilmember Helen Gym and Constitutional scholar Kim Roosevelt.

**Saturday, April 30 (rain date May 7)**

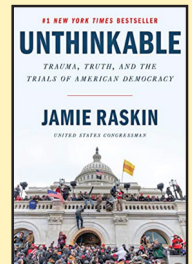
## Camp Linden Volunteer Day

We will carpool from the Society building at 9 AM; or you can meet us at the camp at around 10:15 AM. Tools and lunch are provided. RSVP to [Sharon Wallis](#) or [Henry Pashkow](#).

**Sunday, May 1, 4 PM**

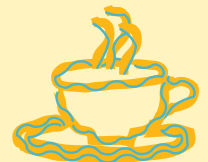
## May book discussion: *Unthinkable: Trauma, Truth, and the Trials of American Democracy* by Jamie Raskin

In this book, Maryland Representative Jamie Raskin, a new light in American politics, continues to call for the highest ideals of democracy while enduring intense personal heartbreak. This first meeting will cover the Prologue and Part 1 (In-person). We will discuss Part 2 in person on May 22 at 4 PM and Part 3 on June 5 at 4 PM on Zoom.



## Tea Circle Anyone?

Please let Hugh know if you'd like to host a "Tea Circle," an informal social Zoom gathering of Society members. Coordinate with Hugh on the date and time and invite a mix of members that you want to get to know or reconnect with. Hugh will handle the Zoom invitations and co-host. You pick the discussion starters!



## Where to Find Us

All links to Zoom sessions appear in the event descriptions on the [calendar section](#) of our web site.

All in-person events take place at the Philadelphia Ethical Society at 1906 Rittenhouse Square.



## SUNDAY SERVICES

11 AM

*Ethical Views* is published monthly  
except July and August.

*Executive Editor*, Leigh Buchanan  
*Copy Editor*, Henry Pashkow  
*Web Master, Copy Editor*, Nick Sanders  
*Layout*, Celeste Hardester  
*Production*, Cheryl Desmond

Philadelphia Ethical Society  
1906 South Rittenhouse Square  
Philadelphia, PA 19103

Hugh Taft-Morales, Leader  
**PES Board of Trustees**  
Michael Black-Smith, President  
Kate Esposito, Vice President  
John McCormick, Secretary  
Nick Sanders, Treasurer  
Stan Horwitz  
John Marshall  
Sally Redlener  
Drew Snyder

(215) 735 - 3456  
[office@phillyethics.org](mailto:office@phillyethics.org)  
[www.phillyethics.org](http://www.phillyethics.org)

## PHILADELPHIA ETHICAL SOCIETY COMMITTEES

Our Society is sustained by all of its volunteers who serve on the many committees that fulfill our purpose and guide our decisions. The following generous members serve as chairs. Committees meet at the times shown. Members and interested others are welcome to attend. Email us to learn more at [office@phillyethics.org](mailto:office@phillyethics.org). Join meetings at [www.tiny.cc/phillyethics](http://www.tiny.cc/phillyethics)

**Board of Trustees**  
Michael Black-Smith  
Sunday, April 17, 6 PM

**Building Committee**  
Michael Black-Smith  
Wednesday, April 20, 6 PM

**Camp Linden Committee**  
Jeffrey Dubb  
Wednesday, April 27, 5 PM

**Communications Committee**  
Drew Snyder  
No meeting this month

**Community Committee**  
Reva Stover  
Sunday, April 10, 12:30 PM

**Education Committee**  
Betsy Lightbourn  
Wednesday, April 6, 3 PM

**Ending Racism Task Force**  
Sylvia Metzler  
Saturday, April 16, 11 AM

**Ethical Action Committee**  
Denise Marx  
Thursday, April 21, 3 PM

**Finance Committee**  
Nick Sanders  
Wednesday, April 13, 5 PM

For suggestions regarding this newsletter, email Leigh Buchanan  
[leighebuchanan@gmail.com](mailto:leighebuchanan@gmail.com)



## HUMANIST HUMOR

"Laughter is a weapon that  
is fatal to men of marble,"

~ Volodymyr Zelensky

*A day of blue and yellow:* On March 6, Society members Betsy Lightbourn, Stan Horwitz, Leader Hugh Taft-Morales, and Kate Esposito joined several hundred Philadelphians at Liberty Plaza to protest Russia's invasion of Ukraine.