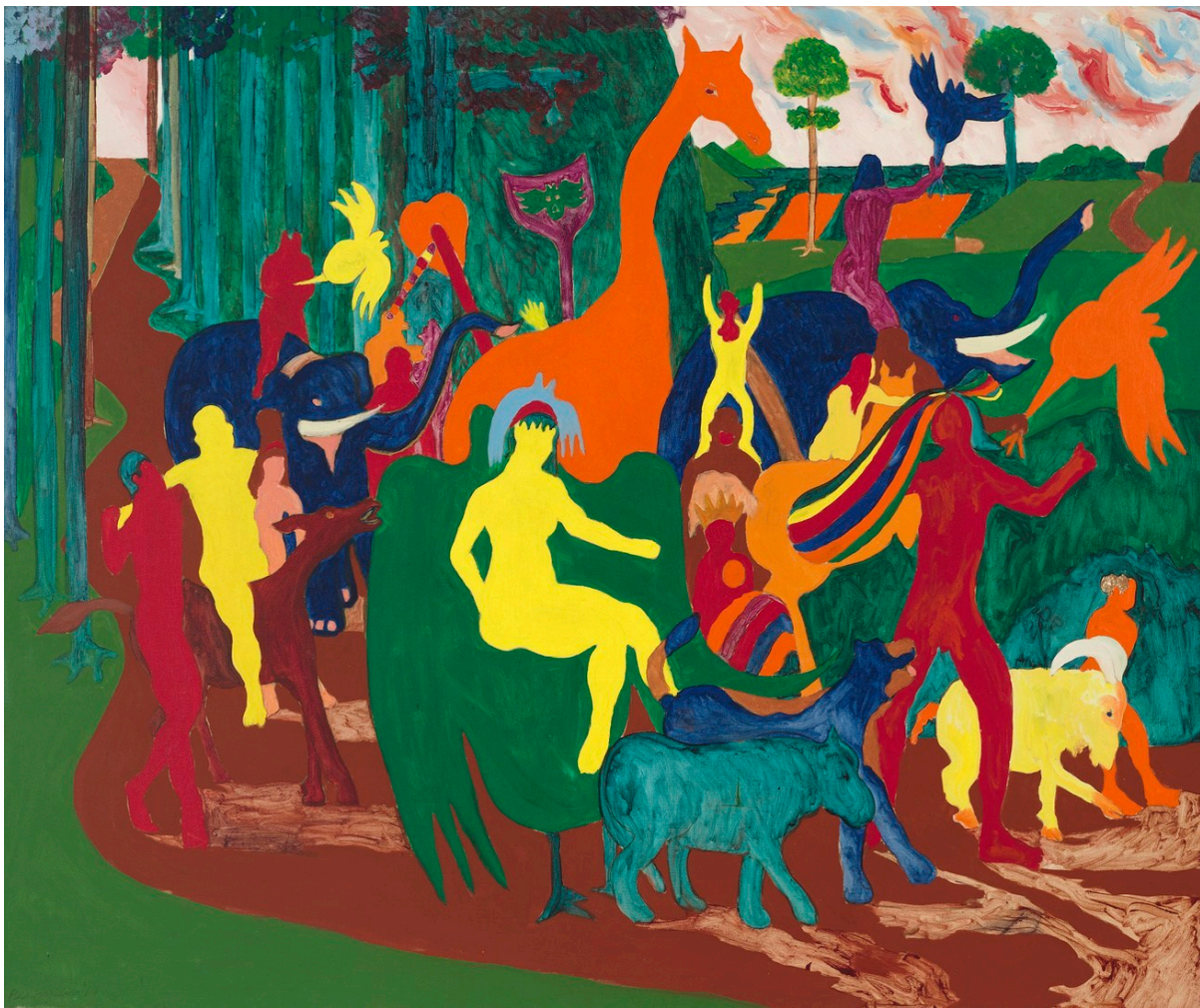


An Open Letter to the Democratic Presidential Candidates

by [Michael Odom](#) (August 2019)



Triumph of Bacchus, Bob Thompson, 1964

Dear Candidate:

I would like to give you the chance to answer these six questions about the state of our culture. These are questions that have come to dominate online discourse and that, I believe, Hillary Clinton disastrously assumed more than answered. These questions with your responses (if and when received) will be published in an upcoming online edition of *New English Review*, a journal of culture many Democrats turn to as they turn away from the Democratic Party.

Thank you in advance your replies.

Questions for Candidates

Culture, and the education that perpetuates it, precedes every other issue and is the ground democracy walks on. Consider that “science” from the left now includes the claims that genetic modification makes scary “Frankenfood” and there is no such thing as biological sex. “Scholarship” from the left includes the claim that reason and rationality (thus science as well) are just coercion the powerful use to oppress the powerless. With science and scholarship the handmaidens of political advocacy, try telling Republicans about climate change. Do they look at you like you are the foolish boy “crying wolf”? And with the Marxists of our schools teaching the elites of our media and Human Resources Departments that Americans have no rights and that the black shirts of Antifa need respect, try telling Republicans they will never need their AR-15s.

There is no more important issue than culture. With that in mind, I would like to give each candidate a chance to take an

explicit stand here, in *New English Review*, a journal whose readers care deeply about culture. I hope all will respond to one, some, or all these questions.

1. At a Pennsylvania university English Department, students tore down a picture of Shakespeare to put up a picture of Audre Lorde in its place. What does that act mean to you?

2. Free expression is essential to the art of poetry. Do you believe in an individual right to write one's truth or do you believe it is the place of political, economic and social power, government, employer and mob, Democrats, Google, Antifa, to create a consensus?

3. Pop stars win Nobel and Pulitzer prizes and have Harvard fellowships named for them and a reality TV star is President. Do you see these as related symptoms of a culture in crisis?

4. In recent years, we've seen students claiming to be "triggered" and to feel "unsafe" shout down professors and demand whole areas of study cease to exist. This phenomenon seems to come from the idea that a single individual with a disability can censor the entire university. Is this an abuse of the Americans with Disabilities Act?

5. Race and gender advocacy in education has reached a point where we've seen the teaching of "white privilege," "white fragility," and other stereotypes offered as scholarship, even as science. Prejudice imposed authoritatively from above was, as I'm sure you know, a common characteristic of Nazi, Jim Crow, Apartheid and other racist cultures. Recently, we've seen white exclusion days violently enforced on some campuses. Given that this current state of race/gender advocacy follows half a century of rationalizing promotion by skin color, genitals,

and sexual preference to achieve pictorial diversity, is it past time to end affirmative action?

6. Liberty, Equality, Fraternity (the latter is now called 'inclusion') are the values of the Enlightenment philosophy the U.S. is founded on. It is a philosophy the left rejects. Do you believe history has moved beyond the individual-based Enlightenment and now we must accept the Marxist assumption that justice is measured socially as a relationship between groups of millions weighed against each other?

Who is this asking? I voted Republican in 1980, the first time I voted, but John Anderson lost that primary to Ronald Reagan. I re-registered and have voted Democrat ever since. Full disclosure: I lived in San Francisco, still live in California, and have voted for Kamala Harris for three offices. I have voted for Bernie Sanders and Joe Biden as well. I am not committed to anyone as of now and the character of our Democratic discourse has changed dramatically.

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- [A Detransitioner's Story](#)
- [Gratitude and Grumbling](#)
- [Are We Really in the Back Row?](#)

Why do I ask? I have almost two decades of experience working in bookstores and almost three publishing poetry. When the bookstores went under for lack of public interest, I returned to school to get a Master of Fine Arts degree in Poetry on the theory I might teach my art. What I found in academia (not

all, not even the majority, but dominant in the administration and reporting) is hate, exclusion, and totalitarian ideology, not poetry, not the humanities. In listening to Democrats debate, I hear little or no awareness of these essential cultural issues.

Why should you, as a candidate for President, answer these questions? Because no person who might be labeled “white” or who cares for someone labeled “white”, no man or person who cares for a man, no person who loves this country could vote for a Democrat who, intentionally or unintentionally, runs on a platform of cultural decline. Rather than allow the electorate to assume you work against the overwhelming majority of Americans, you might address these concerns explicitly in *New England Review*.

Michael Odom

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Michael Odom is an American poet and translator, the author of a collection of ekphrastic cinquains for children entitled *Ick! Fran's Tick!*, a book of translation from Catalan, *Count Arnau & Other Poems of Joan Maragall*, and his own collection of poems playing on the rhythms & themes of Catullus, Selene.

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