

Blacks As Emotional Abusers of Whites:
The Exploration of a Possibility
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There is an aggressive, unreasonable, even neurotic, quality in the outlook and behavior of blacks toward whites currently that wasn't present—at least not nearly to this extent--in prior decades. The term that captures this quality or thrust for me: it is abusive of white people. I think it may be helpful to look at black-white relations in our time from an abuse angle.

Recently, I wrote an article for this magazine that recounted episodes on the Dartmouth and Yale campuses.

A group of blacks, shouting Black Lives Matter chants and wielding protest signs burst into the Dartmouth University library where several dozen white students were studying. “Stand the fuck up you filthy racist white pieces of shit!” they screamed. They pushed and shoved the young white women and men. One of the women, pinned to the wall with the blacks yelling “filthy white bitch” in her face, began to cry. “Fuck your white tears,” one of her attackers sneered. [The white students acquiesced to this attack on them, and as far as I know, no one at the university came to their defense.]

At Yale University a black female student snarled at a white male faculty member who also was an adviser in a residence college: “Who the fuck hired you? You should not sleep at night! You are disgusting!” His response was to say that the student had “broken his heart.” He apologized to her — “I have disappointed you and I'm truly sorry”—and then he resigned.¹

I don't recall this wild-eyed, in-your-face, attack-mode behavior directed at individual white people in prior times. This conduct is abusive. And I have the distinct impression that if this kind of thing had happened to white students or faculty back then

they wouldn't have rolled up in a ball and taken it in the way whites did in these instances.

In late 2014, I wrote an article about the killing of a young black man in Ferguson, Missouri that led to riots in that city and elsewhere:

At this writing, it has been four days since the highly anticipated and nationally televised November 24th, 2014 press conference conducted by St. Louis County, Missouri Prosecuting Attorney Robert McCulloch in which he announced that a grand jury had chosen not to indict Ferguson, Missouri police officer Darren Wilson in the August 9th, 2014 death of an eighteen-year-old local resident, Michael Brown. . . .

Immediately after the press conference, the evidence and testimony the grand jury had reviewed in the process of coming to its decision was released to the public. It put Brown in an unfavorable light: riveting testimony from Wilson describing his struggle with a 6'4", 280 pound assailant bent on killing him; pictures of Wilson's facial bruises from Brown's punches; forensic evidence supporting Wilson's version of the incident; evidence of marijuana in Brown's blood and urine, which could have caused impairment in his judgment; the incompatibility of the forensic evidence and eye witness accounts that had played time and again in media reports describing Brown being shot in the back by Wilson or with his hands up attempting to surrender; and, for the first time, a number of eye witness accounts that squared point-by-point with both the forensic evidence and Wilson's version of what had occurred. Plus there was, now, the simple and, it would seem, compelling fact that a grand jury of twelve local citizens had concluded that there was no probable cause to charge Wilson with a crime in this incident.

What particularly struck me in the hours and days that followed the release of this evidence and the grand jury's finding exonerating Wilson is that, as far as I have been able to tell, none of it had the slightest impact on the those who had decided that the answers to the two questions posed by the case were a resounding yes: yes, this was an instance of racially motivated police misconduct; and yes, this was part of the larger problem of racial injustice in America. These people didn't

speak to this new information, they didn't refute it or explain it away, and they certainly didn't incorporate it into how they looked at the case. It was as if for them it didn't exist, or that the details of this new data somehow didn't compute with them. In any case, they simply reiterated their position they had held before the grand jury report—Brown had been shot with his hands up trying to surrender (or in the back) and an awful thing is still going on with race relations in America. It could have been August 24th rather than November 24th.²

No less than the president of the United States, after the Ferguson grand jury finding and all the evidence had come in, piled on whites as if the grand jury had never happened.

We have made enormous progress in race relations over the course of the past several decades. I have witnessed it in my own life, and to deny that progress is to deny America's capacity for change. But what is also true is that there are still problems and communities of color aren't just making these problems up.³

With all due respect to President Obama, the protestors in Ferguson and elsewhere, the matter at hand, were in fact making problems up.

My Ferguson article was entitled "Epistemology Matters: Reflections Prompted by a Death in Missouri." Epistemology is a philosophical term having to do with how people go about knowing things. In the article, I described three basic epistemologies.

One way of knowing people employ, one epistemology, is to draw conclusions based on concrete reality: what's right in front of them, what they can discern with their senses, and from detailed accounts of what others have discerned with their senses. It could be called the empirical, or scientific, method of coming to the truth about something. . . .

Another way to come to know, another epistemology, is rigorously to use one's mind: carefully consider various positions and arguments and systematically, intensely, concerted, employ reason and logic in coming to conclusions about what is true. . . .

A third epistemology, is coming to know, arriving at an understanding or conclusion, on the basis of how something fits into a narrative, or story, you have accepted as a valid one. By narrative or story, I mean like a movie or television show, except that it is real, not fiction: in the beginning this happened, and then this, and then this, and now here we are and this is going on; and the story isn't over, the ending hasn't been written, and you are involved in writing it, or you could be.⁴

To the protesters in Ferguson and elsewhere, and to the president, the salient reality wasn't the evidence and the grand jury finding, but rather a narrative, a story, that goes something like this: From the earliest days of America, black people have been oppressed by white people. A big part of that problem is the discriminatory and aggressive and violent conduct of racist white police officers in urban black communities, especially toward young black males. The overall situation is perhaps better now than it was before, including with the police, but in any case it's still a huge problem in this country and something has to be done about it.

At this writing, police officers are being murdered for allegedly targeting blameless black men. Heather Mac Donald has written a new book that powerfully makes the case that reality doesn't support the reasons given for demonizing and executing police officers.⁵ To significant numbers of black activists in this time, what Ms. Mac Donald writes is beside the point, because reality is beside the point, it doesn't matter; the narrative does. Proceed with the abuse.

In universities, and schools at all levels, what drives current assaults against white students—the abuse of them--isn't what they or their parents or their racial forebears actually did. In fact, there's no need to muck around in that reality with all its

complications and qualifications. These young white people are how the story depicts them, case closed. If the story warrants them getting put down as racists, oppressors, and privileged, and worked over psychologically and subjugated personally, and it does, then that's what they deserve; plus it makes the neurotics that impose it seem sane.

Characteristically, around racial matters, white students these days are subdued, self-deprecating, docile, rote, careful, apprehensive—like, well, abuse victims. I was teaching in schools and universities as far back as the 1960s. I don't recall white students being racially beaten down, domesticated, softened, and subordinated in prior years. And it is not just white students that are like this. A lot of white people—old as well as young--have this persona.

So that I might look into it and learn about it, I asked myself, where is the phenomenon of abuse surfaced and explored? The answer: in the realm of personal relationships; husbands and wives and so forth. It's labeled emotional abuse. I've looked into the literature on emotional abuse in personal relationships some—how it goes on, its impact on its victims, how people who are subjected to it can best deal with it—to see if it sheds light on race relations in our time, particularly how blacks are treating whites and how whites are responding to that treatment.⁶

From my investigations of the writing about emotional abuse in personal relationships, I've come up with the following twenty signs that you are being emotionally abused. The basic idea undergirding this list is that there is a story about you that sets up, justifies, someone's treating you in these ways. I can't say the exact number of these twenty that has to be there for it to qualify as abuse, and I didn't weigh these indicators, give some more importance than others. The best I can offer is that if some, all, of this list—you decide—rings a bell for you, you might well be getting emotionally abused. Of course, be thinking about race relations as you go through the list. I've used "he" in all of these, but it could just as well be "she" or "they."

1. He constantly points out your mistakes, shortcomings, and flaws, to the point that essentially you are defined by what he says are your failings.
2. His put-downs of you rein down in a harsh, cutting, disdainful manner; he lives in an attack mode toward you.
3. Negative critiques most certainly don't go the other way; don't even think about noting any of his limitations.
4. He ignores or trivializes your strengths and accomplishments.
5. Your interests, involvements, goals, hopes, and dreams are immaterial, unimportant; but on the other hand, his most certainly are crucially important, compelling.
6. You are defined by your relationship to him, what he's about, how he is. Your question in life: how's he doing?
7. There's no need for him to send empathy or compassion your way. You understand and care about him; he doesn't understand and care about you.
8. He avoids taking responsibility for the state of his being and the quality of his life. He's a victim of circumstances.
9. If it can be said he has any faults or inadequacies, or is doing anything improper, a big part of that, if not all of it, is your doing. You are the cause of his problems.
10. He is always right and you are always wrong. Reality and external standards of morality have nothing to do with anything, so don't try to explain anything, point out anything, or reason with him. What's true and right is what he says it is, period.

11. He does the talking, and with regularity, the yelling and accusing, and you do the listening. That is, when he is not giving you the cold shoulder, avoiding you, snubbing you, rejecting you.

12. Your opinions, ideas, suggestions, requests, count for nothing. Keep them to yourself. Best, suppress them. If you speak up about anything, he'll shut you up and make you pay.

13. He accuses you of things and blames you for things that aren't true about you. Yet, because he said it, they are true about you; you've come to believe that.

14. You live with constant conflict or threat of conflict. Every so often, he goes off, including violently. If you object to anything he does, or try to stand up for yourself, his abuse escalates. So for you it comes down to the choice between two unappealing options: either put up with what you're getting or, if you object to it, getting what's even worse.

15. At any moment, he might hurt you. At any moment, he might take retribution against a real or imagined transgression on your part, however slight it may be. And whatever he does, you'll deserve it.

16. You are nervous, apprehensive, fearful, intimidated, around him. You walk on eggshells trying to keep the peace and avoid getting hurt.

17. He disregards your boundaries. You have no right to privacy, no right to your own space; he's right there in your face, in your consciousness, in your life, 24/7. You are trapped; there is no escape from him.

18. He isolates you. You are alone. You have no business being with like-minded, supportive people. You are connected to nothing other than him. There is no one to help you or protect you.

19. You find yourself ignoring your own welfare in deference to tending to his wants and needs.

20. Your wellbeing and happiness are your business, not his. In fact, bad as you are, you deserve diminishment and distress, and he's not above contributing to making that happen.

Emotional abuse is a form of brainwashing or conditioning. It controls and subjugates its victims. It hurts them, inflicts mental anguish and, at times, physical pain. It diminishes them. It erodes their positive sense of self and personal value. It makes them feel shame and guilt, that there is something wrong with them; they're bad. It leads them to think that their interests and needs don't matter. They feel inferior to their abuser. They become benign, deferential, servile, obedient, cut off, ensnared.

Why would someone abuse others? Because it has payoffs:

- You get attention. The relationship is about you, your concerns, your interests and needs, what you are doing. You're the action. The light shines on you. The abused person turns from her life and attends to you. That feels good.
- You get power. You get to call the shots. The abused does your bidding, serves your interests and needs. That feels good.
- You get to be one up on someone. Objectively, the abused was superior to you (and, deep down, you know if you weren't standing on her neck, she'd still be that). But now she is your inferior. She bows down to you. You feel positive about yourself now, or

anyway better than you did before; or at least your inadequacies are masked. That feels good.

- You get to hurt someone, take revenge against her. She cringes and cowers before you. That feels good.

What can a victim of abuse do about it? This is what I discern from the literature on emotional abuse:

- Recognize it is happening. Realize what it is costing you. Commit to rebuilding your self-esteem, regaining power over your life, and attending to your own wellbeing.

- Expel the negative concept of who you are that's been laid on you. Quit buying the story about you. Stop blaming yourself for things you personally didn't do. Start acknowledging the good things about yourself (and, with race as the referent, about your people: such as what whites have accomplished historically in the fields of architecture, philosophy, physics, math, chemistry, medicine, biology, the arts, and technology). Reject the idea that you deserve to be put down, punished, get to the back of the line, or suck up to and serve someone who resents and despises you and interjects himself into your life.

- Realize that abuse is not about rationality, reality, and accepted tenets of morality. Don't try to argue, beseech, or explain. Long talks aren't going to do it. He may say he wants a conversation, but he won't engage in one. Give up hope that the relationship with him is ever going to work out. The abuser is going to keep doing it to you as long as he receives the benefits from it.

- Set personal boundaries. Announce to him (and to yourself) that you've had enough of it. That's terse, brief, it's not a speech; no elaborations, no discussions. More, it is your personal bearing, a foundation from which you conduct your life. Perhaps you don't

say anything; you just start doing it and let him figure out what's going on. To the extent you can, stop playing your part in the demeaning and self-destructive "movie" you've been in. Wipe the obsequious smile off your face, cut the self-deprecation and deference, and discontinue the servant's work for him you've been doing. Disengage, back off.

- Break the isolation, the atomization. Seek out support, connect with others; in person, online, however, wherever. Understanding and support are out there even if right now you don't think they are.

- Take care of your personal integrity and safety. You aren't getting admonished, yelled at, assaulted, raped, none of that, zero. Your being is inviolate. Whatever you have to do to get that done, do it.

- Develop an exit plan. You aren't going to be around anything or anybody that brings you down, exploits you, hurts you. Out.

At this time, is there abuse going on against white people by blacks and those who handle or abet them, whichever applies? I'm saying yes, there is. For my money, Martin Luther King, and even militant black leaders like Malcolm X and Stokely Carmichael, in the 1960s were not abusive of white people, but the current diversity programs in schools and colleges are abusive. Black Lives Matter? Abusers. President Obama? Sophisticated, subtle, but he's been abusive toward whites. The outlook and manner of many whites, young people especially? Characteristic of abuse victims. The answer to the current state of black-white race relations for white people? Exit.

Am I overstating the case? I could very well be doing that. Your call about that. Even if I am making too much of it, however, is emotional abuse a lens to employ in attempts to make

sense of what's going on with race in our time? Here I feel more assured: yes, I really believe it is.

Endnotes

1. Robert S. Griffin, "Creating a White Future," *The Occidental Observer*, June 13, 2016.
2. Robert S. Griffin, "Epistemology Matters: Reflections Prompted by a Death in Missouri." It is a 2014 article in the writings section of my website, www.robertsgriffin.com.
3. For a transcript of President Obama's remarks following the Ferguson grand jury decision, see <https://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2014/11/24/president-obama-delivers-statement-ferguson-grand-jurys-decision>
4. "Epistemology Matters," op. cit.
5. Heather Mac Donald, *The War on Cops: How the New Attack on Law and Order Makes Everyone Less Safe* (Encounter Books, 2016).
6. A note on method: My investigations into emotional abuse involved reading books on the topic and doing Google searches and then trying to pull it together to address the three topics I deal with in the article: signs of emotional abuse; effects of emotional abuse; and dealing with emotional abuse. Two of the books: Gregory Jantz and Ann McMurray, *Healing the Scars of Emotional Abuse* (Revell, 2009). Beverly Engel, *The Emotionally Abused Woman: Overcoming Destructive Patterns and Reclaiming Yourself* (Fawcett, 1992). The Google searches: "research on emotional abuse"; "emotional abuse"; "signs of emotional abuse"; "effects of emotional abuse"; and "dealing with emotional abuse." The backdrop for this concern goes all the way back to my study and personal involvement in the 1970s with what was called then the human potential movement, something that has continued to the present day. My doctoral dissertation in 1973 was in this area. This perspective, this movement, these theorists and practitioners, focused on the process individuals go through to achieve their full possibilities as unique human beings. My connection to it, my respect for it, accounts for my tendency to focus on the individual, personal dimensions of public concerns, in this case race relations. The human potential movement has been denigrated and dropped down the intellectual memory hole by those who, in our time, shape and control the public discourse, and I believe for good reason. This movement supports personal autonomy and self-determination, and that gets in the way of the efforts of those who want

suggestible, malleable, deferring people who will fit into and serve the kind of society and culture, and world, they are bent on bringing about. For a summary of my association with the human potential movement, as well as a guide to begin exploring its elements, see the August, 2011 thought in my web site, www.robertsgriffin.com, entitled “On est and the Human Potential Movement.”

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