Griffin found an invaluable guide in Sterling Williams, proprietor of a shoeshine stand near Jackson Square. He shared his secret with Williams, who nevertheless remained skeptical that Griffin was really white.

John Howard Griffin (age 18), as a medical student in Tours, France, 1938.

Griffin with Vutha, Chief of the Solomons (to Griffin’s left), 1945. As a member of the U.S. Army Air Force in the South Pacific, Griffin lived for a year in a native village, learning the culture of the Solomons, who were U.S. allies against the Japanese.