

Dear Editor,

I must commend you for including Dr. Sorin's article on *Driving While Black* in your September issue, and I would like to emphasize a few key points in response.

As a black motorist who has driven a car in each one of our 50 states, over 30-plus years, so far I have survived numerous unwarranted traffic stops, and a white motorist once helped me avoid being lynched by a local mob when my water-cooled Volkswagen overheated late one evening while driving through rural South Carolina.

Even so, I can not afford to forget for a moment that many white people still feel entitled, in their hearts and minds, to serve as the judge/jury/executioner of my body and existence at any moment. With Confederate flags still being flown proudly outside of homes and businesses in all 50 states, the widespread and enduring attachment to a presumed white supremacy dictates that I can be innocently gunned down, as Mr. Castile or Mr. Arbery were, either today or tomorrow. On that note, I would have to respectfully disagree that Mr. Arbery lost his life because some white homeowners resented his mobility as a pedestrian coming through *their* neighborhood -- they clearly objected to his qualifications for human existence in the first instance.

Ever since that first, fateful landing at Jamestown, most white people have trained themselves and their children to view black people as being roughly 3/5 human -- and thus unqualified to receive even the most basic measures of human dignity and rights. That same training continues today in white homes across this *great* country -- it took place this morning at many breakfast tables, and it will continue tonight after dinner as well. Some of those people being so trained simply can not wait until they can apply to the police academy, while others will undoubtedly be graduating and swearing *to serve and protect* black motorists and citizens later this month. Our national survival and progress likely depend upon the primacy of candor at this late hour, so let's debunk the *few bad apples* myth, once and for all.

As long as any white parent continues to train (even through silence) their child to hate, demean, and subjugate people of color, and that the presumed authority over black people and their bodies, in all situations, is a part of their birthright, black lives will continue to matter much less and our murders will continue. In lieu of expecting that white hatred, subjugation, and fear of their fellow black citizens could miraculously be rooted out of police departments via additional or *better* training, we must instead consider the enduring legacy of those slave patrols that were mentioned in the article. Well before we ever heard of Bull Connor, Greg McMichael, or Derek Chauvin, each of whom also had parents, police departments were arranged to assert power over black people's lives and mobility, and they were mandated to protect and maintain the white power structure -- not necessarily to uphold the Constitution or Bill of Rights. At least since 1776, it would seem that our national commitment to the First Amendment has always been trumped by a preoccupation with the Second Amendment, and we probably need to understand why this is the case, lest the whole experiment finally come to its bloody and decisive end.

After many years of loyal patronage, I previously decided to cancel my annual subscriptions to your main competitors, for many reasons that will only make this letter read even longer. Suffice it to say that I was incredibly and pleasantly surprised to come across this article in your September issue, and I can't help but wonder if its publication is connected to the fact that Ed Loh, an Asian-American, has worked at the editorial helm at Motor Trend and Ten: Publishing. In any case, I do plan to renew again next year.

Thank you for summoning the courage to publish Dr. Sorin's article. Bravo!

Gratefully,
R. Wilhite
Washington, DC

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