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# Hate speech

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?Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me.?

That's a phrase kids are taught about how to respond to someone calling them names.

It means just turn around and walk away. There's no use in responding to name-calling, and no reason to get into some physical confrontation over something insignificant.

If you do get into some situation, like traffic road rage, where some hothead starts yelling, simply ignore them and leave.

That will take the wind out of the guy's sails, and he just ends up looking like a fool in front of anyone who witnessed what happened.

In Canada and several other countries, the government has enacted ?hate crime' and ?hate speech' laws.

These laws are redundant and never should have been created in the first place because there are already laws in place covering what could happen in such situations.

Hate speech laws are nothing more than the government's attempt to stifle free speech when they feel it becomes necessary.

A ?Hate Crime' is defined as ?an act against a person, group of people or property that is motivated by hate, prejudice or bias based on race, colour, nationality or ethnic origin, language, religion, sex, age, mental or physical disability or sexual orientation.?

This was already covered by existing laws. There are penalties for crimes committed when ?hate' is involved.

Serious crimes like murder, aggravated assault, and attempted murder are never committed because of a friendly act.

You will never hear a murder confession where a guy says, ?I liked my neighbour. We were good friends for 30 years. I just figured he was too darn nice and helpful, so I shot him and his wife to death.?

If a person was murdered because they were disabled or a minority, or a member of a religious group, the result is the same. The person is still dead, and the offender must face the penalty for their crime, regardless of the motive.

During a trial, if one of the reasons a person was murdered was due to one of those reasons, that fact will be part of the evidence presented by the prosecutor, and it will be taken into consideration during sentencing.

Murder of an intimate is one of the most common types of killing in this country. Does the fact that a man murdered his wife make it less of a horror than if the man murdered a gay person?

Both crimes deserve the same punishment.

Hate speech laws in Canada are not well defined. If you look at court cases about hate speech in this country, the findings are all over the road.

Hate speech laws are not enforced evenly. They only apply to certain groups.

Judges are reluctant to convict, and there seems to be no clear understanding of what constitutes hate speech.

Again, there were already laws in place regarding making threats to people that were taken seriously by the courts.

If making a hateful comment to someone is a crime, then there are a lot of people going through divorces in this country who are guilty, as well as many road ragers, angry neighbours, and dissatisfied restaurant customers.

The Liberal government is now trying to push through new legislation that will provide up to 10 years in prison for ?displaying symbols' of hate. They have specifically referred to Nazi symbols like swastikas and Nazi SS insignia.

This type of legislation is both confusing and dangerous.

What exactly is a ?symbol of hate??

It could mean different things to different people.

If a World War II collector has historic artifacts in his collection that contain Nazi symbols, does this legislation automatically make him a criminal?

If you see a criminal gang member walking down the street wearing gang colours, can you call the police and have him arrested for displaying a ?hateful' crime symbol by wearing the bandana?

A couple of years ago, a neighbour on my street flew a Confederate flag from his house. It was only there for a day, and I have no idea why he was flying it.

Could this new legislation mean you can request charges be laid because someone has a beef with Robert E. Lee?

Certain religious groups have anti-social and anti-societal behaviours. Does this mean a cleric can be arrested for wearing a robe that represents that organization in public?

The legislators are not answering these questions, and the proposed law is very vague.

We don't need more laws to ?correct' our behaviour.

If your grandmother left you her collection of Dresden porcelain, you may have to hide it before some government agency arrives with a search warrant because some nosey neighbour peeked through your window and was offended by a wartime German porcelain doll.