

# Four Reasons 'You're a Hater' Has Become Fashionable Slander

Hatred has been having a boom time. No insult cuts us more deeply than "you're a hater". It means that you are intransigent, intolerant, bigoted and probably a secret nose-picker. "You're a hater" (or its close cousin, "you're a bigot") shuts down all dialogue and turns the alleged hater into a pariah.

It was not always thus. Back in the 30's, for instance, hatred was almost fashionable in some quarters. Fascists boasted of their hatred for Bolsheviks and Jews; Communists boasted of their hatred for Fascists and the bourgeoisie. In democracies, love-your-neighbour was always more respectable, but there were pockets of hatred amongst racists. No one was scandalised by hatred; it was just another reeking garbage dump in the political landscape. You detoured around it.

How can you prove that someone is a hater? Some cases are easy enough. When someone commits a violent crime which was motivated by hatred, as the Christchurch gunman did recently. Or when he openly declares that he hates Jews, or blacks, or Muslims, or Christians.

But what about so-called haters who deny that their actions or speech are motivated by hatred? For example, the Southern Poverty Law Center ([see accompanying article](#)) has tagged the Family Research Council and other organisations as "hate groups". The FRC vehemently denies this designation. And, in fact, the SPLC cannot produce evidence that the FRC has engaged in murder, arson, or assault. Nor have its employees uttered hate speech inciting people to violence.

What there is, is disagreement. [The SPLC claims](#) that "The FRC

often makes false claims about the LGBT community based on discredited research and junk science. The intention is to denigrate LGBT people..." The FRC denies that its claims are false and that its intention is to vilify LGBT people. In other words, the old adage advising Christians "to hate the sin but love the sinner" has been thrown into the dustbin of history. Sinner and sin are one and the same. What I perceive as a hateful action must be the work of a hateful person.

What explains the leap from disagreement to hatred? This is a question which has a complex philosophical history. But here are a few pointers.

**The dwindling of liberal education.** Today's emphasis on professional studies and STEM subjects at university and the declining prestige of subjects like history, politics and literature means that students are not used to a clash of opinions. A liberal education used to equip students with the ability to listen to radically different points of view, to analyse them, and to refute them rationally. As Allan Bloom wrote in *The Closing of the American Mind*:

*True liberal education requires that the student's whole life be radically changed by it, that what he learns may affect his action, his tastes, his choices, that no previous attachment be immune to examination and hence re-evaluation. Liberal education puts everything at risk and requires students who are able to risk everything.*

A sound liberal education does not require you to change your convictions, but it does force you to examine them. According to Socrates, "The unexamined life is not worth living". Sadly, too few students are willing to examine their lives. It's easier to describe intellectual opponents as haters than to engage with them.

**The corruption of liberal education.** Nietzsche, whose thought is the key to understanding the Zeitgeist of the late 20th and

early 21st Centuries, believed that reason was subject to the raw power of the will. There is no such thing as a neutral, objective point of view for a follower of Nietzsche – a notion which is captured perfectly by the observation of feminist philosopher Sandra Harding that Isaac Newton's *Principia Mathematica* was a "[rape manual](#)".

Behind every apparently reasonable, evidence-based statement is a desire to dominate. This is the central impulse of the post-modernism which has dominated liberal arts faculties for the past 20 or 30 years. It is hard to anyone schooled in PoMo to engage in rational arguments because their first response to a different opinion will be "he's just playing power games". In other words, he is a hater.

**Moral relativism.** As a philosophy, relativism is self-refuting. The proposition, "there is no truth", can only be proved by assuming, without proof, that "there is no truth, except for 'there is no truth'". However, relativism has the advantage of being easier. If your antagonist asserts that some things are true (e.g., transgenderism is morally and physically harmful), it's easier to call him a hater than it is to return to first principles.

This is not just the stuff of late-night bull sessions. It has also invaded the law. One notorious example is a 1996 majority opinion written by Justice Anthony Kennedy. In [Romer v. Evans](#) the US Supreme Court overruled its own 1986 decision that homosexual acts could be criminalised. It didn't bother to prove that there was no harm in homosexuality – it was content to declare that a recent amendment to the Colorado state constitution was hateful:

*the amendment seems inexplicable by anything but animus toward the class that it affects; it lacks a rational relationship to legitimate state interests.*

The late American philosopher Richard Rorty was the leading

theorist of moral relativism in democracies. He believed that a society without firm convictions would be more peaceful and civil. In fact, the opposite seems to be happening. When people cannot anchor in a bay of truth, they scud before the winds of passion.

**The politics of Me, Me, Me.** There is a movement nowadays for people sharing a particular personal identity based on their racial, religious, ethnic, sexual, or cultural backgrounds to huddle together instead of engaging in traditional party politics. The key word is “personal”. Disagreement becomes a personal affront, a hater’s dagger thrust. Issues cannot be resolved by rational discourse because identity is not rational. If political debate poses a mortal threat to one’s inmost being, the natural response is to spurn opponents as haters.

Truth is the best antidote to hatred. Not my truth and your truth, but the conviction that it is possible for both of us to reach agreement on the truth of things with reason, evidence and dialogue. Until we shake off the radical scepticism which is corroding our political discourse, “hater” will continue to be the worst of all insults.

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