



# ETHICAL VIEWS



November 2022 Vol. 137, No. 3 Newsletter of the Philadelphia Ethical Society

## SUNDAY PLATFORMS

The public is welcome to join us



**Sunday, November 6, 11 AM**  
***Heartbreak and Healing***  
**Hugh Taft-Morales, Leader**  
**Philadelphia Ethical Society**

Caring deeply about other people, a community, or a project, is part of living a good life. But in our

unpredictable world it also can lead to heartbreak, a form of suffering with distinctive mental, physical, and emotional characteristics. How is heartbreak framed in our relationships and in our culture? What does science tell us about this debilitating, but ultimately conquerable pain? To answer those questions, Hugh will discuss the new book *Heartbreak: A Personal and Scientific Journey*, by science writer Florence Williams.



**Sunday, November 13, 11 AM**  
***The Enlightenment and Its Enemies: Why Superstition Persists and Spreads***  
**Rabbi Edmond H. Weiss**

Thomas Jefferson believed that by the end of the 19th century all

Americans—granted freedom from religion—would become enlightened atheists or Unitarians. A generation later, the founders of Reform Judaism believed that the ethical writings of Immanuel Kant eventually would supersede the Bible's commandments. Rabbi Weiss argues that both viewpoints failed to appreciate the siren power of Romanticism, the enemy of reason and science. Weiss became a rabbi at 75, after a distinguished career as a television producer and associate dean of the Annenberg School for Communication. He is the author of six books on writing and argumentation.

**Sunday, November 20, 11 AM**

***Humanist Thanksgiving***

**Hugh Taft-Morales, Leader**

Join us in-person and on Zoom for a gratitude gathering with music, readings, activities, and sharing—but no food. For those who want to eat, we will be serving pie at the building afterward! (See Upcoming Events, page 7)

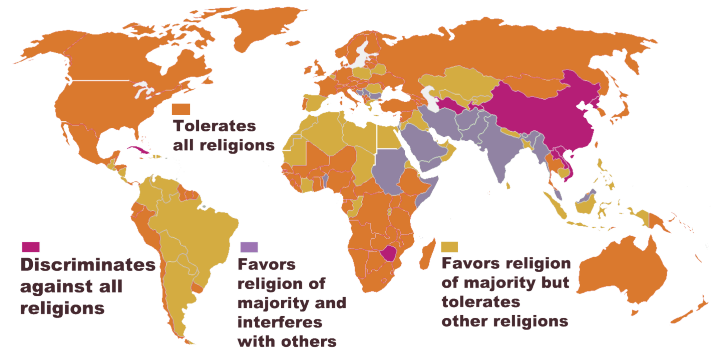


**Sunday, November 27, 11 AM**

***Freedom of Religion or Belief at the United Nations***

**Daniel Hoffman, Member**  
**Philadelphia Ethical Society**

The United Nations NGO Committee on Freedom of Religion or Belief was formed in 1991. The goal: to promote international agreements protecting freedom of thought, conscience, religion, and belief. Daniel, who is on the board, will share the organization's background and talk about how the conflict between freedom of religion and freedom from religion is playing out on the world stage.



Map of religious freedoms and restrictions, from Wikimedia Commons.  
(Some designations are in dispute.)

On the banner: religious symbols. Key is on page 8.

### Where They'll Be

As a general rule, we'll run hybrid platforms when Hugh is the speaker. Platforms with guest speakers will remain on [Zoom](#). In-person attendees should be up-to-date on vaccinations/boosters, wear masks, and maintain six feet of separation. Please, read your emails and check the website before you come.

## IN THIS ISSUE . . .

The racial-justice ramifications of narrowing Washington Avenue; an activist battles the AIDS epidemic; how members respond to #MeToo.

## FROM THE LEADER Fighting Gun Violence with Families, Fun, and Football

By Hugh Taft-Morales

I WAS FEELING A WEE BIT NERVOUS. IT WAS NEARING 11 AM on Friday, September 16; and the Peace Day Philly event I'd been planning for six months was about to get started. The idea was to host a fun gathering and give away 100 footballs as a means to build community and counter gun violence. I was particularly pleased with the name I'd thought up: Footballs Not Firearms. But the process had been exhausting and now—as I waited for people to show up—I wasn't convinced the result would be worth the effort. "I'll never do this again," I swore to myself.

That's the way it is with new coalitions. You don't know how things will turn out. For this march and rally, Peace Day Philly founder Lisa Parker and I had brought together the Philadelphia Police Department, the office of Councilmember Maria D. Quiñones Sánchez, and the Philadelphia Eagles organization. She and I had met numerous times with the police inspector of the Northwest Division and the captains of the 24th, 25th, and 26th districts to plan the date, route, and theme. A friend of mine, former Eagles tight end John Spagnola, helped us secure a donation of 100 footballs and an appearance by Eagles cheerleaders.

All good. But to make it a success, we still needed the most important demographic: young folks!

The point of the event was to help young Philadelphians and police officers get to know each other better. Our rally site was in Fairhill Square near 4th and Lehigh. The youth in that neighborhood are greatly affected by gun violence, gangs, and drugs. Many view the police with

suspicion. If we could help steer just one or two young people away from dangerous lifestyles, or if we could forge a healthier relationship between a police officer and a single young person, then Lisa and I would feel our efforts had paid off. But if no young people showed up, then we would have failed at even those modest aspirations.



**An athletic alternative:** Eagles alums (from left) John Spagnola, Ken Dunek, Garry Cobb joined Hugh to steer youth away from guns.

**The gift of Eagles:** Dunek passed out free footballs to students.



Thank goodness that 15 minutes after our scheduled start time, four busloads of high school kids arrived. They joined dozens of younger children—parents in tow—who had been coming in from the neighborhood. A DJ cranked the music. The police department's community affairs officer, Ryan Barksdale, danced with the cheerleaders to the delight of all. And my mood swung from grim to joyful. The grateful families, the laughter of children, and the good-natured participation of 40 police officers made my eyes tear up.

At 65, I probably should have developed the emotional maturity to ride the rollercoaster of event planning with equanimity. Alas, I have not. So, I couldn't help but chuckle when John, my Eagles friend, spoke about "next year's rally." I knew, then, that I would sign on

for another wild ride. Want to come along? Please let me know if you can help with the 2023 Footballs Not Firearms march and rally against gun violence.

*Hugh Taft-Morales is the Leader of the Philadelphia Ethical Society*



## FROM THE PRESIDENT Pledge, and Save Us from Product Placement!

By Michael Black-Smith

DEAR MEMBERS,

Who hasn't felt a little "icky" when a beloved institution stoops to sponsorship to keep its lights on? Venerated traditions, parades, and parks now often wear corporate logos and slogans in what sometimes feels like selling out.

Fortunately, tasteful and subtle brand placements are possible. As the Philadelphia Ethical Society considers fundraising options, here are a few (tongue-in-cheek) possibilities for our weekly platforms:

### Introduction and Welcome

We gather to search for the best in ourselves, the best in each other...*and to enjoy an ice-cold Coca-Cola!*

### Moment of Silence

Brought to you by Harman noise-canceling headphones.

### Jays and Concerns

Here, we have a space for personal sharing... *brought to you by Hallmark, when you care enough to share the very best.*

### Piano Solo

Rollin will continue his exploration of romantic music with a performance of McDonald's 'm Lovin' It rendered in the style of Frederic Chopin.

### Coffee Hour

The best part of socializing with fellow members is Folgers in your cup.

In all seriousness, November is considered "the month for giving" by many nonprofits. We at the Ethical Society hope you will consider our congregation this month, even as your inboxes and mailboxes fill with pleas and requests. We rely heavily on our members to help cover those operating costs that exceed our

income from investments and space rentals. As of September, member contributions for 2022 are \$35,650. That is \$7,000 less than the same point last year.

As many of you know we are set to receive a large sum in compensation for placing our Brandywine River property into a conservation easement; and that is wonderful. But it would be shortsighted to steal from our future to pay for our present.

We will send out individualized letters to remind you of the support you gave the Ethical Society in 2021-2022. We also will include the amount you pledged during our 2022 Pledge Drive and the amount we have received from you since then. Please take this opportunity to make sure your donation at least matches your pledge. If you didn't pledge, then you can still make a donation. Or if you did pledge and are able to increase your contribution, then please do.

Contributions from friends and visitors are always appreciated.

Please save me from seeking more creative fundraising opportunities. At the moment, I'm mulling whether to approach Ralph Lauren or Men's Wearhouse about Hugh's wardrobe.



*Michael Black-Smith is President of the Philadelphia Ethical Society.*

## FROM THE ENDING RACISM TASK FORCE

### When Roads Divide Communities

By Stan Horwitz

Transportation is a racial-justice issue. Starting in the 1950s, the construction of interstate highways uprooted or bisected Black towns and neighborhoods. Housing for under-resourced people often is located near airports, with associated noise and traffic problems. Areas with large populations of color may lack bridges and safe pedestrian and biking infrastructure. President Biden's infrastructure law admirably aims to address some of that injustice.

A local situation illustrates the importance of balancing transportation-planning and racial-justice concerns. Philadelphia has the **highest rate** of automobile fatalities of any county in Pennsylvania (14%), and Washington Avenue is among the city's most dangerous thoroughfares. In September 2020, Philadelphia announced it would put Washington Avenue on a "road diet" to discourage aggressive driving. The final design reduced the number of motor vehicle lanes from five to three and added protected bike lanes, safer boarding for bus passengers, and safer crossings for pedestrians. The projected increase in walking and biking had positive environmental implications.

In March, Philadelphia's Office of Transportation, Infrastructure, and Sustainability (OTIS) hosted a public meeting to discuss the project. Several hundred people attended from councilmanic Districts 1 and 2, which Washington Avenue traverses. I was there as well. Although I live in District 5, I often ride my bike on Washington Avenue.

At that point, the road diet was widely considered a done deal. However, powerful opposition arose in that meeting. Both districts have many residents of color. White residents from District 1 largely supported the project. Virtually every Black attendee from District 2 argued passionately against it. Their objections spanned the kinds of concerns that often accompany transportation projects in or close to underserved neighborhoods. Among them:

**Fear of further gentrification.** Over the last decade, the neighborhood's Black population has declined and the white population has grown. Home values have risen more than the city average. The revamp of Washington Avenue, opponents contended, would hurt existing small businesses and affordable housing.



**Loss of a major route for evacuations and first responders.** It's been just three years since the explosion and subsequent shuttering of the Philadelphia Energy Solutions refinery. Washington Avenue also is a snow emergency route.

**Diversion of traffic into neighborhoods.** Residents worried that trucks and other traffic would shift to the narrower streets south of Washington, creating congestion and endangering children.

Advocates for the road-diet plan have countered some of these arguments and presented a case built around the primacy of safety and environmental benefits. It is not the purpose of this article to explore the relative merits of each side.

What seems clear, though, is that the city did not solicit and consider the views of enough residents of color when forging its plan. According to WHYY, OTIS acknowledged that its survey about the project—launched online, at the start of the pandemic—failed to adequately represent that population. Mike Carroll, the head of OTIS, talked to **WHYY** about the agency's outreach. "People who are Black and brown, people who are in lower-income situations—there's a pattern in transportation—only get asked or spoken to after decisions are made," Carroll said.

The upshot: Washington Avenue is being put on a road diet, but only east of Broad Street. Will this prevent the west side from becoming safer and environmentally cleaner? Is there still a chance Philadelphia can do more to improve safety, reduce pollution, and at the same time address the concerns of those neighbors most affected by any changes? Perhaps. But only if the city respects those communities: consulting and collaborating with them from day one.

*Stan Horwitz is a member of the Ending Racism Task Force*

*Photo: Phila.gov*



# ADVENTURES IN VOLUNTEERING Providing Facts, Food, and Compassion in the Early Days of AIDS

By Erik Young

I GREW UP IN THE SAN FRANCISCO-OAKLAND AREA: A hotbed of civil rights. At age 16, I joined the Black Panther Party, which politicized me. They sent me to Bobby Seale's trial in New Haven and to Tallahassee, where I liaised between the community and Black college students. I was comfortable around white people and organizations, so being a liaison was part of my thing.

My father's family lived in Philly; and I shuttled between the coasts. I was here when I got my draft notice. With the help of a local resistance group, I went underground. For eight months I lived in a Catholic convent in Baltimore, learning about Liberation Theology from the nuns.

I attended Howard University for two years, part of that spent as an exchange student in Africa. In 1973, I traveled to Cuba to cut sugar cane as part of the Venceremos Brigade. After that, I worked full time for the Panthers, trying to stop the gang wars.

At the Painted Bride in 1985, I met Kiyoshi Kuromiya, a gay activist. Kiyoshi had recently launched an organization called We the People: Living with AIDS in the Delaware Valley. I volunteered to set up their food program.

AIDS had exploded in Philadelphia. People in the gay community needed a place where they could get health information and support. We built our own community center in an abandoned building on Broad and South, helped by carpenters who couldn't get work because of their HIV status.

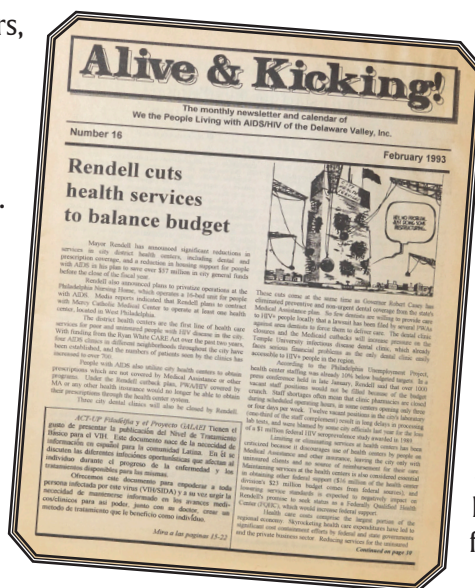
In 1986, we started offering Tuesday night meals out of University Lutheran Church in West Philadelphia. The Share Food Program would give us \$50 worth of food for \$20 and community service. We set up a food bank, a clothing bank, and a library, and also brought in medical experts. The city wanted everyone who used our services to identify themselves. But we pushed back, protecting people's privacy.

Kiyoshi and I set up a 24-hour hotline out of his house. People would call because they were scared or weren't feeling well or their medicine wasn't working. Some had gotten beaten up when people found out they were HIV-positive. Some had been kicked out by their families.



We created two newsletters. *Critical Path* covered news about treatments and medicines. *Alive and Kicking* was a more general report about the AIDS community. We also had a television show called *Positive Health* where I would talk about food and nutrition.

We expanded the food program to three nights a week in different churches. The focus was on good food—often including healthy vegetarian dishes—as a means to fight disease. Most meals were cooked and served by Lutheran and Baptist congregations. Some local restaurants got involved, such as White Dog Café, founded by local advocate Judy Wick.



Over time we got more involved in advocacy. The AIDS Consortium, which funded us, didn't approve. In 2001, they gave away our contract. I set up my own nonprofit and consulted with agencies and churches about AIDS and homelessness. In 2010, I helped launch *One Step Away*, a newspaper for and about the homeless.

These days I'm a member of the Welcome Church, which ministers to people on the street. We feed them and hold services in Aviator Park. I do a kind of radical Bible study. It's not so much about religion as about Jesus as a philosopher.

My experiences with the AIDS community reinforced for me the importance of compassion. That's what led me to humanism.

Erik Young is a member of the Philadelphia Ethical Society.

## GRAY AREAS Should You Boycott #MeToo Transgressors?

Every so often, we present members with a question on which Ethical Humanists might reasonably differ. This month: Is it OK to go to the movies, read the books, or otherwise consume the work of creators who have been implicated in #MeToo transgressions?

*The answer depends on the needs of the victims and the dynamics of each situation. A prosperous perpetrator can pay damages in a civil lawsuit brought by a victim of sexual assault. Enhancing the coffers of the artist may indirectly help the victims to enforce judgments for money damages.*

*On the other hand, the accountant of the Weinstein Company was concerned about the impact of Harvey's abusive behavior on corporate revenues. Bill Cosby's reversal of fortune in the aftermath of credited sexual abuse accusations alarmed the accountant for the Weinstein Company, according to *She Said*, a book by Jodi Cantor and Megan Twohey. A threatened boycott may nudge corporate behavior if such an entity employs the creator of the work.*

*I would not buy works that boast about or otherwise promote the abuse of women.*

—Doris Dabrowski

*There's a show called Partner Track on Netflix where a racist guy who disrespects women is competing to become partner in a law firm. He doesn't get punished because he brings in the big money. It's easy to judge that decision by the fictional firm as unethical. After all, it's just money. It's harder to reject the work of talented writers and others who produce great art but who are also transgressors. In that case, the public is losing out. If boycotting such people has a big effect, then it would be worthwhile.*

—Lori Broesamle

*You use the term "implicated." So, I may continue to enjoy the artist in question unless there is a long history of past abuse. It also depends on the severity of the charge. Rape, sexual assault, domestic violence is the final line for me.*

— Erik Young

*It depends. I wouldn't go near anything that in some way would benefit the obvious villains, like Cosby, Weinstein, etc. But if proceeds went to victims, then I would.*

*For people who have been implicated in #MeToo but not indicted, then it really depends. While the movement started for very good reasons, it quickly became a tsunami of accusations that paralyzed both men and women. The radio dial got turned way in the opposite direction, rather than tuning things to the way they should be.*

— Ruth Dubinsky

*Each situation is unique. One example is Michael Jackson. I love his music. But because of his reputation with children, I won't listen to his music unless someone else has it on, such as in a bar.*

—Stan Horwitz

*It depends on the severity of the transgressions. While I was a big fan of Woody Allen's work, I no longer watch his films, new or old. People disagree over whether he was guilty of sexual abuse, but it's clear that his actions were "grossly inappropriate." (The words of Judge Elliott Wilk.) Not supporting people guilty of #MeToo transgressions is mainly symbolic: my individual consumer choices have limited effect. But it's important to try to live up to one's ethical values.*

— Hugh Taft-Morales



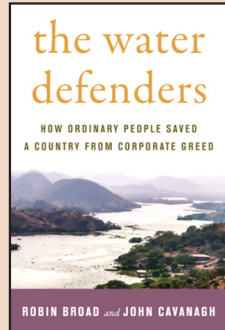
# UPCOMING EVENTS

On your screen or in the Square? Our events are everywhere! Check the Weekly Bulletin before you come.

**Saturday, November 5, 10:30 AM**

**November book discussion: *The Water Defenders: How Ordinary People Saved a Country from Corporate Greed*, by Robin Broad and John Cavanagh**

In this inspiring tale of grassroots environmentalism, Broad and Cavanagh describe how El Salvador became the first country to ban the mining of metals. You have two chances to discuss the introduction and chapters 1-4. First on [Zoom](#) on Saturday, November 5, at 10:30 AM. Then in-person on Tuesday, November 8, at 5:30 PM. We will discuss chapters 5-8 and the epilogue on [Zoom](#) on Saturday, November 19, at 10:30 AM; and again, in-person, on Tuesday, November 22, at 5:30 PM. On Saturday, December 10, at 11 AM, we'll meet the author(s) on [Zoom](#)!



**Sunday, November 6, 2 PM**

**Celebration of the Lives of Maureen and Arthur Pielli**

Join an Ethical Society gathering in honor of Maureen and Arthur Pielli. We will mourn their passing and celebrate their gentle and generous personalities. Only in-person attendees will be able to share their memories during the memorial. Those joining on [Zoom](#) may ask an in-person attendee to read their reflections, email them to Hugh, or

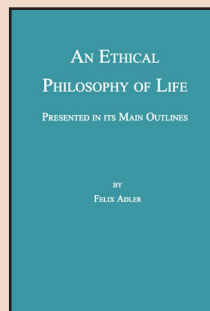


place them in the chat. Contact [Hugh](#) if you can bring refreshments for the following social hour.

**Sunday, November 6, 7 PM**

**Introduction to Ethical Humanism**

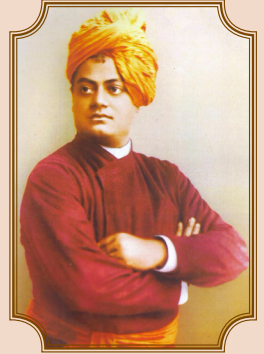
Join Hugh in-person or on [Zoom](#) for a discussion of our unique brand of humanism. This gathering is intended chiefly for those new to Ethical Culture. But members are welcome to listen in or share their own perspectives.



**Monday, November 7, 5:30-6:45 PM**

**Wisdom of East Meets West: Swami Vivekananda**

Swami Vivekananda was a late 19th century Indian Hindu monk who taught about the nature of reality; the relationship between reason and religion; the paths of love and knowledge; the just division of labor; and the harmony of world religions. He influenced thinkers, including William James, Margaret Noble, Nikola Tesla, John D. Rockefeller, and W.E.B. Du Bois. Divya Nair, a student of Swami Vivekananda's teachings, will make a brief presentation followed by a conversation moderated by Hugh. In-person and on [Zoom](#)



**Sunday, November 20, 12 Noon**

**Gratitude Gathering with Pie**

Follow our hybrid Humanist Thanksgiving platform by breaking bread—or eating pie—upstairs in the dining room of the building with other Society members. This is an after-lunch potluck, so let

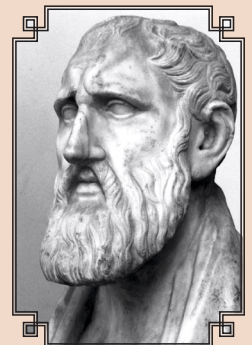


[Hugh](#) or [Ruth](#) know what you can bring: a pie, ice cream, or beverages.

**Sunday, November 20, 4 PM**

**Welcome Back from Covid**

The Philadelphia Stoics are planning an in-person meeting in the building. For information, email [Bill Broadwater](#).



Candle Photo by dittymathew, License - Wikimedia Commons

Stoic Philosopher Zeno photo by Paolo Monti, License - Wikimedia Commons

Leaves on page 1, from Shenandoah National Park, License - Wikimedia Commons





## SUNDAY SERVICES

11 AM

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

Executive Editor, Leigh Buchanan

Copy Editors, Henry Pashkow, Nick Sanders

Web Administrators, Cheryl Desmond, 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

Nick Sanders, Treasurer

### Trustees-at-Large

Stan Horwitz

Sylvia Metzler

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 of the committees, which 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).

### Board of Trustees

Michael Black-Smith

Sunday, Nov. 20, 6 PM

### Building Committee

Michael Black-Smith

No meeting this month

### Camp Linden Committee

Jeffrey Dubb

No meeting this month

### Education Committee

Betsy Lightbourn

Wednesday, Nov. 2, 5:30 PM

### Ending Racism Task Force

Sylvia Metzler/Erik Younge

Saturday, Nov. 12, 11 AM

### Ethical Action Committee

Open chair

Next meeting TBA

### Finance Committee

Nick Sanders

Wednesday, Nov. 9, 5 PM

### Media Committee

Drew Snyder

Wednesday, Nov. 16, 6 PM

### Social Committee

Ruth Dubinsky

Sunday, Nov. 6, 12:30 PM

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



**Full house:** Our Camp Linden Committee is growing! Attending the last meeting were (clockwise from bottom, left) Sharon Wallis, Leonard Weeks, Nick Sanders, Kate Esposito, Jeffrey Dubb, Carol Love, Ann Nicholas, Paul Lucot, Sally Redlener, and Amy Johnson. (Hugh was behind the camera.)

## HUMANIST HUMOR

"Yes, reason has  
been a part of  
organized religion,  
ever since two  
nudists took dietary  
advice from  
a talking snake."

— John Stewart, comedian

Key to religious symbols on banner, top left to bottom right: Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, Shinto, Baha'I, Taoism. There are over 4,000 religions in the world. This is what fits in one square inch