



ETHICAL VIEWS

May 2024 Vol. 138, No. 9 Newsletter of the Philadelphia Ethical Society

SUNDAY PLATFORMS

The public is welcome to join us *

Sunday, May 5, 11 AM (in-person) 2 PM (zoom)

Nostalgia for Childhood:

Reflections in Song, Verse, and Culture

Hugh Taft-Morales, Leader

In May, Hugh's platforms will address two very different stages of life: youth and old age. His first talk—suggested by our pianist, Rollin Wilber—examines the work of Eugene Field, a 19th century writer who composed sentimental poems for children. But while young people delighted in Field's verse, adults were moved by his evocation of an innocent, magical time. More broadly, Hugh will consider nostalgia for childhood, both in late 19th century culture and today. Rollin has composed music to accompany some of Field's verses. He and Robert Edwin will bring those songs to life.



Sunday, May 12, 11 AM (zoom only)

The AEU's Role in Supporting Societies and Advancing Ethical Culture

**Khandra Sears, Board President
American Ethical Union**



Reflecting popular trends, the American Ethical Union (AEU) has seen engagement decline at its member societies and across the movement. It also has navigated a series of significant, rapid transitions in recent years. Sears' talk will focus on the AEU Board of Directors' work rebuilding connections among Ethical Culture Societies and offer a forward-looking perspective on how it can improve support. A native of the island of New Providence, in the Bahamas, Sears holds a doctorate in microbiology and is a research associate at the Center for Vaccine Development, at the University of Maryland.

Sunday, May 19, 11 AM (in-person) 2 PM (zoom)

Aging Gracefully

Hugh Taft-Morales, Leader



Too often, our youth-centric culture treats aging as something to avoid, hide, or belittle. Yet, every one of us—if we are lucky—will grow old. Hugh urges us to embrace this journey, so as to nurture greater meaning and gratitude. And he introduces the concept of "intentional eldering," which allows us to live more fully and mentor future generations. Hugh asks, can we move from "aging" to "sage-ing?" (For more on this subject, see the Letter from the Leader, on Page 2.)

Sunday, May 26, 11 AM (zoom only)

What We Must Do to

Save Reproductive Freedom Now

Kathryn Kolbert, Public Interest Attorney



A journalist and entrepreneurial leader, Kathryn "Kitty" Kolbert will speak about the bold strategies needed to help restore and expand reproductive and sexual rights. Using what has been called "one of the most audacious litigation strategies in Supreme Court history," Kolbert, in 1992, argued *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, the landmark case widely credited with saving *Roe v. Wade*. Her publications include *Controlling Women: What We Must Do Now to Save Reproductive Freedom*, with co-author Julie F. Kay. As a graduate of Temple University's School of Law, a previous staff attorney at Community Legal Services and the Women's Law Project, and a thought leader at the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg Public Policy Center, Kolbert has deep ties to the Philadelphia region. Her accolades include the Women's Way Lucretia Mott Award.

* 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.)

LETTER FROM THE LEADER

A Better Way to Think about Aging

By Hugh Taft-Morales

Walking in my garden after a rainstorm on April 1 (no foolin'), I slipped. Struggling to stay upright, I planted my right foot on the ground, hard. I heard and felt a snap above my knee. A few creative expletives and one MRI later, I was facing surgery and six-plus weeks in an immobilizing brace.



The pain wasn't too bad. But the prospect of weeks of inconvenience swirled in my head. A flurry of practical questions challenged my equanimity. How long would I be unable to walk? Since it was my right leg and I couldn't drive, how would I manage my commutes from inside the D.C. Beltway to Philadelphia and Baltimore?

Such challenges become more frequent as we age. Every year, close to 14 million adults age 65 or older experience injuries from falls that require medical treatment and/or restrict activity, according to the Centers for Disease Control. The incidence of other ills—ranging from aches and pains to hearing loss and cognitive impairment—increases over time. As such, the phrase “golden years” can feel like an unconvincing euphemism for a process of relentless deterioration.

We don't have much direct control over the physical trials of aging. But our mental approach can make a big difference.

That's one message I took from “Mindful Sage-ing,” a workshop series held recently in my neighborhood. A small group of folks around my age met weekly with a local rabbi to discuss the book *Wise Aging: Living with Joy, Resilience, and Spirit*. The authors—Rachel Cowan and Linda Thal—approach getting older as a series of changes, not only in our bodies but also in our relationships. They suggest ways to infuse this period with joy and meaning.

I was particularly intrigued by the concept of “intentional eldering,” which promotes agency. At every stage of life, doors continue to open: to better relationships with adult children, for example, or to new experiences and interests. Cowan and Thal urge readers to focus on the choices *they do have*. Ones that will help them to flourish and to leave a positive legacy.

In one intriguing exercise, group members drew their own “Rivers of Life,” which are flowcharts of major events and transformative moments, starting from birth. As we worked, the group's leader encouraged us to pay attention to our feelings, to look for patterns, to note the people who emerged as most important, and to consider what surprised us.

What struck me, in particular, was the fullness of my 20s. Things moved so fast back then! There I was, a college sophomore. Then, in a seeming instant, married and with a child. The exercise reinforced to me the centrality of my wife and kids, as well as my lifelong engagement in teaching. Those things provide my compass as I navigate the river.

With aging, as with other challenges, we draw strength from within ourselves. Recently, my modest meditation practice has helped. But we also depend—in ways that sustain rather than weaken us—on other people. My accident reminded me how fortunate I am to enjoy the privilege of first-rate health care. Given the stress placed on medical staff and doctors, their attentive care was heartwarming.

I also am grateful for the messages of empathy and practical support I received from family, friends, and members of the Ethical Society. Such communities of concern can't save me from the occasional sharp rock or wild current encountered in the river of life. But they can make my journey along it more joyous and fulfilling.

(Note: I found the “Mindful Sage-ing” program so rewarding that I may devote a platform to it. I also may offer a similar workshop at the Society in fall or spring. If you think you would like to participate, please [let me know](#).)

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

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Our Offer, Carved in Wood

By Michael Black-Smith

My last column was about what *you can do* for the Philadelphia Ethical Society. In it, I discussed the contributions of money, time, and engagement through which friends and members demonstrate their care and commitment. This month, I'd like to take a look at the other side of this relationship. In other words, what the Ethical Society *can do for you*.

Picture, if you will, a food truck, with the word FALAFEL spelled out in red LEDs, spinning and twisting frenetically on a blinking digital display. Though more subtle, the painted wood letters above our Auditorium stage similarly are a form of advertising:

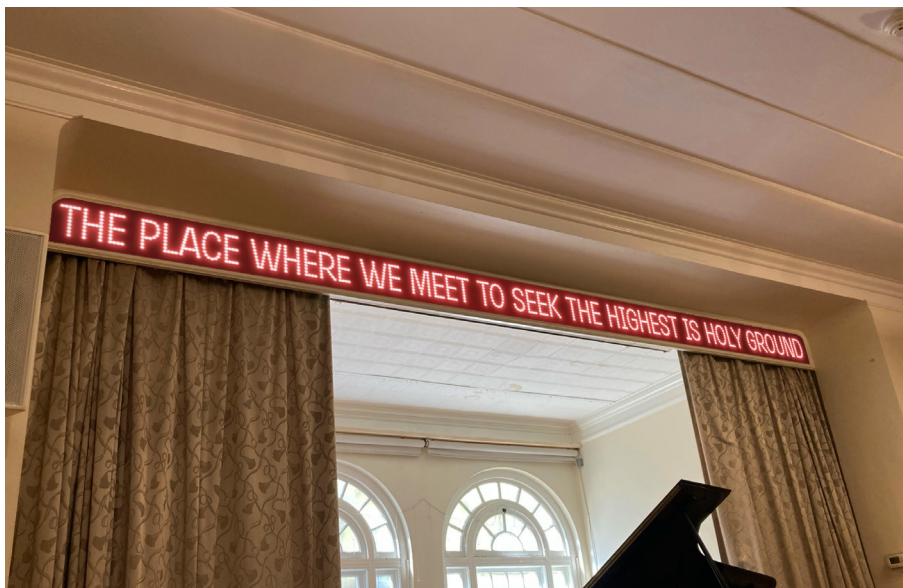
THE PLACE WHERE WE MEET
TO SEEK THE HIGHEST
IS HOLY GROUND

Quietly and effectively, those words assert what's on offer for the members, friends, and potential members gathered in view of the proscenium. Not deep-fried chickpeas, but rather the benefits delivered by our Society's tripartite mission.

Let's start with "The place where we meet." This is a statement of our community mission. The Ethical Society provides a nexus where like-minded individuals can find, get to know, and come to rely upon each other. "Place" used to be more literal, of course. Those Sundays when 50 or 60 people physically gathered for platforms and to greet and share with one another are distant memories. These days, we are as likely to unmute on a Zoom screen as to turn to the person sitting beside us in the Auditorium and ask how their week has been. Still, members continue to make new friends and check in with old ones, to share ideas and experiences, and to pursue together common causes, both inside and outside of the building.

"Seek the highest" speaks to our education mission. It is the reason—beyond the desire for community—that members and friends attend our platforms, book-discussion groups, Ethical Humanism classes, and other programs. There are many options out there if you're looking for those who share your passion for poetry, bike infrastructure, or chess. (In fact, we offer space in our building to those affinity groups and others.) But people come to the Ethical Society because they want to discover something new about themselves and the larger world. We help you learn to care more for yourself, for other people, and for the planet.

"Holy ground" represents our third mission: ethical action. That "holy" requires some translation. Broadly speaking, our community is non-theistic or atheistic. Our stance toward a member's belief in the existence of forces outside the laws of nature boils down to, "You do you!" This is not to say we lack reverence. We honor relationships. We exalt social justice. We also venerate our building on Rittenhouse Square, with its chipped paint, scuffed floors, and all. Not because there is something intrinsically holy about the building. Rather, because it is here—and also within the Society's virtual manifestation, where many groups and committees meet—that we gather to become informed and to organize actions that will make the world a better place.



For almost a century, the Philadelphia Ethical Society has met beneath those 12 carved words that announce our mission. We serve you, our members, by enabling you to serve others. It is here that we share in our community's successes and challenges. Here where we learn about the world and our roles in it. And here where we are informed about the ethical actions of other members and opportunities beyond our doors to effect positive change.

Still, it's important to move with the times. Anyone else think we should consider getting one of those blinking LED signs?

*Michael Black-Smith is the President
of the Philadelphia Ethical Society*

FROM THE ENDING RACISM TASK FORCE

Inspiration and Heartbreak in Mississippi

By Sharon Wallis

I was in the room when Fanny Lou Hamer informed Victoria Gray that three civil rights workers had not returned to Meridian after investigating a church burning near Philadelphia, Mississippi.

In 1964, between college and law school, I was one of over 1,000 out-of-state volunteers who participated in the Mississippi Summer Project. The “Freedom Summer” objectives were overcoming racial barriers to voter registration; organizing an alternative to the all-white Mississippi Democratic Party; and holding “Freedom Schools” for Black youth, which were intended to make up for the limitations of local, segregated schools.

Two week-long orientation sessions were held at a college in Ohio. Mickey Schwerner, James Chaney, and Andrew Goodman attended the first session, for voter registration volunteers. Schwerner and his wife, Rita, had been working in Meridian as organizers since January. Chaney, a Black native of Meridian, was a local civil rights activist. Goodman was a summer volunteer from New York. They were murdered on June 21, which was my first day of training as a Freedom School teacher.

I was fortunate to be assigned to share a room with Victoria Gray, who was the Freedom Democratic Party candidate for United States Senate. She and Fannie Lou Hamer, who both were born and raised in rural Mississippi, were among the co-founders of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party and organizers of Freedom Summer.

When we convened the following morning, Bob Moses, leader of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee on voter education and registration, announced that the three civil rights workers were missing and presumed dead. He warned us that we were risking our lives by going to Mississippi and advised us not to participate unless we were willing to take that risk. Only a few of the volunteers went home. Those who remained sang the freedom songs with even greater fervor, especially the one that began “This may be the last time.”

I experienced a feeling of awe, in the presence of inspiring leaders, being part of a movement that was bending the arc of history toward justice.

Sharon Wallis is a member of the Ending Racism Task Force



Civil rights activists (left to right) Fannie Lou Hamer, Victoria Gray, and Annie Devine in front of the U.S. Capitol, in 1965.

In Memory of Garry O'Rourke

Garry O'Rourke, our friend and a member of the Philadelphia Ethical Society since 2010, died on April 1, at the age of 76. Society members held several gatherings to honor and remember him.

When you walked into the Auditorium on a Sunday morning, Garry was one of the first people you'd see. His height and thick thatch of hair drew the eyes. During Joys and Concerns, he weighed in often, talking about his job or with news of his mother, Betty, to whom he was devoted.

Garry contributed to the Society in more formal ways. For six years, starting in 2012, he served on the Board. During the last four, he was vice president. As chair of the Building Committee in some of the Society's leaner years, he led the assault on a to-do list that approached 60 items. Occasionally, he paid for the work himself. He also supported the Service Auction: offering boat rides for which he prepared meals, sometimes with a Central American theme.



Garry cared deeply about ethical issues, both global ones and those he encountered every day. He would launch and join debates—in-person and through e-mail—on such subjects as crime and the war in Ukraine. Sometimes, he posed questions about things he saw around town. Should he have intervened when he observed a teenager harassing a younger child? Was a convenience store clerk right to detain a man she thought was shoplifting? "I don't have a good answer," Garry would say, inviting others to weigh in.

On some issues, Garry swam against the stream of opinion prevailing in the Society. But he did so with an earnestness and curiosity that members respected. You might clash with him, member Sylvia Metzler remarked. But, also, you would bond with him.

Garry was a local guy, born in Philly and raised in Ardmore. An avid golfer, he began caddying at Overbrook Country Club while still in high school. It was a caddying scholarship that brought him to St. Joseph's University, where he earned a bachelor's degree in economics. He later received a master's in that subject from Penn State.

For almost three decades, Garry was employed as a property manager for a company that develops and manages affordable homes. He also invested in his own rental properties, relishing the hands-on satisfaction of renovation work.

Garry had long felt drawn to Latin America: its people, language, and culture. He studied the region while at St. Joseph and spent time in Mexico, where he became fluent in Spanish. Early in his career, Garry taught Spanish at Girard College. He also enjoyed being part of a Spanish conversation club.

In 2008, Garry made his first trip to Honduras to volunteer as a translator for a non-profit that was starting a medical clinic. He helped assemble equipment and acted as a liaison with officials and residents in the town. On additional forays, in 2012 and 2014, Garry facilitated communication among American and Honduran dentists and their patients. Later, he participated in Habitat for Humanity, in Guatemala.

"What impressed me about Garry was that he sincerely and consistently wanted to do the right thing," said Society Leader Hugh Taft-Morales. "While we may have disagreed on some issues, he always shared his views respectfully, listened to my opinion, and was willing to rethink his position. We will all miss him."

The Planet and the Park

For an hour on April 21, Camp Linden relocated from the Brandywine Creek to Rittenhouse Square. Following the Sunday platform, Society members and visitors paraded into the park and unfurled a giant rainbow parachute. Under Leonard Weeks' direction, we practiced cooperation by bouncing an inflated globe on top of it; and Robert Edwin led us in the Camp Linden Song. Then it was back to the building for a lunch of corn bread, salad, and, a cake celebrating both Earth Day and Henry Pashkow's birthday.



Clockwise from top right:
Sally Redlener and Henry Pashkow;
Julian and Dino; John Horkel;
Julia Gokalp, Diego Granerà and Sally Redlener;
Robert Edwin and Kate Esposito;
Leonard Weeks; Sharon Wallis;
Alexandra and Victoria with Amy Johnston



In Good We Trust

a podcast about being human
hosted by Hugh Taft-Morales

PHILADELPHIA ETHICAL SOCIETY

Have You Heard Hugh's Word?

In Good We Trust, a podcast created by our Leader, Hugh Taft-Morales, promotes thoughtful reflection about the challenges of living an ethical life. So far, Hugh has produced more than a dozen 10-minute episodes on subjects ranging from the Deadly Sins to Valentine's Day. If you haven't yet tuned in, then you can catch up [here](#) or from the Philadelphia Ethical Society [home page](#). After you've listened, please take a minute to record a comment on Voice Memos. You could be part of an upcoming podcast!

UPCOMING EVENTS

Thursday, May 2, 12:30 PM (zoom)

Lunch with Hugh

We'll talk about whatever is on your mind. You'll eat whatever is in your kitchen.



Sunday, May 5, 10 AM
Spring Outreach Effort

Be part of our last outreach effort of the season, in which we introduce the Ethical Society to neighbors and potential friends. For an hour before Sunday platform, members will sit at an

information table in front of the Society building or join Hugh passing out flyers and talking to people in Rittenhouse Square. It's fun to tell others about our great community.

Contact [Hugh](#) or [Mike](#) to volunteer.

Sunday, May 5, 1 PM - 2:15 PM (in-person)

A Community Conversation about Gender Wealth



Join Hugh and Kelly Sheard, director of the Gender Wealth Institute at [Women's Way](#), for a conversation about the gender wealth gap.

The Institute is creating the region's

first Gender Wealth Index, to measure changes in women's wealth and drive evidence-based action to reduce inequality. By participating in this conversation, you can help an important research project define measurements that are holistic and equitable. RSVP to [Hugh](#).



Art Returns to the Collier Gallery

Through May, the Collier Gallery will host an exhibition by Philadelphia artist Jim Wadleigh. "The Whole Shebang!" reflects Wadleigh's response to the times in which we live. Works are for sale. Twenty percent of the proceeds will be donated to the Society's Kiva microlending nonprofit, which aims to expand financial access for underserved communities around the world. The exhibition is free and open to the public. The Collier Gallery, on the second floor of the Society building, is open from Sunday to Wednesday, noon to 6 PM. Or, to make an appointment, call 215-735-3456.



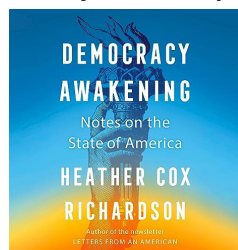
Tuesday, May 7, 12:30 PM (in-person)

Lunch with Hugh

We'll talk about whatever is on your mind. You'll eat whatever is in the bag you bring from home. Meet in the Leader's Office.

Tuesday, May 7, 5:30 PM - 7 PM (in-person)

Book Discussion Series: *Democracy Awakening: Notes on the State of America*, by Heather Cox Richardson



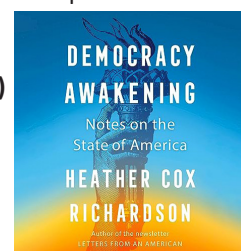
How did we arrive at this moment of political crisis? How do we find our way out of it? Acclaimed historian Heather Cox Richardson presents a condensed account of modern conservatism and a recap of Donald Trump's Presidency. This session will cover the book's second half, beginning with Chapter 17.

Meet in the Leader's Office.

Monday, May 13, 5:30 PM - 7 PM (zoom)

Book Discussion Series: *Democracy Awakening: Notes on the State of America*, by Heather Cox Richardson

See event information for May 7.



Sunday, May 19, 12:30 PM (in-person and zoom)

Annual Members Meeting

On the agenda: Board elections for president, vice president, and up to three trustees-at-large. The treasurer will report on next year's budget and moving our endowment to the Philadelphia Foundation. Also on tap: an update on the Rose Rappaport Long Fund and the Stewardship Fund.

Monday, May 20, 1 PM (in-person)

Peeling the Onion



Get to know other Ethical Society members and some of our Philadelphia neighbors through this fun activity. Peeling the Onion lets participants share stories from their lives, creating opportunities for conversations and new friendships. Meet in the Leader's Office. Space is limited, so RSVP to [Woody](#) or [Hugh](#).

Saturday, June 1, 10:30 AM

Seventh Ward Tribute Tour



Join members of the Philadelphia Ethical Society and the First Universalist Church of Philadelphia for a tour of the Seventh Ward. Our guide will be Amy Hillier, an associate professor at the University of Pennsylvania's School of Social Policy and Practice. Hillier is co-leader of a multimedia program about this historic neighborhood, which once

was the heart of Black Philadelphia. In the late 19th century, Penn commissioned W.E.B. Du Bois to document the lives of people living there. RSVP to [Hugh](#).



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

Philadelphia Ethical Society
1906 South Rittenhouse Square
Philadelphia, PA 19103

Hugh Taft-Morales, Leader

PES Board of Trustees
Michael Black-Smith, President
Kate Esposito, Vice President
Daniel Hoffman, Secretary
Nick Sanders, Treasurer
Trustees-at-Large
Stan Horwitz
Sylvia Metzler
Henry Pashkow
Sally Redlener
Drew Snyder

(215) 735 - 3456
office@phillyethics.org

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, May 19, 6 PM

Building Committee
Michael Black-Smith
no meeting this month

Camp Linden Committee
Jeffrey Dubb
Wednesday, May 22, 5 PM

Education Committee
Betsy Lightbourn
Wednesday, May 1, 5:30 PM

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

Ethical Action Committee
open chair
next meeting TBA

Finance Committee
Nick Sanders
Wednesday, May 8, 5 PM

Media Committee
Drew Snyder
Thursday, May 16, 6 PM

Social Committee
open chair
next meeting TBA

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

Saying Hello

On the season's first Spring Outreach morning, members spread the word about our Ethical Society's mission and Earth Day celebration to neighbors and potential friends. Volunteers fanned out across Rittenhouse Square and also distributed leaflets from a table in front of the building. Among those participating were (left to right) Betsy Lightbourn, Sharon Wallis, Sylvia Metzler, Hugh Taft-Morales, Justin Taft-Morales (Hugh's temporary chauffeur), Carol Parlett, and Richard Brown.



Saying Goodbye

Last month, Hugh spoke at a memorial for Gregory Williams, the Society's longtime Event Facilitator, who died on March 10. About 200 people—close to half of them family members—were present at Edenton United Methodist Church, in Greg's North Carolina hometown. Many spoke about Greg's kindness, generosity, and perseverance in overcoming challenges. Some called him "the King of Rittenhouse Square." His daughter, Uniqua Williams, thanks the Society for its condolences and financial support.

