

Vivek Ramaswamy, 'White Supremacy,' and the Day I Interviewed George Wallace



by Roger L. Simon

Yes, as the title reads, I did interview George Wallace, the governor of Alabama who stated in his Jan. 14, 1963, [inaugural speech](#), “In the name of the greatest people that have ever trod this earth, I draw the line in the dust and toss the gauntlet before the feet of tyranny, and I say, segregation today, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever.”

I was a Dartmouth College student at the time, an aspiring writer on the staff of the *Daily Dartmouth*, trumpeted as “America’s oldest college newspaper.”

It must have been my senior year, 1964, because Mr. Wallace was barnstorming New England on his first run for the presidency, an attempt he made four times, three as a Democrat and once as an independent.

I can't remember why or how I got the assignment, but I do recall I was mostly terrified. I adamantly opposed segregation and would, only two years and a few months later, be in South Carolina taking my small part in the civil rights movement.

For all I loathed him, I do recall, however, that Mr. Wallace was personally charming in the manner, I would come to learn, common to politicians. He was also well-dressed and well-coiffed.

"Simon?" he said, shaking my hand firmly. "You're not related to the Alabama Simons, are you?"

I instantly realized he recognized me as Jewish and tightened—racists were racists, after all. My impetus to join the civil rights movement didn't begin then, but it certainly wasn't diminished by facing this monster.

I certainly didn't know who the Alabama Simons were, either. Supporters, I assumed. That didn't make me proud.

That's about all I can dredge up of what happened some 60 years ago, other than the Alabama governor's face emblazoned on the front page of the college paper the next morning, my byline just beneath. I had asked for the words "reviled segregationist governor" to be in the headline, and, to my relief, they were. I didn't want to be a toady for this guy.

I hadn't thought about it for years, but somehow the memory bounced back to me when watching a [video](#) of an encounter the other day between 2024 presidential candidate Vivek Ramaswamy on the Iowa hustings and a reporter for *The Washington Post*. Watching it, I couldn't escape the conclusion we may have come a long way, baby, but, unfortunately, it's not all good. Far

from it.

The George Wallaces are, thankfully, basically gone, if they exist at all today, but many people seem wedded to the idea this isn't true, pretending that they're still lurking behind every bush.

Indeed, they seem vested in that bizarre notion to a degree that can only be described as highly neurotic, verging on the pathological (unless, of course, like the Rev. Al Sharpton, they're making money from it.).

Well, more than half the Democratic Party and the mainstream media seem to hold that view.

This although, and this is the saddest part, that the integration we were all fighting for more than half a century ago, that "black and white together" thing we sang about, has been abjured for years now in favor of new forms of segregation, all-black graduation ceremonies at Harvard and so forth.

This could have been the subtext to Mr. Ramaswamy's dialogue with the reporter. The candidate had responded to her ritualized question on whether he, a man of Asian Indian descent, condemns "white supremacy and white nationalism."

Mr. Ramaswamy answered: "Of course I condemn any form of vicious racial discrimination in this country. But I think that the presumption of your question is fundamentally based on a falsehood that really is the main form of racial discrimination we see in this country today."

"Institutionalized racism is institutionalized racial discrimination that we see that doesn't come from somehow discriminating against people on the basis of some tentative white supremacy," Mr. Ramaswamy continued. "It's based on affirmative action. It's based on actually discriminating against people on the color of their skin in a way that's

actually institutionalized today.”

The female reporter obviously didn't like what she heard. It wasn't her narrative—or the “World According to The Washington Post,” the same outfit that insisted for two years, without a shred of evidence, that Donald Trump was colluding with Russia.

“You didn't say you condemn white supremacy,” she huffed.

Reading it over, I imagined that said by the dowager Margaret Dumont in a Marx Brothers comedy. Only it wasn't funny.

Mr. Ramaswamy gave her the response she deserved: “Because you asked a stupid question. The reality is I condemn vicious racial discrimination in this country, but the kind of vicious and systemic racial discrimination we see today is discrimination on the basis of race in a very different direction. You want to know what the best way is to end discrimination on the basis of race? Stop discriminating on the basis of race.”

Consciously or not, the candidate was echoing the words of Morgan Freeman when the great actor was explaining his blasé attitude toward Black History Month to Mike Wallace on “60 Minutes” back in 2005.

“You're going to relegate my history to a month?” Mr. Freeman asked. “What do you do with yours? Which month is White History Month?”

When Mr. Wallace said he was Jewish, Mr. Freeman asked if he wanted a Jewish History Month. Mr. Wallace said he didn't.

“Oh, why not? Do you want one? I don't either,” Mr. Freeman replied. “I don't want a Black History Month. Black history is American history.”

“How are we going to get rid of racism?” Mr. Wallace asked Mr. Freeman.

[“Stop talking about it,”](#) the actor responded. “I’m going to stop calling you a white man, and I’m going to ask you to stop calling me a black man.”

No truer words on race relations in this country have been spoken, but unfortunately, he was pressured to walk them back.

Mr. Ramaswamy has not and is not likely to. Nor is he likely to win the presidency, this time around anyway. But unlike the other candidates vying to compete with Donald Trump, he’s bringing up topics that are usually unaddressed and deserve to be. (Robert F. Kennedy Jr. is also doing so, particularly in the health area.)

More, please.

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