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Global Summit “Week Three” *Daily Life in an Ancient World*



Why did Egyptian men and women wear close-cropped hair? [1]

Did you know that for ancient Greeks “who were ill, injured, or disabled ... there were no painkillers, no antibiotics, and no anesthetics? Those who were sick or hurt dealt with pain on a level of intensity and frequency scarcely imaginable today.” [2]

Did you know ancient Rome had no #MeToo moment (of course you did) and as a result “modesty and fidelity were the foremost virtues expected of women ... (because) it was essential not to give provocation to the lustful male gaze?” [3]

Did you know that in ancient Rome women were essentially peripheral and “required to keep a low profile,” and that “there were no real girls’ names? Those who belonged to the Julian clan, for example, were merely called Julia.” [4] The same is true for the name Claudia, which referred to the *gens Claudia*, sometimes written Clodia, one of ancient Rome’s most patrician families. One Claudia’s epitaph “captures the lives of countless unknown Roman women. Her husband describes her as devoted, retiring, and faithful.” [5]

Did you know that the term paterfamilias meant “head of the Roman family, invested with the power of life and death over all of its member, including his children?” [6]

Jumping ahead a millennium, did you know that your diet, as unbalanced as it is for most of us, would constitute a caloric and nutritional tsunami for even the wealthiest medieval person, whose diet consisted primarily of “wheat, oats, and barley, cooked in the form of a porridge? People also ate a great deal of bread ... meat and fish were eaten only on holidays ... eggs were something of a delicacy ... and for most of the year fresh fruit wasn’t available.” [7]

Did you know that the age of chivalry with its knights in shining armor ended when the invention of the longbow enabled common soldiers to slay the dashing knights at a distance? [8]

We’ll get back to those fascinating items from long ago and far away later in this **Book Note**, but first, after two information-rich weeks, in one of the sporting world’s hoariest cliches, Global Summit XV seeks to “finish strong” with a “final four” quartet of quality presentations.

Beginning at the end, Global Summit XV will conclude on Monday, November 13 with a much-anticipated program that starts at 7:30 p.m. at Cathedral Prep’s auditorium, near the corner of West 10th and Myrtle streets: a conversation between Val Demings and Michael Steele about “The State of American Politics.”



NOTE #1: Demings, a former Orlando, Florida police chief, served in the U.S. House of Representatives from Florida's 10th congressional district from 2017 to 2023. During her tenure, she served as a House impeachment manager in former President Donald Trump's first impeachment trial in the U.S. Senate. Demings described her own life story as the source of her support for Trump's impeachment. She said, "I come before you tonight as a descendant of slaves. Slaves who knew they would not make it, but dreamed and prayed that one day that I would make it. I come before you tonight

proclaiming that in spite of America's complicated history, my faith is in the Constitution." [9] Although Demings, who was on President Joe Biden's short list for vice presidential candidates in 2020, lost her Senatorial bid in 2022 to incumbent Republican Marco Rubio, her story resonates with my *The American Tapestry Project*.

In that project, I have repeatedly pointed out one of the great ironies of American history. It is the story of those who were first excluded from the benefits of America's ideals who fought for their inclusion not by seeking to overthrow the government, not by storming the U.S. Capitol, and not by saying, as a current Republican presidential candidate has, that it might be time to scrap the U.S. Constitution, but by appealing to those very ideals.

This story has been repeated through the ages by women, immigrants, and African Americans simply asking, as Martin Luther King, Jr. did in his last speech, for America to be true to what it said on paper. Conversely, those alleged patriots who would deny people their rightful inclusion in the American project, do so by denying those very ideals. This story, too, has been repeated through the ages, first by southern secessionists in the 19th century, racist and anti-immigrant bigots after World Wars I and II, and as recently as today's evening news.



Demings will be joined on the Global Summit stage by Michael Steele, a veteran presenter at the Global Summit. Elected lieutenant governor of Maryland in 2003, Steele was the first African American elected to statewide office. Steele continued to break through glass ceilings when he became chairman of the Republican National Committee in 2009. Steele's story confounds most narrow-minded people's stereotypical notions of African Americans. A graduate of Johns Hopkins University, Steele, a devout Roman Catholic, studied for the priesthood before leaving to enroll in Georgetown University's

Law Center. After graduating from Georgetown Law in 1991, Steele practiced law in Washington, D.C. and later in Virginia. Raised a Democrat, Steele later joined the Republican Party inspired by his mother's refusal to accept welfare and Republican President Ronald Reagan's espousal of self-reliance. [10]

Steele served as Republican Party National Committee chairman from 2009 to 2011. An outspoken opponent of President Barack Obama's administration, Steele also criticized other more radical right-leaning Republicans for damaging the party's electability in senatorial and congressional races. Steele himself, however, consistently advocated for a strict conservative agenda on issues such as abortion, gay rights, global warming, and health care. After leaving the Republican National Committee, Steele became a faculty member at Brown University's Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs. Opposing Donald Trump's ascendancy over the Republican Party, Steele became an adviser to the Lincoln Project, a group of former Republicans seeking Trump's defeat. [11]

Recently, Steele has exhorted his fellow Republicans to stop supporting Trump, saying "We do a lot of losing with him" ... because at his core he "is a carnival-barking reality TV character." [12] Even more recently, he has urged Democrats to not let Republicans "gaslight" them by accepting blame for the ouster of Kevin McCarthy as Speaker of the House. Steele said, "Did I miss what he did for that speakership, when he said to Matt Gaetz, 'Oh, we will no longer require 20 votes in the House to vacate the Chair, we'll give the power to one member only?'" [13]

Demings and Steele – should be an interesting evening!



NOTE #2: Other Global Summit XV “final four” highlights include a panel discussion of “The Road to the White House 2024 and the State of the Media” featuring three top journalists, Laura Coates, Karen Tumulty, and Erie’s own Lisa Adams on Sunday, Nov. 12. Adams began her career at Erie’s WICU when she was only 21 years old; now four and a half decades later, she’s been a reporter, anchor, producer, and former news director. Adams will share the Yehl Ballroom stage with former Global Summit presenter Karen Tumulty, a deputy opinion editor and columnist for The Washington Post, and Laura Coates, a CNN anchor, chief legal analyst, and host of Sirius XM’s “The Laura Coates Show.” Given their varied backgrounds, their “take” on the state of the media should prove interesting, in particular, the evisceration of local media and the national media’s insistence on treating the 2024 presidential race as if it were a “traditional” political contest. In doing so, they ignore the fact that one of the two major parties’ leading candidate has been accused of leading the Jan. 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol and is juggling 91 felony charges and a gathering number of civil charges. It is a situation which, as Tom Nichols pointed out this week, is unprecedented in American history.



Edward L. Bolton, Ret., will receive the Thomas B. Hagen Dignitas Award. An Erie native, Gen. Bolton is a graduate of Erie’s Collegiate Academy and holds degrees from the University of New Mexico and two Master of Science degrees, one in systems management from the University of Southern California and the other in national security strategy from the National War College. [14] Bolton’s extensive Air Force experience includes numerous commendations for excellence, including the Air Force Organizational Excellence Award with two oak leaf clusters, Air Force Achievement Medal with three oak leaf clusters, and many others all of which are detailed in his official biography available here. [15] Displaying his commitment to service, Gen. Bolton will also be making several appearances at Erie area schools sending the message “you too can succeed.”

Now, back to those fascinating facts from long ago and far away.

NOTE #3: What is history – you know, that topic about which Sam Cooke said he didn’t know much? We’ve discussed it numerous times these past three years in multiple **Book Notes** trying to make sense of America’s current culture wars.

If the historian Jill Lepore is correct that “history is the art of making an argument (advocating for a thesis or a point of view) about the past by telling a story accountable to evidence,” [16] then most people almost automatically assume the story will be about the great and powerful – about Julius Caesar or Catherine the Great or Winston Churchill or someone in our own time. Well, I am not sure who in our own time qualifies as “the great and powerful,” but the landscape is littered with more than a few *wannabes*. Still, the point is that most people think history is about great figures doing great (or at least important) things in the realms of politics and war and peace. Most people think the path trodden to *now* followed only the footsteps of those great and powerful.

There is, however, another side of history that sees the path to *now* not only shaped by the acts of the great and powerful but by the intersection of multiple social forces. This view of history aims at creating a “total history” accounting for all the forces shaping the human story. Known as the Annales School of history, it was established in the early 20th century by French historians Lucien Febvre, Marc Bloch, and Fernand Braudel. They replaced studying the great and powerful with studying the lives of ordinary people. They replaced studying politics and war with the study of climate, demography, agriculture, communication, social groups and culture – those social groups’ attitudes, values, and beliefs. [17] In short, they replaced – perhaps a more accurate word is *supplemented* – the study of the “great” with the study of ordinary people recognizing that the story of the path to *now* was the “total history” of the interaction of the “great” and the “ordinary.”

In the study of American history, the “total history” approach gave rise to “American Studies,” which sought to understand the unfolding American story from the intersection of all the elements of American culture. In the larger study of world history, the “totalist” approach inspired a re-exploration of all aspects of history both ancient and modern. Next Wednesday, Nov. 8 at 7:30 p.m. at the Jefferson Educational Society, you will have the opportunity to hear one of the foremost practitioners of the latter approach as he discusses “The Other Side of History: Daily Life in the Ancient World.” As his brief biography on The Great Courses website states:

Robert Garland is the Roy D. and Margaret B. Wooster Professor of the Classics at Colgate University. He earned his B.A. in Classics from Manchester University, his M.A. in Classics from McMaster University, and his Ph.D. in Ancient History from University College London. A former Fulbright Scholar and recipient of the George Grote Ancient History Prize, Professor Garland has educated students and audiences at a variety of levels. In addition to teaching classics at Colgate University, he has taught English and Drama to secondary school students and lectured at universities throughout Britain as well as the British School of Archaeology in Athens. Professor Garland is the author of numerous

articles in both academic and popular journals and books capturing details of all aspects of ancient Greek and Roman life, including *The Greek Way of Life: From Conception to Old Age*; *Introducing New Gods: The Politics of Athenian Religion*; and *Daily Life of the Ancient Greeks*. His expertise has been featured in *The History Channel's Last Stand of the 300*, and he has repeatedly served as a consultant for educational film companies. [18]



When Garland and his students approach “the other side of history,” they ask three questions: 1) What did it mean to be human in that world, what did it mean to be on the receiving end of history? 2) What was it like to be sick, to be infirm, to be enslaved, to be elderly, to be poor, to be disabled, to be a refugee, and to be a woman? And 3) Like Herodotus, the first ancient writer to show an interest in what historians and anthropologists call the “other,” they want to know how different peoples lived yet still show a deep respect for their customs. [19]

One ought to study history to understand it on its own terms, but it can also help us better understand the present. If so, then an understanding of how ordinary people lived long ago should make us more appreciative of how fortunate we are to live in the “here and now.” Setting aside for the moment the potentially lethal tomfooleries of America’s current political class and war and chaos elsewhere (a large set-aside, I grant), Americans and others in the so-called “developed world” live better than 99% of all the other people who ever lived. For example, in the beginning of this article, I asked why Egyptian men and women wore their hair closely cropped – to avoid lice, which they had no other way to control.

Or, in the second item I said to think for a moment about the physical pain of the ancients in the absence of painkillers, antibiotics, and anesthetics – not to mention vaccines to prevent infection in the first place and modern dentistry to cope with the inevitable tooth decay. Such thinking exposes the foolishness of anti-vaxxers like Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., but also how dangerous they are to our common well-being. Recognizing that there remains much to be done, it is not only tangible things like diet, medicine, and hygiene, but also intangible advances in values and attitudes we frequently fail to note.

Like, for example, the amazing progress in minority and women’s rights that has been achieved in literally the lifetime of most Jeffersonians – rights a Roman woman would find incomprehensible. Why? She lived in a world in which naming girls was an afterthought, a world in which her father could dispose of her as he saw fit, a world in which her virtue was hers to protect lest she provoke a male’s ardor causing him to rape her in a culture in which rape was her

responsibility for having provoked him. As Germaine Greer noted, talk about blaming the victim! [20]

As I am sure Professor Garland will remind us, studying the past to understand how other people lived is not simply an exercise to remind us of our good fortune. It is above all else an inherently valuable undertaking seeking to understand how we got to *now*. Understanding how we got to now enables us to deepen our appreciation of how other people lived in the past and how other people live now. It is foremost an undertaking seeking to understand the *other* in order that we might all live in peace together. Or, as Professor Garland says, we study “what is radically different or “other” in human behavior ... to keep an open mind and demonstrate tolerance” not only towards the past but also towards those “others” with whom we share Mother Earth today.

If that is too grandiose a hope, then maybe studying how ordinary people lived in other times will help us understand what the poet knows – that just as history is not only or even mainly about the doings of the great and powerful, our own lives are not only or mainly about the big moments. No, our lives are lived day after day after day in the ordinary moments and events that we are often too distracted to attend to – *to be present to*. So, in an odd turn around, “total history” also teaches us to be ***present to the present***, for, in the end, that’s all there is. As poets are wont to do, they can crystallize a great deal of meandering prose into a finely honed and succinct revelation of the actual fact of the matter. Regarding our lives being lived in the gathering ordinary moments of the day to day, the poet Jack Gilbert said it best.

(Brief note – Michiko was his wife who died young.)

Highlights and Interstices

We think of lifetimes as mostly the exceptional and sorrows. Marriage we remember as the children, vacations, and emergencies. The uncommon parts. But the best is often when nothing is happening. The way a mother picks up the child almost without noticing and carries her across Waller Street while talking to the other woman. What if she could keep all of that? Our lives happen between the memorable. I have lost two thousand habitual breakfasts with Michiko. What I miss most about her is that commonplace I can no longer remember. [22]

The moral? *Pay attention.*



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End Notes

1. Garland, Robert. **The Other Side of History: Daily Life in the Ancient World: Course Guidebook**. (Chantilly, VA: The Great Courses, 2012), p. 34.
2. Ibid., p. 109.
3. Ibid., p. 173.
4. Ibid., p. 172.
5. Ibid., p. 173.
6. Ibid., p. 176.
7. Ibid., p. 272.
8. Ibid., p. 304.
9. Stracaulursi, Veronica, "Ex-officer, Trump impeachment manager and now Senate candidate: Who is Rep. Val Demings?" at **CNN politics** available [here](#) accessed October 22, 2023.
10. "Michael Steele" in **The Encyclopedia Britannica** available [here](#) accessed October 22, 2023.
11. Ibid.
12. Moran, Lee. "Ex-RND Chair Reality-Checks Republicans With 8 Words About Donald Trump" in **HuffPost** available [here](#) accessed October 22, 2023.
13. Harvey, Josephine. "Ex-RNC Chair Shares Blunt Advice For Democrats on Republican Gaslighting" in **Huff Post** available [here](#) accessed October 22, 2023.
14. "Edward L. Bolton, Jr." at **The Aerospace Corporation** available [here](#) accessed October 22, 2023.
15. "Major General Edward L. Bolton, Jr." at Air Force available [here](#) accessed October 22, 2023.
16. Lepore, Jill. **The Story of America**. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), p. 15.
17. In addition to the superficial description of "total history" in encyclopedia's like **Britannica** (see "Annales school" in **Britannica** available [here](#) or in **Wikipedia** (see "Annales school" in **Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia** available [here](#) both accessed October 23, 2023, you will also want to consult for an in-depth analysis of "total history" Michael Harsgor's "*Total History: The Annales School*" in the **Journal of Contemporary History**, vol. 13, no. 1, 1978, pp. 1-13. JSTOR available [here](#). accessed October 23, 2023.
18. "Professor Robert Garland, Ph.D." at **The Great Courses** available [here](#) accessed October 23, 2023.
19. Garland, *cited above*, p. 4.

20. For an interesting discussion of various attitudes towards Roman rape, cf. Germaine Greer “*Let’s forget the rape shall we?*” in **The Guardian** (May 31, 2001) available [here](#) accessed October 23, 2023.
21. Garland, **cited above**, p. 5.
22. Gilbert, Jack. “*Highlights and Interstices*” in **Collected Poems** (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2017), p. 176.

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