

August 26, 2020

Dear Erika,

Here is the letter I promised in our recent phone conversation in which you sought my support for your candidacy as State Representative. I commend your interest in public service and encourage your continued involvement in public affairs even should you not gain selection in the primary.

I've carefully read your campaign materials and find your ideals sound. As it happens I have for six decades professionally studied your areas of concern, with conclusions which I can share with you as to how I evaluate people and programs aiming to achieve these ideals.

Your letter states "the only way . . . is through government." Many government programs (in some of which I was involved) have begun with high ideals but led to horrendous consequences since their proponents were ignorant of the processes involved and of how to achieve durable change. (Think Vietnam War and AFDC.) I see in you a dedicated and patriotic person with excellent goals but at risk of doing a lot of damage to our country. Things may be bad but they can always worsen (as I have seen in my lifetime and as my children will see in theirs).

I should begin by telling you that I lived most of my life abroad in Buddhist countries, heavily involved in social science research, teaching and writing and as a public official and consultant in economics and national security policy.

My criterion for evaluating a candidate is how well the candidate understands, and can have a substantive discussion of, three things in regard to each issue in the candidate's platform:

The structure of the issue, that is to say the chain of relationships between various factors leading to the hypothetically unsatisfactory state of affairs. That includes an inventory of all the factors, how chained together logically and numerically, and the metrics by which to measure the desired change. This is the fundament.

The acceptable values for the desired outcomes. Nothing lacking measurement can be managed.

The scientifically grounded measures by which the structure (first above) will be altered to produce different results (second above).

This is highly abstract. Let's take some specific examples from the present day in the platform you posted to me.

Let's start with BLM. There is a fatal difficulty in your handling of "systemic bias" or "structural racism" which in current framing is deprecated as "racial bias" or "prejudice." This anti-scientific framing is why we have hardly moved the needle on racial disparities in the more than half century since the Civil Rights Act of 1964. If you don't understand the structure of the problem, you cannot develop responsive measures, and you can't get results.

What is presented in shallow newspaper stories and TV talk shows as "systemic racism" (and as stated in your campaign letter) is one manifestation of in-group favoritism (look it up on Wikipedia--it's this issue's fundament), a deeply comforting set of universal behaviors highly adaptive to survival, resulting from thousands and thousands of generations of human evolution. Sometimes the favoritism is triggered by discernible stigmata like skin color, speech, religious practice or dress; sometimes by nothing at all (think Bloods vs. Crips or "mean girls"--view the

film of that name). Prejudice is not unique to whiteness. People of all skin shades equally practice in-group favoritism--see the film *Mississippi Masala*. I, as a white for decades in societies peopled by those with variously yellow-toned skins, experienced the same thing.

To say something worth hearing about disparate living experiences in the United States among people of differing skin pigmentation, one must understand the science which explains how the contingent experience of "structural racism" grows out of innate and ineluctable in-group favoritism, *which is adaptive to survival and is not going away*.

The historical experience of the Hebrews exemplifies the adaptive value of in-group favoritism. The dietary and other rules laid down in the Book of Deuteronomy, and Talmudic teaching forbidding exogamy, are the principal factors in their survival for so many millenia. The Zoroastrians, another group forbidding exogamy, have survived even longer than the Hebrews. Everyone else from their founding epochs is gone.

Only by recognizing this can one talk sense about measures to improve the life experience of those subject to discrimination. *And the measures have to be based on scientific knowledge of how to change behavior*. Since it can't be eliminated, how much favoritism is permissible? What kinds are permissible and what not? Since nothing is free, what are we willing to sacrifice for this change? One must be explicit to gain confidence in one's proposals. Otherwise it's just pandering to emotions.

You may think "merit is the answer" but that's facile. A criterion of merit has its own disagreeable consequences. One has to have read Michael Young's *The Rise of the Meritocracy* to legitimately discourse on this issue. Merit-based discrimination is just as oppressive as one based on skin color or national origin or something else. (After reading Young's seminal work read two recent books on this topic: Lani Guinier's *The Tyranny of the Meritocracy* and Michael Sandel's *The Tyranny of Merit*.)

One thing science tells us is that screaming and calling those who think differently vile names (like "racist") are not helpful. Every sensible parent knows this. That's the reason for 50 years of failure.

Any high school graduate can understand the structure of this issue and the science behind it, because we all share the same human nature. And that is just as true for the following issues.

Let us take another issue important to you: **enhancing economic resources** devoted to achieving your ideal visions. Let us leave aside for a moment whether specific programs are effective, for example education below. Assigning resources to a program must simultaneously identify their origin. All resources must come from someone; that's the fundament here. Spending money is not the same as creating actual resources. A stance toward spending of "We have to do this now; we'll figure out where to get the money later" is putting spending on a credit card and sending the bill to my daughters. It is deeply unethical. Worse: it is aggravating the coming financial crisis. Read the paper I'm enclosing, "Feather Beds and Hockey Sticks," archived as <<http://www.jeffreyrace.com/nugget/feather.pdf>>. Anyone advocating spending without showing how it comports with the facts reported there lacks competency to speak on public finance.

Education: International comparisons show an American educational system in relative decline. My three daughters grew up and were educated abroad through high school. They all tell me the same thing: it's so easy for them in America because standards here are so low. As an exchange student for a year in Pennsylvania, my middle daughter (whose first language was not English) was top among the 32 students in her American high school English class. No one is competent to speak on education who cannot explain how his proposals comport with the profound lessons in the near-documentary film *Stand and Deliver*--the most prominent being that

money is not an obstacle to vastly improved educational achievement right now. The principles and practices to produce an educated person and an educated populace are well known and eminently doable. Those responsible here choose not to do them but to do something else.

"Immigration reform because none of our neighbors should live in fear" (from your campaign letter): I lived most of my life abroad, in highly corrupt countries where "the rule of law" is not as we understand it but rather "The strong eat the weak." You never lived that so you can have no idea how precious is the rule of law; it's what made America possible. Remember, America is not a place; it's an idea. No goal, not even compassion, justifies sacrificing the rule of law. Advocating that one can pick and choose the laws to obey is the beginning of the end for our country. The only ethical answer to difficult contemporary issues like immigration is punctilious observance and enforcement of the law combined with mercy where deserved until reform of immigration law occurs.

Suspending enforcement of any kind (drugs, theft, illegal presence in the United States) has practical consequences. As usual California is ahead and you can see it there: undocumented shoppers plunder stores, pocket calculator in hand, to stay within the limit of what they can steal without consequence (up to 999 dollars).

The fundament here is: actions must have consequences. Law-breakers should *indeed* live in terror of the law.

Economic redistribution: reading Gerhard Lenski's *Power and Privilege* could really help you.

Human hierarchy emerged as soon as technology and climate permitted small bands to accumulate an economic surplus (around ten thousand years ago, later in many places, and still hardly emergent in some very primitive communities). The properties and behavior of this emergent structure are the fundament of any discussion of economic policy, especially redistributive. It first manifests as patriarchy, then evolves into leadership of a community and finally appears as the complex ruling structure of the contemporary nation-state.

Emerging with the appearance of economic surplus, hierarchy regulates its distribution, among the many other of its social consequences. This is inevitable and ineluctable, because like in-group favoritism it is *adaptive to survival*. All of humankind, rich and poor, including you and me, displays this behavior: "He has it and I want it."

In earlier stages surplus is transferred by brute violence or by threats, diminishing as more complex state mechanisms enable the creation of monopolies and preferential credit access. The present stage adds subsidies, tax and trade policy and modulation of the intricacies of markets and technology.

As with the issues previously mentioned, if one wants to speak credibly one must understand the fundament, specify the metrics (wealth, income, how much, of what, for whom to be changed) and base recommendations on grounded science with full elaboration of their first-, second- and third-order consequences. Without serious science supporting candidates' proposals, elections become an "advance auction sale of stolen goods" in Mencken's perspicacious words.

Use of terms like 'elite' or 'greedy' conveys the speaker's lack of scientific comprehension and his poor fit to be entrusted with making policy recommendations. It's pandering to primordial impulses. Complaining about an unequal economic distribution supposedly resulting from the corruption of the state is anti-scientific. That's what states do in their very nature--it's not an aberration. A society in which outcomes would be forced to converge between persons (in power, status markers, income and wealth) could not long survive. How much convergence

is too much? How little? On what scales? What are the trade-offs? Modest change can happen but one must start with the fundament and work with science, not slogans.

Some concluding points:

"The only way . . . is through government" is dangerously simplistic. Government is the answer to some things, while superior solutions exist for others. Some problems have no solution; for them one must rethink the problem or develop alternative ways to adjust to the inevitable.

America is a democracy; we now have the government we deserve. If large segments of the population are ignorant (even among college graduates, 50% are functionally illiterate), never studied history or civics, and don't believe in science, then sooner or later people like Donald Trump will rule. Equally dangerous people in the other party preceded him, and produced him, unrestrained by a virtuous public.

If you live in a bubble without a clue to what's happening, and so use the force of the state to get ahead of the science on what change people are comfortable with, you get the backlash which gave you Donald Trump. I suggest you read

<<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/10/business/media/news-outlets-wonder-where-the-predictions-went-wrong.html>>

a candid analysis by the New York *Times*' top political reporter, on the front page the day after the announcement of Trump's election, of how bubble-dwellers like us had and still have no idea how this country works, and so made and still make grievous errors trying to make things better. You may wish to reflect on the implications of this article for your work.

I enclose for you, as a young person, some rules for life I have slowly developed in my 77 years: "Wisdom I Wish I Had Known as a Freshman in September of 1961." This is archived at <<http://www.jeffreyrace.com/nugget/h65a.rtf>>.

None of this is hard. My PhD certainly didn't help me. You just have to invest time to gain understanding in order to have a legitimate right to speak and to gain the public's confidence--or at least mine.

I hope the ideas and pointers in this letter help you to some extent at least. I've neither advocated nor deprecated programs; rather, I'm advocating the kind of thinking that must precede programs. I've had to simplify many details and omit a lot of grace notes, but it's the best I can do in a short letter.

With best wishes for your future in public service,

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Race