

## Week One Report

Jefferson Educational Society

Global Summit XII: Digital Speaker Series

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and Jefferson Staff

What did we learn in Week One of the three-week summit? So much that many of us are still trying to digest it all.

Race, racism, social justice, climate change, life beyond the solar system, and a look at the late British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher through different lenses – literally. These were among the topics that captivated hundreds of Jefferson Educational Society summit attendees in the first five of 14 programs.

The speakers – Camille Busette and Rashawn Ray; Ali Zaidi; Avi Loeb; Rev. Jeffrey Brown; and Nile Gardiner – kicked off the 2021 spring summit with engaging presentations and insightful conversations with Jefferson Vice President Ben Speggen. Find a sampling below.

### Addressing Policy Reform and Racial Equity with Camille Busette and Rashawn Ray



Featuring Camille Busette and Rashawn Ray  
*Aired Monday, May 10*

Busette and Ray, both of the prestigious Brookings Institution (nonprofit, public policy organization based in Washington, D.C.), drove right to the point: Racism exists in 2021 – in government, policing, private enterprise, health care, housing, etc. It is essentially imbedded in American culture.

Does this mean we're all racists? No, they say. But race relations in America have reached a tipping point – on the heels of racial and societal unrest, protests, and violence after documented cases of police brutality and killings of African American men and teens at the hands of police officers.

Ray's "bad apples" deconstruction played a central role in this talk. As the University of Maryland professor noted, "Bad apples come from rotten trees – law enforcement agencies imbued with structural racism. Structural changes are desperately needed in law enforcement. I think they start with restructuring civilian payouts for police misconduct.

"Black people are 3.5 times more likely than white people to be killed by police when they are not attacking or have a weapon: George Floyd. Black teenagers are 21 times more likely than white teenagers to be killed by police: Tamir Rice and Antwon Rose. A Black person is killed every 40 hours by police: Jonathan Ferrell and Koryn Gaines. One in every 1,000 Black people are killed by police: Breonna Taylor. And, as sobering as these statistics are, they are improvements to the past. These statistics are the reason why from Minneapolis to Los Angeles people are protesting, marching, and rioting.

"We must wonder if we would even know about George Floyd, Ahmaud Arberry, or Christian Cooper without phone videos. These incidents should make us all wonder how many more like them there are that did not get the opportunity to become martyred hashtags. Most Black people will tell you there are many more unnamed martyrs than named ones. In the words of Will Smith: 'Racism is not getting worse. It is getting filmed.'"

How can people start to help end this destructive status quo of systemic racism? The first step is understanding – seeing – the way racism exists. Can we recognize and understand the difference between an individual's racist behavior and society's systematic racism? Knowing that difference could lead to real change.

The work of Busette and Ray is so impressive because it is based on facts and evidence. Check out their writings on the Brookings website([Brookings.edu](https://www.brookings.edu)).

**NOTES:** Jefferson President Ferki Ferati and Vice President Ben Speggen launched the summit with a brief conversation about the Jefferson's accelerated programming and publications after the pandemic struck in 2020. Dr. Ferati also thanked Jefferson supporters, board, and summit sponsors, particularly lead sponsor Erie Insurance.

Tesha L. Nesbit, director of Diversity & Inclusion at Erie Insurance, introduced special guests Busette and Ray.

Dr. Parris Baker of Gannon University joined moderator Speggen in asking questions to the guests on race and justice. Dr. Baker has written extensively and presented programs for the Jefferson on these subjects throughout 2019, 2020, and 2021.

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## A Conversation with Ali Zaidi, Deputy National Climate Advisor to the Biden Administration



**Featuring Ali Zaidi**  
*Aired Tuesday, May 11*

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Ali Zaidi, Deputy National Climate Advisor in the Biden Administration, may have been sitting in the White House during the program but he was welcomed to the Global Summit like the hometown hero that he is. A 2004 graduate of General McLane High School, Zaidi was just 5 years old in 1993 when he and his family moved from Pakistan to Edinboro.

With many former teachers and classmates in the audience, Zaidi did many shoutouts as he came across familiar names.

But this was a very serious talk, of course, as it addressed jobs, science, political will, environmental justice, President Biden's environmental plans, and, ultimately, faith that Americans can develop a new economy in the face of climate change and economic upheaval created by a public health crisis.

During his eight years in the Obama administration, Zaidi made economic arguments related to the nation dealing with or not dealing with rising sea levels, increased insurance premiums, and the steep cost of hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, earthquakes, and wildfires. Now, he's a point person for carrying out major environmental projects like the unprecedented wind program off the East Coast, which he mentioned.

In the program, he also underscored how many Americans are already trained in equipment that will be needed in a green economy, and that the scope of a new civilian workforce on environmental projects would be 10 times larger than Franklin Roosevelt's Civilian Conservation Corps. In a similar vein, Zaidi discussed the importance of the "intersectionality" between climate and issues of economic well-being, racial justice, public health, and infrastructure as a priority in the Biden administration in its "whole of government" approach to climate action.

Zaidi fondly reflected on growing up in the Erie region, praising the lessons he learned in education from excellent public school teachers and lessons of life from growing up in a value-rich community. He credited his positive upbringing with his subsequent success as a Harvard University undergrad, Georgetown law student, and attaining a leadership career in the federal government.

**NOTES:** Jefferson President Ferki Ferati and Vice President Ben Speggen started

the program with continued conversation about the Jefferson.

Jefferson Chairwoman Joyce Savocchio introduced special guest Ali Zaidi.

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## Extraterrestrial Life: Are We the Sharpest Cookies in the Jar?



Featuring Avi Loeb  
*Aired Wednesday, May 12*

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Dr. Avi Loeb, one of the world's top astrophysicists, has been interviewed 500 times in the few months since his bestselling book, [\*Extraterrestrial Life: First Sign of Intelligent Life Beyond Earth\*](#), was published in late January. That 501st by Jefferson Vice President Ben Speggen seemed extra special.

Loeb's brilliance came across clearly as he argued for the scientific method whether in the study of the stars, solar systems, or everyday life: see the issue, try to develop evidence, gather more evidence, reach conclusions. The more evidence, the more reliable the conclusions. Don't waste the process of data gathering by not understanding its true relevance to an issue or problem.

Dare to take risks, he urged. It's how he left his family farm in Israel, earned a Ph.D. in Physics by age 24, came to the U.S. as part of President Reagan's Star Wars idea in 1987, took the challenge of a Princeton fellowship on the condition he pursued astrophysics, and built a career at Harvard basically in search of the unknown.

It's not your everyday Horatio Alger story. If you take risks, you may fail. But don't take the safe path. Because if you do, what will you gain in the end? In other words, shoot for the stars and maybe you'll get there. Loeb is still trying to reach them as a leading figure in a daring project to develop a craft that can reach the next star within 20 years through wind sail and ultralight material technology that would travel at one-fifth of the speed of light and send pictures home once it reaches its destination.

Those words do little justice to Loeb's arguments, which he spells out in 66,000 words in his book designed to be read by the populace. He'd rather have one picture, he says, that could help prove his theories that extraterrestrial objects – perhaps space junk technology rather than living beings – are bouncing off our star, the sun, more commonly than thought.

Among his favorite movies is "Arrival," the sci-fi thriller that used legitimate science to tell its story of alien invasion. The producer of that Charlie Sheen

movie was among his admiring interviewers this year. Was it kismet or an aligning of the stars? You'll need to check out Loeb's books and many other writings to get the lowdown.

**NOTES:** Jefferson Vice President Ben Speggen and Operations Director Angela Beaumont started the program by discussing Dr. Loeb's new book, previous summits (guests Eleanor Smeal and Michael Eric Dyson were among Beaumont's favorites) and her work with the Jefferson Civic Leadership Academy.

Jefferson President Ferki Ferati introduced Dr. Loeb.

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## A Conversation with Rev. Jeffrey Brown: Race in America and Today's Black Lives Matter Movement



Featuring Rev. Jeffrey Brown  
*Aired Thursday, May 13*

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Spiritual, practical, inspirational. These words could aptly sum up Rev. Jeffrey Brown's presentation at Global Summit XII on Thursday night.

Brown first took the audience back 30 years to inner-city Boston, Massachusetts, where gunfire, drugs, gang warfare, and, most of all, fear ruled the streets. After tragedy struck, an epiphany followed: You can't make real change from inside the four walls of your sanctuary. Brown united with volunteers from all ages and walks of life to walk around Boston's most troubled neighborhoods from 10 p.m. to 3 a.m., first on weekend nights, to meet, gain the trust of, and eventually work together to affect the lives of hundreds of young people. First, they arranged a cease-fire from Thanksgiving to mid-December. Eventually, the streets saw a four-fifths' drop in violent crime over a 10-year period. And so much happened in between.

The lessons are searing: It takes years to make change. It takes humility not to dictate solutions from a position of authority. It takes faith to overcome fear. It takes buy-in from law enforcement. Today it truly requires transparency from police – body cams, rules requiring the use of body cameras, and much more to establish accountability.

It requires developing relationships with people on the streets, which takes time, sometimes small steps, always honesty. Rev. Brown quoted James 2:16: "If one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well,' but you don't give them what the body needs, what good is it?" If a man is hungry, does he first need

to be preached to? No, he needs something to eat. Can you begin to see each other (“They are you; you are them.”) The problems, he learned, are not just in front of you, but all around you.

As co-moderator, Dr. Parris Baker noted that many Black people grow tired of even well-intentioned white people “coming in to rescue us.” Brown cited an old West African proverb, “What you do for me, you do to me!” The idea of white privilege often expresses the feeling that the white person alone can make the difference. That there aren’t enough leaders in the Black community (“That is just not true.”) One of the big ways for the white community to help is to be willing to follow, not lead. (“Let African Americans become the experts of their own problems.”) We must learn the history of race relations, such as the GI Bill when 16 million American soldiers returned to the U.S. after the war. More than 80 percent of white veterans were able to take advantage of interest-free loans to build a house and the start family equity. Of the 1.2 million black veterans, a total of 56 were granted interest-free loans.

And the talk grew deeper still. Brown gave the facts about the Black Lives Matter Movement, including its origins in programs like the Boston Miracle. Politicization cannot skew the facts: It is a multicultural movement that is growing, including large numbers of white people who want to be part of solutions. It is not an all-Black movement.

The first question from the audience came from Brown’s old friend, Rev. Charles Mock. It was a pointed one that asked him to comment on the sometimes lack of support from church people for his reform ministry. Turns out that’s true. There has been pushback. Turns out that it’s also true that when you let the spirit lead you to God, Rev. Brown posits, and you listen to God, good things will follow.

**NOTES:** Jefferson President Ferki Ferati and Vice President Ben Speggen started the program with continued conversation about the Jefferson.

Jefferson Board Secretary Charles Brock introduced special guest Jeffrey Brown, a Baptist minister. Rev. Brock, a founding board member of the Jefferson, is also the founder and director of the Brock Institute for Mega Issues Education.

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## The Iron Lady on Screen: Discussing Margaret Thatcher in Film and on TV



Featuring Rev. Jeffrey Brown  
*Aired Friday, May 14*

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Despite our politically divided country, most people enjoy movies and acknowledge the power of cinema. So how well did the movies accurately portray the late British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher?

Not too badly, concluded conservative intellectual Nile Gardiner as he wrapped up the first week of presentations at the Jefferson's Global Summit XII speaker series.

Gardiner, who appears frequently as a foreign policy analyst and political commentator on national and international television and radio, including Fox News Channel, CNN, BBC, Sky News and NPR, was well-qualified to talk about the program theme, "The Iron Lady on Screen: Margaret Thatcher in Film and on TV."

He served as a foreign policy aide to Mrs. Thatcher, assisted her with her last book, "Statecraft: Strategies for a Changing World," and advised her on many international issues. He is now director of the Margaret Thatcher Center for Freedom at The Heritage Foundation.

Gardiner offered his general insights about history in media and pop culture and as an avid fan of "The Crown" and having seen "The Iron Lady," he assessed Gillian Anderson's and Meryl Streep's portrayals of the former Prime Minister. The jury remains out on his skills as a movie critic.

Thatcher came from a humble background, and before going to Oxford University worked in her father's grocery. The Crown and Iron Lady depict her clashing with the upper classes of the Conservative Party. Gardiner described how Thatcher's modest upbringing may have influenced her leadership as prime minister.

The Falklands War also features prominently in both "The Iron Lady" and "The Crown." Gardiner weighed in on whether the filmmakers got Thatcher's leadership and instincts right.

Off the subject of cinema, Gardiner also discussed his support of Brexit, the biggest political issue in the UK of the last decade, and his belief that Thatcher would have, too.

**NOTES:** Jefferson Vice President Ben Speggen and Scholar-in-Residence Dr. Andrew Roth started the program with continued conversation about the Jefferson where Dr. Andrew Roth introduced special guest Nile Gardiner.

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**You can still register for the rest of the  
Global Summit XII lineup!**

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**Registration itself is free**, but there are limited spots.

There is no bulk registration as individual Zoom links are created for each of the events. You must register for events individually to reserve your spot to receive your customized links. Emails with your links will be sent out after registration, a week before the event, a day before the event, and an hour before the event for your convenience to ensure you have the link available to you.

See the lineup below:

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## Week Two

- Gerald Seib: [We Should Have Seen It Coming: From Reagan To Trump--A Front-Row Seat to A Political Revolution](#)
  - Monday, May 17 at 7:30 p.m.
- Dr. Michael Saag: [The Global Coronavirus Pandemic and America's Path Forward](#)
  - Tuesday, May 18 at 7:30 p.m.
- Susan Page: [Madam Speaker: Nancy Pelosi and the Lessons of Power](#)
  - Wednesday, May 19 at 7:30 p.m.
- Karen Tumulty: [Nancy Reagan: Archives, Letters, Memoirs, and Interviews Offering A New and Revealing Look at the Former First Lady](#)
  - Thursday, May 20 at 7:30 p.m.
- Dr. Leana Wen: [Covid-19: The Path Forward for Parents, Educators and Public Health Experts](#)
  - Friday, May 21 at 1 p.m.

## Week Three

- David Ignatius: [Russia, China and What You Need to Know About America's Greatest Foreign Policy Challenges](#)
  - Monday, May 24 at 7:30 p.m.
- Ambassador Christopher Hill: [Understanding America's 21st Century Diplomacy: Lessons from The Front Lines of Europe and Asia](#)
  - Tuesday, May 25 at 7:30 p.m.
- April Ryan: [Front Row to History: Reporting from the Front Lines of The White House](#)
  - Wednesday, May 26 at 7:30 p.m.
- James & Deborah Fallows, Steven Ascher, & Jeanne Jordan, ["Our Towns:" From the Pages to the Screen](#)
  - Thursday, May 27 at 7:30 p.m.

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