

Tales
of Cyprus
HOME TRUTHS

NUMBER

1

CONSTANTINOS EMMANUELLE

Home Truths

NUMBER ONE

Those who had a lot less in life often seemed more content.

Despite the somewhat harsh and somewhat primitive conditions that existed on the island between 1920 and 1950, especially in the rural areas and villages, and despite the poverty, limited infrastructure, difficult life style, demanding working conditions, lack of formal education and public health, limited technology and industry – despite all that and more, people were somewhat content with their lives and appeared to take nothing for granted. In fact, compared to today’s modern-day citizens in our so-called civilized society, the inhabitants of the past seemed to be more grateful with their lot in life.

It makes me realise that perhaps we have become so self-obsessed and self-absorbed in our modern, globalised and westernised societies that we have forgotten how fortunate we really are or how grateful we should be for what we have.

Think about this.

All the people I have interviewed so far have admitted to me they had a lot less but were more content and grateful for what they had. We have a lot more and yet appear ungrateful and less content. Something doesn’t add up. How can that be? My parents, uncles and aunts have told me in very descriptive terms – how difficult life in Cyprus was back then. People worked endlessly to make ends meet. They worried incessantly about how to survive and how to provide. Infant mortality was high. Medicine and health-care was almost non-existent. No

roads, no electricity. No plumbing. All these things were real and yet – people seemed happier or at least content with their lives.

I felt humbled by the recollections and admissions of this past generation.

As I sit at my laptop typing this post, in a warm and well-lit room, in front of my Panasonic flat-screen TV, surrounded by a hundred of my children’s toys, with a belly full of chicken curry and about to munch into a couple of cup-cakes that sit dangerously close to my keyboard – I wonder if we are actually better-off than my parent’s generation. We have so many modern comforts – so much more than any previous generation before us and yet, I know as a matter of absolute certainty there are people amongst us today that do not feel satisfied. I know these people. They seem lost and lonely and genuinely pissed off with life and with what they have.

Don’t get me wrong. I’m not saying we should all go back to live in mud-brick huts with no sewerage or lighting, no medicine or refrigerators. I’m not saying we should get rid of our computers and TVs and custom-built kitchens. I just think we should be more grateful and content with our modern-day luxuries and reflect once-in-a-while about how amazing our parents and grandparents really are and what an amazing world they actually lived in.



This is a great photo supplied by Maria Frangou. The photo was taken in 1918 (possibly in Kornos or even Larnaca) and shows Maria’s parents Dimitra 18 and George Frangou 23. The seated older woman is George’s mother Eleni Haralambou 35 and I think the little boy Michalis may be his brother.



C O N S T A N T I N O S

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