

## Stivers Responds to Accusations

As a responsible voter, I am confident that you are fair and will listen to both sides of a controversy. If you have followed the columns in our local paper in recent weeks, you might have noticed some very harsh accusations which have been made about me in the letters' section by people who do not know me but have created an imaginary monster from their excursions on the Internet.

Let me respond to the most troubling ones:

**First, I have been accused of being a racist** because a book I wrote twenty years ago is offered for sale on a very offensive website. Even though my book was not about race, a couple of troublemakers have maliciously portrayed me as endorsing the content of that website because the book is offered on it. I do not.

A published author cannot control who buys his books and then, in turn, offers them for sale to other people. You can go down to your local bookstore and buy anything, and then open your own store to sell what you bought. It does not mean that the author endorses you or even knows about you.

The author might even come down and autograph copies of his book for you, but that does not mean he supports your store or even necessarily knows what you are about.

The same goes for tapes and videos.

I have been a prolific writer and speaker over the last thirty years. I have written and spoken on many topics. While I have never made much money at it, my material has been reproduced all over the world.

My opponents say that this offensive website sells one of my books and has even broadcast my lectures over their Internet radio.

So what does that prove? Nothing. I get no royalties. The material they are using is not about race and is not copyrighted. As far as I can tell, I can't stop them from doing it. It certainly does not mean I agree with the content of their website.

My accusers say that the man who runs the website claims to be my friend. I don't consider him to be my friend. Just because you meet someone at a meeting, or shake a stranger's hand, or even stay in someone's bed and breakfast, it does not mean that you know, understand, or support their ideologies. I have painfully ended long-standing friendships because my friends adopted racist beliefs. What makes him so special? Why would I consider this man a friend when he is someone I wouldn't even recognize if I met him walking down the street?

The truth is, I first learned to preach the Gospel in a black Pentecostal church. I have racially-mixed nieces and nephews. Sweeter children you cannot imagine. Christianity began as a racially-mixed religion. Why should I believe any differently?

If I were a racist, don't you think that I would talk like a racist and act like one, too? Don't you think there would be more examples to prove it than just this one and only connection from many years ago? If that is all it takes to prove someone is a racist, *I bet I could prove that you are a racist, too.*

**Second, I have been accused of being a polygamist.** That is not true, either.

But I did write a book about biblical polygamy many years ago. It has been long out-of-print, except for the “bootleg” copies sold over the Internet.

I do not promote it, but I will defend my research. I wrote it “propositionally.” I said that on the first page of the book. Educated people know what that means. It is a disclaimer. Everything which follows in the treatise – no matter how forcefully it is argued – it is all an exercise in academic investigation and cannot be taken to be the personal beliefs of the author, *even if the author says so as a point of argument.*

If you ask me, I will tell you that it is quite obvious that polygamy is taught in the Bible. But I don't practice it because I do not believe you can take everything in the Bible literally. A literal interpretation of the Bible does not work in our civil society. Our Founding Fathers were able to help our country escape from the cruelties of Europe because they required that our courts rely upon reason and the discoveries of science instead of religious dogma.

I also believe in freedom and agree with what the Supreme Court said in its Lawrence Decision (2005). The Republican-dominated Supreme Court said that *consensual sex between adults is not a crime*. It might be a sin according to one's religion, but it is not a concern of the government to enforce a certain standard of sexual morality. Everyone has the right to form the relationships they believe will bring them happiness. A morals police is wrong.

**Finally, I am not a “cult lord”** – as one hostile said in reference to my background in Christian Reconstructionism. I haven't been a Christian Reconstructionist for almost ten years. Christian Reconstructionists represent a revival of Puritan beliefs. Many New England leaders were Puritans and helped to found our country. There is nothing sinister about them.

Some Reconstructionists are misguided neo-Confederate enthusiasts. Some are Southerners trying to find dignity in their ancestry and the best of Southern manners. Their attempts to white-wash the history of slavery is misguided and foolish, but not evil. I have not met a single Reconstructionist that ever said we should revive slavery. And I am certainly not one.

I believe in freedom and the free institutions of our society. My religious doctrine teaches that we can change the world through the power of compelling ideas and the opportunity to succeed with those ideas. Example is the great teacher.

I am deeply offended and find it bizarre that my views have been misrepresented by people who should know better. I am further offended by the outright lies and fabrications which have been made by people who obviously have a personal vendetta against me and my family.

**Please do not indulge those who instill hatred.** We have to live together in this community. Vote according to the merit of the issues. Don't let these hate-mongers make this campaign into a personality contest which does not address the economic problems we are facing in North Idaho.

Thank you for your time.

- James Stivers