

GOING PUBLIC: BEING SEEN, HEARD, AND FELT AS WHITE IN MAINSTREAM AMERICA

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The last couple of years, I worked on a book that sensitized me to two issues confronting those concerned about the status and fate of white people in America. The book, *One Sheaf, One Vine*, is made up of statements about race from seventeen racially conscious white men and women of various ages and stations of life from around the country. The two issues that surfaced for me during the book project: First, the white racist, white nationalist perspective is absent from the public discourse; and second, those concerned about the well-being of white people in this country don't attend enough to private, in contrast to public, concerns.

Most of what people know, or think they know, is derived from mediated experience: received information, ideas, and interpretations. They weren't there themselves, they didn't see it, hear it, or touch it, they didn't think it up themselves; rather, somebody stood between them and reality and showed them a depiction of it or told them about it and gave it meaning for them. That somebody could be a teacher in school or a professor in a university, or a moviemaker, popular musician, television personality or performer, politician, journalist, church leader, novelist, or non-fiction writer. From our early years, all of us have been immersed in a stream of public discourse — images, ideas, interpretations, concepts of what is true and preferable and what is out of bounds — and that iconic and ideational context shapes our reality and perspective and guides our engagement with the world.

For all practical purposes, the white racist perspective is not a part of that mainstream public discourse. All the average person knows about white racism are the negative characterizations of it and those who subscribe to its tenets put forth by its adversaries, who predominate in the public dialogue and debate. I teach at a university, a major battleground in the war against European-heritage people. Except for the KKK, which has been used forever to epitomize, discredit, and demonize white racial consciousness and collective action, students don't know a single white racist organization or individual by name and haven't read or heard a word they've written or spoken. All the students know is what they have been told by the mediators of reality that get their eye and ear: that this orientation and these organizations and people are racist, anti-Semitic, hate-filled, extremist, ignorant, misguided, malevolent, and to be shunned.

More, students are conditioned to employ a “label, denigrate and affirm, and turn away” strategy that keeps their level of understanding and awareness of white racist ideas and people where it is and reaffirms their antagonism toward them. The way it works, if anything even hints at a white racist outlook, students have been taught to stop right there. Don’t try to understand it, reflect on its claims, go any deeper into it; don’t engage it at all. Instead, immediately label it pejoratively and derisively (“racist” “anti-Semitic” “hate”), and then go into a little speech, if only to themselves if no one is around, about how racism is bad, anti-Semitism is bad, hate is bad, diversity is good, and so on. And then disconnect altogether – get away from the “bad” person, close the book, throw the flyer in the trash; and if they can’t physically get away, if they are in a classroom, say, look down disapprovingly and doodle and wait it out.

Recently, I published a review in this journal of George Fredrickson’s *Racism: A Brief History*. Fredrickson, a professor emeritus at Stanford who has written and taught on racial matters since the 1960s from a pro-minority angle, portrays racism in this, his latest, book as endemic to white gentiles throughout history (and nobody else) and includes anti-Semitism in his conception of racism. What struck me reading *Racism: A Brief History* was that Fredrickson made this basic pitch to white Stanford students, among the best and the brightest of our young people, for forty years, and that his books, including this new one, have and will be encountered, if not examined carefully, by untold thousands more young white people as required reading in university courses. And, most significant as far as I’m concerned, Fredrickson’s analysis of racial matters wasn’t, and in all likelihood won’t be in the future, countered by an alternative or opposing argument. Students won’t remember the details of Fredrickson’s lectures and books, but they will retain the generalization that whites have been on the wrong side of history and that to get on the right side they need to align themselves with the cause of minorities and Jews rather than with their white brethren.

Writing the *Sheaf* book, as I call it, and an earlier book, *The Fame of a Dead Man’s Deeds: An Up-Close Portrait of White Nationalist William Pierce*, brought home to me how tightly regulated public discourse is in America. I learned through my literary agent that you don’t get published in this country in conventional ways unless you talk up minorities and Jews and talk down white people, simple as that. But note the qualifier in that sentence: *in conventional ways*. I was able to make both the *Fame* and *Sheaf* books available to the public through a print-on-demand Web publisher and at minimal cost, and I was able to get the word out to potential readers through the Internet at no cost that the books exist. The system of thought control, in this country anyway – it’s better here than in Europe – isn’t airtight.

My experience with my two books has revealed a distribution downside, however. It has seemed to me that the only people reading the *Fame* book are

those already familiar with and amenable to the ideas in it. In all the correspondence I've received from people about the book, I don't remember one of them being what I would call a mainstream reader. It appears that the *Fame* book has stayed in a niche, and I speculate that unless there is some change in marketing strategy the new *Sheaf* book will as well.

With a few exceptions – the editor of the book review section of this journal, Samuel Francis, prominent among them – racially aware white people are only talking to one another. We post things on discussion lists, we read each other's writings – some of which are fine indeed – and we talk to each other at meetings. A lot of this exchange, like exchange in any context, is little more than filler, but a lot of it, too, is quality exchange, perceptive, instructive, useful in providing insight, direction, and encouragement to the people involved. But the point here is that no one is listening to us; we aren't part of the core public discourse in this country.

To be sure, there are good reasons for that. I have learned firsthand how major publishers and universities operate to silence and marginalize those with outlooks they don't like. But at the same time I have also learned – at least in my university situation, and I surmise that my situation is not unique – to express myself honestly and openly about racial matters and to teach courses that include legitimate investigations of the white nationalist perspective. And I have learned – and I think this is important – that the barriers to my being involved in the main arena in American life are just as much, if not more, internal than external. That is to say, many of the obstacles were and are inside me; I have held myself back, and while I am better than before, I'm still doing it. I have learned that I need to examine my assumptions about the way the world works and my place in it, and I need to look hard at my own patterns of behavior and my own dedication and personal character, and I need to look at my efficacy, my ability to set tangible goals and get concrete things done.

So the issue of the absence of white racialism in the public life of America has come back to me as a person, as an individual. And this leads into the second point I want to make here: that more attention needs to be paid to the personal, in contrast to the public, dimensions of the issues facing whites as a race. The people in the *Sheaf* book (and I stayed in contact after my interviews with them) that comprise the source material for the book, and that changed the meaning of the book project for me from just being about what some people think about race to what they are doing with their lives, and what I'm doing with my life. Even more fundamentally, the *Sheaf* book came to be about life itself, finiteness, mortality, what each of us experiences and accomplishes between now and the end of our time on this earth. Increasingly, I have used this personal, call it existential, lens when looking at white racial matters and trying to make sense of them.

The people in the *Sheaf* book tend – all through this, I'm speaking in generalities; I'm not saying this is every-time true – to have difficulty living lives

of racial integrity. By racial integrity I mean, day to day, acting in accordance with one's most cherished racial beliefs and values. I mean in their jobs and relationships and engagement with the community, those kinds of basic things that make up the substance of our individual lives. For so many of them, it is as if their thoughts on race are "over here" and their actual lives as related to race are "over there."

While they are impressively insightful and articulate about race, at the same time—and again, this is not true in every instance—they are silent, or bordering on silent, in the public arena. They don't say what they really think in any of the contexts of their lives outside their families and close relationships, and sometimes not even there. Or at least in any of the real contexts of their lives; in a number of cases, they are very expressive in the virtual context of the Internet, through discussion list postings and such. I have an image in my mind of a person sitting in a room tapping on computer keys, but I don't have an image in my mind of someone speaking out at the school board meeting held to discuss the latest diversity curriculum. Although as I now conjure up that school board meeting image, I envision the *Sheaf* participants being very effective if they were to do something like that—these were informed and persuasive people, attractive people.

And more than just silent, so many of them are hidden. They are living secretive lives. They are intimidated, even frightened. What if their views on race become known? What if their friends, parents, their girlfriend or boyfriend, their colleagues at work, the teachers of their children at school, their children's classmates, find out what they believe? What if people learned about the literature they read? What if their name got in the paper? They would be ridiculed, scorned, excluded, they could lose their jobs, their children might be harassed. More than half the people in the *Sheaf* book use pseudonyms. In this country that, supposedly anyway, is grounded in a commitment to freedom of speech, open expression, the marketplace of ideas, all those high-sounding concepts I heard about in school, here are people who feel unable to identify themselves when speaking about something they care very deeply about. Our adversaries don't hide their identities or hold back in the least from announcing what they think about race, yet so often we do. What's that about? Why can they go public and we can't? How'd that happen? What can be done about it?

Asking these rhetorical questions is not to imply that every one of the people in the *Sheaf* book should have put their names to what they said, not at all. The world is very hostile to race-affirming white people, and we all have to make a living and get through our lives, and going public with your racial views if they deviate from the current party line in this country can be like sticking your head up out of the foxhole. But I am offering that living openly and publicly and fully as the person you truly are is the ideal. It is the best way I can think of to be happy and fulfilled. I'm saying that the fact that

many of us are hiding out is an issue we need to confront, individually and collectively, head on.

If we do take on this issue of living authentically – in truth, in honor – as racially conscious and committed white people, one of the things we are going to have to deal with, as I mentioned above with reference to myself, is the limitations or obstacles within ourselves. Indeed, there are forces outside of us that are intimidating us and pushing us to the side. And we have to take that reality into account in figuring out how to live honestly and openly and effectively, full speed ahead, no tentativeness, no hesitancy. But we hold ourselves back, too. All of us have spent our lives in the hands of the enemy, as it were – the schools and TV shows and movies and popular music and news shows and orating politicians, all of them. Since we were very young children we have been discouraged and distracted from becoming proud and contributing members of our own people, European-heritage people, white people. Even if we have largely escaped from the grasp of the enemy – I say “largely” because you can never completely get away from them, they are ubiquitous – the residue of that conditioning is still inside us and affecting what we think and feel and do.

One of our major challenges for each of us is to expel the residue of our own prior conditioning. We need to expel any notion we have internalized that multiracialism, feminism, collectivism, and cosmopolitanism are, really, on the side of history, that they are the action and that, at best, we are a holding action, gadflies. They speak freely, we stay silent, or perhaps talk to a few people on the side, and that is OK as long as no one sees or hears us. They go full out and we are circumspect. They ridicule, condemn, belittle, and threaten; we defer, or even equivocate, grovel, backtrack, and placate. They have the power to hurt us, so it goes, and will hurt us, so we had better lay low. We need to identify those feelings, thoughts, and images and tell ourselves that we don't accept them any longer; and we need to affirm more empowering, more honorable conceptions of ourselves and, in small and big ways, take action in alignment with those conceptions.

Looking at things from a personal angle has made me realize the need for white racialists to be healthy physically and mentally and tough and fierce. To be a racially committed white person who is “out there,” present in the world, in full view, saying it, being fully who he or she really is, one must be willing and able to do battle. Those in power in this country will ignore you if they can, but if you get too visible or get in their way they will come after you. If you aren't strong and battle-ready you will be prone to do what so many of us do when attacked: cave in. We need to be like boxers in training, getting ready for the big bout, so that when the occasion calls for it we come out firing punches rather than going into a shell. Personally, I have discovered that they can't hurt me as much as I thought they could, particularly if I'm in good personal shape. And I've also learned that I can do more than just defend

myself when attacked for my racial views and actions. I can counterattack. It brings a lot of bullies up short to contemplate the possibility that their noses might get bloody too.

These two issues — the lack of mainstream presence and the need to attend to how we are doing as individuals — are interconnected. The absence of our kind in the public arena leads us to feel unimportant, somehow illegitimate, outsiders, commentators rather than actors. What does it do for our sense of place in the world not to have a politician to vote for who wouldn't cross the street to avoid us? Or not to have a teacher in a school who doesn't look down his nose at us? And that sense of ourselves as essentially on the outside looking in inhibits us from doing what it takes to increase our mainstream public presence. So it is a vicious cycle, and it has to be broken.

We can work on both these issues concurrently. As organizations and individually, we can look for ways to enter the mainstream public discourse. For myself, I intend to get the *Sheaf* book to the attention of mainstream readers. As private individuals we can set a goal for ourselves to move steadily and persistently toward living our everyday lives openly and honestly and taking on anything or anybody that tries to stop us. That might come down to speaking up and holding our ground in some context where up to now we have deferred or remained silent. The lesson for some of us who try things like that is that the best option for us is to homestead in Kentucky with a community of our racial kinsman and let the world spin on its axis without us. But I think a lot of us will realize that we have as much right as anybody to live full out as the persons we truly are in the dead center in American life, and that we are going to keep moving ourselves resolutely in that direction.

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