

Coates (2010): It's Not That You're Racist... —Noted

I see that Cornell's William Jacobson is back, claiming that he is being cancelled. I see that he claims so in spite of his dean Eduardo M. Peñalver's writing that "to take disciplinary action against him for the views he has expressed would fatally pit our values against one another in ways that would corrode our ability to operate" and that he employs Jacobson because we "value academic freedom, which prevents us from censoring the extramural writings of faculty members, and we value job security for our clinical faculty..."

It is worth underlining, since Peñalver finds Jacobson's writings "offensive and poorly reasoned" and "not reflect[ing] the values of Cornell Law School", that this is a long established pattern and practice from Jacobsons pen. William Jacobson has long taken it to be his mission to metaphorically wave the Confederate battle-flag in Ithaca, NY: **Ta-Nehisi Coates** (2010): *It's Not That You're Racist...*
<https://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2010/12/its-not-that-youre-racist/68522/>: '...It's that you're either ignorant or dishonest. Cornell Law Professor William A. Jacobson inveighing against Matt Yglesias...

...1947 was the year in which the color barrier was broken in Major League Baseball. Prior to Jackie Robinson taking the field, MLB (or whatever it was called at the time) was segregated. Actually, it was more than segregated, it excluded blacks completely.

Using the logic of Matthew Yglesias of Think Progress, who is having his 15 minutes of race card fame, anyone who expresses any measure of praise for the pre-1947 Yankees necessarily would be "expressing affection for a White Supremacist" organization. It would not matter that the praise was for the Yankees' baseball skills; any expression of anything less than complete condemnation of the Yankees necessarily evidences tolerance for racism because the Yankees were part of a racist system.

That logic is what Yglesias uses against Haley Barbour because Barbour made a statement that when Barbour was growing up in the early 1960s in Yazoo City, Mississippi, the "Citizens Council" stood up to the Klan and was organized to keep the Klan out of Barbour's home town. That apparently is a true statement, but because the Citizens Council also supported the system of segregation, Yglesias has accused Barbour of "expressing affection for the White Supremacist Citizens Council," and almost the entire nutroots blogosphere has picked up the meme that Barbour is a racist.

Yet nothing Barbour said, or has done in his professional life, supports the charge that Barbour supported segregation himself, although if he were a Southern Democrat during the 1960s he almost certainly would have supported segregation...

Accusing Barbour of being racist is odious and evil because there is no evidence to support the charge. Yglesias merely does what I could do to anyone who praised the pre-1947 Yankees.

I think it helps to be very clear on the basic charges here:

1. Matt has accused Barbour of "expressing affection for the White Supremacist Citizens Council." and spurred the "nutroots blogosphere" (I assume that's basically left blogger) have ran with that and used it to argue that Haley Barbour is a racist.
2. Left bloggers, like Matt, claiming that Barbour is a racist are doing something "odious and evil."

Let's take the last point first—I think it would be generally, odious and evil, to accuse someone of racism without much evidence. I think there's quite a bit of evidence that Haley Barbour is shockingly ignorant of the history of his state, and of American history at large. In his office hangs the battle-flag of an Army raised solely to found a republic based on White Supremacy.

This is not the politically correct sooth-saying of liberal historians. It's the reprehensible rantings of the very Confederates whom Haley Barbour honors. Here is the Vice President of the Confederacy, Alexander Stephens, rejecting the founding fathers notion of equality of man:

The prevailing ideas entertained by [Thomas Jefferson] and most of the leading statesmen at the time of the formation of the old constitution, were that the enslavement of the African was in violation of the laws of nature; that it was wrong in principle, socially, morally, and politically...Those ideas, however, were fundamentally wrong. They rested upon the assumption of the equality of races. This was an error. It was a sandy foundation, and the government built upon it fell when the "storm came and the wind blew."

Our new government is founded upon exactly the opposite idea; its foundations are laid, its corner- stone rests, upon the great truth that the negro is not equal to the white man; that slavery subordination to the superior race is his natural and normal condition. This, our new government, is the first, in the history of the world, based upon this great physical, philosophical, and moral truth.

Here is the declaration of secession from the very state where Haley Barbour now presides:

In the momentous step, which our State has taken of dissolving its connection with the government of which we so long formed a part, it is but just that we should declare the prominent reasons which have induced our course. Our position is thoroughly identified with the institution of slavery - the greatest material interest of the world. Its labor supplies the product, which constitutes by far the largest and most important portions of commerce of the earth. These products are peculiar to the climate verging on the tropical regions, and by an imperious law of nature, none but the black race can bear exposure to the tropical sun. These products have become necessities of the world, and a blow at slavery is a blow at commerce and civilization. That blow has been long aimed at the institution, and was at the point of reaching its consummation. There was no choice left us but submission to the mandates of abolition, or a dissolution of the Union, whose principles had been subverted to work out our ruin.

I guess I can agree that merely displaying the flag of a white supremacist Army, praising a group which opposed integration in the 1960s, and—at this very moment—is boycotting a Hollywood movie because for casting a black person as a Norse diety, does not make one a racist. I guess I'd also agree that dressing in Nazi regalia, and praising Pat Buchanan's writings on Jews doesn't, in itself, make you an anti-Semite. No one can know the contents of person's heart. But it does make you, as Matt charged, "dangerously ignorant," among many other things. Of course Jacobson never quotes Matt—or frankly anyone—charging that Barbour is a racist.

That of course leads us to the second point—that there is an outbreak of liberal bloggers claiming Barbour is a racist. A google search of "Barbour is a racist" is instructive. It does not reveal a single liberal blog of real note making that case. On the contrary it reveals a raft of sites either arguing that Barbour isn't a racist, or arguing why it's not relevant. Unable to deal with the actual arguments made by Matt here, for instance, and evidently generally ignorant of the basic facts of American history, Jacobson simply strawmans and changes the subject.

Regrettably, this is basically the accepted tactic of many conservatives when talking about race. It happens so often that, in most cases, it's not even worth noting. But Jacobson is a professor at one of the most prestigious institutions of higher learning in this country. I can't for the life of me imagine how someone rises to such heights and, evidently, never acquires an understanding of the rudiments of American history, nor an ethic of honest debate.

It's true that universities are sprawling. But this is the kind of dissembling defense of public official who honors a white supremacist flag, and praises a white supremacist organization, is what you get out of a professor at Cornel, what real hope is there for cable news?...

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