

A Message in the Inbox
Robert S. Griffin
www.robertsgriffin.com

On a Sunday morning in June of 2009, in my office at the university where I am a professor, I came upon an e-mail message that had been sent the previous Thursday and repeated on Friday. It turned out to be the start of a round of media and Internet consideration of my activities, including writings, dealing with race from a white perspective and my status as a university professor given my views on race. Part of that were stories written by two young journalists, one in Vermont and the other in Washington, D.C. While I am critical of their work and refer to them frequently here, I do not identify them in this writing. I don't want to come after them personally; rather, I want to use them as springboards to a consideration of people like them and how they got that way and what that might mean for those who care about the status and fate of white people in this country and elsewhere. So while I presume it would be easy enough for readers to identify these journalists and what they wrote, I don't think it is necessary and if someone does that it will be without my help.

I was not teaching during the summer and had been out of the office since Wednesday, so I was seeing both messages—again, they were duplicates--for the first time on Sunday.

Hi Professor Griffin,

I saw some of your writings on race on your Web site and was wondering if you had time to chat today or tomorrow. My office number is 802-XXX-XXXX and my cell phone is 802-XXX-XXXX.

I'm a reporter for [two Vermont newspapers].

thanks,
-[man's first name, a nickname--no last name]

I'll call this journalist "D." in this writing. I learned D.'s last name from his e-mail address. I live and work in Vermont, but I had had no previous contact with this reporter, nor had I ever read his

newspapers. The web site he refers to in the message is my personal site, www.robertsgriffin.com.

My first reaction to D.'s message was to take note of its informality. This was professional correspondence and yet it started with "Hi," and there was a comma after the greeting rather than the more formal colon or dash, and it was "chat" rather than "interview," and there was no capital on the closing "thanks," and there was the nickname signature and no last name. I speculated that D. was young and a recent, or fairly recent, college graduate, and I've done a bit of checking and I think I was right about that.

This initial response popped into my mind because this message was consistent with a pattern I've noticed in recent years to the point that it has become intriguing to me. The last five years or so, student and recent graduate correspondence has been characterized by this kind of informality. With increasing frequency, written communication from young adults has had a "Hi" greeting and been—to me, anyway—overly casual and inappropriately personal, and it didn't used to be this way, at least as I remember. I've also have noticed a change in my face-to-face contacts in this same direction, in classes, office visits, and the like.

The self-presentations of young people have seemed to become noticeably more immature, benign, and innocuous in recent years. To put it in the starkest terms, people that used to be young men and women are now kids, and, for many of them, this kid persona persists well into what used to be adulthood. We all have to figure out how to pitch who we are to the world, and to ourselves, and I speculate that many young adults these years—and I'm thinking particularly of the college educated--have decided that the best way to perceive of themselves and to navigate their social, school, and work contexts is to "play it young," as it were, and to do that for a long time, to age thirty and perhaps even beyond that.

Candidly, something I've noted in the "Hi" crowd, to use that shorthand, is a fair amount of, well, sneakiness. There is something sly about a lot of them; enough, anyway, that when I encounter a "Hi" type my distrust alarm flashes, and that is what happened with D. What's D.'s con? I asked myself. I fervently try to write off my suspicions in instances like this as age-induced paranoia, but, as the old joke goes, sometimes they really are out to get you. And indeed, my qualms about D. were quickly reinforced, because, it couldn't have been five minutes later, I got an e-mail message

informing me that that same day a lengthy story about me with D.'s byline had appeared in one of his newspapers. And it turns out that D. had really gone for my throat. Among other smears of me, his piece quotes one Heidi Beirich from a private organization called the Southern Poverty Law Center declaring that I am a "neo-Nazi," have racial beliefs that "many find deploring," and am "a major player in the white supremacist and neo-Nazi movements," and speculating whether I know James von Brunn, the elderly man who just days before had killed a security guard in the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C. (her conclusion, maybe or maybe not, but in any case von Brunn and I "ran in the same circles"). D's article ends with another source's assertion that the writings of the late white nationalist William Pierce--whose book-length portrait, *The Fame of a Dead Man's Deeds*, I authored--"resonates with both religious and secular hate groups who probably feel like their own world is ending." Since the story is about me and those are the very last words, it is clear what impression of me D. wanted to leave with readers.

I would have presumed journalistic professionalism would dictate that D. in the Thursday message, repeated on Friday, share that he was writing an article on me and that he had conducted a number of interviews for it and that the story would be published in a couple of days, and that he would have given me the chance to respond to the basic thrust of the piece and/or to the specific claims in it. I don't know what they teach about ethics in schools of journalism these years, but to my layman's way of thinking "I saw some of your writings on race on your Web site and was wondering if you had time to chat" was disingenuous, even duplicitous, or, if you'd like, sneaky.

I have entitled this writing "A Message in the Inbox" because D.'s article set off a chain reaction among media outlets picking up on an initial piece and then on each another reminiscent of the one I reported in a published article back in 2006, "A Knock on the Door," the text of which is available in the writing section of this web site. As D. did this time, a reporter back then wrote an article on my white racial views and standing as a professor at the university. Instead of an e-mail message that was my first inkling something was up, it was a knock on my office door at the university by a reporter for the university newspaper, who then wrote the article about me. Subsequently, I was the subject of a piece in the

city newspaper and a large-circulation weekly free tabloid and the topic and guest on local talk radio and television. By the way, in contrast to this time, during the “knock on the door” period there wasn’t a “Hi” type in the lot among the media people, and in every instance I was treated professionally, competently, and fairly. A couple of days after the D.’s article ran I received a voice mail message at the office—young voice—and an e-mail that reiterated it:

Mr. Griffin,

My name is [woman’s first name] and I’m a reporter with [a higher education publication]. I hope this e-mail finds you well.

I’m writing because you were featured today in [the Vermont newspaper, D.’s story]. However, I noticed that your personal voice seems to be missing from the article. I would be very interested in hearing your side of the story in regards to your writings, teachings, etc. for [her outlet].

Please let me know if we can arrange to talk on the phone sometime this afternoon. My number is 202.XXX.XXXX xXXX.

Thank you and I look forward to hearing from you shortly.

Best,
[first name]

I’ll call this reporter “S.” Again, noticeably informal, although at least no “Hi” this time. But absent is a last name. And even though the Vermont newspaper article noted that I am a tenured professor and referred to me as “Dr. Griffin,” it’s “Mr. Griffin.” I would expect that someone dealing with higher education would attend to a detail like that, and the e-mail raised the question for me of how much care S. gives to professional matters overall. My sneakiness alarm light flickered a bit, but nothing major. As it turned out, it was picking something up, because S. published a lengthy story on me the very next morning, and the prospect of that occurring within hours is something I think she might have mentioned in her message. I did respond to her message denying some of the outrageous and slanderous allegations by Beirich in D.’s story, and, assuming she was researching a story she would be

writing up the line, I suggested two of my web site writings to her for background into, as she put it in her message, my side of the story (a book review of *Sundown Towns* in the writings section and “The New McCarthyism” in the thoughts section). As for S.’s article, it had the same angle as D.’s story—“There’s a monster in the back yard!”—and while it wasn’t as sophomoric as his was, it demonstrated that what S. knew about me--as my late mother used to phrase it--you could put in your eye.

I invite review of my conduct and expressions, but I expect it to be objective and mature. Everything I have written over the last ten years is cited on my web site, and most of it is available as links on the site itself. If you are interested, read what I’ve written and draw your own conclusions. It will tell you about what I think on most everything, not just race, including the arts and personal development and education. As you read the web site, remember that it is my personal web site, not a university web site. I am more than the embodiment of my work role. I am a professor to be sure, but I am also an American and my parents’ child and a father and a human being, and, yes, I am a man who is proud of his race and his heritage in the same way I hope all people on this planet are proud of their race and heritage. I welcome dialogue with those who take the time to study my writings seriously. My web site includes a way to contact me, and as long as I don’t pick up that you are lazy or a phony or a lemming, I’ll correspond with you to the extent I have the time.

Having said that, I want to focus the remainder of this writing on people like D. and S. and those who, in the broadest sense, educate them, including media figures, politicians, clergy, and interest group representatives, as well as school personnel. Look me over and decide how to deal with me—fine--but along with that, let’s look over the people who are looking me over and the people who shape their perspective and approach, and let’s decide how to deal with them. The people judging me aren’t somehow immune from being judged themselves.

To begin, two foundational points:

The first is that a great proportion of what we know, or think we know—you, me, D. and S., all of us--comes from mediated rather than direct experience. We weren’t there, we didn’t see it, we didn’t have contact with it, we didn’t read it ourselves. Rather, someone—

a teacher, a mass media figure, a politician, an advocate for a cause, a religious representative—in effect stood between us and reality and told us about it, showed it to us; and more than simply pointing it out, these mediators of reality told us what it means, how important it is, how to think about it, and what we ought to do about it. And human nature being what it is, if they came off credible at all to us, we bought what they put out. Yesterday, I read a web site post from someone going on about me based on D.'s article. This writer has never met me and obviously knows next to nothing about my life and work, including my writings, and yet he felt perfectly justified in pontificating not only about who I am but also about what ought to be done with me (fire me from my job). Although I haven't read them, I have been told there were negative letters to the editor about me based solely on the D. story. The point is our actions in life grow out of what we deem to be true and preferable, and whoever can control the public discourse--the stream of (alleged) facts and ideas and images and prescribed ways we swim in, as it were—which is the basis for that determination, has enormous power.

The second point, the late psychologist Abraham Maslow was on to something. Maslow proffered that people have basic personal needs that compel satisfaction before anything else. These needs are survival, shelter, food, water, clothing; physical and psychological safety, security, employment; love and belonging, friendship, family, sex; and self-esteem and approval and respect from others. In general, we'll go along with anything and anybody that has the power to satisfy--or thwart the satisfaction of--these fundamental needs.

Put these two points together and you have a theory of human manipulation. That is to say, if I can control what comes into your awareness and your Maslow rewards and punishments, call them that, I can get you to be my sled dog. And more, if I'm halfway good at it, you won't catch on to what I'm doing and you'll think I'm great and actually like what's going on. You'll buy what I'm selling big time; in the late philosopher Eric Hoffer terms you'll become a True Believer. And as long as you get your payoffs and stay clear of adverse conditions you'll be very flexible about which way you'll go: If it's Germany in the 1930s, you'll be a dedicated National Socialist. If it's China in the 1960s and '70s you'll be in the Red Guard. If it's America in the '40s and '50s you'll be rooting out Communists. And

if it is America and Europe in our time, you'll be hunting down racists and haters. "Oh no," you tell yourself, "I would never have been a Nazi or a McCarthy Era witch hunter, not me." Oh yes, you would. People didn't suddenly get enlightened just when you came on the scene. One of the hustles run on you is that people in the past were dupes but you have it wired. Don't kid yourself.

All to say, I'm not in power. The D.s and S.s of the world have nothing to lose by trashing me. In fact, doing that not only is consistent with everything that has been put into their minds by their handlers—and that's what they are--it has a distinct Maslow booster effect for them, to put it that way. On the other hand, if they cross the people in charge and give even the appearance of siding with me, they run the very real danger of being scorned, shunned, getting a low grade or being out of a job, and harboring bad thoughts about themselves. And just because they don't think about this consciously doesn't mean that an understanding of these contingencies isn't just beneath the surface directing their articulate thoughts and behaviors. I read a lot of biographies and I find myself looking for things that the person written about did that cost him self-regard and social invitations from those who mattered to him, or, my apologies, that got in the way of his getting laid, and I invariably come up empty. It's obviously not the whole story, but one of the ways to understand the pariah status of white advocacy and activism in 2009 is that it is not a good way to get her to invite you in for a drink at the end of the evening.

White young people have been conditioned from every direction, and remarkably effectively, to pair an almost obsessive concern for the status of minorities and commitment to serve those interests with no concern for the wellbeing and destiny of their own race. The reverse is true with minorities, who, trust me, aren't encouraged to give over any time to worrying about how white people are doing or helping them out. (Incidentally, our use of the term "minorities" is misleading. Currently, white people are 8% of the world's population, down from 20% a century ago. No white population, including the United States, is reproducing itself. In the lifetimes of most of those reading this, whites will be a minority in America.) Whites are trained to assume that non-white racial identity, pride, concern, commitment, solidarity, advocacy, activism, and organization and collective action are good, but that these same impulses among whites are racist, anti-Semitic, neo-Nazi, violent,

and outright evil. White consciousness and concern is unnecessary and, when it manifests itself, stupid and wrong, and it should be shut down hard. If you think or talk about white people and their history at all, keep it negative. (A word association test: write down the first ten words or phrases that the term “the white race” brings to mind. How many of them were positive?)

And what are white people supposed to do if white racialism—let’s say, my writings--somehow slips past the idea blockade and comes to their attention?

The first thing they should do is *feel superior*. My experience has been that the vast majority of whites who encounter my writings sincerely feel better than I am. They are smarter, more ethical, more informed, not a doubt in their minds about it. The possibility that I might know something or am a decent person isn’t on their screens. I’m deluded, off-base, malevolent, worthy of scorn and exclusion, and their inferior, case closed. They could be nineteen years old and, in truth, not know up from down, but in their eyes they are miles ahead of me. Speaking of Maslow, it must be nice.

Second, as quickly as possible, they should *run away*. Nothing good can come out of having anything to do with me. They already know everything about race they need to know and with a certainty that is truly remarkable given their level of actual experience and understanding. There is no need at all to study what I have to say, dialogue with me, ask me to expand on anything, or spend any time in my presence. That’s what has been sold them and that is what they have bought whole hog. In his article, D. declares that my book on William Pierce is “a fawning biography.” How in the world does he know that with enough certainty to put it in the newspaper? He never met Pierce, and it was clear to me from his piece that he hasn’t even read my book. I feel quite sure I know where he came up with the word “fawning.” Beirich uses it to dismiss the book and me, and D. parroted her with no second thoughts at all, I’ll wager anything on that.

Third, if they deal with me at all, they should play the “Are you a racist?” game. Here’s the way it works: Again, let’s use me as an example. In effect I am brought before a tribunal. My betters and my judges are sitting at a long table above me looking down on me. “Are you a racist [or a hater or a white supremacist or an anti-Semite or a neo-Nazi]?” one of them asks accusatorily. Their posture in all this isn’t impartial but rather adversarial; after all, they

possess the True Belief and their mission is to expose heretics, and they are quite sure that's what I am (if I weren't why wouldn't I be reciting the creed like everyone else?). And besides, digging up something on me justifies playing the Are you a racist? game in the first place—they don't want to come off looking arbitrary and petty. And then, my part in the game, I give a testimonial or make a confession: "No, I'm not a racist [or whatever], you misunderstand me. In fact, some of my best friends . . . " "Thank you for helping me see the error of my ways. No punishment is too great for me."

It is a great game from the inquisitors' perspective. For one thing, they are by definition right and I am, quite possibly, probably, just about certainly, wrong. Whether I dispute the implied charge (and that is what it is—Are you a racist? is really You are a racist, aren't you?) and they declare me innocent, so to speak, or I admit my transgressions, they stay one-up on me and comfortably snuggled in among the enlightened and righteous. And it's safe for them—I'm on trial, they aren't. And it doesn't require that they do any heavy lifting—neither D. or S. got eye strain finding out what I have to say in any detail and nuance. In fact, you don't have to know or do much of anything to play the Are you a racist? game. Collect a few accusations from people and/or grab a quote or two off my web site and get right to playing. And last, the game legitimizes the mean streak in people. Whatever I said, they could have marched me to the gallows (held me up to public ridicule, gone after my job, etc.). I must admit I'm with Woody Allen, who, when asked to characterize human beings, replied, "Nasty creatures." Don't let the smiles fool you.

And why would I go along with the game? Maslow: I'm worried about losing my livelihood, not getting promotions and pay increases, being jerked around with teaching and committee assignments, having protests organized against me, somebody physically assaulting me, being the subject of gossip about who knows what, and social and professional rejection and exclusion, and I have the (irrational) hope that if I say the right thing they'll like me.

Both D.'s and S.'s articles conformed to the Are you a racist? game. Both essentially posed the question, "Is this professor a racist?"—yes, no—and if he is (and he probably is), what do we do about him—get rid of him, what? Both included defenses of me from university representatives, which I very much appreciate, but

most of their stories was given over to fanning the flames of suspicion about my racial stance and right to remain in the university. Both D. and S. did what it took to make me look sinister, including carefully cherry picking my web site and flagrantly employing the guilt by association tactic. Do I think they did this maliciously? No. But nevertheless they did it.

And both of them let Heidi Beirich spout ugly slurs against me—“neo-Nazi,” etc.—without questioning her credentials or motives. D. refers to Beirich’s organization, the Southern Poverty Law Center, as “a civil rights organization that also tracks hate groups across the country” (so if she’s on my case, what does that make me?). I assume it is Journalism 101 to check on your sources, particularly when they are engaged in this kind of invective. If D. or S. had done that they would have quickly come upon what *Harpers Magazine* in a cover article said about the Southern Poverty Law Center:

The SPLC spends most of its time--and money--on a relentless fund-raising campaign, peddling memberships in the church of tolerance with all the zeal of a circuit rider passing the collection plate. "He's the Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker of the civil rights movement," renowned anti-death-penalty lawyer Millard Farmer says of Dees [Morris Dees, the head of the SPLC], his former associate, "though I don't mean to malign Jim and Tammy Faye." The Center earned \$44 million last year alone--\$27 million from fund- raising and \$17 million from stocks and other investments-- but spent only \$13 million on civil rights programs, making it one of the most profitable charities in the country. (“The Church of Morris Dees,” November, 2000.)

History moves fast, so for those who don’t know about the infamous Jim Bakker—his wife, Tammy Faye, who recently died, got off pretty clean—he was a television evangelist who got jail time for having his hand in the till. Jim and Tammy Faye would emote that their Heritage USA religious theme park was going to have to be abandoned if the viewers didn’t send them some cash right away. In would come the money, Jim would throw a few bucks at the park and pocket the rest. Dees’ specialty is direct mailing and the SPLC sends out a flood of solicitation letters saying that haters are a gigantic threat to decent people everywhere and that the SPLC is

holding back their onslaught, and to send money fast or it's Hitler and the KKK takes over America. Dees and his employees, Beirich among them, get on television and in the newspapers and paint me and others as devil incarnates—we are their Heritage USA--to get the checks in the mail. And D. and S. buy it uncritically. And why don't they question it? My guess is that they have been conditioned to think that someone on the "right" side has to be OK and therefore there is no need to check Beirich out—after all, she is smoking out bigots, and what could be wrong with anybody doing that?

My speculation is that, without being fully cognizant of it, D. and S. have been socialized to bring this perspective to a consideration of me. I would be surprised to learn that they even considered other ways to hold the meaning of my writing and teaching. What are some other frames of reference that could be brought to bear on a consideration of me?

One possibility: What exactly am I writing about race? What are my analyses, my claims, my prescriptions? What is my message? But remember the point above: there's no need to get into that, because they already know everything they need to know about race, and it's clear I doesn't align with it, so why bother? Plus, that would take a lot of work. I'll offer an addendum to Woody Allen—human beings are both nasty and, in the words of poet Charles Bukowski, "sleepy in the afternoon."

Another possibility of an angle: The threat to my freedom of conscience and expression as an America and my academic freedom as a university faculty member. A highly distressing element in the indoctrination of today's young people—and again, as throughout this discussion, I am especially referring to what is going on in our colleges and universities—is the dictum that good ends justify whatever means necessary to achieving them. The good ends in our time are racial justice, gender equality, and economic and political transformation in an egalitarian, collectivist, and redistributionist direction. Anything that gets in the way of accomplishing those good outcomes has to go, and freedom of conscience and expression and academic freedom are high on that list. Freedom of conscience leaves room for people to think the wrong things, and we can't have that. And freedom of expression just muddies the water and deflects our energies. So, as it goes, "No free speech for fascists" (or, a more popular variant of that these days, "haters"). Academic freedom has to do with all that, so that has to get dumped. I

surmise that the reason so much effort is put into establishing that I am a neo-Nazi, or a hater, or violent, when even the most cursory review of my conduct and writings would demonstrate that I'm not any of that, is because it will then be easier to circumvent the core American value of freedom of speech and the historic commitment to academic freedom in our universities and shut me down.

A third possibility, how are white students faring in today's universities? A virtually endless number of articles and books are written about how minority students are doing. How white students are doing isn't on the syllabus in our time; no way D. and S. would think of that.

For background on all of this, survey the writings of a group of Marxists collectively known as the Frankfurt School of intellectuals (many of them came to America from the University of Frankfurt in Germany back in the 1930s). Among them are Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, and Herbert Marcuse. They have been dead for decades and their prose is dry as dust and just about nobody these days has heard of them, but their writings are incredibly important as the underpinnings of the current leftist ideological orthodoxy in American universities popularly known as political correctness. The basic idea is that the Marxist utopia can best be realized not through armed uprisings of the working classes as was once thought but rather through the efforts of the middle classes whose minds and hearts are shaped in schools, especially universities. Read some Marcuse—perhaps start with his *An Essay on Liberation*--to get a scholarly justification for university faculty using their courses to propagate a progressive or social justice perspective among their students and for harassing, silencing, and expelling colleagues who try to get in their way. A term to punch in if you are Googling, using Amazon's search engine, or perusing a library's card catalog is "critical theory," which is what the Frankfurt School's perspective is called.

To the extent that what I have written has validity, what do those who care about the status and fate of white people do? I'll list some possibilities.

Attend to language.

I have found it helpful to divide words into “cleans” and “dirties.” I’m not getting at obscenity here, but rather to the fact that some words have positive—clean—associations and some have negative—dirty—ones. Any movement is helped along by describing what it is up to in the cleanest terms possible and tacking dirty labels onto its opponents. The anti-racists (there’s a clean term right there) have been very good at this, and we need to get better at it. Of course I’m not talking about using language in a dishonest or misleading way, but rather finding words that are both clean—or cleaner, anyway—and accurately descriptive. Some that come to my mind are white consciousness, white circumstance or status, white concerns, white interests, white commitment, white solidarity, white scholarship, white advocacy, white activism, white civil rights, white organization, white collective action, white separatism (linked to the American value of freedom of association), white self-determination, white racial and cultural integrity (linked to the historic American commitment to pluralism, which has been largely replaced by the ideas of multiculturalism and diversity), white heritage, and white fate or destiny. For me, these concepts have been good tools for analysis and argumentation—or, another way to say it, they have had heuristic value—and they have given me positive ways to perceive my work and myself.

At the same time we find clean (or cleaner) ways of holding the meaning of what we are doing, we need to point out the “dirty” aspects of our adversaries language. Some illustrations:

“Diversity” by and large gets an undeserving pass as a clean in our time. In reality, diversity is a cover for giving vent to resentment and hostility toward whites and for officially sanctioned racial discrimination against them, especially their men, in school admissions, employment, and grants and contracts. The great irony is that there is no better example of racism in our time than the diversity movement, but to see that you have to get beyond its clean rhetoric to its reality.

The anti-whites (a good dirty to attach to the other side?) have the propensity to leave concepts vague so they can tack more and more phenomena onto them as time goes along. One example of that is “racism.” In our time, racism is not merely irrational animus toward another race and the abuse and exploitation of another race. Now you are a racist if you assert that there are persistent physical, intellectual, or predilection differences among the races, or prefer to

live among those of your own race (no freedom of association for you), or criticize, or even think negatively about, other races. Racism in our time is not just doing the wrong things, it is saying the wrong things, and even thinking the wrong things—racism has become a thought taboo, a thought crime. In truth, a great deal of what is called racism against blacks is white disapproval and contempt in response to blacks' collective behavior (including illegitimacy rate, crime rate, violence against women, education and work performance, welfare dependency, physical destruction of the areas in which they live in any concentration, propensity to hold others responsible for their conduct, and demand to be the beneficiaries of racial preferences at the expense of others). Neither D. nor S. demonstrated that they saw the need to, even in the briefest way, define "racist" or any of the other terms they threw around in their stories. We need to call people on that.

Another example of keep-it-vague-and-pack-it-to-our-advantage use of language is "white supremacist." At first blush, white supremacy would seem to refer to a misguided notion among whites that they are top dogs and that gives them the right to subjugate and exploit other races; but this "dirty" has spread out to apply to more than just that. In our time, white supremacy is associated with even the hint of the belief that whites presently, or historically, have accomplished one lick more than any other race of people—don't get caught, or catch yourself, going in that direction.

In a follow-up email to my response to her initial e-mail, S. asked me three questions. I wrote out answers to her questions but didn't send them, because by this time I had had enough of the game. I sent her an e-mail that euphemistically got it across that my bullshit detector had gone off and I went home and had dinner. My unsent answers to her three questions inform this writing, however, so I'll include them in this writing. This is what I wrote in response to S.'s question, Are you a white supremacist?

If you mean white supremacist in its conventional pejorative meaning, no, I'm not a white supremacist. I have no interest in lording over or hurting or oppressing or exploiting anyone. My problem with the concept of white supremacist is that it is used to shut down objective consideration of the relative merits of whites and blacks in particular. I believe very much in freedom of inquiry and open and unthreatened

dialogue and debate, in the society generally and especially in the university. If they were not intimidated, more than a few white people, including both students and faculty in the university, would be open to exploring the thesis that if you objectively assess the races on the bases of their achievements throughout history, world-wide--in philosophy, ethics, the arts, architecture, mathematics, science and technology, and business acumen--whites are at the top of the list, or at least when compared to blacks and Hispanics, and that to insist they are not is ideology and politics and not scholarship. There are more than a few whites who believe that knowing that a community is white, anywhere in the world, will allow you to predict with a great deal of certainty that it is orderly and safe, and that its children are cared for and educated well, and that life is livable there; and that the same cannot be said for a black or Hispanic community. They would claim that when there is an infusion of blacks and Hispanics into a white area to a level of critical mass, say 30%, the area will likely deteriorate physically, become politically corrupt and more dangerous, that educational standards will become lower, and that it will be an area that decent people will want to leave, not enter. They contend that the same people who disallow and punish the possession and expression of these beliefs themselves operate as if they were true when deciding where to live and where to send their children to school. This is what I have heard white people say, and this is what I have reported in my writing. I have concluded that the beliefs of these people are not manifestations of irrational, hate-inspired racism or white supremacy, but rather empirical claims. If these claims are false, demonstrate that, but don't refute these people by calling them names.

The social scientist Charles Murray's recent book, *Human Accomplishment: The Pursuit of Excellence in the Arts and Sciences, 800 B.C. to 1950* uses statistical methods to argue that Europeans have overwhelmingly dominated accomplishment in the arts and sciences—Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, da Vinci, Michelangelo, Shakespeare, Rembrandt, Newton, Bach, Beethoven, Kant, Goethe,

Mozart, Wagner, Dostoevsky, Pasteur, Tolstoy, Cézanne, Nietzsche, Edison, van Gogh, and Picasso. Shaw, Faulkner, genetic engineering, computer technology, and on and on and on and on. I'm certainly not the last word on this matter, but I know that I don't think writing off Murray—who is the W.H. Brady Scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, a premier public policy center in Washington, D.C.—as a racist and white supremacist, as has been done regularly, including in universities, is the American way; it is someplace else's way, somebody else's way.

Attend to narratives.

We need to be more forceful in putting forth a positive narrative of the white race to counter the negative one now being imposed on our children. In the words of the late scholar Neil Postman, a narrative

tells of origins and envisions a future, [is] a story that constructs ideals, prescribes rules of conduct, provides a source of authority, and, above all, gives a sense of continuity and purpose. (*The End of Education*, pp. 5-6)

The narrative, the story, of whites being preached to our children these years is one in which the main themes are not the accomplishments just referred to but rather repression and injustice: racism, sexism, economic and political exploitation, arrogance, and exclusion. Especially villainous in the currently predominant story are white men, or, in the parlance of the day, white males—insensitive, boorish, authoritarian, violent, inhibited. The late critic and writer Susan Sontag, honored far and wide and a regular on the commencement speech circuit, proclaimed to nodding heads, “The white race is the cancer of human history.” The challenge facing humankind, the current narrative has it--and whites have to take the lead in this--is to put whites in their proper place, which, depending on who is telling the story, is either on a par and mixed in with everybody else or humbled and deferring at the back of the line.

White young people are taught the contradictory beliefs that 1) race doesn't exist, it is a social fiction; 2) race does exist but doesn't matter; and 3) race exists and matters, and for them their

race is something to feel guilty about and atone. In any case, they have no business feeling any sense of positive connection with their race, their European heritage, or their racial and cultural brethren, no, no, no. Prominent contemporary educator Herbert Kohl reflects widely held views in the field of education when he writes about a university class he instructed in which he sought to “level the playing field” by teaching white students that their culture is “no more permanent or special than other cultures.” (Imagine if he did that with any other race or ethnicity.) Kohl wants whites to see themselves as parts of the whole, not separate and distinct, and his lessons—coming after years of similar ones in other classrooms and in countless movie theaters and on countless television screens—bear fruit: white students “hate being called white” and are “annoyed” and “angry” that they are white. (*The Discipline of Hope*, pp. 319-20). What is going on in our schools is nothing less than a subtle genocidal attack against a race of people. The first step in this pogrom is to get white children—and only them, no one else is taught this—to reject, even disown, their racial identity.

White students need to hear another story, another narrative, about their race. They need to hear of their idealistic and adventurous and visionary and daring and spiritual ancestors—farmers, warriors, philosophers, poets, scientists, architects, civilization builders. To be sure, white history isn’t an unblemished record, but the through-line, the main story, of the white race isn’t the tale of oppression being pushed on us. Last weekend, I was sitting with a friend at the lakefront in Burlington, Vermont. There were hundreds of people around where we were, parents and children, young couples, older people. There was a gentility, a peaceful flow, a grace, to them. It was safe where we were. I remarked to my friend how impressed I was with the architecture in the lake front area and in the downtown just behind us, and how everything was kept up so well. After a time of silence, she said, “You know what I’m thinking? Everybody here is white. This is what they built, this is what they created; this is how they live when they are among their own.” Young white people—all white people—have a right to acknowledge the worth as their race, and to be proud of it, and to feel connected to it, and to feel responsible for continuing and extending its best aspects.

The white narrative needs to include the reality that this way of life is threatened. There are fewer and fewer Burlingtons now

days (and how long will Burlington be Burlington?) and more and more Detroits and Londons and Cincinnati. My hometown of Minneapolis, a lovely, safe city of lakes when I was growing up, has gone through demographic changes and, predictably, much of Minneapolis isn't lovely and safe any longer. It has come to be called—and I find this so saddening--“Murder-apolis.” It goes unreported, but white people are under siege and fleeing. My book *One Sheaf, One Vine* is made up of the personal statements about race from seventeen everyday white Americans, who, if it hadn't been for my book, would be publicly silent. Those who control the public discourse don't want us to hear from them, and anyone, like me, who makes them visible is subject to attack. Hear from two of the white people who speak out in my book:

The first is a forty-year old man from the northeastern part of the United States.

People who think of themselves as enlightened and on the moral high ground in matters of race write off people like me as ignorant racists. Unlike them, so it goes, we pre-judge people. If only we were exposed to racial and ethnic diversity we would learn to value different kinds of people—etcetera, etcetera, you've heard the line. You'll notice that most of these people doing the pontificating and finger pointing about racial equality and harmony and the virtues of integration and multi-racialism do it from the far distance of the leafy suburbs or a university campus somewhere. The fact of the matter is that, unlike practically all of them, I have lived up close with the reality of race in America. And regardless of what they might like to think, I am not stupid or unenlightened or their moral inferior. The people who look down their noses at people like me should come live for a year or two or three where my family and millions of other white families live. Let their children grow up and go to school in this pigsty and be threatened and attacked and robbed and raped. Then they can talk. (*One Sheaf, One Vine*, pp. 154-155.)

The second is a twenty-eight-year-old woman who is leaving southern California for Washington or Oregon, or perhaps Canada, she's not sure, in the face of the non-white infusion of the area in which she lives:

I just want to live a normal life, preferably with a family, but if I can't have that, a life with good friends in a community where I feel safe and I'm free to walk down the street without looking over my shoulder. I want to be able to express pride in my people and admiration for our white ancestors and continue their traditions without minority harassment and interference. When I am really old, I want to live in peace instead of like those old people in the neighborhood where I live who are eighty-ninety years old without the energy or the money to escape. (*One Sheaf, One Vine*, p.136.)

This is going on, and our children are hearing their race and heritage denigrated in schools, and they are being deluged with crude and vulgar images and messages from the lowest rung of black culture, and they are the victims of racial discrimination when they apply for college or a job, and even more basically, their race is steadily disappearing from the face of the earth. I received an e-mail yesterday from a father who told me that his daughter, who had worked incredibly hard in school and had graduated at the top of her high school class, had been rejected by all the Ivy League schools she had applied to while many of her black classmates, with far lower academic achievements and test scores, had been admitted. He said his daughter "cried and cried." After reading what this father wrote, I cried and cried. A new narrative should include this white girl, along the invitation to white people to expel their sense of isolation, their feeling of separation from one another, their atomization, and join with their racial kinsmen to put a stop to this kind of injustice and cruelty. Doing that isn't about being against anyone or hurting anyone. Rather, it is about racial self-love and self-preservation and self-determination, which are the rights of every race of people.

Affirm the historic role of the university.

When I entered university work four decades ago, the university was, the phrase that was used, "a marketplace of ideas." The greater the variety of ideas, the higher the caliber of "goods" in the marketplace, the better the university. The university was a setting for free and unfettered inquiry and expression. Open and civil dialogue and debate around all claims and points of view was encouraged. Academic freedom was cherished as an essential

element in the continuing search for truth and the good ways to live. When I went into university work I assumed I would be applauded for using my mind and offering alternative conceptions of reality, and for challenging conventionality, and for encouraging my students to do the same, and in the beginning I was.

But no more. Over the course of my career, and with an accelerating pace, the university—or better, particular aspects of it, the humanities, social sciences, education, and social services—has become a secular church that reaffirms, and demands allegiance to, a particular doctrine, a particular faith. To be a faculty member is to be a missionary, to spread the good word and bring people into the fold. Classes are church services, rituals that confirm the creed among the faithful. To teach a class is akin to being a pastor serving a congregation. S.'s story quotes the president of the Black Student Union at my university as saying with regard to me, "Everyone has an opinion, but as a teacher you kind of are representing the student body." A pastor or minister reflects the views of the congregation, but I am a teacher. Teachers don't *represent* the student body, they *teach* the student body. They don't merely reaffirm doctrine but rather introduce new ways of perceiving reality, and they challenge students to look at the world with new eyes. By the way, there was no place for S. to go to solicit the views of white students for her story. There is no White Student Union on my or any other campus—that sort of thing is forbidden. I'll bet S. didn't take note of that fact. That white students cannot organize and cannot designate a spokesperson and every other race can is a blatant contradiction, and both very telling and very wrong.

S.'s story quoted this same black student as saying she would "probably feel awkward" studying with me. I assume this comment is what prompted S. to ask me in a follow-up message, "Do you think minority students might be uncomfortable studying with you?" This is one of the three questions I wrote out the answers to but decided not to send. This is how I answered S.'s question:

I can imagine minority students being uncomfortable studying with me given what they may have been told about me, and I am very vigilant to that happening. As far as I can tell, minorities that know me--students, faculty, others--are very comfortable with me. I think they know who and what I am. They know I'm not a racist or hater or bigot, they know

my character, they understand that concern for my race and pride in my heritage does not mean that I have animosity toward them or would ever do anything to hurt them, in the same way I don't believe I have to take offense if an African American has pride in his people and a commitment to their betterment. What I find interesting is that the reverse of your question is never asked: are white students uncomfortable studying with minority faculty? Many white students have surreptitiously (they are afraid to do it openly) come to tell me of their discomfort in classes taught by African American instructors in particular in which they are subjected to their heritage and ancestors and themselves being disparaged harshly, and, according to them, the harangue goes on and on. They contend that if black students had to sit and listen to a white instructor put down their people, there would be outrage and that the university would do something about it. I care about anyone's people being put down, anybody being told they must think a certain way about themselves, anybody who is intimidated and silenced, and that means anybody--blacks, whites, Asians, Latinos, gays, whites, anybody, and that includes me.

Since S. included this quote from a black student, who, remember, had never taken a course with me, or even met me, without any balancing quote or counterargument, I'll include an excerpt from correspondence I received this week from an African American woman, now a graduate, who was a student in one of my classes.

As I would expect, the thoughts expressed about you were mixed from some of the students in my old program. They were astonished that I was taking your class and said that you were a "conservative," which in their minds meant "a bad person" and that you were probably a dangerous person. When I told the nay-sayers that you were actually a nice person and I had enjoyed taking your class and received a good grade they were shocked. Your class came along at the right time for me because of some of the classes and readings in [her graduate program]. As a person who was both female and minority, they wanted to box me in in terms of what I felt, thought, and even what was fun during my free time. For instance, I questioned some of the White Privilege theory as I felt it applied more to social class and experience and not necessarily race. I also felt that not all viewpoints were fairly

represented. I was criticized by some of the very liberal white students and the other students of color in the program for being an “agent in my own oppression.” I felt that was far from the truth. In fact I felt that students in the program were acting oppressed as they put chains on their mind in terms of how to think and act. My experience in your class aided my development and self-discovery. I learned about the mentalities of the majority of academia and how to work within the parameters, but stay true to what I am.

When university faculty talk about the virtues of diversity they most certainly are not referring to intellectual and philosophical diversity. Theirs is the only voice that can be heard without sanction, and through peer review hiring and promotion practices anyone who would counter it either never gets on campus in the first place or never gets beyond the probationary period to tenure. I’m an anomaly; I was tenured many years ago. I wouldn’t get hired now, and if I did happen to get hired I would be dismissed during the six-year probationary period, and my level of excellence and accomplishment would have nothing to do with it, it would be a political, ideological decision. Students tell me they hear the same speeches over and over and over in their classes, and there is a good reason for that. That is the way it is supposed to be: repeat, repeat, repeat, repeat, drum it in, drum it in, drum it in, drum it in.

One of the three questions S. asked me in her follow-up message gets at this issue. I think it does, anyway--her syntax was problematic for me. I believe she asked me whether I felt justified sharing my views on race in classes and in the context of my other responsibilities at the university, and in public statements, since, as a professor, I am linked to the university. In any case, that’s the question I answered and this is how I replied.

There is a double standard implied in your question. No one asks this of an African American or Hispanic or Asian and, as far as I can tell, these people don't hold back from expressing their views in their research or their teaching at all, or in their public statements. If my views on race are germane to a subject I am researching as part of my university work or a class I teach, I bring it into play. I make sure to let students know that I am expressing my own perspective, and that I am committed to their academic freedom, and that they are free

to hold contrary views without fear of admonishment or other retribution from me, grades or recommendations, anything. And I make sure to include perspectives in required readings that contradict my own. Faculty who reflect the, let's call it, politically correct perspective do not hold themselves to this standard. Rather, they insist that there is but one right way to see things, theirs, and that students should feel compelled to align with these views. I have reviewed required reading lists in courses that touch on racial topics at my university, and intellectual diversity is not reflected in them. Having said that, my web site is a personal web site, not a university web site. It includes writings that I would link to my work in the university as well as writings that do not. I am not simply a university professor. As an American, as a citizen, I have the right to speak out on the matters of the day in the same way all other Americans do. America is not a place where some people can talk and other people must remain silent.

I believe implicit in S.'s question is the assumption, and the fear, that I use my position as a university faculty member to impose my racial views on students to the exclusion of other perspectives. I do not do that. Today, I received a letter from a former student who had read the Vermont newspaper article and follow-up letters to the editor critical of me and was prompted to write a letter to the editor himself. He enclosed a copy of his letter to the editor:

I took a class taught by Professor Griffin. Not once did I ever hear him say anything that could be twisted into a racist comment. I found Professor Griffin to be the most thoughtful professor I had the privilege to learn from. Professor Griffin strove with great pains to be down the middle as he could be, trying to find the best side of opposites on any issue. In a private conversation, he encouraged me to never allow anyone to make me feel ashamed of where I came from. I was a rural farm boy in the enlightened university. I think Professor Griffin only asks that everybody play by the same rules. If we can encourage black youths in urban areas not to be ashamed of their heritage, we ought to tell rural farm boys like me the same thing. This was the exact opposite message that I received in the university's mandatory race and culture class, where I was made to be more ashamed on my skin color than I ever thought possible. Regardless of what other people

say, and what might be printed, I am confident I will never encounter a man of his fairness in education again.

Needless to say, I was very touched to receive this letter. I try not to, but I often feel very alone and unacknowledged and unsupported and, I'll admit, fearful because of my racial positions. Every day without fail, I have trepidation when I check my post office box at the university: is this the day of the ambush? I'm going to plug on no matter what, but receiving a letter like this makes it a lot easier to plug on. I have learned that every hit in life contains a gift. The recent negative media attention, which I most certainly didn't want, brought this student's letter—I had no idea he felt that way about me. Speaking of mediated experience, you would never have known of what I just reported to you, or anything else in this writing, other than from this web site. No conventional outlet would publish any of this.

But back to the main point in this section: The marketplace of ideas concept of a university and academic freedom and tenure protection are crucial to a university's proper role in this constitutional republican experiment in freedom. We need to affirm and defend these principles, these ideals, against those who would destroy them in order to impose their own ideological and political agenda on us all.

Play the game our way (or quit playing).

I'm talking about the Are you a racist? game. The first thing those of us who care about white people need to do is figure out the game. I've tried to help with that in this writing. This most recent round of the game has led me to make some decisions on how I'll proceed the next time it gets put on my table:

I'm not kowtowing to anybody. I've done a lot of that in my day, and just thinking about it upsets my stomach. No more, I don't care what the consequence. Personal honor isn't on Maslow's list, but it is now at the top of mine.

No more nice-guying people trying to do me in. I've done a lot of that too. I'm going to see if I can wipe this persistent obsequious smile off my face. I've learned that if you are going to be on the

side of white people you had better be willing to fight up close and get good at it. I've also learned that the people who come after me like to do it from long range and from behind a tree. They don't like to go toe-to-toe, and they like to hit but they don't like to get hit back. I used to write for boxing magazines. Good boxers defend themselves, but along with that they hit back hard, they counterpunch. I've decided I'm not going to take the first swing, but from now on I'm going to counterpunch--I guess this writing is an example of that. And if that doesn't end it and I get hit again, I am going to keep swinging.

Quick as I can manage it, I'm changing the game. The question isn't going to stay am I a racist and should I go mute and should the university fire me. It going to become: Do you think white children have less right to racial consciousness and commitment than non-white children? What writings of mine have you read?—let's talk about them. What do you think about freedom of speech and freedom of association? What white racial advocates and activists have you studied? Tell me about what they say.

I've decided I don't have to play the game at all. After one e-mail exchange with S., it hit me that I had been assuming I had to stop whatever I was doing and give energy to anybody, anywhere who came into my life and said, in effect, let's play. It suddenly dawned on me I don't want to play any more and didn't want to play with her anymore, and I just said the hell with it and quit and went home and read some of Ralph Waldo Emerson's essays (which by the way, speak to all of this). From now on, I'm prepared to reply to "Are you a racist?" with a grunt "Ugh" and go on with my day. Perhaps I won't play it that way, but it's now in my repertory of responses, that's for sure.

Grow up, wise up, and stand up.

If you are a white young person, and especially a young white person, here are some suggestions for your consideration.

If you are over seventeen, get off the kid act. Declare to yourself that you are a man or a woman and start acting that way, this minute. Children are dependent, suggestible, overly oriented

toward the group, conventional and conformist (even as they believe they aren't), safe, benign, soft, no threat to anybody in power. And that's the way they want you. If you are sneaky, stop being sneaky. Grow up.

Start reading things that aren't on the required reading list. Since day one, your experience with the world has been managed. You've been reading the assigned books in school and watching the movies and television shows and listening to the CDs and playing the video games they put in front of you. If you want to become your own person and not somebody's poodle you have to develop a healthy perversity. Figure out what they don't want you to learn and who they don't want you to talk to, and go learn about that and go talk to them. I wrote earlier about how they train you up to turn and run if you happen to encounter a white racial argument. D. and S. both went to my web site and to sites I had linked on my web site and in effect said "Eek!" and scurried away. If you are to become more than a walking cliché you are going to have to stop putting your head under the covers every time you think you have seen a ghost. Ideas aren't poison; they won't kill you. Insulation and ignorance won't kill you either, but they are sedatives, and you owe it to yourself not to sleepwalk through life.

I hope I'm not being presumptuous, but I believe that regardless of what conclusions you ultimately reach about what you encounter, it would be liberating and empowering for you to give over time to seriously engaging my web site. There is something like 1300 pages of writing there, much of it available on the site itself. I think the site could be the basis of a good masters thesis or doctoral dissertation, and I would be willing to cooperate fully with anyone who takes on that project. Short of that, my writings are something you could investigate along with whatever else you are doing. Note that race is not the only topic I consider in my writing. In fact, I have focused very little on race since 2007. At this writing, of the 65 thoughts and writings over the last two years, totaling almost 400 pages, only seven of the them of them, including this writing, have dealt with race. Anyone giving careful study to my site will see that my treatment of race is embedded in a larger, more inclusive focus on the whole of life.

For those interested in my views on race and who have limited time, my short list recommendations:

- My book, *The Fame of a Dead Man's Deeds*. You can get it from Amazon, or a library can obtain it for you through interlibrary loan. Also, if you have the time, read my two other books on race, *One Sheaf*, *One Vine* and *Living White*.

- From the writings section of my web site: My reviews of three books, *Sundown Towns: Gods of the Blood*, and *The Conservative Bookshelf* (this last one doesn't deal with race directly, but it provides good background into my overall orientation). Also, the articles "The Tale of John Kasper," "From Sex Symbol to French Patriot," "A Knock on the Door," and "When They Attack."

- From the thoughts section of the site: "The New McCarthyism."

To learn about me generally, while I didn't mean it to be, the thoughts read from start to finish, beginning with "On Michel Foucault," are an autobiography of sorts. If you want to sample the thoughts, my suggestions are "On Michel Foucault," "On Mishima," "On A Very Big Regret," "On John Lennon," and "On Steve Ditko."

I also suggest you study the links on my web site. Do I agree with everything you will find there? No. Do I think you should subscribe to what you will find there? That is up to you. However your inquiry turns out, I think it will be good for you to find out that there are people that don't go along with what is being pumped into you about race. And it will be good for you to realize that you can learn things on your own, and that you don't need somebody to tell you what to do every minute in order to learn something.

Be honorable. The measure of a man or woman is the level of his or her honor. Honor involves living with *integrity*, where your actions are in alignment with your highest understandings and convictions, and to do that takes *courage*. Even at my late stage of life I'm working on my honor, and I'm better this week than I was last week, and I'm gratified about that. I invite you to work on your honor. You have the precious gift of something I don't have, and that's time. If you start now and work hard you can go way past me in honor and accomplishment—anything honorable I have managed to do I started doing very late in life. And remember, it is going to take courage. Here is a quote about courage from my book on the

late William Pierce, a white racial leader and honorable man who was vilified in both D.'s and S.'s articles:

I understand the difference between prudence and reasonable caution on the one hand and cowardice or unreasoning fear on the other hand. Prudence is no vice, but cowardice is. The times we are living in make cowards of us all. We are pressed to make moral compromises every day, and it becomes a habit. We adjust our behavior in order to get by without a lot of trouble. We do not act heroically because heroism is out of fashion. We try to do what is prudent rather than what is heroic. I'm not asking for courage from people who have none in them, but there are still a few individuals who are capable of being honest. Even in our universities. Even in our government. A few who have the courage to be honest if they are given a little encouragement, if someone else will set an example for them. We should never think, "Well, I am only one person. What I do or don't do isn't important. I can't make a difference by myself." That kind of thinking is wrong. We can make a difference. Courage is contagious. It spreads from person to person. And it is powerful. One courageous truth-teller can back down a thousand cowards and liars and hypocrites. There has never been a time in the long history of our race when we were more in need of a few honest men and women, a few people of courage and integrity. There has never been another time when a few good men and women had the opportunity to make such a big difference as they can make right now. (*The Fame of a Dead Man's Deeds*, pp. 392-393.)

I've tried to do an honorable job with this writing. Now I'm going to do my best to live honorably the rest of today and again tomorrow. I hope you do the same.