



ETHICAL VIEWS

February 2025 Vol. 139, No. 6 Newsletter of the Philadelphia Ethical Society

SUNDAY PLATFORMS

The public is welcome to join us *

Sunday, February 2, 11 AM

Ethical Immigration Policy

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



The U. S. immigration system needs significant repair, but not in the manner chosen by the new administration. Our focus should be on how to absorb 10 million undocumented immigrants, most of whom have lived here for more than a decade. These people—who contribute much to our society—do not deserve to be treated as criminals. Many are fleeing life-threatening situations exacerbated by our country's

insatiable thirst for drugs and our status as the world's top gun manufacturer. We must do a better job protecting those who seek asylum and providing a path to citizenship. Hugh Taft-Morales explores options for compassionate, legal, and ethical responses.

Sunday, February 9, 11 AM

Humanitarian Service to Art

**Lunise Jules, Economic-Development Expert
Talie, Musician**



Lunise Jules, a native of Haiti and an economic-development specialist, will discuss her efforts to implement humanitarian programs for vulnerable populations in Central America and the Caribbean. Jules's newsletters and success stories promoting social and economic justice have inspired others.

They also led her back to her first love: the arts. A storyteller and poet, she published a book of poetry, *Pluie D'Hibiscus*, last year.

Jules will be joined by Talie (Nathalie Cerin), a Philadelphia-based singer-songwriter, born and raised in Port-au-Prince. Talie's music is a unique blend of Haitian folk music and soul, delivered through alto vocals and acoustic guitar. She recently released her sophomore project: a collection of original and traditional Haitian folk songs called *Solèy Midi* (Midday Sun).



Sunday, February 16, 11 AM

Evolution Revolution

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

The theory of evolution fundamentally changed western paradigms about the universe. Thanks to Darwin's conception of natural selection, a growing majority of U.S. adults no longer views humankind as the pinnacle of life, divinely created as part of a master plan to serve an invisible, all-powerful creator. Instead, they understand that we are the product of random mutations and interactions with the environment over thousands of years. Hugh Taft-Morales explores the senses of wonder and humility engendered by this revolution of thought.

Sunday, February 23, 11 AM

Why We Need the Peace Corps for Everyone

**Jonathan Zimmerman,
Professor of the History of Education
University of Pennsylvania**



Americans live in an immensely polarized moment, lacking shared goals or even a shared narrative about who we are. Formal education has only made matters worse. Instead of uniting us, it has divided Americans into hostile camps, contends Jonathan Zimmerman, a former public school social-studies

teacher and Peace Corps volunteer, in Nepal. Zimmerman will advocate for required national service as a different educational experience: one that brings everyone together. His most recent books include *Whose America? Culture Wars in the Public Schools* and *The Amateur House: A History of College Teaching in America*.

* **Where They'll Be**

The Philadelphia Ethical Society gathers in-person every Sunday, at 1906 Rittenhouse Square. Platforms are delivered simultaneously in the Auditorium and over zoom. When guest speakers appear on zoom, attendees in the Auditorium can view their presentations on a screen while experiencing the rest of the program in real life. Please continue to check your Weekly Bulletins for updates.

LETTER FROM THE LEADER

Our New Era of Welcomeness

By Hugh Taft-Morales

As we enter Black History Month, I am heartened that a “Welcoming Covenant” was adopted, in December, as an aspirational statement of the Philadelphia Ethical Society Board of Trustees. That assertion of principle is particularly important given the current backlash hurting efforts to deconstruct oppressive systems such as racism, sexism, classism, LGBTQ+ bigotry, and xenophobia. The new administration in Washington, influenced by the pernicious Project 2025, will be whipping up intolerance and targeting vulnerable groups. Given the current political environment, it is essential that the Ethical Society remain a welcoming and safe space in Philadelphia.

But aspirational statements mean little if they don’t inform our actions. The Board and, hopefully, all members will embrace the spirit of this Welcoming Covenant to guide our interactions, programs, and policy. The Covenant consists of four statements:

- 1) *We pledge to nurture a welcoming, respectful, and inclusive community that treats all people as having inherent worth.*
- 2) *We acknowledge that our social structures, culture, and habits have historically inherited oppressive elements that are insensitive and harmful to marginalized people and that it is incumbent upon us to deconstruct those insensitive, harmful elements.*
- 3) *In the context of the fact that humans are flawed beings, when people from historically and culturally marginalized groups critique our words or actions, as individuals or as an Ethical Society, we should try to avoid knee-jerk reactions rejecting such critiques. In the spirit of life-long growth and learning, we strive to listen actively, with open minds and hearts, to thank them, and to allow the experience to integrate into our consciousness so that we can more deeply consider and honor what they offer.*
- 4) *We will review, on an annual basis, how best to use our human, material, and financial resources to help heal the wounds caused by centuries of systemic oppression based on race, gender, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, national origin, body type, and religion.*

Some members may have reservations about aspects of the Covenant. They might worry that it could lead to extremism and witch hunts targeting anyone who questions any aspect of diversity, equity, and inclusion policies. While advocates of multiculturalism, like myself, sometimes make mistakes, I believe it is better to err on the side of inclusion and respect.



The Covenant lays down a baseline for communication and behavior that our members can build on, thoughtfully, in every interaction. The emphasis is on listening and learning.

Honoring the worth of every individual is a founding principle of Ethical Culture. The Covenant helps us apply that principle to the practice of welcoming diverse perspectives and backgrounds into our community. Doing so is not always easy. But it is at the heart of ethical humanism and critical to our organization’s mission, resilience, and relevance.

I believe this Covenant will nurture an environment of growth. Growth of understanding among our current members. And growth of our congregation, as we attract and make welcome a broad diversity of Philadelphians who embrace our values. Visitors to our community and newcomers to Ethical Culture will experience these beliefs in our language and in our actions, beginning with how they are greeted when they walk through our doors.

The Covenant reflects other values we share at the Ethical Society: openness, humility, life-long learning, ethical relationships, and dedication to building a more just and sustainable world. These values are enhanced when we listen carefully to people from historically marginalized groups as they share their experiences and perspectives. Clarity about our commitment to fighting oppression will help professional and lay leaders guide the Ethical Society toward the future we want. As we continue to provide a welcoming, celebratory community, let’s work together to heal past wounds and create a better future for all.

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

BEHIND THE SCENES

Meet Our New Office Administrator, Kim Blough!

Tell us about your background.

I grew up in Redlands, California, and went to college at San Diego State. I met my husband there. We were both part of the Student Environmental Action Coalition.

Since then, we both have worked in nonprofits. Early on, we volunteered at the Alliance for African Assistance, which helps refugees assimilate when they first land here. My husband also was part of a coalition of teachers that started a nonprofit called San Diego Refugee Tutoring. I was employed by San Diego Second Chance. We served incarcerated youth: helping them get their GEDs, doing job training, matching them with internships. I set up a program within that for them to tutor refugee elementary school students. A lot of these kids didn't have a great education. But they could sure help a 6-year-old who didn't know English.

During this period, we bought a house together with another family and started a little farm, where I would bring the kids from Second Chance. It was a way for them to become more connected to their food.

You were also growing your family at this time?

We had two daughters when we were quite young. Then, inspired by the kids we saw in our nonprofit work and also by the other family we lived with, we decided to foster. Our first placement was Dominic, who came to us at 5 months. We adopted him when he was 2. Around that time, we got a phone call: they had found Dominic's mother. She was in prison and had just had another baby. We fostered—then adopted—Angel. Angel had cancer and passed away when he was 3. After that, we fostered two more kids, both of whom were reunited with their families. In 2020, Dominic and Angel had another little sister! Esme is now 4. We are so lucky to have these kids in our lives.

Your older daughters have grown up around youth from difficult backgrounds. How has that affected them?

It's really shaped their lives. We used to take them camping with my previously incarcerated youth. They also grew up tutoring refugees. They loved these kids and still keep in touch with some. I think the experience made them more compassionate. And they never got involved with drugs because they've seen where that leads! But they've also grown up seeing the injustices of the system. Camille, our 21-year-old, just started a mutual-aid program. She and her friends are trying to feed people, hand out clothing, and do neighborhood cleanups.



How did you end up in Philly?

In 2023, we spent a year traveling around Europe and North Africa. We moved every few weeks: Spain, Portugal, Eastern Europe, Tunisia, Morocco. We wanted to spend time together and reconnect as a family. After that, we were ready for the next adventure and to stay put for a while. My husband got a job in Philly.

What excites you about this new job?

I worked at a large synagogue, in La Jolla, as a facilities manager. I worked with their congregants, members, board, and committees. I love the idea of using this beautiful space in this beautiful location for good things. I know you guys are going through some transitions. I would love to help you figure out how to grow.

What do you do for fun?

I love cooking and reading; exploring our world through travel, hiking and eating. A while back, we really wanted to visit Cuba, which is mostly not legal. But it's OK if you're participating in an international sporting event. So, in 2020, we signed up for the Havana International Triathlon. It was awesome.

Final thoughts?

We've made what may look like some weird decisions. But you only live life once.

FROM THE ENDING RACISM TASK FORCE

Stand Up Against Book Bans!

By Erik Younge

In May 2023, the NAACP and the ACLU filed a lawsuit against the School District of Pickens County, South Carolina, over its ban of *Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You*. The suit charged that removal of the book from schools and libraries violated students' First Amendment rights. The NAACP went further, characterizing all censorship of factually accurate teaching about the history of Black people as an act of "pedagogical violence." Such policies, it noted, are "rooted in an unyielding legacy of racism, prejudice, oppression and anti-Blackness."

Attempts to ban books reached record numbers in 2023, according to the American Library Association. PEN America documented more than 10,000 incidents of book banning in the 2023-2024 school year. And while censors attacked books for many reasons, 44% of the most commonly banned books featured characters of color. From July 2021 to March 2022, PEN reports that 21% of banned books dealt explicitly with race or racism.

Censorship, of course, is a centuries-old weapon of tyrannical, patriarchal, and oppressive governments. In this country, it was wielded by slaveowners and their supporters. Writing in *National Geographic*, author Erin Blakemore described how material about the enslavement of Black people—"the nation's most incendiary issue"—alarmed censors in the early 19th century South. By the 1850s, every slave state had passed laws limiting the expression of anti-slavery sentiments, according to the Free Speech Center.

In 1851, abolitionist author Harriet Beecher Stowe defied those laws with the publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. The book was subsequently burned and banned. In Maryland, a free Black minister was sentenced to 10 years in the state penitentiary just for owning a copy, according to historian Claire Parfait.

I first learned of the connection between slavery and book bans in 1969, during a political science class. We were discussing *An Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World*, a scathing rebuke of American chattel slavery and racism. The pamphlet, published in 1829, was written by David Walker, a free Black, man, abolitionist, and anti-slavery activist. This blazing declaration is typical: "America is more our country, than it is the whites'—we have enriched it with our blood and tears."

An Appeal was banned throughout the South, with Black people arrested for distributing it in Georgia. A warrant was issued for Walker's arrest and a reward offered for his capture: \$10,000 alive; \$1,000 dead. Still, Walker's writings were widely

read and influenced abolitionists and civil rights activists, including Frederick Douglass, Nat Turner, John Brown, Martin Luther King and Malcolm X. It had a profound effect on me: demonstrating the need for Black activists to expose the ethical hypocrisy of slavery, white supremacy, and systemic racism.

Chattel slavery in the United States has been relegated to history. Book banning has not. Fortunately, the current censorship frenzy has created a growing counter-movement. Books written by Black authors about race, anti-racism, and Black history and culture have soared onto bestseller lists. These writers challenge us to resist, expose, and fight systemic racism. Some point out how censorship props up that system.

We encourage people to read and share banned books, demand that schools and public libraries keep them on shelves, patronize independent bookstores (which often are more resistant to censorship), and challenge book bans in courts. In Philadelphia, the Little Free(dom) Library Initiative offers free banned books—many by Black authors—at locations around the city.



Finally, read Black authors who are reimagining the white-centric perspective of American classics. I recommend *James*, by Percival Everett; and *Big Jim and the White Boy*, by David F. Walker and Marcus Kwame Anderson. These two recent books brilliantly reframe Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* to foreground the perspectives of enslaved people. As their heroes seize control of the historically dominant narrative, readers come away inspired to fight racism, book bans, and anti-Blackness.

Erik Younge is a member of the Ending Racism Task Force

UPCOMING EVENTS

Unless noted, events take place at the Philadelphia Ethical Society, 1906 Rittenhouse Square.



Saturday, Feb 1, 7 PM
The Ethics of Star Trek

In their book, *The Ethics of Star Trek*, authors Julie Barad and Ed Robertson explain how the show, in its myriad iterations, challenges viewers to consider subjects that include virtue, power, self-determination, responsibility, and individual rights.

Join Julia Gokalp and Stan Horwitz in the Collier Room to watch two *Star Trek* episodes, followed by a discussion of their ethical themes.



Sunday, Feb 2, 3 PM - 4:30 PM
Understanding Love in Stoicism

Stoicism is often mischaracterized as advocating for emotional suppression. That leads many to wonder how Stoics express

love. In fact, the Stoic endeavor to master emotions contributes to a richer, more authentic experience of love. Join members of the Ethical Society and Philadelphia Stoa to uncover the ways in which Stoicism encourages genuine connection and deep emotional engagement.



Sunday, Feb 2, 5 PM - 6:30 PM
Ethical Culture Happy Hour!

All are invited to this introduction to the history, philosophy, and current practice of Ethical Culture. We'll explore our non-theist alternative to traditional religion over beverages and snacks.



Wednesday, Feb 5, 12:30 PM - 1:45 PM
Lunch with Hugh

Bring your lunch and topics of conversation to the Leader's office for this informal gathering.

Tuesday, Feb 11, 12:30 PM - 1:45 PM (zoom)
Virtual Lunch with Hugh

Join Hugh and other members online for casual conversation.



Wednesday, Feb 12, 6 PM - 9 PM
New Year of the Trees

Camp Linden celebrates this ecological-awareness holiday with a feast of fruity food and drink.

Dance to klezmer music and start seeds to be replanted in the camp's garden. The event will take place in the Auditorium. Cost is \$15 or \$10 if you bring a dish to share. RSVP to [Camp Linden](#).



Saturday, Feb 15, 5:30 PM - 8 PM
Darwin Day Party

Hugh hosts this fun blast from the Ethical Society's past: a Darwin Day Party!

We'll start with a potluck dinner, then move on to a silly Darwin quiz, followed by a video about the naturalist's life, and conclude by singing Darwin carols. Please email [Hugh](#) if you plan to attend and let him know what you will bring to the potluck.

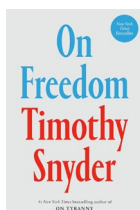
Charles Darwin enjoyed eating puma fetus, owl, and rhea. But a casserole or bundt cake will be just fine.



Sunday, Feb 16, 3 PM - 4:30 PM
Beyond Stoicism: A Guide to the Good Life—Ancient Philosophies for Modern Times

Join the Philadelphia Ethical Society and Philadelphia Stoa as we explore existential questions through ancient philosophical

perspectives. Dr. Amjol Shrestha, from Rowan University, leads this discussion about navigating life's complexities, with a focus on themes of pleasure, virtue, and doubt. Copies of *Beyond Stoicism: A Guide to the Good Life with Stoics, Skeptics, Epicureans, and Other Ancient Philosophers* can be purchased at the event or [in advance](#).



Tuesday, Feb 18, 2 PM - 3:30 PM

Book Discussion: *On Freedom*, by Timothy Snyder

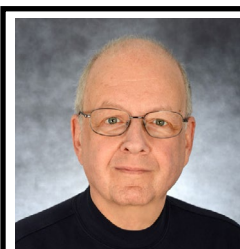
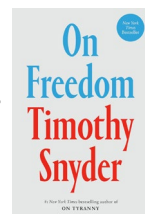
Award-winning historian Timothy Snyder explores the challenges nations face as they try to create functional, compassionate systems of governance. *The New York Times* described this book—a follow-up to Snyder's 2017

bestseller, *On Tyranny*—as “part memoir, part meditation, and part manifesto.” Drawing on his extensive knowledge of Eastern Europe, Snyder advocates striving for a freedom that is more positive (freedom to) than negative (freedom from). This first of two sessions will cover material up through the section “Mobility.”

Thursday, Feb 20, 5 PM - 6:30 PM (zoom)

Book Discussion: *On Freedom*, by Timothy Snyder

A virtual version of our February 18 book discussion. See details, above.



Sunday, Mar 2, 2 PM

Memorial for Bob Bueding

We will gather at the building to honor the life of our friend and former Society president Bob Bueding, who passed away in December.



SUNDAY SERVICES

11 am

Ethical Views is published monthly except July and August.

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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. Check with chairs for meeting venues.

Email us to learn more at office@phillyethics.org.

Board of Trustees
Michael Black-Smith
Sunday, Feb 16, 6 PM

Building Committee
Michael Black-Smith
Wednesday, Feb 19, 6 PM

Camp Linden Committee
Jeffrey Dubb
Wednesday, Feb 26, 5 PM

Community Committee
open chair
next meeting TBA

Education Committee
Betsy Lightbourn
Wednesday, Feb 5, 3:30 PM

Ending Racism Task Force
Sylvia Metzler, Erik Younge
Saturday, Feb 8, 11 AM

Ethical Action Committee
open chair
next meeting TBA

Finance Committee
Nick Sanders
Tuesday, Feb 11, 5 PM

Media Committee
Drew Snyder
no meeting this month

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



Eat, Drink, and Raise Money

Carol Love's annual bash in support of Camp Linden raised \$1,112 for the beloved community service project last month. Sixty-five guests, including a sizable contingent from Bertha Waters' family, gathered at Carol's home for a meal of turkey, vegan black beans, and a variety of potluck dishes. Some played pool and quaffed single-malt whiskies. Among those in attendance (left to right): Leonard Weeks, Amy Johnston in the background, Stan Horwitz, Harry Thorn, and Sharon Wallis.



Meet, Greet, and Tell Stories

Peeling the Onion, a game in which cards prompt people to tell stories about their lives, has become a popular get-to-know-you activity for members of the Ethical Society and Friends in the City, a nonprofit dedicated to enriching the lives of older people in Center City. Participating in the January event (clockwise from top left): Hugh Taft-Morales, Woody Kardon (the game's creator), Marybeth Tereszkiwicz, Stan Horwitz, Jeanette Artway Jimenez, Susie Perloff, and Jean Haskell.