



# ETHICAL VIEWS

June 2023 Vol. 137, No. 10 Newsletter of the Philadelphia Ethical Society

## SUNDAY PLATFORMS

This summer, the Philadelphia Ethical Society will offer a series of stimulating, informal programs showcasing the talents and interests of our members, coordinated through the Education Committee. For July and August platforms, check your *Weekly Bulletin*.

All summer platforms are on **Zoom** (<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/3917679274>) only.  
(Not in-person.)

**Sunday, June 4, 11 AM**

***Songs of "Spectives"***

**Robert Edwin (Bob) Steinfort**  
**Professional Musician**

"Every song has some kind of *spective*," says Bob. "Intro-. Re-. Per-. Pro-. Retro-. (Circum-?)" Our virtuoso pianist, Rollin Wilber, will join Bob for a lively program of music in a variety of spectives. They will perform their own compositions, as well as works by others.

**Sunday, June 11, 11 AM**

***My Peace Corps Experience***

**Kimiko Doherty, Former Volunteer**  
**Peace Corps**

Kimiko started her Peace Corps journey in Honduras. During two-and-a-half years in a rural town, she learned lessons that have lasted a lifetime. Come and hear about them, while helping Kimiko celebrate the 20th anniversary of that foundational experience.

**Sunday, June 18, 11 AM**

***Tech at the PES***

**Stan Horwitz, Senior Systems Manager**  
**Temple University**

**Oliver Jane Jorgensen, Community Life**  
**Coordinator, Philadelphia Ethical Society**

Oliver Jane will discuss the role of social networking—through services like Instagram and YouTube—in Ethical Culture. Stan will provide tips and tricks for using Zoom more productively and with greater confidence.

**Sunday, June 25, 11 AM**

***Dog Days of Summer Reading***

**Betsy Lightbourn, Prolific Reader**

July 3 through August 11 are the official dog days of summer. It's the perfect time to curl up with a book on the beach or in a park. Or read in air-conditioned comfort, if you prefer. This program of book reviews by our members will help you choose your next title. Or get a head start on books Hugh plans to discuss in the fall. (See below.)

### ***So Many Books! So Little Time!***

Hugh would love to lead discussions on all these titles this fall. Alas, time will not permit. So, he will choose the four books that members want most and focus on one a month, starting in September. Do your research and let **Hugh** ([LeaderHugh@phillyethics.org](mailto:LeaderHugh@phillyethics.org)) know which interest you.

- *All About Love* (bell hooks)
- *American Dirt* (Jeanine Cummins)
- *American Ending* (Mary Kay Zuravleff, who would join the conversation on Zoom)
- *The Big Myth: How American Business Taught Us to Loathe Government and Love the Free Market* (Naomi Oreskes and Erik M. Conway)
- *Braiding Sweetgrass* (Robin Wall Kimmerer)
- *Humanly Possible: Seven Hundred Years of Humanist Freethinking, Inquiry, and Hope* (Sarah Bakewell)
- *My Beloved World* (Sonia Sotomayor)
- *Women Talking* (Miriam Toews)



## FROM THE LEADER

### The Joys of Introduction

*By Hugh Taft-Morales*

Among the joys of leading the Philadelphia Ethical Society is meeting people curious about our alternative to traditional religion. On the first Sunday of every month, from September through May, a few folks gather in my office or on Zoom for an Introduction to Ethical Humanism. Afterward, almost all express enthusiasm and delight that our community exists!

Last month's attendees were representative of those who check us out. (I've changed their names since I did not ask for permission to use them.) Diane, who studied philosophy and now works in the behavioral sciences, is seeking support as she explores the ethics of her profession. Mark is moving here from Houston. He wants his family to be part of a tolerant community open to critical thinking: something missing from their lives in Texas. David, on the brink of finishing medical school, is energized by discussions like one we had about the daily challenges to living ethically.

These sessions remind me of my own introduction to Ethical Culture, three decades ago. When I first visited the Washington Ethical Society, I was a skeptic. But I wanted my children to have more religious literacy than I could offer. I wanted to support a community doing good in the world. And I wanted to figure out what I, personally, was looking for.

I remember, on one of my first Sunday mornings, the call for a moment of silence. I felt such inner peace, amplified by the presence of others sitting in a communal hush around me. Already attuned to philosophy, I found resonance in platforms that suggested ways to apply those ideas and ideals to daily life. Soon, I was involved in rewarding community service work with other members.

The Washington Society has nearly four times Philadelphia's membership. Consequently, its resources far outstrip those available to us on Rittenhouse Square. We lack a large volunteer pool to fill all our committees, for example. The pandemic has only made things worse. Hence, the urgency of our conversations about attracting and retaining members.

And we have so much to offer them! Ethical Culture is special. Our history is rich, our philosophy profound, and our community unique. Where else can you gather weekly for humanist inspiration, surrounded by caring people collectively committed to living more ethical lives? Where else can you find our blend of realism and idealism, solidly grounded in empiricism, yet earnestly yearning for a better world?

What we have to offer people is profound. But how we offer Ethical Humanism must evolve to accommodate changing health concerns, technological opportunities, and generational perspectives. I hope Diane, Mark, and David will stick around, stirring fresh ideas into our collective imagination.

When representing the Ethical Society to potential members and others, I strive to express the combination of humility and hope that I first found so attractive. But I am not our congregation's sole ambassador. I encourage all of you to welcome visitors to the Society with enthusiasm and respect. Include new members in formal and informal gatherings, especially during the summer when we offer fewer weekly programs.

Also, help them find roles that fit their interests and their strengths. At the new-member ceremony last month, several people expressed excitement about getting involved and asked existing members to reach out about committees and other activities. You heard them. Reach out!

I will resume my Introduction to Ethical Humanism sessions on September 3. If you know anyone who might enjoy learning about us, please suggest they attend. Word-of-mouth can be powerful. Some of our most devoted members first heard about us from others in the congregation who were friends or neighbors. So, come yourself. And bring someone curious!

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



**Family affair:** The Washington Ethical Society runs programs for teens and parents. Hugh co-directed the program for this 2009 cohort.



## FROM THE ENDING RACISM TASK FORCE

### A Brief History of Chinatown's Long Struggle to Survive

By Henry Pashkow

The proposed construction of a sports arena is not Chinatown's first struggle with development. What follows is a condensed history of a neighborhood that—for 150 years—has been a refuge from racism for Chinese immigrants.

**1871:** Lee Fong opens a laundry at 913 Race Street in the heart of Philadelphia's "red light" district. Fong is one of many who fled to eastern U.S. cities to escape the virulent anti-Chinese sentiment in the West. They live in small, squalid apartments in the only part of the city that will have them. These are men without families, without mates, restricted to menial employment at barely subsistence wages, fated to live out their lives that way.

**1941:** The Holy Redeemer Catholic Church and School opens at 915 Vine Street. It will become an anchor for Chinese families, Catholics and non-Catholics alike.

**1950s:** Liberalized immigration policies open the door to a new wave of immigrants, who transform Chinatown into a family-oriented community. New businesses crop up. Social and cultural organizations improve life, preserve Chinese culture, and offer services.

**1966:** PennDOT unveils a plan for the Vine Street Expressway that includes razing Holy Redeemer under eminent domain. Cecilia Moy Yep, a young widow with three small children, leads the successful fight to save the church.

**1969-1970s:** The newly formed Philadelphia Chinatown Development Corporation (PCDC) lobbies against projects encroaching upon Chinatown. Among them: Market Street East, Gallery I and II, a commuter terminal, and the Convention Center. The organization mitigates the negative impact of six public projects and blocks construction of a bus terminal and conversion of a warehouse into a federal prison. Still, residents are displaced and the community is boxed in. Rising real estate prices make the community unaffordable for many Chinese people.

**1975:** Following PCDC recommendations, the city commits to funding housing in Chinatown for low- and moderate-income residents displaced by government action. Three affordable housing projects are built in three years.

**1982-1984:** A trade mission to China results in an agreement with Philadelphia's sister-city, Tianjin, to provide materials and technical assistance for construction of the Friendship Gate.

**Late 1980s:** As construction of the Convention Center looms, the PCDC organizes businesses located on the site to demand that the city honor its promise to replace the lost units. The result is seven new commercial structures on 9th Street.



**1991:** The Vine Street Expressway is completed. It cleaves Chinatown into north and south sections, cutting off many in the community from—among other places—Holy Redeemer and a food bank.

**1994:** The community rises up against a plan to build a federal prison on the site of a proposed mixed-income housing development that would herald Chinatown's northward expansion. The prison is relocated closer to the Federal Court. The development, Hing Wah Yuen, opens in 1997.

**2000:** The city proposes building a baseball stadium at 12th and Vine Streets. That project threatens to paralyze the neighborhood with traffic and block further growth. Residents rally, and the stadium moves south.

**2008-2009:** Residents successfully protest plans to locate a Foxwoods Casino at the Gallery.

**2023:** Residents and supporters of Chinatown mobilize, once again, against a project that threatens the community: a proposed arena for the Philadelphia 76ers.

Against the backdrop of a surge in anti-Asian racism, Philadelphia's Chinatown sits at the crossroads of a struggle for land in Center City. The outcome will determine whether Chinatown persists as a dynamic haven for social and cultural traditions that might otherwise be lost to gentrification.

*Henry Pashkow is a member of the Ending Racism Task Force*

## NEW MEMBER PROFILE

### Welcome Amy Johnston!

#### Where did you grow up?

When I was younger, we moved frequently with my father's job, mostly in upstate New York and then Kentucky. My parents retired to Pennsylvania; and I moved with them. I met my husband at Mansfield University, where I was studying biology. We moved to the Philadelphia area when my husband was in grad school at Temple. We've lived in Downingtown for about 30 years.

#### Did you work in biology?

Not immediately. I was looking for a job and saw an opening for a librarian at the German Society of Pennsylvania. Having worked through school in a library, with a minor in German language, I thought it sounded interesting. Then, after I had my kids, I worked for the school district as a personal care assistant, in a science classroom. The teacher said, "How do you feel about going on a field trip to do a stream study?" That turned out to be with the Brandywine Red Clay Alliance, which promotes restoration and conservation of the watersheds. It was awesome. I got a job there. For the last 12 years, I've been teaching students about watersheds and helping foster an appreciation of the natural world.

#### You also do nature instruction at Camp Linden. How did that come about?

I work with two scout troops. One scout is a lifeguard at Camp Linden. She told her mother that "working there would be the perfect job for Mrs. Johnston." So, her mother called me. Oddly, I work five or ten minutes away and didn't know it existed! I started last year as environmental instructor, then became assistant program director. By the end of the summer, I was co-program director. I've loved Camp Linden since the first time I visited.

#### What excites you about teaching there?

It's a whole new world for these kids. One little boy was crying. I asked him what was wrong. He said, "I'm afraid of the snakes. I'm afraid of the toads. I'm afraid of the insects." By the end of the six weeks, he was good with all of it. My passion is to introduce the natural world to these kids and hope that my excitement rubs off.



**Amy Johnston**  
Sharing her love of nature

#### I heard you're studying the Lenape language.

I met the teacher at a workshop about Lenape culture. Some students are Lenape. But a good number, like me, are not. Lenape is not a written language. Not a lot of people speak it. One reason to do the course is to help preserve it.

#### What do you do for fun? Although it sounds like, for you, work is fun.

Anything outdoors. Hiking. Kayaking. Working in my garden. I do a lot of crafts. I like to bake. I try to give back in an active way. After Hurricane Katrina, we went down with our church to New Orleans and rebuilt houses. Same thing with Houston. That is kind of a passion. The Ethical Society's "deed before creed" resonates with me, personally.

#### Tell me about the butterflies.

I've been raising butterflies for years. The population of monarchs is decreasing; and I wanted to help the conservation effort. I turned my backyard into a kind of monarch habitat. For educational purposes, I also have a big mesh habitat, where I put eggs that I've collected off the milkweed. It's enclosed, so predators won't get them. The kids can watch as the butterflies transform and then release them.

#### Anything else interesting?

With one of the scouts from Troop 19, we are creating a pollinator garden at Camp Linden!

## GRAY AREAS

### Are Charter Schools a Positive or Negative Force?

*Every so often we present members with a question on which Ethical Humanists might reasonably differ. This month, we asked, “Are charter schools a net-positive or net-negative force in education?”*

Net negative. They divert funds from public schools. Charter schools also tend to segregate students by accepting good ones and rejecting poor ones.

- Chuck O’Neil

In a perfect world, I would go all-out for ditching charters. They drain money from the public-school system's budget, where it's most needed.

I was educated in the public schools and got a good education. But that was long ago and far away, before

- Buildings and infrastructure began to deteriorate.
- Teachers were striking (although they weren’t paid well then).
- Maintenance was seriously neglected.
- Books and basic materials became unavailable to children most in need.

The public school system has always been society's stepchild: the last to get funded. If I were to guess why, I would say racism.

So, despite my deep misgivings, the charter schools are a net benefit. Public schools are in such a state of disgrace that I don’t think they can be fixed all the way—or even to the point where it wouldn’t make much difference, one way or the other.

- Henry Pashkow

In charter schools, teachers can be treated poorly. Because they are privately managed (although publicly funded), they may be exempt from some disciplinary and labor laws.

- John Marshall

I support Philly charter schools, especially Black- and Latino-led schools. There are 21 such institutions serving more than 13,000 children and families in Philly. They highlight and provide solutions to racial inequities in the public-school system by providing more resources. Fervent testimonies of parents and children outline their mostly positive results.

In too many cases, charter schools have been scapegoated by unfair regulations and misinformation. As a former student and teacher in this system, I bear witness to the mostly positive results for many students in good Philly charter schools.

- Erik Younge

Charter schools hurt public schools and their students by draining much needed resources. That is true for all charters: the opportunistic ones and those that position themselves as progressive and enlightened. Although they are not supposed to exclude or kick out students they don’t want, there is little or no enforcement.

In urban districts like Philadelphia, brick-and-mortar charters have been allowed to expand with very little oversight. Cyber charters, approved by the state, get even less. Quality charters exist but still can be selective and drain local budgets. Some support charters in the name of parental choice. But that assumes public schools are not a public good. That doesn’t mean there aren’t a lot of problems with public education.

Pennsylvania’s charter-school law, passed in 1997, is outdated. Among other things, it gives charters funding for special education but does not require they use it all for that. To get his budgets passed, former Governor Tom Wolf gave up on reform.

- Sylvia Metzler



## Camp Linden Visits the Square

For 90 minutes on April 23, our friends at Camp Linden invited us to recall what childhood was like. The Society's summer program for children living in low-income neighborhoods brought its mix of environmental education and nature appreciation from the rolling hills of Chester County to neatly landscaped Rittenhouse Square. After the morning's platform, delivered by co-program directors Sharon Wallis and Amy Johnston, members tried out some camp activities. We pollinated a model flower, examined a leaf under a digital microscope, got up-close-and-personal with the residents of a worm farm, and watched a winged pig deliver a lesson in solar power.



Queen Bee Sharon Wallis



Afterwards, we donned animal hats and butterfly wings and—dodging bemused traffic—trooped out to the park for Camp Linden's traditional closing exercise. The difficulty of collectively bouncing an inflatable globe on a parachute is a reminder how much cooperation we'll need to save the planet.

## Come Learn with Us

Two Ethical Culture Leaders would like to offer Zoom courses this summer, if there is sufficient interest. Please contact [Hugh](mailto:LeaderHugh@phillyethics.org) ([LeaderHugh@phillyethics.org](mailto:LeaderHugh@phillyethics.org)) as soon as possible if you would like to participate in either of the following. If enough people sign up, then we will work with participants to set times and dates.

### ***Women of Ethical Culture*** **Jone Johnson Lewis, Leader** **Riverdale-Yonkers Society for Ethical Culture**

This three-session workshop approaches the history of Ethical Culture through the lives and teachings of notable women in the movement and explores the influence of Suffragism, Feminism, and other social and political developments.

### ***Humanist Family Life Ceremonies*** **Anne Klaeysen, Leader Emerita** **New York Society for Ethical Culture**

This two-to-three-session workshop offers guidance for nontheistic ethical ceremonies, celebrations, and practices. Participants will learn to create ceremonies that celebrate life from birth to death, honor change, acknowledge accomplishment, and embrace humanist values.

## An American Ethical Union Summer



Our federating national organization is in flux, considering ways to move forward and evolve. Related summer activities include Restorative Justice Circle trainings and our annual AEU Assembly, on July 29. Keep an eye on the [AEU web site](http://aeu.org) ([aeu.org](http://aeu.org)) for virtual events in which you can participate.

# UPCOMING EVENTS



**Friday, June 16, 1 PM**

## Game: Peeling the Onion

Participants in this get-to-know-you activity react to prompts with stories and experiences, stimulating conversation and forging connections in the process. Share as much or as little as you like. We will meet in the Leader's office. Space is limited, so RSVP to **Redwood Kardon** ([redwood.kardon@gmail.com](mailto:redwood.kardon@gmail.com)).



**Saturday, June 24, 2 PM**

## Ending Racism Task Force Social

Enjoy casual conversation and exchange ideas with others interested in anti-racism work. Feel free to bring snacks!

**Saturday, June 24, 4 PM**

## Ending Racism Task Force Movie

**Sunday, July 9, Noon - 5 PM**

## Summer Picnic at Camp Linden

Join us for the annual picnic and cookout at Camp Linden!

Activities include socializing, swimming, and eating. Also on tap: folk-singing, outdoor games, and tours of the property.

Recommended contribution is \$15 for adults and teenagers. Children 12 and under are free. We provide hot dogs, hamburgers, veggie burgers, fixings, soft drinks, and beer. Bring a dessert or side dish to share. We will carpool from the Society building at 11 AM. Please RSVP to **Camp Linden** ([camplinden@phillyethics.org](mailto:camplinden@phillyethics.org)), and let us know if you need a ride or can take passengers. Rain date is July 23.



**Wednesday, July 12, 1 PM**

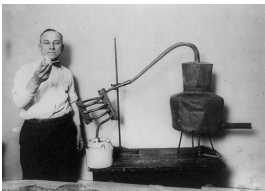
## Game: Peeling the Onion

See June 16 event description.

**Wednesday, August 16, 1 PM**

## Game: Peeling the Onion

See June 16 event description.



**Sunday, August 27, 4:30 PM-6:30 PM**

## BYOB Happy Hour

## 1906 Rittenhouse

As the summer draws to a close, let's reconnect in person. Bring drinks and snacks.

## Fun for the Under-40 Crowd

Watch! Talk! Eat! Serve! Whether you're a member of the Ethical Society or just want to connect with caring people around interesting subjects or activities, check out our summer schedule for people under 40. For all events, please RSVP to our Community Life Coordinator, **Oliver Jane Jorgensen** ([community@phillyethics.org](mailto:community@phillyethics.org)).

**Sunday, June 11, 5 PM**

## Ethical Movie Night

Join Oliver Jane at the Society building to watch and discuss a to-be-announced documentary. Snacks provided.

**Sunday, June 25, 5 PM**

## Anatomy of a Song

Join Oliver Jane at the Society building to watch and discuss an episode of the Netflix documentary series "Song Exploder." We'll view one that unpacks REM's song "Losing My Religion." Snacks provided.

**Monday, July 10, 5 PM**

## A Platform Retrospective

The Ethical Society's Sunday platforms treat subjects such as racial justice, ethics in government, climate change, philosophy, and art with eloquence and insight. And we have them on video! Join Oliver Jane at the Society building to screen and discuss one or two past platforms. If you'd like to nominate a specific **platform**, email **Oliver Jane**. Snacks provided.

**Saturday, July 29, 4 PM-8 PM**

## Volunteer Disco Ball Day at Dirtbaby Farm

We'll get our hands (and clothes!) dirty as we weed, harvest, and sort produce with the folks at Dirtbaby. This small CSA partners with locals to provide affordable produce for Philadelphians in need. Meet at the farm, which is located at the Organic Community Gardens at the Schuylkill Center. (Directions: <https://www.dirtbabyfarm.com/visit>)

To carpool from Rittenhouse Square, email **Oliver Jane**.



**Sunday, August 20**

## Food Pantry Volunteer Day

We will volunteer our time and skills at a local food pantry. Time and location to be determined.





## SUNDAY SERVICES

11 am

Ethical Views is published monthly  
except July and August.

Executive Editor: Leigh Buchanan  
Proofreaders: Betsy Lightbourn,  
Henry Pashkow, Nick Sanders,  
Hugh Taft-Morales

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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 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, June 18, 6 PM**

Building Committee  
Michael Black-Smith  
no meeting this month

Camp Linden Committee  
Jeffrey Dubb  
no meeting this month

Education Committee  
Betsy Lightbourn  
no meeting this month

**Ending Racism Task Force**  
**Sylvia Metzler, Erik Younge**  
**Saturday, June 17, 11 AM**

Ethical Action Committee  
open chair  
next meeting TBA

**Finance Committee**  
**Nick Sanders**  
**Wednesday, June 14, 5 PM**

Media Committee  
Drew Snyder  
no meeting this month

Social Committee  
open chair  
next meeting TBA

**For suggestions regarding this  
newsletter, contact**  
**[leighebuchanan@gmail.com](mailto:leighebuchanan@gmail.com).**

## Game Professional

Hugh and Dan Hoffman celebrate a Phillies victory, thanks to the 2023 Service Auction! The pair enjoyed local brews, great seats, and stimulating conversations. That included chats with folks sitting nearby: as a result, Hugh now rejects the bad reputation of Phillies fans. Carol Love's generous donation of tickets allowed us to cheer on the team and helped the Society raise money. The service auction is ongoing: check out the offerings at <https://phillyethics.org/members-page-2-2/>. If you cannot access the members' section, contact the office or Hugh.



## Game Confessional

Members of the Society and Friends in the City gather for Peeling the Onion, a game in which people respond to prompts with personal memories. In one recent game, stories ranged from a near-death experience in Hawaii to a surprise invitation to a Beatles concert. Participating were (clockwise from head of the table) facilitator and game creator Redwood Kardon, Annie Hartford, Elaine Radbill, Leigh Buchanan, Irv Gross, Maric Radbill, Verley Platt, Surendra K. Gambhir, and Marcia Paulin.

