

## RG3 gets down to business

Written by William Reed

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African-American sports pundit, Rob Parker created a clamor and got himself suspended for saying on live television: "My question is ... Is he a brother or is he a cornball brother? He's not real ... He's kinda Black, but he's ... off into something else ... I keep hearing these things... he has a White fiancé ... there's this talk he's a Republican. "

Robert Griffin III's reply to the criticism was: "I don't want to be the best African-American quarterback; I want to be the best quarterback. But to fans ... who think that way and look at me as an African American, it's important I succeed for them."

Race is still a category that separates and divides us, but the image and illusion around RG3 is evidence that some of the historical boundaries that separate the races are breaking down.

RG3 is that All-American guy next door that you root for even if he plays for a team not your own. It's been an incredible National Football League (NFL) rookie campaign for the Redskin quarterback. The number of RG3 jerseys sold by the NFL is more than any other player in a single year since the NFL began keeping track. Griffin III broke the record previously held by Brett Favre. Griffin wears number 10 for the Redskins, with "Griffin III" on his back. This makes him the first player in the history of the "Big Four" professional sports leagues (NFL, MLB, NHL, and NBA) to have a Roman numeral on the back of his jersey, as the NFL changed the rule in 2012 to allow players to include generational titles in their names. Griffin previously had "Griffin III" on the back of his jersey while in college, which was actually necessary in order to distinguish him from the other Robert Griffin on the Baylor team.

After being drafted second by the Washington Redskins, RG3 signed a four-year \$21.2 million contract that had a \$13.8 million signing bonus. Andrew Luck was drafted first by the Indianapolis Colts and got a slightly bigger team contract. But, Griffin has made more money with the endorsement deals he has with Castrol Motor Oil, EA Sports, Subway, Gatorade, Nissan and Adidas. A masters degree candidate in communications, RG3 has become a media darling.

Griffin is a force to be reckoned with. He's now the face of one of the most storied NFL franchises in one of the nation's top 10 media markets. He's got personality, skills, a big smile, and plenty of talent. Overall, marketers have been extremely impressed with Griffin's poise in interviews and remembering brand message points.

In regards to Griffin's "White fiancé," studies say that interracial marriages "are good for society." Among opposite-sex married couples, one in 10 (5.4 million couples) are interracial. In 2010, multiracial Americans numbered 9.0 million, or 2.9 percent of the total population – but 5.6 percent of the multiracial population is under 18.

Griffin III met his fiancée, Rebecca Liddicoat, at Baylor. He proposed to her in 2010. She's White, and "a total non-issue" among the parents. "She doesn't see him as African American; she sees him as a man," says Griffin's mom. Jacqueline and Robert Griffin, Jr. say that in their household, "faith development was essential" and that "he doesn't see her as a Caucasian woman; he sees her as a woman."

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RG3 was born in Okinawa, Japan. In 1997 the family settled in Copperas Cove, Texas, where RG3 attended high school and was a three-sport star in basketball, football, and track and named to USA Today's 2007 All-USA Track and Field team.

Griffin has to be considered "quite a catch." RG3 graduated high school a semester early after being "class president" and "7th place" in the class. He began attending Baylor University during the spring 2008 semester when he was 17. While a member of Baylor's track and field teams, Griffin graduated in three years with a degree in political science and a 3.67 GPA. Griffin made the Dean's List twice.

*William Reed is publisher of "Who's Who in Black Corporate America" and available for projects via the BaileyGroup.org)*