



# ETHICAL VIEWS

June 2024 Vol. 138, No. 10 Newsletter of the Philadelphia Ethical Society

## SUNDAY PLATFORMS

The public is welcome to join us \*

### Sunday, June 2, 11 AM (zoom)

*How Decisions—Good or Bad—Can Change Our Lives*

**John Horkel, Member**

**Philadelphia Ethical Society**



John was taking a walk in New Haven, Connecticut, one day, not long after retiring from his career as a zoo curator and director of an arboretum and a nature center. Finding himself before the building that houses the nonprofit New Haven Reads, he impulsively went in and signed up to become a volunteer tutor. As a result of that decision, by the time John arrived in Philly nine

years later he had under his belt more than 10,000 hours spent tutoring students from first grade through high school. John will discuss how this and other decisions changed his life and how your own decisions may change yours.

### Sunday, June 9, 11 AM (in-person)

*Rollin & Robert: Bach-ing and Rocking*

**Rollin Wilber, Pianist; Robert Steinfort, Member**

**Philadelphia Ethical Society**



They say you can't please everybody. Well, Rollin and Robert Edwin—two outstanding musicians with disparate backgrounds—are going to try. This program features music spanning Bach to rock and will include a reprise of Rollin's four original song settings of poems by Eugene Field (originally presented at our May 5 platform).

Eugene Field (originally presented at our May 5 platform).

### Sunday, June 16, 11 AM (zoom)

*Lessons from the School Ship*

**Karen Lawrence and Lisa Winkler,**

**Experiential Trainers**

**Schooner North Wind Youth Program**



Many organizations have a mission to provide education and experiences to young people. Gloucester City Sail stands out for doing it on a boat. Youth from the Philadelphia and Camden areas get the opportunity to learn about science and history—while also doing

some shipboard work—on the Schooner North Wind, as it plies the Delaware River. This program is run entirely by volunteers and funded by charter rentals and ticketed public sails.

*The Philadelphia Inquirer* named Schooner North Wind its 2024 Philly Favorite Boat Cruise.

### Sunday, June 23, 11 AM (zoom)

*Confronting Our Difficult History*

**Erik Younge and Sylvia Metzler, ERTF Co-Chairs**

**Philadelphia Ethical Society**



In his 2020 TED Talk, "Why We Must Confront the Painful Parts of U.S. History," Hasan Kwame Jeffries urges us to examine the historical context of present injustice. A discussion will follow screening of the video.

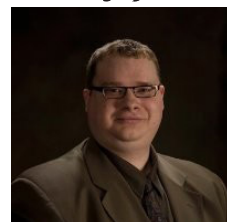
### Sunday, June 30, 11 AM

*Resistance to Book Banning*

**Christopher Harris, Director,**

**School Library System,**

**Genessee Valley BOCES**



This is an All-Society Platform. Check the *Weekly Bulletin* for the zoom link.

### \* Where They'll Be

With the exception of our musical program on June 9, which will be presented at the Ethical Society building, all platforms in June are on zoom only.

## LETTER FROM THE LEADER

### Being There When Life Is Hard

*By Hugh Taft-Morales*

Pastoral care is a big part of my job as Clergy Leader of the Philadelphia Ethical Society. Lately, that work has felt particularly demanding. More members are battling health challenges. I've had to organize several memorial services. People are struggling with issues that range from a painfully divisive Presidential election to horror in the Middle East. Phew! That's a lot of grief, fear, and trauma to process.

Members also come to me with ethical dilemmas. Those may involve relationships: Should I continue to financially assist a good friend I believe won't pay me back? Must I be completely honest with my mother, who has dementia? Others questions are less personal but also complex. Is it OK to do all I can, legally, to minimize my taxes? Should I buy an electric car?

Sometimes, people need help sorting out interpersonal conflicts in our community. That is particularly true for overworked volunteers. Tensions arise even among those dedicated to improving the world.

Fortunately, I've been well prepared to handle such pressures, starting with 30 years spent advising high school students. That was followed by three years of Leader Training with the American Ethical Union (AEU). I also earned a certificate in counseling from George Washington University. (To be clear: I am not a licensed counselor.)

Also helpful is my experience—as both a child and an adult—in psychotherapy. There, I learned healthy ways to channel angst, such as by painting. (The creation of a semi-self-portrait titled “Deep Blue,” which appears on this page, was especially cathartic.) I like to think that three years of psychoanalysis earned me something comparable to a PhD in intrapersonal knowledge.

Still, I don't approach pastoral work as dispensing “right” answers to those in need. Rather, my role is to help people more thoughtfully consider the issues troubling them; and to provide a calm, warm, supportive presence. Often, members simply want to be heard, to feel validated, and to know they are not alone.

Sensitivity—to the needs of both individuals and the congregation overall—is essential. When Garry O'Rourke died, for example, I had to strike a balance between confidentiality and transparency. Having learned second-hand that his death was a suicide, I was required to honor the privacy of Garry's family. But for members who mourned him, there could be no comfort without candor.



Naturally, I am affected when people I care about discuss with me their personal and existential challenges: especially the ones I share. But what haunts me are those occasions when I fear I have let someone down. Some people have been disappointed by my counsel. A few have left the Society. That weighs on me.

How do I cope with these burdens? More than a decade ago, Bob Berson, Leader of the Northern Westchester Ethical Society and one of my AEU mentors, advised me to “know the limits” of what I could and should do. It is important to draw boundaries, Bob reminded me. And it's OK to say, “I'll have to get back to you on this.” Or even, “I can't help you with this.”

Self-care is critical. I watch what I eat, exercise, and dabble in yoga and meditation. I also seek occasional help from my therapist. And I know that I can solicit help from many of you, and from Leader colleagues and clergy outside of Ethical Culture.

The work of providing advice and emotional sustenance, however, is not mine alone. As the psychiatrist Carl Jung said, “We are all in this soup together.” One of my goals for the fall is to revive our Community Committee and Caring Team. If I succeed, then those groups will serve the needs of our community well into the future. That would give me great satisfaction.

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

## BEHIND THE SCENES

### How Do We Communicate? Let Me Count the Ways!

By Cheryl Desmond

One thing that happens largely “behind the scenes” at the Ethical Society is a great deal of communications activity. As you are currently reading *Ethical Views*, our monthly publication, I’ll assume some familiarity with our work. But while the newsletter is a key component of the Society’s outreach, it is just the tip of the iceberg. We also communicate over apps and social-media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, Linktree, Meetup, Mailchimp, pod.link, and WordPress. Oh, and we print a few things, too.

Let’s start with *Ethical Views*. In order to get the newsletter to you in advance of the first Sunday platform of each month, our stalwart editor, Leigh Buchanan, collects all articles, program information, photos, and other material three weeks earlier. Leigh edits the articles, a process that may include a back-and-forth with authors to clarify intent and meaning. She then submits a draft of the whole newsletter to our team of proofreaders: Betsy Lightbourn, Henry Pashkow, Nick Sanders, and Hugh Taft-Morales. This process is extremely important because the reviewed text is used in nearly all of our communications for the month. Leigh’s husband, Daniel, does the layout.

Once the text is vetted, we publish the platforms and other events on our website home page and calendar (found at [www.phillyethics.org](http://www.phillyethics.org)). Media Committee Chair Drew Snyder did these WordPress postings for several years. Recently, however, that task has passed to Julia Gokalp, our new Communications Assistant. We also produce the *Weekly Bulletin* (using the app Mailchimp) in order to get out more timely notifications of events and meetings to our email list subscribers. Interesting fact: the *Bulletin* is sent to about 840 people. Do all of them read it? Well, perhaps not. But we hope we offer something of interest to many folks.

As for social media: our Facebook account is used chiefly by my Boomer demographic, while Instagram reaches a younger generation. I only recently learned that, because those platforms are owned by the same company, we can produce one post to run on both. Thanks to our younger staff and friends for showing me how that works. Taking over from our former Community Life Coordinator Oliver Jane Jorgensen, Julia creates an attractive graphic for each post and adds information about the platform or other event. Those posts are done weekly—more often, if needed. Stan Horwitz is also a frequent and valued contributor to the Society’s Facebook page.

Leader Hugh’s podcast series, *In Good We Trust*, is our newest format for spreading the word about humanism and Ethical Culture. Unsurprisingly, two more apps are required for that. Pod.link makes the recording upload available on all the popular podcast sites. And we use Linktree to connect with Instagram users. Phew.

I almost forgot to mention **YouTube**. The Philadelphia Ethical Society is there, too. You will find videos of most past platforms by searching for “phillyethics.”



For people who may happen by, we keep our building lobby stocked with print information, including the current month’s *Ethical Views*, a print-only handout called “Who We Are,” and—when available—materials about the Camp Linden program, the American Ethical Union, and other related subjects. Finally, if we fail to post an announcement of the week’s Sunday program in the display case outside our building, I can count on a member or friend passing by to get that omission corrected, immediately.

All in all, the Philadelphia Ethical Society’s communications work is another example of how it takes a village to accomplish our mission.

*Cheryl Desmond is the Office Administrator of the Philadelphia Ethical Society*

## FROM THE ENDING RACISM TASK FORCE

### Can We Emulate This Exemplar of Reparations Work?

By Sylvia Metzler

The reparations work of Green Street Friends Meeting (GSFM) is an inspiration. Among other results, its efforts have stabilized \$11.3 million worth of real estate for Black families in Germantown. Could the Philadelphia Ethical Society—a comparably sized congregation— manage something similar?

Here's how GSFM's reparations initiative came about. Since at least 2014, members had been discussing anti-racism. Quakers' reputation as abolitionists and helpers on the Underground Railroad was well known. But some members were surprised to learn that many Quakers, including William Penn, had been slaveholders. Quaker founder George Fox was a slavery apologist. Until the 1960s, Black students were denied entry to Quaker schools. Even members familiar with that history learned more about it.

Although the congregation engaged in some anti-racism activities, mostly, members talked and learned. Then, in 2017, a contractor reported that their building needed almost a million dollars' worth of repairs. A trustee told them not to worry. They could "just pay it." After all, they were a wealthy congregation! That reminder rang a bell.



GSFM embarked on a six-month educational journey called the "Spirituality of Money," which included workshops about using funds in line with its values. In 2018, it created a Reparations Committee. Two years later, the murder of George Floyd brought renewed energy to issues of social justice and reparations.

GSFM defines reparations as "economic and spiritual repair for the intergenerational harm of slavery, Jim Crow, and their after-lives. It is spiritual work intended to address the theft and pillage of Black wealth for more than 400 years." To begin that repair, in 2021, the committee decided that 50%

of the meeting's "surplus" (funds after subtracting operational costs) would be put towards reparative justice. It earmarked \$500,000 to be dispersed evenly over 10 years. Decisions about how to spend those funds would rest solely with GSFM's Black members and attendees.

Gabbreell James, a Black member of the Reparations Committee, proposed establishing legal clinics to help Black Germantown homeowners with real-estate problems. A longtime housing advocate and community organizer, James had seen firsthand how the lack of stable home ownership among Black families contributed to the wealth disparity between Black and white Americans. In addition to rampant discrimination, tangled real-estate titles and a lack of estate planning or wills made the problem worse.

GSFM hosted six free legal clinics, which received inquiries from 81 Black Germantown neighbors. Staff conducted intake interviews and referred homeowners for legal services (pro bono and paid). The organization parlayed part of that first \$50,000 fund to stabilize a reported \$11.3 million in Black housing wealth for 66 families.

In 2023, GSFM co-hosted another legal clinic and also funded a summer camp for ARCS, a promoter of STEM education. In addition, it contributed to the Philadelphia Midwives Collective, for a birthing center. And it donated to the Philly Birth Fund, a non-profit formed to cover home births by Black midwives for Black parents.

GSFM is now planning its disbursements for 2025. This leads me to ask, What can the Philadelphia Ethical Society do?

Lucy Duncan, a member of the Reparations Committee, invites us to join a collective. Rise Up for Reparations was initiated by the Mayor's Commission on Faith-Based and Interfaith Affairs, with support from the Truth Telling Project. Last year, it presented a four-day course to show the public that there are realistic ways to compensate Black people for the inhumanity and discrimination they have faced. Duncan hopes to offer that course again in the next nine months.

The collective—now led by reparationWorks—comprises 15 Philadelphia-area congregations. The goal is to reach 100. I invite my congregation to consider joining Rise Up for Reparations.

*Sylvia Metzler is a member of the Ending Racism Task Force*

# SUMMER EVENTS

Friday, June 21, noon - 10 PM

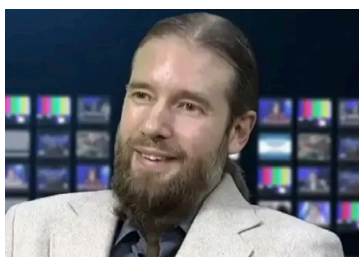
## Make Music Philly

**MAKE  
MUSIC**  
Philly

This annual DIY festival, featuring music of all genres and performers at all levels, will unfold around the city throughout the day. Performances at the Ethical Society building include a show by Jazz 4 Nothin', at 7:30 PM. (This is a wider community event. More information is available [here](#).)

## Harmony in Diverse Perspectives: Honoring CJ Fearnley's Comprehensivity date to be announced

A comprehensivist perspective encourages us to understand the world holistically: in a way that encompasses our beliefs, values, feelings, and ethical principles. Looking beyond the



confines of individual knowledge, it advocates bringing people together in order to better grasp the complexity of our civilization. CJ Fearnley—a philosopher, mathematician, software pioneer, and lifelong learner—was a leading

proponent of the concept. This joint production of the Ethical Society and the Greater Philadelphia Thinking Society celebrates the publication of his book, *Collaborating for Comprehensivity*. (Fearnley, who died in 2022, was a cherished contributor to the Thinking Society.) Attendees are encouraged to prepare by reading these essays:

[“Mistake Mystique in Learning and in Life,”](#) [“Redressing the Crises of Ignorance,”](#) and [“The Whole Shebang: To Understand All and Put Everything Together.”](#) The book is available from [Amazon](#) and in [PDF](#). Meet at the Ethical Society building.


## Camp Linden Picnic date to be announced

Join our annual summer celebration of friendship, fun, food, and the great outdoors! We provide hotdogs, hamburgers, and beverages. You are encouraged to bring side dishes and desserts. A recommended contribution of \$15 will be collected at the event. Children 12 and under are free. Those who wish to carpool should email us at the address below, indicate whether you can take passengers or need a ride, and include your mobile-phone number. Carpoolers will assemble at the Society building at 11 AM on the day of the picnic. Overnight camping is available on Friday and Saturday. We may also offer overnight accommodations at Temenos, a nearby conference center, if there is sufficient interest. RSVP to [camplinden@phillyethics.org](mailto:camplinden@phillyethics.org).

Wednesday, September 11, 5 PM - 8 PM

## Reentry Simulation

People released from incarceration must navigate a bureaucratic labyrinth and overcome myriad practical obstacles in order to re-integrate into society. To educate the public about those challenges—which contribute to very high rates of recidivism—the Ethical Society, in collaboration with the U.S. Attorney's Office, Eastern District of Pennsylvania, invites you to participate in a reentry simulation at our building. Participants will assume the roles of recently released people and attempt to do everything from pass mandated drug tests to find jobs. Tickets are free but limited. We will let you know when they become available. Invite your friends!



**PHILADELPHIA  
ETHICAL SOCIETY**  
presents  
**CAMP  
LINDEN  
PICNIC**  
in  
**WEST CHESTER, PA.**

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lawn games  
swimming  
hiking  
kayaking  
**local attractions:**  
museums  
wineries  
gardens  
historical sites  
**cookout (veg opt)**  
camp fire  
fireworks  
**overnight options:**  
camping  
hotel  
retreat center  
pancake breakfast

**a WEEKEND  
of SUMMER  
FUN!**

**Date To Be  
Announced!**

Contact [camplinden@phillyethics.org](mailto:camplinden@phillyethics.org)  
To RSVP or for more details



## SUNDAY SERVICES

11 am

Ethical Views is published monthly except July and August.

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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 16, 6 PM**

**Building Committee**  
**Michael Black-Smith**  
**Wednesday, June 19, 6 PM**

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 8, 11 AM**

Ethical Action Committee  
open chair  
next meeting TBA

**Finance Committee**  
**Nick Sanders**  
**Wednesday, June 12, 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).**

## Welcome!

Valerie Pry (left) and Julia Gokalp have been Society members for a little while now. But on May 19, Leader Hugh formally welcomed them into the fold, presenting each with an "Ask me about Ethical Culture" pin. Julia spoke about how her search for community after college and a well-placed social media ad brought her to our doors. Valerie talked about her new job as a tour guide on a double-decker bus, which helps her appreciate Philadelphia through the fresh eyes of visitors. We are thrilled to have them among us!



## Welcome Back!

Despite the dreary weather on May 5, we felt like breaking into a chorus of "Here Comes the Sun," when Ruth and Barry Dubinsky returned to Sunday platform. Although Ruth's struggle with cancer kept the couple away for about a year, they never lost touch. Ruth's optimistic, funny, candid notes to individuals and to the congregation sustained her in our thoughts. "If there is a silver lining to a serious illness," said Ruth, "it's discovering just how much you're loved in this world."

