

Bethlehem Moments: A Proposal (3)

The Bethlehem Gadfly Bethlehem Moments, Fun Stuff, Gadfly's posts October 7, 2018

(3rd in a series of posts about Bethlehem Moments)

Ok, are you with me?

(Be sure to see Peter's cautionary comment on my Proposal (2) post. One bad thing about WordPress is that the comment space is barely visible and thus easy to miss. Not good. Please check out Peter's comment.)

So what's so special about history?

Gadfly's had to answer that question many times in his life as a (literary) historian.

(To gain a sense of his work, followers might want to drift for a moment to [Gadfly's "History on Trial" project](#) where he engaged students on the impact and power of history on our lives through controversies over the representation of that history in various media.)
I answered that question in as many ways.

But here are two of my favorite and easy-to-understand sound-bite answers:

"History is our mother"

"History is our cultural memory"

History is our mother:

Our mothers give us life, physical life, but they also give us the first values by which we live.

You know the old saying:

"Mothers write on the hearts of their children what the world's rough hand cannot erase."

True.

Bethlehem is our mother and has written on our hearts in ways we don't even realize.

History is our cultural memory:

You don't realize how important memory is till you get to Gadfly's age and some lights go out or till you have to advance or defend a sexual assault charge from 36 years ago.

The stark horror of some of the Edgar Allan Poe classic stories you might know (if only from movie versions) that at least some students still read came from memory loss. "The Pit and the Pendulum." "The Premature Burial." Characters who find themselves in catastrophic situations without the least notion of how they got there no matter how hard they strain. The memory box is empty.

Poe is fiction. Dementia and Alzheimer's are real. What family does not have a member so struck? Some gradually slipping in to a living death. Blank-faced. Memoryless.

Meaningful life is not possible without memory.

Cities (countries!) can shamble into Dementia and Alzheimer's too. History tells us culturally where we came from, where we are, and points us to where we are going.

That's why leaders with memory and vision are so important, reminding us where we came from, where we are, where we are going.

Ha! I'm trying to make the case for the utility of "history," if you haven't noticed.

Chew on this for a while. More to come. Soon.