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Editor

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To The Editor:

Sam Prentice says that I "unintentionally rail against meritocracy." Do you believe him? The letter he was presumably responding to is at http://letters.sauyet.com/#/2021-11-05/. Go ahead and read it; I'll wait...

No? You found no sign of railing about anything, perhaps? No critique of meritocracy? Don't be surprised. This is Mr. Prentice's *modus operandi*: invent a straw man, fail to knock down even that, then hope no one will notice his sleight of hand.

"People," he says, "who see everything through the prism of skin color are the true racists." Could be. Do you know anyone like that? I certainly don't. But we've all met those who deny that current and past racism are significant causes of modern inequalities. It sounds as though Mr. Prentice is treading close to that line.

Interestingly, the same day I read Mr. Prentice's note on meritocracy, I happened upon an academic paper (https://link.sauyet.com/34) which showed that among White students admitted to Harvard, 43% are admitted not because of academic merit but because they are athletes or the children of alumni, staff, or donors. For non-White students, that number is no more than 16%. Many doors are opened by degrees from a prestigious university, so this is one more example of how structural racism perpetuates racial inequality. The world is full of such examples. Noting and reporting them is not racism. Denying them often is.

Finally, we should note the odd obsession of Sam Prentice and other conservatives with the Democratic party. Sixty-plus years ago, the parties swapped places in their approach to race; today the vast majority of African-Americans find the Democratic party the more congenial home. As a progressive, I simply prefer the parties with progressive agendas and remain unconcerned about what they stood for a hundred years ago.

Sincerely,

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