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# Freedom-zine America

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*"But every difference of opinion is not a difference of principle. We have called by different names brethren of the same principle. We are all Republicans, we are all Federalists. If there be any among us who would wish to dissolve the union or to change its republican form, let them stand undisturbed as monuments of the safety with which error of opinion may be tolerated where reason is left free to combat it."*

—Thomas Jefferson

First Inaugural Address

March 4, 1801

President Jefferson, the patriot brave enough to affirm our rights derived from God, entered office with deep divisions in American politics, indeed in American society. His example of reaching out to his enemies, declaring unity, is what we need today in U.S. politics.

### **On Political Language**

In the spirit of George Orwell, let's examine the language of 21st Century American politics. Political debate takes place in our country in four separate forms—print, broadcast, internet and person-to-person. In all of these media, civility has moved aside in favor of insults. We all know the difficulty of discussing our political views with someone holding opposing opinions. In print and broadcast, and over the world-wide web, it is even easier to be on our worst behavior because no one can interrupt. By insulting someone's credibility, freedom of speech is stifled.

The current practice of hurling accusations, using myths and falsehoods as facts, exchanging insults, and assigning negative labels to the others who hold different ideas is causing us to lose our objectivity. It is taking away our ability to arrive at and accept the real truth. We are preventing our country from developing feasible solutions to problems because of the use of the language. If we cannot have an honest, open-minded, free exchange of ideas, where we are willing to listen and respect our differences, then problems like the national debt won't get solved. We will also continue using a poor strategy in the "long" war in the face of a more numerous enemy, with few allies of our own and with limited resources at our disposal.

It is the language we use, the tone, the meaning, the intent, and the delivery, that creates an almost impossible condition for using logic, reason, facts, ideas, and the cold hard truth to understand and solve any problems. Take the words "liberal" and "conservative" as two examples of language used by people to attack the credibility of their opponents. Republicans use the tag

"liberal" as an insult to describe ideas and people opposed to them. This is ironic in an historical sense. Abraham Lincoln, the first Republican president, created large bureaucracies. He enlarged government spending, expanded government's ability to intervene in people's lives, and he was an atheist. He was socially progressive. Lincoln was the perfect American LIBERAL up to his time and beyond.

What about "conservative," used by Democrats against their enemies in much the same way. The founder of their party, Thomas Jefferson, tried to limit the powers of government and prevent change. Hypocrisy? The father of modern conservative thought, Edmund Burke (whom most Republicans have not even read directly) stood up in the British House of Commons and defended the rebels of the American colonies and their claim to equal protection and rights under the laws of Great Britain. What is so bad about being a conservative in the spirit of Burke?

Other words used in American politics are unconstructive and even destructive of unity and safety. Labeling someone's ideas on the war as "cut and run" doesn't contribute one thing to a better, smarter strategy for victory. Shouting that any financial reforms are "tax cuts for the wealthy" avoids assuming any responsibility for real, tough-decision-making leadership to solve our nation's dismal financial situation.

What do we need as a country? We need leaders and individuals in our communities more concerned about finding the truth, having a free-exchange of ideas, defending free speech, and not leaders, a mass media, and a public scoring points in a useless game of ignorant words.