

We are the people of the United States. A House divided against itself cannot stand. Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

**Jason Raia:**

Hello, and welcome to *George Washington Slept Here*, the civic education podcast from Freedoms Foundation at Valley Forge where we explore American history, civics, and the idea of liberty through conversations with some of our favorite thinkers, writers, and leaders. I'm Jason Raia, chief operating officer at Freedoms Foundation and host of *George Washington Slept Here*. Our format is simple, a long form conversation with a friend of Freedoms Foundation where everyone can learn something new. Before we go any further, just a little bit of information where you can reach us. If you like what you hear, we ask you to please tell a friend and show your support. You can donate by going to [www.freedomsfoundation.org/podcast](http://www.freedomsfoundation.org/podcast) where you can find our archive of episodes. You can also email us at [qwshpodcast@gmail.com](mailto:qwshpodcast@gmail.com) and visit us on social media @FFVF on X and Facebook and Instagram at @FreedomsFoundation. Today's interview is with honorary British Consul Oliver St. Clair Franklin, CBE. Hello, Oliver.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Hello.

**Jason Raia:**

Our conversation today is going to be structured in a way that will keep us on track. We want to explore your origin story. How did you become the person sitting here before us? Your current work as honorary British consul, and then we wanna talk about the state of America today and maybe some lessons from history that you can help us explore. And finally, we end with a quiz, which hopefully will allow listeners to learn something about you they never knew. And so let's start where were you born and raised?

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

I was born in Washington, D.C. and raised in Washington and Baltimore, Maryland. My family is a Virginia family. My mother's Emily is from Courtland, Virginia, and they have the surname Turner. And, of course, Nat Turner.

**Jason Raia:**

Very famous, last name

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

-is from the area. I can't say I'm a, quote, relation, but I can certainly say with confidence that some of my ancestors certainly knew him, so I feel comfortable. And my father's family is from Lynchburg, Virginia, which is in the western part of Virginia. They moved to Washington, D.C. before the first World War. And my mother, who had, raised on a farm, went off to Virginia State College. And then when the second World War came, she moved to Washington, and that's how my parents met.

**Jason Raia:**

Okay. So, both from Virginia.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

That's right.

**Jason Raia:**

But met in D.C.?

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Met in DC.

**Jason Raia:**

Excellent. So tell me, who were the most important influences in your young life?

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

I think, certainly, my father, who was a minister and, was the dominant and I mean that with a small "d", not a large "D", but certainly was a a mover and shaker, in the civil rights movement and was one of the younger ministers, who was challenging the established Negro, a power structure of the time. So I think he was a very, very important, figure in my life. And then, of course, you know, most of the, the civil rights people that I grew up with, you know, the kings of the world, or I should say Bayard Rustin because I just saw that marvelous biopic of him on Netflix.

**Jason Raia:**

About the planting of -

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Yeah. Yeah.

**Jason Raia:**

The Washington speech.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Yeah. It was really beautiful. And, Barack and Michelle Obama were the executive producers. So when I saw that, I thought, I think this is gonna be very good. And it was. So they were primarily the influences. I think in terms of philosophers, which I read a lot of. I always had a challenge with John Locke, because of his belief in private property, and, of course, my whole origin story is kinda based on this whole notion of private property. But, yeah, I think the people from the sixties were were were and Ralph Bunche, I remember meeting him as a child or as a young man, and that was earth shaking, just to shake the hand of a guy who was, you know, a hot shot at the UN who spoke a couple of languages, that was very influential.

**Jason Raia:**

So for those of us who don't know him, tell us a little bit about him.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

He grew up actually in California, went to Howard University, was an internationalist, and really became the number two person at the United Nations. And, he was African American and was the only one at the UN at that time. And I think his value, his contribution was particularly when Africa and the third world nations were becoming independent. He wasn't a European. He wasn't white in that sense, but he was really able to fly off to the Congo and Ghana and all of India and these places and help negotiate. So he was a very important fellow, very intense, very brilliant, like all of them, smoked a lot and, from my perspective, died too young.

**Jason Raia:**

Yep. So you have this really interesting group of individuals who are influencing you—

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Right.

**Jason Raia:**

-from the civil rights movement-

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

That's correct.

**Jason Raia:**

-from the UN, your father.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Yeah.

**Jason Raia:**

How does that influence the decisions you make? You go to Lincoln University.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Correct.

**Jason Raia:**

And what do you choose to study?

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Well, I I didn't want to, I just wanted to choose, basically, liberal arts, but let me back up. I I I went to boarding school.

**Jason Raia:**

Okay.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

A school called the Voorhees School in Denmark, South Carolina. It's now a 4 year college. And what's missing from the narrative are the number of African American kids whose families sent them to these boarding schools in the South. Palmer Institute is the name a lot of people will recognize. Fork Union Academy, which was a black military academy, you know, the first kids going to the Naval Academy in West Point. Had come to, and the Citadel.

**Jason Raia:**

Right.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Had come out of Fork Union Academy. And it was very interesting to me, and I've just begun to reflect on it a bit, is that my parents were really in the forefront of trying to, not trying, of integrating schools in Baltimore, Maryland.

**Jason Raia:**

Okay.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

And so I was all excited at 13 or 12 or 13 that I was gonna go to this, you know, white school. And then my parents said, nope. You're not going. You're gonna go to boarding school, which is okay. It was fun. It was only about 20 years later that I realized they had calculated that the first group of African American kids in these white schools were gonna be ignored and these troubles they were gonna have were gonna be amazing. My two brothers didn't go to boarding school. They went to regular public schools.

**Jason Raia:**

Interesting.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

But they didn't want me to be an experiment. And years later, I asked my mom. She's, like, 82. And I said, you know, is that the reason I didn't go to City College, which was a big high school there, Polly? She said, yep. We knew that the first generation that went were going to be the unsung heroes, and we didn't want you to be an unsung hero. But then I went to Lincoln University, which is the oldest black college in the country.

And what's exciting about Lincoln is it is the only, historically black college that's not in the bosom of a black community. And the reason is that when the Presbyterian ministers were looking for a plot of land to acquire to to create a college for the collegiate training of colored men, and that meant classics and Latin in Greek, in geometry, in philosophy, no one would sell them land because they believe that, this was an impossibility, that, that, these, young men didn't have the mental capacity to to understand Plato and Aristotle and Pythagoras. And they finally found a fella who was an African American farmer who lived in Southern Chester County. And in 1850, they passed the Fugitive Slave Law, which meant that you could essentially go and grab someone who was even a free African American and drag himself to be sold. And this guy, Mr. Amos, had, like, six children, and one of his children disappeared. And they searched and searched, and they came to the conclusion that the child had been snatched. So they went to Canada which is what everybody did.

And he passed way up there, and he still had this farm. And when his kids realized that people were looking for a place to create this Institute, for collegiate study, they said, we'll sell you our farm at a discount. And so that's how they got the land. It was when I was there, it was in the middle of the cornfields.

**Jason Raia:**

Right. Right. Right. Right. So and that for those who don't know, that's not too far from where we are in Valley Forge.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

It's right. It's 35 miles. It's probably 30 miles from Valley Forge and just as beautiful as it is out here. And our new mayor, who came in on January 1st, went to Lincoln University.

**Jason Raia:**

Okay. Yeah. So, you go to Lincoln.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Yeah.

**Jason Raia:**

And what do you study?

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

I really studied by default economics.

**Jason Raia:**

Okay.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

And we had this really cool guy from Princeton, named Philip Bell, who was, I didn't realize it at this time, the head of the Economics Department Princeton, I had no idea. We didn't have Wikipedia. He was just a cool guy, and he became my senior adviser because I took labor economics and I took marketing and theoretical knowledge, Milton Friedman theoretically economics with him, and it was very odd. He said, what are you gonna do next? Very calmly. And I said, well, I've got admitted to a couple of law schools. And he says, well, do you wanna go to law school? I said, no, not really. And he was the one that suggested Cambridge.

**Jason Raia:**

Okay.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

And I said, Cambridge? And I was shocked. He said, sure. And I said, I don't know. And then he said, what about Edinburgh? I said, that sounds a little better. So I ended up going, which was great, to Edinburgh, studying Africa in the African center because everybody was about Africa in the sixties. And my tutor at Edinburgh, who was from Cambridge, says, you know, you really should go to Oxford and Cambridge.

**Jason Raia:**

Interesting.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

I said, here we go. And, I didn't know how to do it. And he says, just decide where you wanna go, write them a note and let them send you the exam. So I decided I wanted to go to Oxford, and they sent me a set they sent to him, a set of exams. And one Saturday, I spent five hours answering these questions. And the beauty is they were all essay questions, and they were all interesting.

**Jason Raia:**

Okay.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

And so I figured you're not getting in. Just just have fun. And I enjoyed it. And then I passed the exam and then I had to go down for interviews. So I then actually fulfilled the dream of this professor that I had by ending up going to Oxford, and that was a lot of fun too.

**Jason Raia:**

So you end up at Oxford

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Yeah.

**Jason Raia:**

Via Edinburgh.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Yeah.

**Jason Raia:**

And, it is I I I can only imagine that there were few Americans there and even fewer African Americans-

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Correct.

**Jason Raia:**

- who were there -

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Correct.

**Jason Raia:**

So I'm curious. What was your experience in England and Scotland like compared to your experience, which was right in the –

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Right in the middle.

**Jason Raia:**

Of, you know, the Civil Rights Movement.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Correct.

**Jason Raia:**

The assassination of Kennedy, it's just before–



**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

And King.

**Jason Raia:**

-the assassination of King.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Correct. Right. Totally. The first thing, and I'm speaking to you after having been out all these years, was that I brought my Americanness with me, and I was never an American. I was always a Black man. If you said to me in the sixties, you're American, I said, I'm not an American. I'm a Black man like that because countries were getting free in Africa. Well, I got there, and guess what? I'm really an American. And it was shocking because there was no camaraderie amongst black people I met.

They were polite. But in America, if you're a stranger and you see a black person, you walk up and say, look, man. I'm from so and so. I need help. They help you. There, you say, they may help you. They may not help you. They help you well. They're all polite. That was a real shock to me, but I got to know a lot of the Indians and Africans and Chinese that were in Edinburgh. And Oxford was different because it's the only place I'd been where everybody thought I was a wealthy aristocrat.

**Jason Raia:**

They just made that assumption.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Yeah. They just made that assumption. They figured if you're here, you must be the son of the president of the country or the son of the king. Right? And, that was interesting, for me because it was a twist of everything I thought I would have understood. I thought they're gonna say, why are you here? Do belong here. You're intelligent.

They all thought I was brilliant. Because I was there, which was a relief because I didn't realize when I got there I wasn't. And, so it was an interesting experience. We had five African Americans. And we had, I mean, Bill Clinton was in his last year, when I was in my first year there, and I assume we had 50 or 75 Americans, but I was unique because I wasn't anything. I wasn't a Rhodes Scholar. I wasn't a Marshall Fellow. I wasn't a blow and blow. I wasn't like this. And People would say to me, what are you? I said, I'm a Methodist. So so it it helped me see how American I was.

**Jason Raia:**

Mhmm.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Which is an experience, I think. Most people that alienated African Americans in the sixties, we were trying to get real, we were trying to make America what America should be. And in the process of doing that, there was that alienation, which is a normal process. You need to get out amongst other people to realize just how American. I had a guy who I sold who I bought a paper from every morning, he called me sir. Then he started calling me a yank, and I never spoke to him. And I said, how do you know I'm a Yank? He said, look at your shoes. And I realized as I walked around with my head down, looking at all men's shoes, but looking at all the shoes, I could tell the American.

**Jason Raia:**

Right.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

By the shoes.

**Jason Raia:**

Yep. And I think that's I think that's fairly, still true today that-

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

It is.

**Jason Raia:**

You can tell even if the even if, an American tourist does a good job, From the ankles up, you can usually look at their shoes and -

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

You can tell.

**Jason Raia:**

- know. So you're at Oxford, and you did something, fairly unusual, and that was attempt to, reach out to the Prince of Wales, Charles.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Correct.

**Jason Raia:**

At the time -

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Correct.

**Jason Raia:**

Who was at Cambridge?

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

No. He hadn't. He was on his way.

**Jason Raia:**

He was on his way.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Yeah.

**Jason Raia:**

And you wrote to him?

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

I just wrote him a letter, and I got a response from his secretary. I'm saying come in and just have tea. And on a Saturday, I went in, a young guy. You know, I was pretty relaxed. You know, I was anti-establishment, so to speak. That's the smartest guy I have ever met in my life. Here is a guy that was very introspective, And I think people understand that now, who thought deeply about issues of the day and and doing his apprenticeship, his long apprenticeship, sort of like the long 18th Century, and that doing his long apprenticeship, took on roles and challenges, that were ahead of his time. He was the first guy in the UK to talk about organic farming. And what is so interesting is he created an organic farm. Okay. He understood the resources at his disposal And how to and I I I don't wanna sound too businesslike, deploy those resources to prove a

point. And so, you know, he's now King. And what you find is this is a very thoughtful guy with all these pressures on him, with a slimmed down monarchy because Prince Harry is out, Prince Andrew is out.

**Jason Raia:**

Right.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

He's got two key people in the senior level that are out, and here he is with all these various pressures from the Commonwealth and situations going on socially, within Britain and and this great, rethinking of empire, was it good? Was it bad? What does it mean? How does it impact Don, how we think about ourselves as being good Brits? Right? All of that. And as the head of state and the symbolic head of the country, I think you'll find out. He's only been in a year, but I think you'll find out he'll handle those pressures very well.

**Jason Raia:**

And you actually met with him not long after he became King.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Just saying, what I do is you're not friendly.

**Jason Raia:**

Right.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

The whole point is to work together on a common project. Right? So my relationship is good. I develop very strong staff relationships. And then once we have something going with the staff, when it's time then the Prince of Wales would come in for 20 minutes. Now he's King. You'll go see him for 2 minutes.

**Jason Raia:**

Right. Right.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

But that's the difference. But it's fine. But he has hired a very sophisticated Nigerian, a woman who is of Nigerian heritage, to head up his sort of Commonwealth Office. So she's the DNI

diversity person, on the staff, and I work with her, and I work with a young man who's also very capable, who is the Deputy Private Secretary for Global, for international. And as long as you can keep those relationships and keep focused on what's at hand, then you'll have a very successful relationship with senior royal.

**Jason Raia:**

So let's go back. I'm very curious how you became the Honorary British Consul and what that means.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Okay. Well, I guess the Honorary British council, in a funny way, just means that you're a junior diplomat. You should, by statute, be a citizen of the country.

**Jason Raia:**

Okay.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

You are the honorary, you're here so you don't disappear every five years and a new person comes in. And these are roles that Americans are finally beginning to recognize as being really extremely important. If they're done well. We have the first Consular Corps in the United States in Philadelphia, and we have 82 members.

**Jason Raia:**

Okay.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

So that's quite impactful.

**Jason Raia:**

Right.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

What we primarily do is trade and investment because, you know, whatever they tell you, it's all about how we can get more trade going between our two countries. And then there's a consular bit where, you know, somebody has gotten themselves in jail and they have one phone call. I wanna talk to my counsel. And then I get the call or, although most of it is done digitally now, or

the frantic parent who whose kid realized that she needs a visa or he needs a visa to do that junior year abroad in Britain.

**Jason Raia:**

Ah right.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

And school opens in a week. Those are the fun ones. And then that's a consular. And then the other component is public diplomacy. That is what I'm doing now.

**Jason Raia:**

Right now.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

For instance, And that's the real fun part, getting out, hearing people, talking to people. And while I try to give some of my knowledge whenever I'm in a car after these events, I realize that I've learned a heck of a lot more than I've probably given out. So that's also the good part. Now and you leave the government, like, 55, 56 or 60, you're out. So, you know, most British Ambassadors that you meet are under 60.

**Jason Raia:**

Okay.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

So what you have are very young, from my perspective, but really talented people in the foreign office in the British Foreign Office who have more energy than you can believe. So I worked with them, and I also worked very closely with the ambassador in Washington. And, you know, British people are very nice. I mean, I've never really seen any of them explode in anger. I've seen them leave the room and come back calm, but I've I've never been in a situation where The conversation is very heated, and somebody-

**Jason Raia:**

Right. What's the famous, keep calm and carry on?

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Keep calm and carry on. So it's fun working with them, and It's just an honor to be the honorary council. And you're on everybody's "A" list, so that helps too.

**Jason Raia:**

So a good part of what you do is is that business side is you're trying to help American businesses and, and British based businesses connect and and work together and sort of 1+1=3 whenever possible.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Exactly. I mean, that's the whole point. And, you know, there are so many, inherent barriers to people doing business abroad. I mean, British people, British business people, when they arrive here, even though they've studied it all their lives, they forget how vast America is. And I tell them, you're going to fly to California. When you land, think of yourself as going through customs.

**Jason Raia:**

Right. Right.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Because the attitude is different. People say things differently. So just just switch your head. You know? Sort of not like going from London to Manchester-

**Jason Raia:**

Right.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

-for instance.

**Jason Raia:**

Right. It's it's, yeah. It really is that European equivalent.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

It really is.

**Jason Raia:**

Yeah.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

And so and and and and the second thing that surprises them is our federalism. I know you've been in a lot of your things, you talk about federal power and federalism and how each state has its own individual rules for the type of product you want to distribute in that state.

**Jason Raia:**

And you have places like California that have very different rules of some businesses.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Exactly. And so a big part of the process is, a, always letting them know it's the biggest economy in the world.

**Jason Raia:**

Right.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

No matter how frustrating it's going to be, just remember, once the gates open, you're good.

**Jason Raia:**

Right.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

You're gonna have a ball.

**Jason Raia:**

It's worth the-

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

It's really worth it. From the American side, the challenge now is now that they've left the European Union, through the Brexit process. In the past, the story was, you know, to put a factory in the UK because you have access to all of Europe.

**Jason Raia:**



Right.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

And and they speak English they they sort of speak English in the UK or they think we -

**Jason Raia:**

A version of English.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

They think we sort of speak English. But now the issue is still put your factory there, because the UK and the EU are Getting to harmonize. So you'll be able to get your bolts into the EU. It may take a little bit longer, but not that much more. So the story has changed, but it's good.

**Jason Raia:**

I'm curious about being an American who is part of the British consular services. And you've done this for a long time now.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

I've done it for 28 years.

**Jason Raia:**

So you really come with this wealth of knowledge, but I'm very curious. You went to school in London and in Oxford.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Yep.

**Jason Raia:**

The relationship between the United States and England, we've always talked about, at least in the 20th Century, about this special relationship.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

That special relationship. Thank you, Churchill.

**Jason Raia:**

Yes. And it didn't have to be like that. After the American Revolution, they could have remained implacable foes, and they didn't. And I'm curious from your perspective, how do the British look at the relationship. I think we, you know, we may better understand how we as Americans look at it. But how do the British look at the relationship with the United States? And that it was once a colony, but then it became this prevailing power in the latter half of the 20th Century.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

I think a lot of it. I think the first World War had an awful lot to do with British perception, because even after 1776, we had the War of 1812. I think what happened around the Civil War was also very interesting, because the question was, you know, where would Britain stand in the Civil War? On the one hand, so much of their, their, industrialization took place from cotton

That came from the slave south of the United States. And that ran the mills in Manchester and Lancaster and these places and helped it. But on the other hand, the British were very curious and very standoffish here in the Civil War. They kinda wanted to see what would happen. They sent lots of journalists to the North and the South, and they would go to the North, get a pass, go to the South, interview Lee, and have total access, and I think after Gettysburg. And they realized once they realized, then they begin to tilt toward the Union. And I think people in the North were very pleased. People in the South were not, they had their ships being built in In Liverpool

**Jason Raia:**

Right.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

For the Confederate Navy. Right? So but I think the shift really took place In the first World War, when finally, we were able to send troops in because it was very iffy about what was going to happen. And the Americans who didn't spend so much time in Britain but spent a lot of time in France began to tip it, and it was sealed. A relationship was sealed at the end of the second World War when they believed that they were the Greeks to our Romans, that was a very famous statement among the British leaders. Sure. The Americans are powerful, and they are more powerful than we are, but we're their Greeks. We are the people that are gonna, quote, temper their emotion and shape them into being the world power in our image.

**Jason Raia:**

Interesting.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

So I think the second World War was very good for the British.

**Jason Raia:**

I, I imagine, that WWI, of course, WWI has has this devastating effect on, Britain and and the loss of a generation who went over

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

In the elite generation too.

**Jason Raia:**

Yes. And, then you have WWII. But one of my favorites, I remember before we the Americans joined the war, there were many Americans who went over, and then were flying with the RAF.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

That's right.

**Jason Raia:**

And more and more come over.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

That's right.

**Jason Raia:**

And, of course, there's the great, the great cry was that the Americans, you know, were, they were overpaid, oversexed, and overcharged. To which the Americans responded said, well, the British are underpaid, under-sexed, and under Eisenhower.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

I always thought that was very funny. Yes.

**Jason Raia:**

But but it really is born, you know, this this special relationship, this special friendship of these two nations, who could have been enemies is born out of the fire of of WWI and WWII.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Correct.

**Jason Raia:**

And they realized that in some ways, they very much need each other, and they made each other better. The 21st Century has seen lots of challenges. You reference the fact that they are contending with the empire and the legacy of that empire.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

That's correct.

**Jason Raia:**

The United States is contending with its own history. You know, one of the things that I think, one of the places where I think there's more agreement than most people would think, amongst whether it's left and right or different, different political parties or or different, ideas in history is most of us wanna tell the full story.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Correct.

**Jason Raia:**

And that's something that has not always been true. That there is this there can be a difference in emphasis but telling the story as it happened, not running away from it is really important. And we see both nations sort of dealing with the convulsions from that. Politics in Great Britain are rough and tumble.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

God. Yes. It is. It's, you know, people resign on principle in the UK. You have to throw somebody out here.

**Jason Raia:**

Yeah.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Nobody no nobody says, I am a member of the President's Cabinet and I disagree with this, and therefore, I'm offering my resignation. But that's a routine thing, in the parliament in Britain that

people say, oh, we have a disagreement. I'm offering my resignation. We're both countries going through a reevaluation of its history, we're going through it in terms of our being a racialized society, and I think Britain is going through it in terms of how they are looking at empire. In 1928, which was the apex, Britain controlled a third of the world.

**Jason Raia:**

Right. The sun never set.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

The sun never set on the British Empire.

**Jason Raia:**

Right.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

It was a real opportunity for people who didn't have the opportunity in this little island to go abroad and become powerful like kings. Here's a kid that is 18 or 19, and someone says, we'll put you in the Indian service. And at 21, he's assistant governor of Madras, which has 20,000,000 people.

**Jason Raia:**

Right.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

And so there was so much opportunity for the empire. But what's so interesting is the amount of scholarly work. And I think what's important about what you do here is the fact that you base a lot of what you do on sound scholarship. And once the scholars start looking at, our scholars can disagree on interpretation of facts, and it's always great to listen to them because they're both coming from very grounded places. But, the scholars in Britain are beginning to change history. There was a book by a woman who just got a major award, who looked at the Mau Mau in Kenya. And realized all the atrocities that were committed by the British against them, the hangings and executions and just things you would never consider Mr. Poppins, a mild mannered Brit, doing to people, but they did it. And once this book came out, you begin to see, some of the Mau Mau detainees sued the British government, and they won. They actually got an award for compensation for the pain and suffering. Here in this country, African American scholars and people that are studying African American history are coming up with interesting and really a lot of insights.

My frustration is it takes so long for that book, that scholarly book, to get into the public consciousness. So someone does a great scholarly work, and they're a professor, and the book is out. They do conferences, and they may win a prize, but they've gotta then move on to the next project.

**Jason Raia:**

Right.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

And that book alone, if it were, had more public acknowledgment could do a lot to change.

**Jason Raia:**

Well and and being able to have those, important conversations where people do disagree-

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Exactly.

**Jason Raia:**

-are really how we move forward.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Exactly.

**Jason Raia:**

So whether it's to that published book, then there's a conversation in how we and the number of them that make it into the public consciousness. I have always found that really interesting. How does someone become David McCullough?

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Oh, my goodness.

**Jason Raia:**

Who's certainly a brilliant writer, brilliant researcher.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Really. Really.

**Jason Raia:**

You know, but we need more of him.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

We need more of that. That's true. And we need to train scholars how to be public intellectuals. And I think what we're missing is that we had in the twenties, in the thirties, in the forties, Eric Hoffman didn't really go to college, but he wrote a lot about history. So we need to Train young people who are bright and very competitive how to articulate in a way that a nonacademic person who's not an expert on the topic and who probably gets their news from social media or whatever, how to talk to them? And David McCullough had the ability to show his enthusiasm. I ran into him in 30th Street Station.

And he's just walking. I said, Mr. McCullough, It's just a real pleasure to see you. And he was as I said, what does it take to get you to come in and speak? I he said, you have to talk to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, which is British for the Treasurer.

**Jason Raia:**

Right.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

He said, that's my wife. We both laughed so hard. Just the humanness and the openness that he is. I agree.

**Jason Raia:**

Yeah. I think that would go, I think that would go a long way. I I I the number of books that I've picked up, whether they're political science history or psychiatry, whatever, that are really just written for other scholars.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Exactly.

**Jason Raia:**

Opposed to the rest of us-

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Right.

**Jason Raia:**

Who are interested but are not, necessarily schooled, in the specificity that someone who is an academic scholar is. I'm curious about a program that you started that helped bring Philadelphia public school kids, public high school kids to experience London.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Right. That was good.

**Jason Raia:**

What, what were you trying to achieve, and what was the contours of that program?

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Well I learned something. At that time, we had Prince Andrew, here for the Queen's Golden Jubilee.

**Jason Raia:**

So her 50th?

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Her 50th.

**Jason Raia:**

Right.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

And when you have a senior member of the royal family, if you really wanna get their attention, you gotta show them what the money earned on the visit will do in a charitable way. Because they keep a tally on how much people raise. I mean, it's like you're sitting around the table in August in Balmoral, and you did this and you did that and you, so we went to the Prince and said, you know, we're gonna have a gala, and what we'd like to do is create a fund to let, to a Secondary is what they would say in Britain. Secondary school students. So we selected a



school, Masterman, which is the best school in the city, and we sent it off to the palace. And the palace got back to us and said these kids can go on their own. They don't need this program.

**Jason Raia:**

Right.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

And I'm thinking these kids, that'll be why I'm thinking differently, I'm trying to say I need a successful program. I need bright kids.

**Jason Raia:**

Right.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

And then they said, what is the worst performing school In the city of Philadelphia. Okay? And so we went through the process, and we found this school in, it's in North Philadelphia, a high school, and they said that's where we wanna bring the Prince, and that's where we want the program.

**Jason Raia:**

Oh.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

So it was different -

**Jason Raia:**

Because they wanted -

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Exactly.

**Jason Raia:**

They wanted to have an impact that they wouldn't have had.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

That's right.

**Jason Raia:**

Okay, okay.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

So we went to the principal, great guy. And, of course, he didn't believe the royal Prince was gonna show up, And the school was a mess. I say, relax. Everything's gonna be painted. There'll be grass. Sure enough, he went in. He met the students, got them, and they were saying things like, well, what's a royal prince? Just basic questions. And then we raised enough money so over the next 6 years, have a select group of kids who, we had to structure it so that during the year, they would study Britain. So it had to be an after school program. You need kids. And, you know, half of them are gonna drop out. That's normal. But you need the group of kids that are gonna get their passports and get on the plane. To have shown a long-term commitment.

**Jason Raia:**

Right.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

So they worked very well the first year, the second year, and they would go to Buckingham Palace and meet Prince Andrew. And by the third year, we needed a school. So we found a school in Hackney, which is a very multiracial, part of Britain of London. We discovered that the kids at Hackney hadn't been to all the places that our kids were going, like Stonehenge.

**Jason Raia:**

Right. Right. Right.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

We'd get a bus.

**Jason Raia:**

Because nobody's a tourist in their own neck of the woods.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

But they had no idea.

**Jason Raia:**

Yeah.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Now the issue is we need more money because we can't have our kids going and having a counterpart. And then they say, okay. Bye. We're going off to Stonehenge.

**Jason Raia:**

Right.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

We'll see you guys tomorrow. So the program became one where once we partnered with a similar school, they had similar economic challenges as our kids did. So it worked out very well, and every one of the students in the program did some post post high school education. Some went into the service. Most went into, university and, and I had and every now and then, some young person, not so young anymore, runs across the street and says, Mr. Franklin, I'm so and so. Don't you remember me? And I'll, yes. Yes. I do. And then they talk about what an influence it was in high school spending three weeks in London. Most of them didn't have passports, and they had to go through the process of getting on. Most of them had never been on a plane and how that helped them focus. And and and that's the reason I've always been an advocate for young people getting on a plane. Get a passport.

**Jason Raia:**

Right. And I know from my own experience, I used to, I started start traveling when I was 16-

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Oh good. Yep.

**Jason Raia:**

- on a high school trip.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Yep.

**Jason Raia:**

We went to Paris.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Yep.

**Jason Raia:**

We flew in through London.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Yep.

**Jason Raia:**

And then I've been traveling ever since. And then when I was a high school teacher, I used to lead groups. And so, I would lead groups through whether it was England or France or or Spain or any of the Italy. And it was just amazing to see through their eyes, their experience of history being in a place that was referenced whether that is Stonehenge or or it was the Tower of London.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Well, that's always a favorite.

**Jason Raia:**

Yes.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Yeah.

**Jason Raia:**

Yes. To go see the crown jewels.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Right.

**Jason Raia:**

And even in Spain, going into a bullring and and and being there and then meeting the people and, but one of the almost universal, experiences were as great as those trips were. You come home and often realize how very lucky you are to be.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Correct.

**Jason Raia:**

To be an American, to be for all the hardships, for all the things you may need to overcome-

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

For all the challenges.

**Jason Raia:**

-there is something special. There is something and and I I would argue that it's built in our idea of of freedom or principles of liberty, the those founding documents that are so aspirational even though we continue to work toward their fulfillment, and we have not fulfilled them, but that we work toward greater and greater freedom for more and more people, that there is often the realization. And that has certainly been my experience, particularly when I have been in parts of the developing world.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Yeah.

**Jason Raia:**

Where you look and you say, okay. We have challenges, but even those who are challenged have a lot of freedom, a great deal of benefit that they get from an American.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

I try to explain it to Europeans and Africans, which is where I spent a good deal of my time, is that America is an aspiration. It is an idea. It is the only country on Earth that is an idea. Most countries are ethno national or cultural national. But very few countries are founded on an idea where anyone can be an American. Now people here have visions of what an American is supposed to look like, but I tell them, just get here.

**Jason Raia:**

Yes. Yeah. That's and that's-

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

And you're and you're an American.

**Jason Raia:**

And that's exactly right. That that that those that that is this idea, grounded in freedom, grounded in individual choice.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Correct.

**Jason Raia:**

That is that unites us. It is not blood. It is not just geography even though we have this geography.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

That's right.

**Jason Raia:**

It's not It's not because you your your family for 40 generations was born in this. It is those who come, those who become American, then that no matter what your background, when you achieve citizenship, if you come here from where you are just as much a citizen

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

You got the same vote.

**Jason Raia:**

As someone who came on the Mayflower.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

That's right. You've got the same vote. And, and so this is why I I think our students need to study the enlightenment more. Because all of these concepts are ideas. I mean, wars are

essentially fought over ideas. You look at the people that are dying in Ukraine and Russia because Russia has the idea that Ukraine is a part of Russia. You know, in the Middle East, everyone has an idea of what the country is.

So we need to take ideas seriously and study ideas because therein lies the stuff of material reality. Because what are we thinking when we're not thinking? I mean, it's just ideas in our head that are motivating us, and so then we have culture and and and other things. But we need to study ideas and even the enlightenment, which I have issues with. But as a system of thought, the notion that you would have a society that didn't have a king. I mean, the United States of every other basic society in every part of the world. Now there may be a few exceptions, the academics that are listening to me, I agree. There are a couple of tribes somewhere where they elected their ruler. I admit that. But if you look at all the countries in Europe, Africa, all of them had this patrilineal King or or head, and there was no individual concept of freedom. To have a country, even with enslaving, it's some most of this or 20% of its population. But to have as a document the the concept of individual freedom is what makes it aspirational and fantastic, you know, as a document.

**Jason Raia:**

Absolutely. And something to work toward. And to think that even in that earliest generation, there were those who recognized we're gonna I'm gonna talk about, someone you have, I think some admiration for, John Adams, whose family I I can't remember the exact story, but they raised a young woman who had been a slave -

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Correct.

**Jason Raia:**

-but they had granted her freedom immediately. Raised her, when she was old enough she, you know, was able to go and marry and raise her own family. For the Adams', they recognize as did many of the founders. That slavery, the ownership of other human beings was a huge problem and did not agree with the principles that they were fighting this revolution about, and they fought for it, but others didn't. And so it took a long time. But John Adams specifically, made moves as part of American foreign policy to support his idea of freedom, for all to tell us about it.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

By supporting Toussaint L'Ouverture. I think the founding era is so important, and I've become fascinated with the latter part of the 18th Century because of all the moving parts. Here is the most productive island in the world. It's called Saint Domingue. It shares this island with Spanish but part of it is French. And this island is so productive and so much sugar and other staples are

exported to France that France becomes kinda wealthy as a result of this island. And on this island, they worked their enslaved Africans so hard that they had to replenish 50% of them a year. The women were working so hard, couldn't have children, didn't have the energy, But they were bringing in, they were purchasing them from the African slavers, so we must be clear about that.

They were purchasing them from the African slavers and bringing them. And then, there are thousands of French people living on this island as overseers, there are thousands of mixed race people who are sons and daughters of the overseers and the Africans. And then the Africans decide to rebel. And that rebellion now there is a rebellion going on in France.

**Jason Raia:**

Right. I was gonna say the French Revolution is happening.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

The French Revolution is happening. And what's so exciting is they decide to free all Africans, in enslavement. So they hear that in Saint Domingue. And, of course, they-

**Jason Raia:**

They make the mistake of believing it.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

They believe it. This rebellion was 10 years. I mean, 10 years. And during that 10 years, thousands of French from Saint Domingue came to Charleston, Norfolk, Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. So many Frenchmen came that Philadelphia had four French newspapers.

**Jason Raia:**

Wow.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Four French language newspapers during this time. In the beginning, George Washington, because they were obviously coming to the U.S. for support, was supporting the slave owners because they were the ones that were suppressing it. But as it got more intense, John Adams and his team decided that they would support Toussaint Louverture in his quest to free Saint Domingue from France, and Haiti is the indigenous Indian name for mountainous land. So when they got free, they acknowledged the people that came before them by naming it in the language, Haiti, which is mountainous land. And what's so interesting about this period is that



you have senior level Black people from Saint Domingue and senior level White people from the U.S. meeting on equal terms. This has never happened before.

**Jason Raia:**

Right.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Didn't happen again till the 1960's. And what's so interesting was watching how the Lovatorean government cut deals so they could get the arms that they needed from the Adams government. So one deal they cut was the Southerners didn't want to do it because they felt that if they had an independent Black Republic, they're gonna worst person they're gonna do is sail into Charleston and cause insurrection.

**Jason Raia:**

Right.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

So they're all upset. So Adams negotiates with the libertarian government that they wouldn't send insurrectionists to Charleston because now these guys have a government to run.

**Jason Raia:**

Right.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

They've gotta get people employed. They've gotta get exports going. They've gotta do everything you do when you're running a government. So it was a very interesting period. Now, of course, Thomas Jefferson, Jefferson scuttled it, the deal, because when Napoleon came in, he decided he wanted to enslave everybody. He had this idea. He was gonna create a land in French North America, which is the Louisiana Purchase, where he was gonna move all these French people there. And the enslaved people in Saint Domingue would produce the food to feed everybody there. So Napoleon sends a big army to Haiti, and he's defeated.

**Jason Raia:**

Right.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

So he withdraws his army, and he's now got battles in Europe, and he decides my dream is dead. I'm not gonna have that vast territory in North America. And that's how we got the Louisiana Purchase, but he got it. But what's so interesting about history is it also allowed the U.S. to double its slave size. So with the Louisiana Purchase, you get Mississippi. You get all these areas which are really good cotton growing regions, and you begin to see slavery slave slavery moved from Virginia, North Carolina, and moved out to Louisiana, Mississippi, Arkansas, those areas. So it's so interesting about history That the Black people defeated Napoleon. Napoleon then sells this land to Jefferson. And in the process, it opens up more opportunities for slave owners to move and get more acreage. And that's also what's exciting about history, watching the consequences of decisions that people are making.

**Jason Raia:**

Right. And, of course, then we have the Missouri Compromise in 1820-

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Absolutely.

**Jason Raia:**

And so the southern portion is allowed to have slaves. The northern portion is not, and it it is the certainly, the history for the next 40 years-

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Exactly.

**Jason Raia:**

-from the time of the purchase, 50 plus years of American history is going to be dominated by this slave question.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Exactly.

**Jason Raia:**

Slave states and free states.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

And how are you gonna enter people? If you get a slave state, you need a free state.

**Jason Raia:**

Right.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

To balance it.

**Jason Raia:**

And then we end up in a Civil War.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Exactly.

**Jason Raia:**

And then we know the history. Even after that it is complex, and there are lots of decisions that are made, the consequences are not anticipated.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Correct.

**Jason Raia:**

So what do you think the lessons are that we need to look to take maybe from history generally?

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Well, I think let's talk about democracy. I I I think that's that's good because, you know, all of our discussions, not all, but most of our public discussion about our political scene is about democracy and will democracy survive and you know-

**Jason Raia:**

Yeah. I'm never a fan of that heroine fire. We survived some very difficult times.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

We have made it through tough times. But I think a couple things are important. Number 1 in democracy, you have to admit loss. If you say, like Trump does, "the election was stolen" and

when all the evidence proves that it isn't, that's not democratic. Because the whole point of democracy is that you have winners and you have losers, and what you expect is the losers to regroup and strategize again and come back at the next election.

**Jason Raia:**

I always think of William Jennings Bryan Bryant, who ran-

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

How many times did he run city wide?

**Jason Raia:**

Four times

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Four times.

**Jason Raia:**

Four times and he lost every single time.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

But he had influence because the opposition would take some of his ideas

**Jason Raia:**

Right.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Because they had to debate them in the public forum, you see. And the second thing about democracy is compromise. The Constitution and their battle over enslaved Africans and property did the compromise that in 1808, they would abolish the international slave trade.

**Jason Raia:**

Right.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Alright? Now that was a compromise. Some people wanted to abolish enslavement immediately.

**Jason Raia:**

Right. But they said 20 years after the Constitution.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

But they cut a deal.

**Jason Raia:**

Yep.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

So that the Constitution could hold.

**Jason Raia:**

Right. Right.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

And so compromise and admitting loss are, I think, foundational for a democracy to survive and thrive, and we've got to get back to the concept, and this is where Ronald Reagan was very good. Ronald Reagan says, there are no enemies in politics, just opponents.

**Jason Raia:**

That's a big difference.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

It's a big difference. And we've gotta get back to the notion that a Democrat is not my enemy. Republicans are not my enemies. MAGA are not my enemies. They are opponents. And once you get that attitude in that all the other things like being able to lose and regroup and compromise can emotionally drive us forward. So we've gotta turn the temperature down and challenge the raising of temperature on social media because that's a whole new medium for us. I mean, twenty years ago, I never would have thought I could get my news from a podcast.

**Jason Raia:**

Right.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Didn't even know what it was.

**Jason Raia:**

Right.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Okay.

**Jason Raia:**

Or, you know, or the people who you know? They get their news primarily from whether it's Facebook or Twitter or, you know, what have you, and sometimes very legitimately. I remember, a few years back, we would talk about the color revolutions around the world.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Oh, exactly. I remember. Sure.

**Jason Raia:**

Georgia.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Sure.

**Jason Raia:**

And very legitimately, I got more stuff from Twitter that was good news. That was solid journalism then I was able to glean from the Philadelphia Inquirer.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Correct. Yep. Yep.

**Jason raia:**

Or, you know, any particularly local, and and and that was wonderful. And yet it has morphed, recently into something very different.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Yeah.

**Jason Raia:**

And and that almost In some ways, it it feels like a throwback to, whether it was early America and the broadsides where everybody had their own printer, literally, and and they would pay printers to print things they wanted see in the same thing when we in, you know, yellow journalism of the late 19th Century.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Sure.

**Jason Raia:**

It's sort of like social media

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Exactly.

**Jason Raia:**

That's the 21st Century version.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Right. No. I agree. And these were all new technologies too because you could print stuff up quickly and and and get it out there. But, yeah. So if we bring the temperature down and let people meet, I finally met a MAGA Republican.

**Jason Raia:**

Okay. What was that experience for you?

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

That was okay. I mean, I said, let's just have a cup of coffee and talk. And you know what? When you sat down and really talked, the one thing they liked about Trump was that he gave it

to the elites. Because they they understand that my generation of elites sold them a bill of goods, we, and I don't mean me personally, but my generation said to farmers in Iowa and Indiana, look, we should send this stuff to China because they're gonna be able to produce it much cheaper than we are, and we are going to retrain you all for new jobs.

**Jason Raia:**

Right.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

That was a promise. That promise was never fulfilled. So you have a whole group of people in the Midwest and the South, primarily white working class, who feel betrayed. And guess what? they're right because us East Coast and West Coast elites, and I do believe in East Coast, West Coast elites, I believe we should have sent it. I believed as an economist that that production should go where it could be cheaply produced and you have good quality. Because then the prices will be lower for us consumers. What I didn't understand is that consumers needed money to be able to buy the product.

**Jason Raia:**

Right. And if they don't have that job -

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

If they don't have that-

**Jason Raia:**

Yep.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

You know, who cares about how cheap a good product is. If if you can't do it so so that our generation, my generation, so I accept it, bought this idea, and we never followed up because we never did the legislative work, which is tedious and hard and doesn't make headlines of making sure Congress and the Senate pass laws with funding to actually retrain people. It's hard to do, and it's not sexy. And it doesn't make, you know, it doesn't make headlines, but we failed to do the grunt work to make sure that we fulfill the promise.

**Jason Raia:**

So what I find really interesting about that story is your willingness to listen, to have a cup of coffee and listen to the concerns.



**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Yeah.

**Jason Raia:**

Of this person.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Yeah.

**Jason Raia:**

And be able to understand them even if that doesn't mean you're going to vote with that person.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

I'm definitely not voting with them, but I can tell you that if we could get people in a room without cameras and just let people trust their feelings.

**Jason Raia:**

Right.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Trust their feelings. If we can hear them, Then we can understand that there is common ground here that we can begin to structure some policies around. Most people don't want more government. I mean, just this is just not in our DNA.

**Jason Raia:**

Right?

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Okay? Most people want fewer laws. We need to allow individuals to solve problems

**Jason Raia:**

Right.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Without having a superstructure telling you how you should solve the problem. And then if we have individuals understanding that they are going to solve the problem, then people can sit down and realize everybody has agency here. We also have the agency to scuttlebutt it, and we'll all lose, or we have the agency to really sit down and try to craft something that everybody won't love, but which will work for everybody.

**Jason Raia:**

And we're back to compromise.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

That's right.

**Jason Raia:**

Oliver, this has been great. We always end with a quiz. It is typically the same questions that I ask week after week, which makes it fun to listen. But I wanna start with a special question for you.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Okay.

**Jason Raia:**

To explain to our audience. Which is those three little letters after your name , which is those 3 little letters after your name-

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin and Jason Raia:**

C. B. E.

**Jason Raia:**

Tell us what a Commander of the British Empire is.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Commander of the well, there are several layers of honors and the British Empire was founded by the King in the first World War to honor ordinary people for extraordinary service. And there are four levels. There are members, MBEs of the British Empire, they are people that do work in

their local communities. They are offices of the British Empire. They are people that do a little more. A commander is higher. It means that I'm doing stuff on an international scale. And, of course, the height is the Knight, the Knight Commander of the British Empire.

**Jason Raia:**

So you're not a knight, but that means you don't have to, you know, bring your horse and lance to the king.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

I don't have to bring my horse and lance.

**Jason Raia:**

Right.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

I just serve the king like you would with a bow.

**Jason Raia:**

Excellent. Okay. So here's our usual quiz. Excluding Washington and Lincoln, who's your favorite president?

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Johnson. Lyndon Johnson.

**Jason Raia:**

Okay. Not Andrew.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Not Andrew. Not my guy.

**Jason Raia:**

What's one thing you would want every American to learn more about?

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

I would like for them to learn more about Reconstruction and the 14th amendment.

**Jason Raia:**

Excellent. We're gonna have a program on Reconstruction for teachers.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Oh, good.

**Jason Raia:**

This coming June, so we're very excited about that.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

This is good.

**Jason Raia:**

If you had not chosen your career as an economist and serving as British consul, what do you think you might have done?

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

History professor.

**Jason Raia:**

Love it.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

I love history.

**Jason Raia:**

What's one pet peeve that annoys you the most? I have lots of them.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

I'm trying to think of the one, of many. You know, my pet peeve, and this is really gonna sound cultural, people that lean into their horns, their car. I was in a taxi with a guy, and he wasn't from this country. And he was constantly,

**Jason Raia:**

Oh, sure.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

I said, man, look. You're in America, and you're in Philadelphia.

**Jason Raia:**

Yeah. Yeah.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Don't you don't have to lean on your horn. It's you know? That's one of my pet peeves.

**Jason Raia:**

And as you know, most people in Philadelphia will do the opposite of what the horn is telling them.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Exactly.

**Jason Raia:**

What is your favorite movie?

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

My fave you know, any *Godfather*.

**Jason Raia:**

Okay.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Any one of them is my favorite.

**Jason Raia:**

You are in good company there.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Yeah.

**Jason Raia:**

One thing about you would most people be surprised to learn?

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

I used to play the banjo.

**Jason Raia:**

Oh, really?

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Pick a banjo.

**Jason Raia:**

We were looking at one earlier.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

A 5 a 5 string. I don't I don't know much. But when I was young in college, I had a 5 string banjo.

**Jason Raia:**

Ah, see, I would not have known that.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

I love hoedown music.

**Jason Raia:**

What's one lesson from your life that you would most like to share with young people?

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

For every time you ask a favor, you probably have to do five favors for the person you're asking the favor from.

**Jason Raia:**

So remember that.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Okay?

**Jason Raia:**

Make sure you need it.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

You really, really need it. But you need to do it. You need to treat people right well so that when you need something, they'll be there for you. Yeah.

**Jason Raia:**

So you've been lucky enough to meet A number of well known historical individuals. Is there one historical person that you haven't met that you would have been to?

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

I Didn't know that I would know that it's very interesting that I haven't met historically, probably, Toussaint Louverture.

**Jason Raia:**

Mhmm. Yeah.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Definitely.

**Jason Raia:**

Wow.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

The greatest was Nelson Mandela, so I gotta put that out there. I spent time with him.

**Jason Raia:**

You did.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Yeah. I mean, now I had an hour and a half conversation. I did a lot of listening, so let me just say oh, sure.

**Jason Raia:**

Oh sure. Why wouldn't you? Final question, and we ask this of everyone. Bourbon or

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Scotch. Scotch.

**Jason Raia:**

Yeah. I figured it might be

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

A single malt. Actually, yes. Single malt. I know bourbon, but it's a little too sweet for me?

**Jason Raia:**

Oliver: Well, thank you. Thank you so much. This was absolutely tremendous.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

And good luck. And, I just hope more Americans, and particularly parents and grandparents and aunts and uncles, understand the work you guys hear for students.

**Jason Raia:**

Your lips to God's ears.

**Oliver St. Clair Franklin:**

Amen.



**Jason Raia:**

Thank you to our guest, And, thank you to our producers, Lara Kennedy and Sarah Rasmussen and a special shout out to friends of the pod, Bill Franz and, Bob Gleason, thank you to all of those who make this possible, our listeners and our supporters. Please subscribe, follow, rate, and review *George Washington Slept Here* wherever you listen to podcasts and tell your friends. Visit us at [freedomfoundation.org](http://freedomfoundation.org) or email us at [gwshpodcast@gmail.com](mailto:gwshpodcast@gmail.com) and until next time, thank you very much.