

## More than a Banner: Working to make black lives matter

*In 2016, the Philadelphia Ethical Society put up a Black Lives Matter banner. Obviously, what is important is the work behind the banner. What can we do practically to help our nation transform itself into a racially just society? While we all have a long way to go, below is a statement prepared by the Philadelphia Ethical Society that offers some ideas.*



The Philadelphia Ethical Society (PES) has a history of working to confront and deconstruct systemic and individual racism. In the wake of the Black Lives Matter movement, as an outward expression of PES's on-going commitment to racial justice, our Board voted to put a large "Black lives matter" sign in our window in 2016. The sign acknowledges the continued existence of white supremacy that marginalizes communities of black and brown people. The criminal justice system is particularly racist, devastating many communities and incarcerating of a generation of children.

**When we at the Ethical Society say, "Black Lives Matter," we have done more than just display a banner. We have:**

- For decades organized and funded Camp Linden, a summer day camp on the Brandywine River for underserved children, primarily children of color.
- Since 2014 have been active participants in actions of POWER (Philadelphians Organized to Witness, Empower and Rebuild), an interfaith coalition that promotes through activism and advocacy adequate education funding, non-racist criminal justice, a living wage, and other issues disproportionately affecting people of color.
- Organized a contingent of a dozen or so Society members to participate in each of three trips to the state capitol to demonstrate for fair share of funding for public school students of color in the state.
- Devote time at every monthly Ethical Action Committee meeting to inform each other about our respective work on racial justice issues.

- Formed an *Ending Racism Task Force* that meets monthly to educate membership and the public about what we can all do to counter racism. In fall of 2020 circulated survey to reassess how best to do anti-racism work and are currently working on implementing recommendations drawn from the results.
- Maintain a library of “Ending Racism” newsletter columns on our website.
- Include in our Sunday morning services and monthly newsletter statements that renew our continuing anti-racism work at the Ethical Society.
- Leader Hugh Taft-Morales speaks regularly to educate us all about anti-racism work, including the following talks available on YouTube: [Lift Every Voice](#); [The Joy and Perseverance of John Lewis](#); [Just Mercy](#); [Somebodyness and Inherent Worth](#); [Racism, Peace, and Climate Justice](#); [Learning from Frederick Douglass](#); [The Weight of History](#); and more.
- Support member’s attendance at “Whites Confronting Racism” workshop series and ongoing study organized by POWER.
- Organized and conducted numerous, ongoing discussions of current articles, books, and other media pieces relating to racism and White privilege. Topics have included articles by Ta-Nehisi Coates, videos by Tim Wise, and more.
- In June 2016 hosted [#RacismIsASickness](#), an anti-racism art installation and community engagement project created in 2015 by Tieshka K. Smith, Philadelphia-based photographer, blogger and community activist.
- In 2014 hosted work from [Art for Justice](#), a non-profit that supports and exhibits the work of incarcerated artists in order to: 1) Promote public dialog on ways to prevent crime; 2) Reduce levels of incarceration; and, 3) Find effective, humane ways to improve the criminal justice system.
- Organized a Criminal Justice Reform Summit in September of 2014 that drew over 150 people including: Prof. Jill McCorkel; Reuben Jones of *Frontline Dads & Focused Deterrence*; Tyrone Werts (lifer commuted by Governor and recipient of a Soros Fellowship); J. Jondhi Harrell of *The Center for Returning Citizens*; Pam Superville from the *Mayor’s Office of Reintegration Services*; Harold Wilson, sponsored by *Witness to Innocence*; and Ann Schwartzman, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Prison Society.
- Organized public workshop on Multicultural Fluency and Anti-Racist Activism.
- Sent speakers to numerous issues-of-race workshops, sponsored by multiple organizations including the Unitarian Society of Germantown.