

Collapse of Hegemony and Echoes of Authenticity: A Sociological Report Analyzing the 2001 Global Tribute to the Wittman-Vine Family from the Perspective of 1968 Philadelphia High Society

1. Introduction: Historical Rupture and the Reversal of Cultural Capital

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, fundamentally reshaped the global geopolitical landscape. However, against this grand historical backdrop, the tragedy of a micro-level family unexpectedly became a global symbol of Western civilization's values, authenticity, and resistance against prejudice. In the attack on the Pentagon, Antoinette Wittman (Wiseman) tragically lost her life. Her parents, Travis and Emma Vine, subsequently received unprecedented condolences and tributes across boundaries of profession, nationality, and even religion [1, 1, 1, 1]. This phenomenon was not merely an emotional resonance in international diplomacy; it was a profound sociological and historical reckoning.

The core of this report's analysis is built upon a counterfactual historical timeline: imagine that in the US CBS television series *Cold Case* Season 3, Episode 13 "Debut," Travis and Emma did not head towards the tragic murder in December 1968. Instead, they chose to elope on the night of the Debutante Ball, escaping the hypocrisy and exclusivity of the Philadelphia "Main Line" elite, and built an ordinary but authentic life over the next thirty-three years.¹ It wasn't until the 9/11 events of 2001 took their daughter's life that Travis publicly wore a Kippah and recited the Kaddish at her funeral. This act instantly and perfectly merged their personal resistance in 1968 with the global anti-terrorism narrative of 2001 [1, 1].

This report aims to propose and answer a key sociological question: Fast forward to 2001, what psychological shock and cognitive dissonance would the "young gentlemen and ladies" from the Philadelphia high-society club—namely Landon Ridgely, Chip, Matthew Ridgely, and Sloane—experience upon witnessing this couple receive the highest level of tribute from the British Royal Family, Israeli military and political leaders, Gulf Arab heads of state, top global academic institutions, and international dance organizations? By contrasting the micro-power structures of 1968 with the macro-geopolitics of 2001, this report deeply analyzes how these former elites face the complete bankruptcy of their cultural capital and the marginalization of their historical status.

2. The Power Structure and Hypocritical Nature of 1968 Philadelphia Main Line Society

To accurately measure the psychological devastation inflicted upon the Philadelphia elite by the 2001 global tide of mourning, one must first deconstruct the social ecosystem they relied on in 1968. The Philadelphia "Main Line" class in the 1960s was a highly closed cultural fortress of White Anglo-Saxon Protestants (WASP), dependent on mechanisms of intergenerational reproduction.¹ In this microcosm, cultural capital did not stem from authentic personal achievements or intellectual contributions, but rather from lineage, wealth, and absolute obedience to exclusive social rituals.

The Debutante Ball was the core mechanism of this system. Ostensibly a celebration of young women entering society, it was essentially a strict class marriage market and a boundary-drawing ritual.¹ In this system, although Travis possessed wealth, his hidden Jewish heritage was a fatal stain; Emma, coming from the working-class neighborhood of Fishtown and harboring the "impractical" dream of becoming an astronomer, was seen as an anomaly that needed to be "reformed" and "bestowed upon" by high society.¹

This ecosystem was maintained and embodied by four key figures:

- **Matthew Ridgely:** As a symbol of patriarchy and class patronage, he looked down upon Emma and her mother with a condescending attitude, viewing his approval as the sole source of Emma's life value.⁴
- **Landon Ridgely:** As the "Queen Bee" of the social scene and the future "Mistress of the Rose," she viewed the debutante system as the center of the universe, and maliciously used the revelation of Travis's Jewish identity to manipulate and destroy.⁴
- **Chip:** As a privileged playboy, he took pleasure in arrogance and cruelty. His "Jewish pig" joke represented the deep-rooted racism and xenophobic nature of this class.¹
- **Sloane:** As a marginal social climber from a "New Money" background, she harbored a pathological desire and blind worship for this hypocritical system, even holding a grudge against Emma for losing her spot at the ball.⁶

In December 1968, when Emma saw through their malice and hypocrisy, and accused Travis of being "phony" for laughing along with racial slurs to fit in, Travis ultimately chose to awaken.¹

They abandoned the debutante ball and chose to elope. For Landon, Chip, and the others, they were merely two "ungrateful" losers who had automatically filtered themselves out of their perfect world. However, thirty-three years later in 2001, when the names of these "losers" were juxtaposed with the most powerful figures globally, the arrogance of the Philadelphia elite would be ruthlessly crushed by the wheels of history.

3. Landon Ridgely: The Disillusionment of Anglo-Worship and the Collapse of the "Mistress of the Rose"

Landon Ridgely dedicated her life to maintaining and climbing the WASP social ladder. In 1968,

out of jealousy over the genuine emotional connection between Emma and Travis, she maliciously revealed Travis's Jewish identity to Emma, attempting to use the upper-class antisemitic consensus to destroy their relationship.⁴ Landon's values were built on the premise that British Victorian aristocratic traditions were the highest form of human civilization, and as the inheritor of the Philadelphia Debutante Ball (even becoming the "Mistress of the Rose" who controlled the ball in 2006), she possessed the absolute power to determine others' social value.³

However, the official letters of condolence sent to the Wittman family by the British Royal Family and successive Prime Ministers after the 9/11 events would deal a devastating blow to Landon's psychological defenses.¹

3.1 The Dimensional Strike of the British Royal Family on the "Debutante Ball"

The WASP culture Landon worshipped relied entirely on the imitation of British court etiquette for its legitimacy.¹ But in 2001, Queen Elizabeth II, in her letter to Travis and Emma, explicitly praised Travis's difficult choice in 1968 to "reject pretense and pursue authenticity," comparing it to the Queen's own modernizing reform of abolishing the Debutante Presentations in 1958.¹ For Landon, this was tantamount to a collapse of faith. The debutante ball tradition she spent her life maintaining and taking pride in was, in the eyes of the true British monarch, merely an "anachronism" and a "burden on one's shoulders" that the royal family had already phased out in the 1950s.¹ Even more damaging, Prince Philip used extremely blunt and coarse language in his letter, describing the debutante ball as "bloody daft" and praising Travis for having a "stiffer backbone" in leaving that "hypocritical circle".¹

Landon would painfully realize that the cultural capital she relied on was worthless in the eyes of genuine global aristocrats. Her self-righteous superiority was actually a ridiculous, parochial role-playing game. She had tried to exclude Travis and Emma from so-called "high society," but the British Royal Family personally crowned the couple, recognizing them as representatives of "the most noble aspects of the human spirit".¹

3.2 The Artistic Sublimation of "Refusing to Dance" by the International Dance Community

Beyond political and social blows, Landon was completely stripped of her cultural and aesthetic authority. The 1968 ball was Landon's absolute home turf, but in 2001, the two major authorities of the global dance community—the World Dance & Dance Sport Council (WD&DSC) and the International DanceSport Federation (IDSF)—sublimated Travis and Emma's "absence" into a high-level artistic and sporting spirit.¹

Donnie Burns, the legendary World Champion of WD&DSC, defined Travis's refusal to attend the ball in 1968 as "Sitting Out" of a "Dangerous Waltz" in his letter. In the interpretation of the international dance community, Travis was not an escapist, but a dancer with the highest "artistic integrity" who refused to dance to a tune full of lies and hypocrisy.¹ This international statement, which characterized Landon's ball as "distorted rhythm" and "hypocritical masks," made Landon deeply understand that her social stage was, in the eyes of true artistic masters,

nothing but a cheap show full of greed and prejudice.

When Landon saw the image of Travis publicly revealing his identity by wearing a Kippah at his daughter's funeral being praised by the WD&DSC as "a perfect performance of human dignity" and a "flawlessly emotional solo dance" ¹, she would thoroughly understand: the "elegance" she pursued all her life appeared so pale and pretentious in the face of Travis and Emma's authentic pain and courage.

4. Chip: The Embodiment of Antisemitism and the Terror Deterrence of Geopolitics

In the 1968 Philadelphia club, Chip was a typical privileged playboy who enjoyed impunity for his words and actions.⁴ He viewed antisemitism as a social lubricant, recklessly telling "Jewish pig" jokes, forcing Travis, who hid his identity to fit in, to smile along in fear [1, 1]. In Chip's worldview, Jews were weak, bottom-tier existences who could be mocked at will, while he, as a WASP elite, would always remain at the top of the food chain.

However, the global diplomatic response following the 2001 9/11 events would drag Chip directly from his high-and-mighty sense of security into the terrifying abyss of geopolitics. The strong stance of the Israeli military and political leadership regarding Travis's experience would subject Chip to unprecedented psychological panic.¹

4.1 Becoming the Imaginary Enemy of Israel's "Long Arm" Principle

In 2001, Israel was in the midst of the bloody Second Intifada, and its national security apparatus was highly tense.¹ When Israeli top brass (including Prime Minister Sharon, Foreign Minister Peres, and former Prime Ministers Netanyahu and Barak) learned that Travis had suffered the "Jewish pig" insult in 1960s America, they did not treat it as an old incident. Instead, they equated it strategically with the 9/11 terrorist attacks.¹

The Israeli leadership explicitly stated in a joint declaration that classical, social antisemitism (like Chip's verbal violence and exclusion) and new forms of exterminatory antisemitism (like the 9/11 terrorist attacks) were "different variants of the same virus".¹ Chip would be shocked to find in international news or diplomatic archives that the "Jewish pig" joke he thought was humorous was now classified by a nation possessing nuclear weapons, a powerful air force, and the Mossad intelligence network as "a direct challenge to Jewish survival and dignity".¹

The mock speech delivered by Israeli Ambassador to the US, David Ivry—a ruthless general who had personally commanded the destruction of the Iraqi nuclear reactor—when presenting his credentials in Philadelphia, would become Chip's lifelong nightmare. Ivry declared that the era when Jews could only suffer the "Jewish pig" insult in silence was over; Israel's "Long Arm" (Zroa Aruka) would adopt a "zero-tolerance" attitude towards any form of contempt for Jews, providing a "devastating response anytime, anywhere".¹

For Chip, this cognitive dissonance was fatal. The Travis he once despised now had F-15 fighter squadrons and Special Forces commanders swearing to "leave no grudge overnight" standing behind him.¹ Chip would realize that he was no superior aristocrat, but rather classified ideologically in Israel's national security radar with the Al-Qaeda terrorists hiding in Afghan caves.¹ This identity fall from "socialite" to "fellow traveler of international terrorism" would

completely destroy his sense of security.

4.2 The Dimensional Moral Strike from the Arab World

If Israel's hardline stance made Chip feel fear, then the condolence letters from the monarchs of the Gulf Arab states (Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar) nailed Chip to the pillar of shame on a moral level.¹

In the WASP prejudices of the 1960s, Islamic countries in the Middle East were often seen as uncivilized, backward regions. However, in 2001, as the Arab world faced immense political pressure and conspiracy theories brought on by the 9/11 events, the monarchs of these nations displayed tolerance and humanity a hundred times nobler than Chip and his Philadelphia cohorts.¹

In his letter, Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah respectfully called Travis's Jewish faith the "inheritor of the Abrahamic faith"; UAE President Sheikh Zayed admired Travis's insistence on his identity in the face of hatred, viewing it as a "spiritual victory" over extremists; Bahrain's Emir Hamad even directly called Travis "our Jewish brother" and used his own country's peaceful coexistence with its Jewish community to refute xenophobia.¹

Chip would be extremely ashamed to discover that those Islamic monarchs he considered lower than him on the ladder of civilization could respect and mourn a Jewish family member who died at the Pentagon with immense theological tolerance and diplomatic wisdom, while he, a self-proclaimed American elite at the core of Western civilization, had inflicted cruel racial humiliation on a compatriot in his own club. This universal value resonance transcending religion and borders exposed Chip's narrow-mindedness, ignorance, and moral decay completely.

5. Matthew Ridgely: The Failure of Patriarchal Patronage and the Trial of Meritocracy

Matthew Ridgely represented another, more insidious oppressive force in 1968 Philadelphia high society: condescending, hypocritical patronage (Noblesse Oblige). Because Emma's mother, Lillian, had once been a maid for his family, Matthew harbored a self-righteous protector mentality towards Emma.⁵ When Emma's father was unable to attend the debutante ball to receive his daughter's bow, Matthew "generously" offered to let Emma bow to him in her father's place.⁴

In Matthew's logic, a girl from the bottom like Emma had to rely on the recognition and charity of powerful figures like him to gain social acceptance; bowing to him was an acknowledgment of the class authority he represented. However, Emma and Travis's elopement completely rejected this "patronage".³ By 2001, the evaluations of Emma and Travis by global academic and political circles would make Matthew deeply realize the extreme paleness of his power and wealth.

5.1 The Crushing of Universal Scientific Values and Tributes from Academia

After leaving the Philadelphia club, Emma did not fall to the bottom as Matthew expected but became a brilliant astrophysics professor, personally training over 40 Ph.D.s.¹ The tribute letters

sent to her by Israel and top global academic institutions (such as the Weizmann Institute of Science, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Tel Aviv University, and the Technion) after the 9/11 events would become the strongest critique of Matthew's worldview.¹

Haim Harari, President of the Weizmann Institute of Science, highly praised the "Meritocracy" principle Emma adhered to in her academic career. The letter noted that in Emma's laboratory, "color, nationality, race, or religious belief never became barriers; the only passport was the thirst for truth and loyalty to science".¹ This passage pierced through Matthew's social foundation like a sharp blade.

The club system Matthew maintained was built precisely on strict scrutiny of color, race, and religion; whereas the scientific palace Emma built was an "oasis of pure reason." Matthew would realize how petty and ridiculous his attempt to make Emma bow to him seemed against the grand tapestry of humanity's pursuit of truth in the vast universe. Academia revered Emma as "the most powerful weapon against the narrow hatred in today's world," while what Matthew represented was exactly the narrowness and prejudice spat upon by the scientific spirit.

5.2 The Deconstruction of Class by British Prime Ministers and the Return of Labor Dignity

If the praises of academia destroyed Matthew's cultural superiority, the political condolence letters from successive British Prime Ministers deconstructed his class legitimacy.¹ Matthew always believed his social status was a given, but British political leaders fiercely attacked this social structure relying on inherited privilege in 2001.

Former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, hailed as a conservative icon, stated bluntly in her letter that she was outraged by the "exclusion by so-called 'elites'" Travis suffered in Philadelphia.¹ Thatcher explicitly pointed out: "Those who rely on inherited privilege rather than personal struggle are often the most terrified of genuine talent and faith." She praised Travis for not relying on family wealth but building an authentic life with his own hands (as a carpenter), calling this the "true conservative spirit" and "true backbone".¹

Another former Prime Minister, John Major, proceeding from his lifelong pursuit of a "Classless Society," severely condemned the 1968 Philadelphia high society's rejection of Travis, calling it "a typical manifestation of old-style snobbery" and "a cancer we are committed to eliminating".¹ He emphasized that Emma's scientific achievements and Travis's community contributions proved that "Merit is the only standard for measuring a person".¹

For Matthew, this meant that the logic of capital and lineage he firmly believed in had been completely negated by the political core of the modern West. Travis, a carpenter with calloused hands, received the highest political recognition from British Prime Ministers as "One of us" ¹; while Matthew, the lofty club elder, was classified as a historical "cancer." In 2001, Matthew had to painfully admit: he could not use money to buy the historical immortality that Travis and Emma had won through suffering, labor, and authenticity.

6. Sloane: The Social Climber's Existential Crisis and the Nihilism of "New Money"

Among the quartet in 1968, Sloane's status was the humblest and most pathetic. Coming from a

"New Money" family, she was viewed as "expendable" by the club, and her debutante ball spot was even stripped away and given to Emma.⁶ Sloane's reaction was not to question the system oppressing her, but to pour her jealousy and resentment onto Emma, attempting to win back the spot that didn't belong to her through snitching (revealing Emma and Travis's relationship).⁶ On the night of the ball, as Emma experienced a paradigm shift in life and ultimately fled, Sloane hid in a hotel room with Chip and Landon smoking marijuana, hallucinating in a daze that she was participating in that empty ball.⁶

By 2001, when Sloane saw Emma, whom she once envied and resented, and her family become the global focus, she experienced more than just shock; it was a profound "Existential Crisis."

6.1 The Emptiness of Life in the Contrast of Global Mourning

Sloane exhausted her life catering to and climbing within the tiny circle of the Philadelphia club. She lost her self-esteem for the vain title of a debutante, and even (according to the *Cold Case* plot setting, if she fell into depravity or mediocrity like other characters) might have plunged into endless disappointment and struggle in her later life.⁸ She viewed Emma as the instigator of her life's tragedy.

However, the television screens and newspaper headlines in 2001 ruthlessly showed Sloane a cruel truth: the girl who "stole" her spot back then didn't care about that spot at all. While Sloane was still agonizing over an illusory title, Emma and Travis were already forging ahead in the real world, cultivating top scientific talents, and raising a daughter who served the country (working at the Pentagon).¹

When Sloane saw US President George W. Bush personally write to praise Travis and Emma's daughter Antoinette as a "guardian of the light" and commend Travis's act of publicly revealing his identity as the "steel will of American resolve" ¹, Sloane would feel a suffocating sense of insignificance. The hotel room full of drugs, lies, and prejudice she spent her life trying to squeeze into was practically dust compared to the immense moral strength the Wittman-Vine family displayed over the ruins of 9/11.

6.2 The Ultimate Certification of "Authenticity" by the Core of Capitalism

If the praises of politics and academia made Sloane feel inferior, the tributes from the core of the US capital market completely shattered her understanding of "wealth and status." Richard Grasso, then Chairman and CEO of the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE), in his October 2001 letter to Travis, historically juxtaposed the reopening of Wall Street on September 17 with Travis's public display of his Jewish identity at the funeral.¹

Grasso wrote: "On Wall Street, we often say 'Integrity' is the cornerstone of the market... In 2001, facing terrorism trying to erase our identity with fear, you chose 'authenticity' as your weapon. This courage to publicly embrace your own faith and tradition is precisely the epitome of the message we tried to convey to the world on September 17." ¹

As a representative of "New Money," the ultimate goal of Sloane's family was to gain dual recognition from the capital market and traditional elites. But in this letter, Grasso, the highest representative of capitalism, personally stepped forward to classify the 1968 social prejudice

that forced Travis to hide his identity as a negative example of violating "integrity," while elevating Travis's "Authenticity" to the spiritual cornerstone of the American way of life and economic resilience.¹ Sloane would painfully realize that every hypocritical mask she wore to climb upwards was meaningless junk in the face of genuine historical tests and core values. The object of her lifelong jealousy had not only won love but won the world.

7. Structural Analysis of Data and Rhetoric: The Inversion of Values Between 1968 and 2001

To more intuitively demonstrate the cognitive dissonance experienced by these 1968 Philadelphia elites in 2001, this report reviews the changes in value assessment across four core dimensions in the two eras, showing how world leaders specifically deconstructed the elites' cultural foundation.

Table 1: Inversion of Cultural Capital Assessment of the Wittman-Vine Family's Behaviors in 1968 and 2001

Behavioral Feature / Social Attribute	Assessment by 1968 Philadelphia Main Line Elites (Landon, Chip, etc.)	Assessment by 2001 Global Diplomacy and Society (Heads of State, Academia)	Psychological Impact on the 1968 Elite Class
Travis's Jewish Identity	A social stain to be hidden; an object of mockery ("Jewish pig" joke). ¹	The dignified inheritance of the Abrahamic faith ¹ ; a strategic red line protected by Israeli national force (Mossad/IDF). ¹	Chip falls from a "lofty abuser" to an "enemy of civilization" equated with terrorists, facing the fear of geopolitical deterrence.
Emma's Working-Class Background	A symbol of bad breeding; bottom-tier needing patriarchal elite "patronage" and reform (like Matthew). ⁵	The cornerstone forging a resilient will and the scientific spirit of "meritocracy" ¹ ; Thatcher's praise of "true conservative spirit". ¹	Matthew's "patronage" logic is completely shattered, realizing the emptiness of his own privilege before universal science and meritocracy.
Fleeing the Debutante Ball (Elopement)	Cowardly betrayal; an ungrateful scandal; the source of Sloane losing her spot. ²	A modernizing pioneer rejecting an "anachronism" (Queen's words) ¹ ; the highest form of "artistic integrity" (dance community's words). ¹	The social stage Landon and Sloane spent their lives pursuing is defined globally as "bloody daft" and a "cancer," rendering their life

			goals nihilistic.
Pursuit of "Authenticity"	Viewed as naive behavior opposing "hypocrisy"; inability to adapt to adult social games. ¹	The ultimate weapon against terrorist intimidation (consensus of US, UK, Israeli leaders); the cornerstone of American economic resilience (NYSE Chairman's words). ¹	All elites realize they are the "phonies" eliminated by history, their proud social rules spat upon globally.

Table 2: Specific Condemnation Rhetoric Against the 1968 Elite Circle in Condolence Letters

Sender	Condemning Rhetoric and Targets	Implied Sociological and Political Meanings
British Royal Family (Elizabeth II, Prince Philip)	Called the debutante system a "closed social ritual," "anachronism," and "bloody daft"; called antisemitism "man's capacity for inhumanity". ¹	Stripped the Philadelphia WASP elites of the legitimacy to imitate British aristocrats, equating exclusivity with fascism.
Former British PMs (Thatcher, Major)	Attacked "those who rely on inherited privilege rather than personal struggle"; called their circle "typical old-style snobbery" and "a cancer we are committed to eliminating". ¹	Pincered from both the right (personal struggle) and left (classless society), deconstructing their class superiority.
Israeli Military & Political Leaders (Sharon, Peres, Ivry)	Defined the "Jewish pig" insulters as "those who think Jews are weak and easy to bully," juxtaposing them with 9/11 terrorists. ¹	Elevated private racism to a national security threat, executing transnational psychological and military deterrence.
Arab Gulf States (Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain)	Condemned "rumors that create hatred between different faiths," emphasizing "respect for every expression of devotion to the Creator". ¹	Executed a dimensional moral and theological tolerance strike against the xenophobic behavior of the Philadelphia Christian WASPs.

8. Conclusion: The Bursting of Hypocrisy and the Ultimate Historical Judgment

In the counterfactual historical interpretation of *Cold Case*, Travis and Emma's elopement in 1968 was not merely a romantic rebellion but a profound sociological deviance. Thirty-three years later, although the tragedy of the 9/11 events ruthlessly took their daughter Antoinette, the ensuing wave of global mourning provided a delayed but absolutely authoritative historical endorsement for the couple's early struggles.

For the "young gentlemen and ladies" in the 1968 Philadelphia Main Line club—Landon, Chip, Matthew, and Sloane—all of this in 2001 was a slow and painful public execution. They once held the absolute power to set rules, allocate resources, and judge others' value. They built a seemingly impregnable fortress using antisemitism, class arrogance, and exclusive rituals, banishing Travis and Emma outside of it.

However, when the axis of the world shifted violently in 2001, Western civilization, facing the existential threat of terrorism, urgently needed to find a spiritual force that could represent resilience, tolerance, diversity, and authenticity. Heads of state, academic giants, and social leaders found this power in Travis and Emma. The British Royal Family cut through Landon's aristocratic illusions with modernizing reforms; Israel's national force deterred Chip's racial arrogance; academia's meritocracy shattered Matthew's patriarchal patronage; and the global praise of the Travis family's authenticity reflected the nihilism of Sloane's lifelong social climbing. History ultimately proved that the real losers of that 1968 debutante ball were not the absent Travis and Emma, but those who remained on the dance floor, continuing to dance with hypocritical masks on. Under the spotlight of global mourning in 2001, this group of former Philadelphia elites could only hide in the dark corners of history, watching helplessly as the carpenter and the "anomalies" they once despised were revered by all of humanity as the highest symbols of civilization and morality. This was not only a negation of their personal character but the ultimate historical judgment of the rigid, exclusive, and hypocritical social system they represented.

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