



ETHICAL VIEWS

September 2023 Vol. 138, No. 1 Newsletter of the Philadelphia Ethical Society

SUNDAY PLATFORMS

The public is welcome to join us *

Sunday, Sept 3, 11 AM (in-person) 2 PM (zoom)

Whither Goes Ethical Culture?

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



The American Ethical Union, our national federating organization, is in the midst of a challenging, dynamic process to envision our movement's future. Will our unfolding discussions lead to evolution, revolution, or devolution? At the national level, will relationships grow stronger and wounds heal? Will we build power collectively? Will hope inspire us? Hugh will reflect on the uncertain path that Ethical Societies across the country are traveling together.

Sunday, Sept 10, 11 AM (zoom only)

What To Do When You Can't Trust the Experts

**Nina Strohming, Professor
University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School**



We rely on experts to understand the world. But often, those experts' information is unreliable. Strohming, a behavioral scientist in the Wharton School's Department of Legal Studies and Business Ethics, will discuss the origins and scope of this dilemma and suggest practical approaches to managing it. Strohming specializes in business ethics, decision-making, cognitive bias, emotion, and the art of persuasion.

Sunday, Sept 17, 11 AM (in-person) 2 PM (zoom)

Embodied Peace

Hugh Taft-Morales, Leader

Peace, both in ourselves and in the world, sometimes is portrayed as an elusive, spiritual goal. In fact, it is rooted not in the intangible spirit but in the grounded body. To build embodied peace from the inside out, we must more fully embrace our physical natures, from awareness of our breathing to acceptance of our mortality. Hugh will discuss how, by striving for inner peace, we might better achieve global peace and social justice that protects all bodies.

Sunday, Sept 24, 11 AM (zoom only)

Peace Day Philly: A Journey Creating Peace

**Lisa Parker, Founder
Peace Day Philly**



Our Society has participated in Peace Day Philly since its inception in 2011. Parker will explain the evolution of this initiative, which supports local involvement in the United Nations International Day of Peace. A social worker by training, Parker has worked with at-risk children and youth, as well as Southeast Asian refugees. She has been involved in non-profit development and with theater for social change. Parker also speaks for the National Alliance on Mental Illness.

* Where They'll Be

As a general rule, on Sundays when Hugh is the speaker, the 11 AM platform will be in-person only. Hugh will offer the address a second time, live, on zoom only, at 2 PM that afternoon. (This is Hugh's personal zoom link.)

Guest speakers will appear on zoom only. (This is the Society's zoom link.)

In-person attendees should be up-to-date on vaccinations and remain masked.

Check your emails and our website to make sure you know how to join us.

FROM THE LEADER

Return to the Body

By Hugh Taft-Morales

“Got any plans for your summer, dad?” One of my wonderful children asked me that question at a gathering of the whole family this past Father’s Day. Between September and May, day-to-day Ethical Culture work keeps me occupied. In the summers, my family knows, I enjoy having time for reading and writing projects. So, I drew some chuckles when, rather than mentioning books, I responded, “I’m going to try to be more embodied.”

I intended my “new-age-type” answer to be funny. But it also was true. Recently, I’ve gotten interested in the idea of embodiment, which encourages us to seek wisdom not just in the cognitive sense but also through greater connection with our physical beings. Psychotherapist Resmaa Menakem’s work on trauma and healing helped me appreciate how we all carry negative energy in our bodies. While Menakem focuses on racial trauma, practices that he recommends can help heal all sorts of wounds, both psychological and physical.

I’ve long accepted the need to heal from physical trauma. Six years ago, my own healing was facilitated when two artificial hips lifted me out of a cloud of pain and grim thoughts. Since recovering from my operations, I’ve been lucky. Despite a bout of Covid, I’ve had good physical health. For this, I want to be grateful every day.

Growing older has contributed to that desire. My father died of a heart attack when he was 57, an age that strikes me—from my perspective at 66—as positively youthful. I appreciate the additional decade of life gifted to me so far and hope never to take for granted my years remaining. Recent indications of high calcium in the arteries around my heart remind me of the attention due to my body: something I can forget in my efforts to educate and expand my mind. I am addressing that now, in part, with shifts in medication and diet.

But I’m not concerned just with the physical changes that naturally come with age. Although I have been privileged to live a relatively comfortable life, I, too, have experienced trauma. I feel sadness that needs attention, emotional pain that needs care. When suffering is left untended, when wounds are allowed to fester, that can take a physical toll.



Posing with purpose: Hugh practices yoga

So, this summer I have adopted embodied practices that help me focus on my breath and on my heartbeat. I’ve been meditating every day and doing yoga a couple of times a week. I also exercise daily, nurturing awareness of my body while I do so. My routines are modest, but they help to alleviate both bodily and embodied pain. They make me calmer and more centered. They are good for my health.

I believe that embodied practices also can improve our relationships. When we are disconnected from our bodies, when we don’t take care of ourselves, then we are emotionally less available to others. The good we hope to cultivate in our lives and in the world is stunted. Practicing self-care helps us live ethical lives. It helps us care for others.

Many people I know—including some of you, who are reading this—recently have experienced health conditions much more significant than mine. I hold you in my heart as you manage those challenges. I root for those health professionals who are working hard to support you. Finally, I encourage you to nurture gratitude for your body and for the amazing forces of nature that brought your consciousness into being.

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

Barbecue on the Brandywine

We could not have chosen a more beautiful day! After threatened thunderstorms scotched initial plans for the Camp Linden picnic, about 60 people gathered on July 23 for our annual celebration of friendship, nature, and the good work performed by the Society's summer program for inner-city children. This year was special: for the first time, members of the Baltimore Ethical Society joined the festivities. Bertha Waters' family also attended, bringing with them a second grill and adding chicken to our usual burgers-and-dogs menu. Members swam in the pool, sampled herbs and peas in the camp's garden, played cornhole, sang along in small groups with Hugh, reconnected with old friends, and made some new ones.



Clockwise from top right:

- Sharon Wallis
- Dan Hoffman
- Morgan Williams and Drew Snyder
- Christian Hayden
- Hugh Taft-Morales
- Monique Stins (left) and Marshella Merrit (Baltimore)
- Vincent Waters



BEHIND THE SCENES

Our Society by the Numbers

By Cheryl Desmond

This month, Behind the Scenes will review the financial report for the fiscal year that ended on June 30. Then we'll take a quick peek at the budget and plans for FY 2023-2024.

I am happy to tell you that after the two-plus Covid years, the Society has come out the other side in pretty good shape. Still, some issues need to be addressed. Income from members is down, in part because we've paused collecting donations during in-house platforms. Even if we were to restart them, those platforms are now bi-weekly and less well-attended than before Covid.

Meanwhile, member pledges and other support remain between \$5,000 and \$10,000 below our highest levels before the pandemic. There are many ways to donate. Some people use [PayPal](#), and we recently added Venmo. The Society appreciates the generosity of members and friends during the pledge drive and beyond.

frustrating. We seemed to need one large repair after another. Since we're behind the scenes here, I'll list the largest projects:

- \$5,740 to soundproof the windows in the auditorium and dining room
- \$4,462 to replace a drain and toilet in the second-floor bathroom
- \$4,120 to replace parts of the steam-heat electronic-control system
- \$4,599 to repair the roof where it was leaking into the dining room
- \$3,600 to repair the dining room ceiling after the roof was fixed
- \$2,450 to upgrade fire-alarm systems (partial bill, two-year project)

We also replaced the kitchen light fixtures, the auditorium sound mixer, and one of the auditorium hydraulic door-closing mechanisms. And we upgraded

OPERATING INCOME	Last Fiscal Year	2023-24 Budget	OPERATING EXPENDITURES	Last Fiscal Year	2023-24 Budget
Program Activity	\$ 5,748	\$ 4,600	Program Activity	\$ 22,533	\$ 27,000
Membership	\$ 56,122	\$ 60,000	Administration	\$ 37,272	\$ 37,000
Investments	\$ 18,162	\$ 16,000	Personnel	\$ 103,610	\$ 96,000
Rentals	\$ 172,740	\$ 159,400	1906 Building	\$ 88,644	\$ 80,000
Total	\$ 252,772	\$ 240,000	Total	\$ 252,059	\$ 240,000

Building rentals remain our largest source of income. In the most recent fiscal year, those topped pre-Covid numbers! Although we've increased prices somewhat across the board, we still carry out our mission of providing an affordable meeting space in Center City.

But let me remind readers that an increase in rental activity comes with costs. As you might imagine, our heating, air-conditioning, and water bills run higher when the building is filled with meetings and parties. There also are costs of staff time to manage the bookings, of additional cleaning, and of increased wear and tear on the building, furniture, and fixtures. On balance, rentals still seem like a net positive. But it's something I keep an eye on.

the auditorium air-filtration system and painted the front stairway to the community room. Each of those cost somewhere between \$1,000 and \$2,000. Whew. That was a lot! We will still be doing repairs and replacements this year. But I hope there will be less work on infrastructure and more on nice things that people will notice and enjoy.

Lastly, I want to touch on the budget for this current fiscal year. As you see in the chart, projections are a bit conservative: a little below last year for both income and expenses. But the Finance Committee has developed and approved a balanced budget. Questions about any of these subjects may be directed to office@phillyethics.org.

This past fiscal year, about half of Building Income went toward Building Expense. It was actually pretty

Cheryl Desmond is the administrator of the Philadelphia Ethical Society

FROM THE ENDING RACISM TASK FORCE

The Sad Impact of Racism on Medical Outcomes

By Sylvia Metzler

Ameerah had gone to the pediatrician with abdominal pains. Even though her white count was high, she was sent home to see if she improved. A few days later, her mother—my friend—asked if I could take a look. The minute I saw Ameerah, I called 911 and soon started CPR. But her 4-year-old body had developed sepsis from a ruptured appendix. I couldn't save her.

Would Ameerah be alive today if she were white?

The morbidity and mortality statistics for Black Americans are poor compared to those of white Americans, even when factoring in educational and economic status. The headlines about racism in health care keep coming:

Racism and sexism underlie higher maternal death rates for Black women, UN says
The New York Times July 12, 2023

NFL agrees to end race-based brain testing in \$1 billion settlement on concussions
Associated Press October 20, 2021

Alzheimer's is a scourge of Black Americans—a lifetime of racism is "a one-two punch"
The Philadelphia Inquirer June 25, 2023

For Black youth, mental health struggles rooted in racism
The Philadelphia Inquirer June 11, 2023

How "weathering" contributes to racial health disparities
The Philadelphia Tribune April 21, 2023

Wait. "Weathering"?

Dr. Arline Geronimus coined that term in 1990 when her research, at the University of Michigan, showed that chronic stress from racism could lead to poor outcomes in infant mortality among Black mothers and babies. She compared the effect to a rock being eroded by constant exposure to the elements.

Black babies die more than twice as often as white babies in their first year. The high rate of teen pregnancy among Black women had been blamed. But Geronimus's research showed that babies of Black teens were healthier than the babies of Black women in their 20s and older. The younger mothers had endured fewer years of racism-induced stress and so had given birth to healthier children.

She also found the phenomenon in other groups subjected to poverty and/or racism. Nor were upward mobility and wealth antidotes. In one study that included data on blood pressure, cortisol levels, liver function, and cholesterol, high-income Black women had worse outcomes than low-income white women.

Dr. Elizabeth Brondolo, a professor at St. John's University, concluded that the mind and body cannot easily shake off the physiological impact of racism. In one study she conducted, participants who had been subjected to racist behavior experienced elevated blood pressure for an extended period, even when they were asleep.

In her book *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents*, Isabel Wilkerson describes how exposure to inequality and discrimination affects the telomere lengths of Black Americans. A telomere is a repeating sequence of double-stranded DNA at the end of a chromosome. The more frequently a cell divides, the shorter the telomeres become, wearing out the cell. This leads to a higher incidence of disease such as high blood pressure, diabetes, and heart disease. Black Americans have shorter telomeres along with higher rates of these diseases. (Black people in Africa do not.)

Other factors leading to worse health outcomes for Black people include false beliefs among medical personnel. For example, some medical school curriculums include erroneous claims that Black women's blood coagulates faster than white women's, leading to delayed treatment for dangerous hemorrhages. In one study of health-care providers, 50

percent of respondents believed falsely that Black patients have a higher tolerance for pain and so need less pain medication.

How did the medical staff that treated Ameerah evaluate the severity of her complaints? Would they have done more tests, leading to an appendectomy, if she had been white? How many Ameerahs have we lost because of racism in the health-care system? What will we do to eliminate it?



Sylvia Metzler is a member of the Ending Racism Task Force

ACTIVISM AND ACTIVITIES



Members for justice: Sally Redlener, Sylvia Metzler and Marta Guttenberg were among those Society members protesting when the hate group Moms for Liberty descended on Philadelphia.

During the hottest summer on record, Philadelphia Ethical Society members were out protesting, planning, and making their voices heard. They also spent time with loved ones and stopped to smell the flowers.



Peddling in the park: Valerie Pry presided over a table at the Uhuru Flea Market in Clark Park. She is part of a group that sells donated items to raise money for local animal sanctuaries.



Returning challenge: Leigh Buchanan participated in a simulation of the reentry experience for people released from prison at Eastern State Penitentiary.



Flower power: Carol Love, Marvin Friedman and Henry Pashkow were among those members joining Sylvia Metzler for a tour of gardens in the Norris Square neighborhood.



Presiding over bedtime: Society President Mike Black-Smith with niece Lidia and nephew Timothy at Mike's sister's house near Boston.



Conversations about race: Tara Swartz, Erik Younge, Kate Esposito and Juanda Myles attended the 15th Annual Global Citizen Beer Summit on Racism at Reading Terminal Market.

UPCOMING EVENTS



Sunday, September 3, 7 PM

An Introduction to Ethical Humanism

Join Leader Hugh Taft-Morales in the Leader's Office for an introduction to our non-theist community and the philosophy that guides us.

Monday, September 4, 5:30 PM-7 PM
Discussing Oppenheimer

The blockbuster movie *Oppenheimer* has renewed interest in the physicist who directed the development of the atomic bomb. J. Robert Oppenheimer, a troubled, controversial, and deeply human man, was the product of an Ethical Culture education. Join Hugh in the Leader's Office to discuss the film, the book on which it is based, and Hugh's 2015 platform "J. Robert Oppenheimer and Nuclear Agony." RSVP to [Hugh](#) to receive an electronic copy of the talk, or view it on [Youtube](#).



Wednesday, September 6, 12:30 PM
Lunch with Hugh

Join Hugh in the Leader's Office for an informal brown bag lunch and discussion of any topic of attendees' choosing.

Wednesday, September 6, 2 PM-3:30 PM
Peeling the Onion

Join Hugh, facilitator Redwood Kardon, and members of Friends in the City in the Leader's Office for this get-to-know-you activity. Our lives comprise layers of experiences and stories. Share what you want as we peel those layers together. Great for those new to the Ethical Society! RSVP to [Redwood](#). Space is limited.

Tuesday, September 12, 5:30 PM-7 PM
Discussing Oppenheimer (zoom edition)

Join Hugh on [zoom](#) for this discussion. See September 4 event for details.



Wednesday, September 13, 12:30 PM
Lunch with Hugh (zoom edition)

Hugh will host a virtual lunch on [zoom](#) for members of the Philadelphia and Baltimore Ethical Societies.

Saturday, September 23, 2 PM-4 PM
ERTF Potluck Social

Join members of the Ending Racism Task Force at the Society building for food and conversation. Bring something delicious!



Peace Day Events



Saturday, September 16, 2-4 PM

Meeting Our Sorrowing Heart: A Workshop of Grieving and Healing

Grief coach and writer Naila Francis, of This Hallowed Wilderness, will guide a communal experience of grieving at the Philadelphia Ethical

Society building. In this welcoming space, caregivers, service providers, and others can honor their sorrows through meditation, creative practice, and ritual. Bring a journal. Free, but donations are welcome.

Sunday, September 17, 7 PM

Peace Day Philly Benefit Concert

This musical performance at the Philadelphia Ethical Society building will feature compositions related to peace and harmony, including works by Leonard Bernstein, Cesar Franck, Valerie Coleman, and Florence Price. A \$15 donation is suggested. All proceeds benefit survivor programs of the Nationalities Service Center.

Tuesday, September 19, 11 AM-1:30 PM

Football Not Firearms March and Rally (Rain date September 20)

Join Hugh at Fairhill Square in Kensington for this event, hosted by Peace Day Philly and the Philadelphia Police Department. The rally, in opposition to gun violence and in support of good relations between youth and police, will be preceded by a march of young people and police officers together. Civic officials and player-alumni from the Philadelphia Eagles will speak. (The team has generously donated 150 footballs for distribution to children between 6 and 17.) Enjoy music and free food! Thanks to the Rotary Club of Philadelphia for its support.

Thursday, September 21, 11:30 AM-12:30 PM

Peace Day Philly 2023: Actions for Peace

Join us on the North Apron of City Hall for the annual Peace Day program. It will include music, speakers, global messages, and a creative art and social-media activity. At noon, we'll observe the global minute of silence.

For more information about these and other Peace Day Philly 2023 events, visit this [web site](#).



SUNDAY SERVICES

11 am

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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.

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

Building Committee
Michael Black-Smith
no meeting this month

Camp Linden Committee
Jeffrey Dubb
Wednesday, Sept 27, 6 PM

Education Committee
Betsy Lightbourn
Wednesday, Sept 6, 5:30 PM

Ending Racism Task Force
Sylvia Metzler, Erik Younge
Saturday, Sept 9, 11 AM

Ethical Action Committee
open chair
next meeting TBA

Finance Committee
Nick Sanders
Wednesday, Sept 13, 5 PM

Media Committee
Drew Snyder
Thursday, Sept 21, 6 PM

Social Committee
open chair
next meeting TBA

For suggestions regarding this newsletter, contact leighebuchanan@gmail.com.

Grief on Our Walls

"Craig's Voice" is a portrait of Craig Hatchett Jr., one of dozens of victims of gun violence whose images comprise the Souls Shot Portrait Project, on display last May in the Society's Collier Gallery. Souls Shot strives to draw attention to the scourge of gun violence and to memorialize the lives of those lost. Craig's mother, Marcia Hatchett (pictured), joined Amanda Condict, the portrait's artist; Carol Lastowka, of CeaseFirePA; and Laura Madeleine, Souls Shot executive director, for a panel discussion.



Beliefs on the Mall

In July, Leader Hugh Taft-Morales joined the Rev. KC Slack, senior clergy Leader at the Washington Ethical Society; Greg Bonin, an Ethical Culture Leader and Unitarian Universalist clergy; and Khandra Sears, a member of the Baltimore Ethical Society, at the Smithsonian Folklife Festival on the National Mall in Washington D.C. They discussed what it means to practice a non-theistic religion and how faith and values show up in their daily lives.

