



**The Racism Obsession**

**Guest: Will Grigg**

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*Will Grigg blogs at [libertyinourtime.blogspot.com](http://libertyinourtime.blogspot.com).*

**WOODS:** Before we get into those specific things that you've been blogging about lately, I do want to talk about your post that was up on the Lew Rockwell blog not too long ago about Donald Sterling. Now, warning, everybody. Warning. This may be controversial. This may soil your pristine ears to hear this, but we're going to hear it anyway. Will is a good guy—a sound, sensible guy—and I always appreciate his insight. What did you write there about? Everybody knows who Donald Sterling is—the owner of the L.A. Clippers—I assume.

**GRIGG:** Yeah, I think it's mandatory for people to know who he is.

**WOODS:** I think it is mandatory. If you don't know who he is, I think that's racist.

**GRIGG:** Yes, and it's practically required, of course, to be ritually denouncing him. That's something that we've been ordered to do. What I said about Mr. Sterling is that whatever you think about the thoughts that are percolating within his otherwise uncluttered head, here's somebody who actually provided a very lucrative employment program, non-coercive employment program for people who otherwise might have been unemployable. Here's somebody who, on the basis of what's been ventilated in public, doesn't particularly like black people but he employed a great number of them and made more than a few of them millionaires. And this is the sort of thing that will happen through the free market because there is a demand for professional basketball players, professional basketball franchise.

**WOODS:** And let me interrupt and point out that Walter Williams made exactly this point the other day.

**GRIGG:** Exactly.

**WOODS:** That we are dealing here with a guy who from what I can see is a moral pig, the way he leads his life all around, but regardless—

**GRIGG:** He's an adulterer to begin with. It's something that I find contemptible.

**WOODS:** Exactly. So regardless of what a moral pig he is, the point is that we are, after all, dealing with what we sometimes on the Internet call a First World problem—the guy paying me a million dollars a year doesn't really like me. Well, you know, I could learn to live with that! That's sort of the Walter Williams attitude, and by the way, people who are hypersensitive about issues like this never know what to do with Walter Williams; you know, the libertarians who are hypersensitive about anything having to do with race. If you're not concerned about race, you're a racist. If you think racism is maybe overblown, you're a racist. No matter what you do there's no way to really be on their good side in terms of race. But yet, Walter says things that you and I would say and get denounced for. We're insensitive, and we don't appreciate the problems. But they don't know what to do with Walter Williams. They can't criticize him because he's a black man, of course. So he has black privilege. He's exempt from criticism. They don't know how to deal with that, and yet he's saying exactly the same things that terrible, insensitive people are saying. I hope we get through this thought-control phase quickly, because it really is wearisome.

**GRIGG:** I do as well.

**WOODS:** The average American is so sick of it. And it's so funny—and I'm sorry to keep trespassing on your time in answering the question—but the average American is so tired of having his every move and his every thought questioned and examined and put under a microscope because he might inadvertently hate somebody when obviously he doesn't. The libertarians who are pushing this are the same ones who say, "You terrible people"—meaning people like me, a normal person—"You terrible people. You are keeping people out of the movement." Now, first of all: not to brag, but I would say I have brought more people into the movement than all my critics put together, but that's neither here nor there. I would say *they* are keeping people out of the movement because people will take a look at us and say, well, apparently to be a libertarian you have to be a p.c. hysteric who is concerned about issues that may exist, may not exist, may be figments of your imagination. They are the ones who are keeping people out because these people are tired of this. Because I am against Obama, I am a racist according to *Daily Kos*, according to all these mainstream, left-wing sites. They are sick of it. All right, now, I am sorry. I am sorry. I will not interrupt you again, Will. You carry on.

**GRIGG:** I think part of the frustration you're expressing comes from the double binds you are describing, where we don't know what attitudes we're supposed to be displaying at any given time. There's a really good example of that, which has been churned to the surface by that reliable barometer of absurdity called *Salon*, that has to do with the recasting of the very lovely Zoe Saldana in the Mia Farrow role in the remake of *Rosemary's Baby*. She is the woman who incubates the anti-Christ according to that story, and so the author, the contributor to *Salon*, was trying to decide if it's racist to recast a role that had been played by a white woman, or if it's racist to object to the recasting because that's something that's happened on a couple of occasions where black people have been cast in roles that have been played by white

performers, or if it's racist not to object to the recasting because after all, this is not a complimentary role, and you've got a very popular and successful, young, black actress, although she doesn't really identify herself necessarily as black. Like myself, she is difficult to categorize because she's Latina, but she has African ancestry. In my case, I have been mistaken for black and for Arab, and for several varieties of Near Eastern or Middle Eastern ethnicities of various kinds. I have been mistaken for both Greek and Turk, and that becomes interesting when we're talking about Cyprus. I am a large, brown guy, and as far as I am concerned it's a matter of supreme indifference what my melanin content might be, because it's a question of what people do in terms of individual dignity and property rights.

Now, when I am talking about dignity, I am talking about the understanding that every individual is vested with exactly the same property rights as every other individual, and secondary characteristics don't really matter. It's a question of whether you are engaging in conduct that Thomas Jefferson described as picking pockets or breaking legs. That's where we have to be drawing the line here in terms of the non-aggression principle whether you are talking about private behavior or public behavior, and anything other than that, of course, ends up serving this narrative in which all politics is a matter of identity. We hear a lot about so-called Christian identity or various kinds of white pride identity. These, of course, are all ritually execrated by the custodians of acceptable opinion, but for the left, all politics is identity politics. It's all about checking your privilege and determining what are these arbitrarily defined groups you belong in in order to decide where the relationship of oppression exists. As the great apostle of collectivism, Lenin, pointed out, the fundamental question of politics is who does what to whom. It's whether you are a who or a whom in that question, and the what that is being done is aggressive violence. We assume that the what, if we're Leninist, and of course, I am not, but if I were a Leninist, I would assume that aggressive violence is a privilege that belongs to somebody, and if my privilege dictates that I get to be the who, then I get to inflict aggressive violence either in my own person or through the instrumentality of the state against the whom. And that's what's being said when people are being told on college campuses and elsewhere to check your privilege. In other words, check the status that you have been assigned to. Make sure that you're part of the right collective.

Now, Dr. Williams, like myself, of course, doesn't have any privilege to check according to this perspective on how society should be organized, but like myself, Dr. Williams believes that the most important question is what are property rights? Are you doing aggressive violence to another individual's property? The most important property begins with the physical person of that individual. What's happening now is that the American public has been catechized to believe that the matter of identity is all-important, and the question of property rights is being completely ignored, and it's not just with respect to race.

Over the last few days there's been a great deal of discussion regarding Michael Sam, who is the first openly gay athlete to be drafted by the NFL. And suddenly we're being told that the reaction to this announcement and to his behavior upon receiving the news that had he had

been drafted into the NFL—that's something that people should be checking. How did you react to this? Did you utter the expected bromides and pieties? Did you display the prescribed attitude of joyful exultation of this great step forward in our progress as a culture? Or perhaps were you displaying reluctance that might suggest that you're a tacit homophobe? Or did you say something on Twitter that might be described as less than laudatory? These are the sorts of things that people are being told are the most important of all imaginable social concerns. We've got a government that's completely destroyed our economy. That's committing huge acts of routine pilferage of the value of what we save and earn through inflation. You've got every single day in this country hundreds of SWAT raids being carried against innocent people, many of them people of color. You've got a regime under the leadership of the first African-American president that is daily killing people of color overseas for no reason that could withstand moral scrutiny and incarcerating people of color for reasons that don't pass muster here domestically as well. These things are of no importance because according to the left, cops and drones may break our bones, but only harmful words, only hateful words can really injure us.

**WOODS:** You know what's funny about all this—funny in a macabre sense, of course—is that Hillary Clinton is being held up as the obvious person to support in 2016 for all right-thinking people. Certainly, right-thinking Democrats are getting in line behind Hillary Clinton. And yet, when you think about the damage done in the world by the respective people, Donald Sterling, the moral pig, and Hillary Clinton, the world is a far worse place because of Hillary Clinton. It's not even measurable when you think of all the military aggression that she has supported that actually killed people—didn't just make them feel bad about themselves, didn't make them feel like, well, you know, when I am spending my millions, I will have to shed a tear. No, I am talking about people getting their limbs blown off for no good reason. People watching their kids die in their arms for no good reason other than U.S. military ambition. And yet, is she written out of society for that? To the contrary, she is celebrated. We're all looking forward to having the first female president, and yet, a guy who says some things in a private conversation, he's the one to be demonized. How is saying something in a private conversation—how is that worse than mass murder? Could I get an explanation of that?

**GRIGG:** (laughs) One of the things that I wrote about recently was the fact that way back in 2009, just a few months after Mr. Obama was enthroned, he signed into law a military appropriations measure that was supported by the familiar retinue of left-wing watchdog groups that had muted their objections, assuming that they had objections to the ongoing slaughters in Iraq and Afghanistan, in exchange for support for a hate crimes measure that would expand the domestic police activity of the attitudes of American citizens that may or may not pass muster with the p.c. elite. And Chris Hedges, who is somebody whose economics are completely askew but is morally sound in assessing what's going on with the warfare state, talked about the fact that you had this whole menagerie of self-appointed left-wing watchdog groups that were willing to support this combined bill. You have the hate crimes bill attached to a military appropriations measure. That way, that you got the War Party's right-wing faction

behind it, and you got the left-wing tolerance industry supporting it, because they were going to spend hundreds of millions of dollars to beef up enforcement of the hate crimes laws and the scrutiny of attitudes of American citizens domestically. They were willing to make the cynical deal in which it was a measure of moral certainty that there would be innocent people of color to use the *de rigueur* description, being killed for no good reason in Iraq and Afghanistan and elsewhere. They were willing to see these people die in order to expand their power to keep tabs on people domestically they despised because of their attitudes, whether imputed or actual.

Chris Hedges is an honest observer. He's somebody who is very much a man of the left. His economics are very much in the Marxist tradition. But one thing he can't stand is hypocrisy, and what he is saying here is that there's a certain murderous hypocrisy on behalf of, if you will, the watchdogs who don't bark when you're talking about drone strikes that kill brown people overseas, including Abdul al-Awlaki, the son of Anwar al-Awlaki. He's a 16-year-old, U.S. born, native born U.S. citizen who was murdered, the word is adequate, by the Obama administration while he was sitting down to a backyard barbeque in Yemen with a couple of family friends because his family had been designated enemies of the regime. That's the sort of thing that doesn't cause, as far as I can tell, so much as a tremor of remorse or reflection on the part of the SPLC or the ADL or these other groups that go into cadenzas of outrage every time somebody like a Donald Sterling says something impolitic in a private conversation that's publicized by TMZ. There's a really peculiar sort of pharisaism at work there, if you will, or what Mencken referred to as Puritanism. Mencken famously said that a Puritan is the sort of a person who is haunted by the suspicion that somewhere, somebody might be enjoying himself.

There's a certain hyper-puritanical political correctness in our country, in which there are people who are plagued by similar fears that somewhere, somebody might be expressing politically incorrect thoughts about race or gender or sexual orientation or perhaps leaving those thoughts unexpressed. These are people who see nothing at all wrong with tearing windows into other people's souls and telling them to go through these acts of public contrition before an officially designated agent of exoneration like an Oprah Winfrey or an Anderson Cooper or somebody like that, because that's supposedly a salutary experience for the rest of us, that we're supposed to be prostrating ourselves with grief over the inherited guilt of our supposed privilege, assuming, of course, that we belong to those cohorts. But you're right, Tom. This is the sort of thing that is done in a country that's a power in late imperial decline. Where there's an immensely self-satisfied ruling elite of whom Hillary Clinton is repulsively typical. These are people we cannot question about their actions. If somebody asks Hillary Clinton, or a Madeleine Albright, or any of the other representatives of that group, if you ask them about the people they have killed, the children that they have been responsible for killing, that's considered to be a breach of etiquette of an order of magnitude comparable to saying something bad about officially designated victim groups. And for the left I guess it's all about etiquette because the fundamental question has been decided. Aggressive violence is perfectly fine as long as the right people are inflicting it upon the right recipients.

**WOODS:** You know what's also interesting about this whole issue of racism: the other day I had an exchange, brief exchange, with a libertarian professor. I don't want to mention his name. There is way to much drama out there already.

**GRIGG:** Yes, there is.

**WOODS:** But I wanted to know, look, do you think so-and-so should be accused of racism, and the response I got was, well, most people when they hear racism think it means that the person who is the racist hates a particular group, and this person said that's not really, he thinks, the correct way of understanding racism. Now I never got a definition. You almost never get a definition of racism. They like to keep it as undefined as possible so they can have the largest net to catch the greatest number of people involved in it. So he continued. He said, look, I am not even sure I myself, basically an anti-racist crusader, am entirely free of racist assumptions. So in other words, you can inadvertently be a racist despite having spent years uprooting it from yourself. It can still be present.

I thought, it's weird hearing this coming from a libertarian because this fits in so beautifully to a Stalinist regime, the idea that this problem is so deep-seated in you, citizen, that no matter how hard you try to get rid of it, it's still present, and we will have to continue to monitor you forever because no matter how much of a person of good will you are, this original sin still darkens your soul. I was so creeped out I sat there with my jaw to the floor looking at the screen at this person's response.

**GRIGG:** I know exactly what you're talking about, and I think you're right, Tom, that you're describing something here which is almost trans-Stalinist in terms of its invasiveness because we're told that people who have a privilege to check are ineffaceably tainted by that privilege, and that there is nothing that they can do fully to exculpate themselves from this inherited guilt, and this will require an open-ended process of unremitting self-examination. You're constantly on probation. You're never going to be paroled from the state of probation if you happen to be in one of these groups that is among the designated oppressors of society. That's one of the things that makes this charge so uniquely potent and so uniquely profitable for people on the left. The other thing that I thought your correspondent might be hinting at is something I've often said, and I think that this is something that was probably said or written by Joe Sobran, who was an inexhaustible fountain of insights on many issues. He said that, and I am paraphrasing, a hate group is any group of people whom progressives hate. And hatred really is the mobilizing element, if you will, of collectivism of any variety. Obviously, we need not elaborate on the fact that classic racial collectivism of the National Socialist variety is collectivism. That's something that's obvious. But you get the same kind of an attitude here with respect to any collectivist movement, going back once again to Lenin. Lenin is quoted as saying—I am still trying to find the origin for this imputed quote, and I found plenty of quotes that are cognate with it—“We must hate. Hatred is the basis of communism.”

And if you go back and read the collective works of Lenin, collective is perhaps a useful Freudian slip, collected works of Lenin—and heaven help me, I have spent the last couple of days involved in that type of a study—it’s amazing how frequently and how unabashedly he exhorted his followers toward hatred of designated hate targets such as kulaks, and aristocrats, and the wealthy peasants, and so forth. That was a leitmotiv in his writings. And the idea is that you have to have these totems of intolerance you’re perfectly free to hate, in order for the collective to be organized on the basis that some people are oppressed and other people are oppressors. Once you know which category you belong to, you’re entitled to do more or less anything you want to those who are on the receiving end, the receiving end of your just and appropriate hatred. This is something dumbed down and made palatable for what I call, you might call, the Pajama Boy demographic. You probably remember, of course, Pajama Boy, this famous icon from the Get Talking campaign that the Obama Administration tried to kick-start over Obamacare last year. The fellow that was the spectacled man-child in footy pajamas with hot chocolate who was supposed to go back from college, presumably to his family’s home, during the holiday season and drink hot chocolate and start catechizing them about the glories of Obamacare. That really is the sort of cohort we’re talking about right now—that demographic cohort that is promoting this type of attenuated Leninism where it’s perfectly all right to hate the right people and to use whatever violence is necessary in order to get them to submit to the rule, the collective, or to eradicate them if possible. That, of course, entirely depends upon who you are. It’s all a question of identity.

I think a really good example of this is in the question of how the gay marriage debate is shaping up, specifically with respect to the rulings in New Mexico regarding Elaine Huguenin, the photographer who declined a business opportunity, thereby freeing up a business opportunity for another photographer, when she declined to photograph a same-sex wedding or commitment ceremony. It wasn’t called a wedding—a number of years ago—almost 10 years ago. She exercised exactly the same property right that a hairdresser by the name of Antonio Darden exercised when he declined to keep the governor of New Mexico as a client because she opposes same-sex marriage. They did exactly the same thing, in other words. Each of them refused a customer. Each of them forewent an economic opportunity, freeing up an opportunity for somebody else who doesn’t have similar scruples. But Elaine Huguenin was prosecuted and fined and forced through her fines to underwrite, among other things, the commitment ceremony of the customers she declines. And Antonio Darden was celebrated in the media, and that’s because one was designated an oppressor, Elaine Huguenin, a white, Christian, heterosexual wife and business owner, and the other was designated one of the “who,” somebody who is part of this exalted cohort of presumed victims. That’s really a good example of how this Leninist template has been imposed on our society. It has nothing to do with economics once again. It’s all a matter of collectivism. Which collective do you belong to? Which part of this equation are you plugged into? And that, as you point out, Tom, has become ubiquitous. And people who are ordinary, non-political people who are trying to maintain their lives and their homes and stay ahead of or above the water line of this horrible economy are

wholeheartedly weary of it. But I don't think that this is going to relent until perhaps we see an undisguised collapse of our economy, and we're no longer in the First World, so we don't have to deal with First World problems of this kind.

**WOODS:** Yeah, yeah, that's exactly right. Well, believe it or not, Will, we're at the end of our time. So we'll have you back to talk about things that are—I would like to say more in your wheelhouse, but it's hard to think that you could be better at something else than you were in covering this issue today.

**GRIGG:** Thank you, very kind.

**WOODS:** But I think we've endured this for so many years. I endured it in college—the whole victimhood and oppression thing. I feel stupid even having to point this out; I feel like I am insulting the intelligence of my listeners even to point this out, but that's not to say it's a good thing to be mean to people who are different from you. Well, duh.

Shouldn't the human race be given the benefit of the doubt, and shouldn't it be assumed that we all agree on that? Anytime I talk about political decentralization I have to tell everybody, oh, by the way, I am against slavery. You know what? I don't say that because I assume any normal person of good will knows that in 2014 the number of people who support slavery is vanishingly small. So assume I don't belong to that, and that there could be a reason other than support for slavery for wanting a political system in which the arrangement is different from one city ruling over 310 million people. There could be considerations other than pro-slavery behind that. But of course, obviously you and I are decent human beings—most people, I think, are decent human beings in their actual conduct and how they treat other people, but I will tell you: I, like you, have been mistaken for different groups. My origins are practically Middle Eastern, basically. Sometimes, especially when I don't shave, I look like the guy who is going to hijack the plane. And the thing is, I am not upset at people who look at me and think that way. I am upset at people who hijack planes and then ruin it for the rest of us. I don't blame other people. It's not their fault, right? That's no big deal.

**GRIGG:** But Tom, one of the things I keep telling people is that there are basically two ways we can organize society. One is based on the Golden Rule, which is do unto others as you would be done to, and the other is Lenin's maxim of who does what to whom. That's the rule of the iron fist. You have to choose either the Golden Rule or the iron fist. If you're choosing to follow the Golden Rule as we're given the grace and understanding to apply it in our lives, that's the biggest question we can answer, and all these other secondary and tertiary questions will fall into place. If you follow the Golden Rule, you're not going to treat somebody as less than human because he or she differs from you. And unfortunately, what's happening is that the iron fist is the maxim on the basis of which these people want to organize society. That, of course, results in all kinds of complications of etiquette and manners and decisions as to who is going to be assigned to what cohort here, so it's either the Golden Rule or the iron fist. I know which side I have chosen.

**WOODS:** Good man. Will, how do people follow you online?

**GRIGG:** FreedomInOurTime.blogspot.com is my chief outlet, the Pro Libertate blog—FreedomInOurTime.blogspot.com, and also I write quite a bit for LewRockwell.com.

**WOODS:** All right, everybody, keep your eye out for both of those. Definitely follow Will. You're going to be following stories you won't hear about anywhere else, with analysis that you know you can always trust.