



Try thoughtful debate on for size, because name-calling isn't helping your cause

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Name-calling debases politics. We've seen it south of the border, where President-elect Donald Trump referred to "crooked Hillary" as a "nasty woman" who should be locked up in jail, and Clinton claimed that half of her opponent's supporters belong in "the basket of deplorables ... racist, sexist, homophobic, xenophobic, Islamophobic — you name it."

It's no different in Canada. The Reform Party called for an end to taxpayer funding for various ethnic groups through government multicultural programs, arguing cultural programs should be funded by participants. The Liberal response: "racism." Questions regarding immigration policies were met with the same charge. Today, those who call for stringent screening of immigrants from Middle East war zones are denounced as "bigots" and "Islamophobes." Nothing has changed.

Similarly, people who believe that children are better off being raised by a mother and a father, rather than by two mommies or two daddies, are denounced as "anti-gay" and "hateful." It's easier to attack than to explain how the removal of opposite-gender parents from the family is good for kids. Those who oppose Canada's policy of allowing abortion-on-demand during all nine months of pregnancy are dismissed as "anti-woman," "misogynist," or defenders of "patriarchy."

Can anyone name a U.S. Republican president or presidential candidate in

Conservative Party leader, who has not been described as, or compared to, a Nazi?

In Alberta, the debate about Bill 10 (now section 16.1 of the School Act) has been largely squelched by calling its opponents "homophobes," "bigots," and "hateful." This law removes the right of parents, principals and teachers to determine what clubs are permitted at their children's school. Aside from name-calling, this law's supporters have not bothered to answer basic questions about its merits. Why should children, who can't legally drink alcohol, smoke tobacco, join the military and vote in elections, decide what kinds of clubs are allowed at the schools they attend? Why is it good to strip local schools (and principals, teachers and parents) of their former right to create and enforce their own anti-bullying policies? Why a top-down solution imposed from Edmonton? How can it be good for the law to impose one belief system about sexuality and marriage on every school in Alberta? These questions are ignored entirely, by dismissing as "hateful, homophobic bigots" the people who ask them.

Alberta MLA Sandra Jansen is one of many who uses name-calling to squelch debate. Refusing to answer deeply troubling questions about Bill 10, she dismissed the concerns of over 4,000 Albertans who attended peaceful rallies against Bill 10 as "misinformed" and "intolerant."

It's very unfortunate that some people called Ms. Jansen nasty names after she crossed the floor.

Sadly, Ms. Jansen herself contributes to this debased political culture by refusing to engage in thoughtful and respectful debate, and instead suggesting her opponents are bigots (whose arguments should therefore be ignored). One commentator, in a profanity-laced YouTube rant viewed by almost three million people, cites name-calling as one of the main reasons why the left is responsible for Donald Trump winning the U.S. Presidency. He asks: "How many times does the vote not have to go our way before we realize that our argument isn't won by hurling labels and insults? ... The left is responsible for [Trump winning] because the left have now decided that any other opinion, any other way of looking at the world is unacceptable ... So if you're on the right, you're a freak, evil, racist, stupid ... a basket of deplorables. How do you think people are going to vote if you talk to them like that? When has anyone ever been persuaded by being insulted or labeled?"

Donald Trump's victory in the U.S. took place in the context of a debased political culture, where name-calling has largely replaced the actual debate of issues. There are lessons to be learned by Canadians, should anyone choose to learn them.

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