

What's to be Learned from Jon Gruden Getting Kicked Out of the Game

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At this writing in mid-October, 2021, Jon Gruden, the coach of the National Football League's Los Vegas Raiders, has been forced to resign from his coaching position and undoubtedly has been cancelled for life after it was found he used offensive language in personal emails to former Washington Football Team president Bruce Allen back in 2011. While the word is that there were other objectionable emails, the examples cited in media reports have been from the Allen emails: Gruden referred disparagingly to the capability ("dumberiss") and lips ("size of michellin tires") of the black president of the players union; called the league commissioner a "faggot" and "clueless anti-football pussy"; criticized efforts to encourage teams to draft "queers"; and panned the hiring of woman game officials.

Back in 2008, I wrote an article called "When They Attack" offering advice to White racial advocates and activists who come under fire, as they invariably will if their identities become known.¹ Race hasn't surfaced in the Gruden matter, at least explicitly, but it informs what went down in his case. Look at the picture of Gruden at the top of this article. Is he white enough for you? If you don't follow sports, take my word for it, nobody epitomized (he's past tense now) the rough-tough, no bullshit, anti-white wine, alpha male more than Jon Gruden. If you were a resentful black, feminist, or gay, or a loyal NPR listener, wouldn't you like to punch Gruden right in the nose?

This writing uses the Gruden incident as the occasion to take another run at the "when they attack" topic. It seems worth the effort in a time when the woke crusaders are doing Joseph Stalin,

Chairman Mao, and the East German Stasi proud. Two topics here: what the Gruden episode says about the game—the current cultural/political reality—today’s zealots have managed to put on the field; and the big lesson to be learned from that.

The Game on the Field

The generalization: the rules are stacked against you.

There is a tough participation requirement. You can’t play in the game if someone—including and especially someone who would take delight if you fell into a manhole—can make the case that you are a racist, sexist, or homophobe. If you are declared one of those, you get spit on and tossed.

There’s no difference between talk and action. Gruden said some bad words. But what has he actually done against blacks, gays, and women? He mentored Mike Tomlin, the current black Pittsburgh Steelers head coach. I’ve not heard anything about him mistreating the current Raiders gay player, Carl Nassib. What’s he done to women? I’d like to see a list of his discriminatory, hurtful actions, but then again, I’m not in charge of this game.

Subjectivity doesn’t compute. When Gruden used the terms “faggot” and “pussy,” he didn’t mean the same thing by them as they mean to Pete Buttigieg. His “dumberiss” and “michellin tires” locker room talk about black union leader Smith didn’t mean the same thing as it would have if the women on “The View” had said it. When he came down on pressuring owners to draft “queers” and hire woman referees and umpires, he was—yes indelicately, this is a hard-assed football coach, not Justin Bieber—affirming the merit system in sports. But that doesn’t count for anything in this game.

No distinction between public and private expression. Gruden was talking to a friend (Allen) in what he assumed was confidence. At what point in America did we start snooping into people’s personal communications? That isn’t up for consideration in this game.

It doesn't matter when a violation occurred. Gruden's offenses were a decade ago. The world was different a decade ago, yet Gruden's transgressions are treated as if they happened last Tuesday.

Denials don't fly. Gruden said he isn't a racist. "I don't have a racist bone in my body. I have proven that my entire life." Is it within the realm of possibility that he isn't lying? In this game, no.

Apologies don't cut it. The first words out of Gruden's mouth were, "I'm sorry." Always a losing strategy. In this game, saying you are sorry is an admission of guilt and justifies beating you with a stick.

Don't look for supporters. Before he quickly retracted it, Tony Dungy—an ex-player and coach and current commentator on televised games and, interestingly enough, black—said Gruden is a good person and deserves another chance.

We heard Jon Gruden say he addressed this. He gave his side of it. He said that it wasn't racial, that he was making a comment about DeMaurice Smith [the players union president], and he basically attacked his character. I will accept that and just say that it was an immature way to do it. It wasn't the right way to do it. But it was ten years ago. And I'm not going to chalk everything up to racism. I think we accept his apology, move forward, and move on with his team.²

Tony quickly realized that if he didn't back off, black or not, he'll get a taste of what Gruden got. He wouldn't be kicked out of the game altogether, but he'd be relegated to the end of the bench.

Piling on is permissible. People are coming out of the woodwork to kick Gruden when he is down: for his grating personality, his less than stellar game commentary when he worked for ESPN, for a slight he committed against somebody at some time or another, for looking like Chucky from the movies—anything, everything. It's as if he's never done a good thing in his life. A player he coached twenty years ago: "Man, this dude is a fraud. Y'all don't seem to

understand he's selling you on something and you're buying it. He's been doing that for years. Talking behind people's backs, that was one of his traits in Tampa."³

Invariant consequences. Gruden was fired from his job and cancelled for life. Does that punishment fit this crime? Might a reprimand, fine, suspension, or even forgiveness be in order in this instance? Nah.

The Lesson to be Learned

The big lesson to be learned from the Gruden episode: cover your backside.

I have a seventeen-year-old daughter who lives with her mother in another state from where I live. This week, I got a notice from the administration of her high school.

Our school is participating in the [state] Healthy Youth Survey during fall 2021. The Healthy Youth Survey includes questions related to physical activity and diet, unintentional and intentional injury, substance use, sexual behaviors, abuse, risk and protective factors, and access to school-based services. Participation in the survey is voluntary and the students' answers are anonymous.

In an email, I advised her against completing the survey.

Never trust anything to be remain private. There are too many examples of where such trust was misplaced. This rule also applies to sharing any intimacy verbally. Someone will say something like, "It's OK, you can tell me" and then share it with others. I've seen it happen.

When you are sitting alone in your room with your phone or laptop texting a friend or posting something on Instagram, you feel private. You aren't. You are communicating with the world. In this time of electronic communication and social media, especially within the current "woke" orthodoxy, never express anything you wouldn't be happy to have as a headline in the newspaper. That means in a text,

email, Tweet, Zoom call, on Facebook or Instagram, a TikTok post or video, anything. This also applies to anything you write in any context, including in school papers. This week, a prominent National Football League coach was forced to resign for some language people found objectionable in emails he assumed were private. When I was working at the university, I learned it had my emails going back fifteen years. Fortunately, I've followed the advice I'm giving you here.

My advice to you reading this is to think long and hard before making your identity known to the Big Brothers, inquisitors, and church ladies (remember [Dana Carvey](#)?) who are around in droves these years. I've personally gone public with my racial ideas, but I'm not advising others to follow my example. For one thing, I was a tenured full professor before I made my views known and as a practical matter it was highly unlikely that I would wind up out on the street. Plus, for whatever reason, I have less need than most others for social approval and inclusion. But that's not to say I didn't pay heavy dues for coming down on the side of white people. I'm reminded of the lyrics from the song, "The Boxer":

**In the clearing stands a boxer
And a fighter by his trade
And he carries the reminders
Of ev'ry glove that laid him down**

Many of the writers for this publication [The Occidental Observer] do so anonymously, and that's absolutely fine with me. I would caution my daughter against, say, attending a Charlottesville-type rally. If I wouldn't tell my daughter to do it, I'm not going to tell your daughter—or you—to do it. Some White racial advocates—who keep themselves safe behind false identities—are telling college students to start right-wing and white racial organizations on campus. In today's university, that is setting yourself up for demonization and pariah status and shutting down your graduate school and job prospects. That isn't right, but that is what *is*, and we all have to live in reality, the game that's on the

field. While laudable, even courageous, standing up for white people where people can see you is a very dangerous undertaking. Check out the fates of the visible alt-right spokesmen not so long ago. The metaphor for waging the cultural and racial battle that makes the most sense to me in today's reality isn't storming the beaches of Normandy, it's guerrilla warfare.

Endnotes

1. Robert S. Griffin, "When They Attack," 4pp, 2008. In the writings section of my web site. <http://www.robertsgriffin.com>
2. "Tony Dungy Getting Criticized for What He Said About Jon Gruden, *The Spun by Sports Illustrated*.
<https://thespun.com/more/top-stories/tony-dungy-getting-criticized-jon-gruden>
3. *First Take on Twitter*: [.@keyshawn](https://twitter.com/firsttake/status/1447952352372273156).
<https://twitter.com/firsttake/status/1447952352372273156>