

Social Media, Young People, and Challenges for White Activism
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My work as a university professor brings me into frequent contact with college-age young people. Nothing stands out about them more than their all-day, everyday involvement with social media—Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and text messaging. To put this current phenomenon in perspective, a desktop touchtone phone with a separate answering machine wasn't that long ago. Imagine if you had carried both of those big things around with you all day and checked the machine every five minutes and stood on street corners talking on the phone waiting for the light to change and then kept talking on it while you crossed the street.

Anybody, any group, trying to get through to this cohort I deal with has to take into account that its members get itchy if it's been more than five minutes since they last checked their mobile phone and their friends list on their Facebook page. My read of things is that the pervasiveness of social media in our time poses particular challenges to those on the periphery of the social/cultural core of American life, and that very much includes white racial analysts and activists. To be sure, it presents opportunities as well: young people are plugged into something, and if you can get yourself plugged into that same thing, or figure out how to get them to plug into something else or to do things another way, you can get something good accomplished. That acknowledged, however, the focus of this writing is to point out how social media can get in your way if you have a white racial agenda.

I've identified ten negative, or problematic, outcomes of social media involvement among young people—older people too, but the focus here is on young people, say, up to thirty or so.¹ I'll list the ten and, with each, very briefly—though I think you'll get my point—cite an obstacle/challenge it poses to those who care about the wellbeing of white people. As I go through the list, flesh out and repair each point and think through how the white racial movement can deal effectively with that particular challenge, and be vigilant to fresh ideas

about anything in this basic area—including the Internet and video games--it prompts.

1. *The Opportunity Cost.* One way to compute the cost of anything you are doing is the value of everything else you could have been doing instead. If you are sprucing up your Facebook account, you are not spending the afternoon curled up reading Dostoyevski, taking a walk in the woods and learning Nature's truths, engaged in serious solitary thought and reflection, or . . .

Attending to the status and destiny of white people.

2. *Never Completely in the Room.* With social media, you are always someplace other than in this place, here, now. You are always in the virtual world. In that realm, your focus is on the picture you just sent out on Instagram and reviewing your text messages and sending texts and anticipating what responses you are going to get to what you just sent.

Your audience looks like they are in their seats, but really they aren't.

3. *“Let Me Tell You What I Think.”* Social media are centered on off-the-top commentaries and self-references. They are about what I think, what I prefer, how the world looks to me. They are about telling my story and letting people know what somebody else's story brings up for me. Subjective truth, what's true for me, my opinion, my reactions, takes precedence over the search for the truth outside myself. Social media prompt engaging other people's ideas just enough for them to prompt what I want to say about myself with regard to whatever, whoever, it is.

They aren't interested in what you think but rather what they think. And what they think is what's been put into their heads by the schools and mass media and politicians and clergy since at least kindergarten, and by their parents and peers who have had the very same things put into their heads.

4. *Easy Does It.* Tapping tiny little keys with your thumbs, no heavy lifting in that. In fact, effortlessness is a central value in social media, as well as one of its appeals. Another social

media value, although it wouldn't be stated this way: shallowness. No need to dig deeply into anything.

"If what you are selling gives me eye strain or tells me to get off this chair I'm sitting in, no thanks."

5. *Affinity for the Pop Culture.* The social media messages (both pronunciations) nudge people in the direction of the popular culture. Being on top of contemporary mass entertainment and its ways is a major value in social media, and knowing the latest singer and band and summer blockbuster movie and having a favorite contestant on "The Voice" (or I guess that show is out) is a good way to get it across that you match up with this ideal.

"If there is one thing the popular culture—is that what you call it?—agrees on it's that you are a Nazi nut case."

6. *"Nowism."* The social media are all about this time, now. What's on for today, that's the ticket.

"The fate of the white race? What Francis Parker Yockey—Justin who?—thought about the Imperium—what?—in 1910 or whenever? Are you serious?"

7. *Puts You In Show Business.* Facebook pages put you and Jimmy Fallon in the same line of work; you are both in show business. You and Jimmy are both engaged in self-promotion, exhibiting yourself in such a way as to get attention and go over big with your audience and be popular. Popularity is a major value in the world of social media; get that lineup of friends expanded, get a lot of action coming your way.

Jimmy Fallon didn't get to where he is by pushing race realism.

9. *Imprecise Word.* Social media is about tossed off, ungrammatical, on-impulse tweets and chatty, informal, two-line text messages.

"Could you boil down what you have to say to, OK, a paragraph? And you can leave out the commas."

10. *Groupthink.* Social media breed a collective, identity; you become a member of a virtual community and absorbed into

it. Membership in any community comes at the cost of autonomy and true individuality. That is particularly the case with the social media because in that community you are never private. You are always on display: nine o'clock on a Thursday night, there you are, they can see you. Your life becomes increasingly transparent. You live perpetually in public. A life in public contributes to an increased need to belong, and the way to belong is to go along with the crowd, conform. Social media involves self-disclosure. The more you talk about yourself--in any context, not just the Internet--the more you reveal about yourself, especially negative self-disclosures, the more subject you are to control by others. Social media breeds a kind of networked intelligence: accepted, and acceptable, thought is whatever the wisdom of the collective happens to be. Morality becomes shared morality. Truth, proof, becomes social, what is in the wind, or better, what is in cyberspace.

“Look, everybody knows what up. Get a clue.”

10. *Why Grow Up?* There is a stress in social media on youth, newness, immaturity. We all have to figure out how to pitch who we are to the world, and to ourselves, and many people these years have decided to “play it young,” and the social media push them in this direction.

“You aren’t asking me to be an *adult*, are you?”

That’s the ten. What would you add, change, with the ten? Are there outcomes eleven, twelve, and thirteen—or whatever number—that should be on this list? What are your best assessments, analyses, conclusions, and recommendations that came out of going through this discussion? What, if anything, are you going to do about any of this?

Notes

1. For a more detailed explanation of the ten, see “An Educator’s 10 Concerns About Social Media” in the writing section of my web site, www.robertsgriffin.com.

