

## On historical sources regarding the Persian Empire:

*Almost everything we know about the Persian Empire actually comes from [the Greeks], so it was written by their enemies.... So it's a bit like [knowing] the story of 20th Century America, solely through Soviet sources.*

Neil MacGregor, Director of the British Museum

## On the enlightened rule of the founder of the Persian Empire, Cyrus the Great, and the release of those who'd been made captive by the Babylonians:

*This was a key moment in the history of the Jewish people. They'd spent years "weeping in exile" in Babylon, but were finally allowed to return home to Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple. That return from exile to Jerusalem to rebuild the second Temple, reshaped Judaism.*

Julian Raby, Director of the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, The Smithsonian

## On philosophical links between the founding of the Persian Empire and the establishment of the United States of America:

*The principle source of that view of Cyrus came from the Greek historian, Xenophon. His book, Cyropaedia, was about how to run an empire with Cyrus as a model. It was very popular through the Renaissance and in the 18th Century with the founding fathers of America. We know that Jefferson had two, possibly three copies of Xenophon's life of Cyrus, and referred to it regularly. So there is a very direct link between the Cyrus Cylinder and the making of the United States.*

Neil MacGregor, Director of the British Museum