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Final Project

Sticks and Stones

Have you ever said something, perhaps with innocent intentions, and then suddenly wished you could take it back? Everyone has had their “oops” moments, which one contemporary, satirical film, *Mean Girls*, so gracefully refers to as “word vomit”. Why do we so carefully choose our words when speaking on sensitive subjects? Because we know what we produce will impact every ear it reaches, and we know there is no physical way to take it back. Harsh words tend to be seared into our memories and the memories of listeners, despite the protest of our helpless minds. For this reason, language is like any other force humans possess. As author Robin Lakoff suggests, “Language is powerful; language is power. Language is a change-creating force and therefore to be feared and used, if at all, with great care, not unlike fire,” (Lakoff 13). So perhaps the more important question is, what happens when individuals take advantage of this power? Throughout history, we have seen this time and time again… Nazi Germany, the apartheid of South Africa, McCarthyism… the list goes on. Extreme tyrants use persuasive hate language to manipulate and recruit a susceptible following, always resulting in violence and brutality. Hate language can be defined as “that which demeans another person and as that which reveals hostility to difference, whether that difference be of ethnicity, age, religion, gender, social class, physical appearance, or a society of other characteristics,” (Harmon/Wilson 68). Unfortunately, in today’s world, hate language proves to be just as prevalent as it was in the past, with groups such as the American Nazi Party, National Alliance, and Stormfront using more media outlets than ever, strategically reaching out to angry individuals in order to gain support for political agendas. The old saying, “sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me,” doesn’t seem to hold much merit, not that it ever really has.

The Jewish community has been targeted as far back as time can tell, coming to an ultimate peak in 1940s Germany. The National Socialist German Workers’ Party, who has generally come to be known as the Nazis, killed approximately six billion Jewish citizens from numerous European countries in the Holocaust. Hitler, in his mission to create a perfect Aryan race, degraded, branded, starved, gassed, worked-to-death, and murdered these people in the numerous concentration camps he established throughout Eastern Europe. Dr. D.F. Malan established similar oppression during the apartheid of South Africa, which lasted from 1948 through 1994. The White population suppressed the Black, Colored (mixed), Jewish, and Muslim communities of the country, forcing them out of their homes into “Townships,” segregating them politically and socially, imprisoning and murdering civil rights activists, and ultimately preventing any type of social mobility in order to better their standard of living. Even America has seen this type of power in action. In the 1950s, in the midst of the Second Red Scare rose Senator Joseph McCarthy, creating a whole new term for his fear-mongering tactics, known as “McCarthyism.” His antics led to widespread panic and paranoia relating to a communist takeover in America, majority of his claims being unfounded and politically motivated. Thousands of innocent Americans and immigrants were accused and unjustly punished for being “commies” or “commie sympathizers,” simply because of one man’s influential assertions. What do all of these atrocities, and many others, have in common? All of these injustices were fueled by the hate language of few, yet followed by many. The power these orators managed to install is so incredibly disturbing, and these horribly racist ideas have survived until this day, inspiring new, and old, groups to follow in their footsteps.

Firstly, it is extremely important to understand how exactly words can achieve their speaker’s goals. After all, the words are not the means of violence, but they often tend to be the cause of it. “Guns don’t kill people, the National Rifle Association likes to say: people kill people. By the same token, words don’t change reality, people change reality. But like guns, words make it possible for people to achieve the effects they seek,” (Lakoff 15). In a sense, those who use language in order to control have to obtain a certain degree of psychological genius. Freudian concepts of the unconscious are used to snake their way into the minds of those prone to hatred, (Lakoff 15). In modern America, assumably reflective of the rest of the world, those vulnerable to being coerced into racist organizations tend to be young, angry males. There are four classifications of those who commit hate crimes. The “hatemonger,” who make their racism a full-time objective, the “dabbler,” who is slightly less pro-active yet still outwardly a bigot, the “sympathizer,” who may not act on their hate but understand and justify those who do, and the “spectator,” who simply accept the actions of others and refuse to do anything, (Levin 36-56). While the hatemonger is undoubtedly the igniter of hate, all of these roles are important in the acceptance and tolerance of these racist beliefs. Refusing that racist language is a form of hatred only allows a continuance of these standards to persist, uniting and separating people with strong emotional, national, social, and political connections, (Harmon/Wilson 33). Specifically, one of the most important techniques in breeding hate is the idea of “primary potency,” (Harmon/Wilson 47). Primary potency is the act of categorizing an entire group under one label, objectifying one aspect of their race, such as the Black population are all “niggers.” This was the case in the Vietnam War and the use of the term “gook.” It’s easier to kill a “gook” than to kill a human being, just as it’s easier to hate a “nigger” than to hate an actual individual.

Modern white supremacy groups of the United States were the most easily distinguishable and readily accessed displays of hate language. The first group, with roots from over a century ago, was the Ku Klux Klan, or how as they referred to themselves on their site [www.kkk.bz](http://www.kkk.bz), the Knights Party. Upon entering the site, one’s eye is immediately attracted to the banner running across the top, which reads “Bringing a Message of Hope and Deliverance to White Christian America!” Ironically, the glowing message of “Mobilize America” throbs in the center of the page. The main article can be found when scrolling down on the page, which draws one in by questioning, “Its Back to School Time! Are you sure it’s the right choice for YOUR Family!” Notice the lack of proper punctuation in the above statement, as this seemed to be a pattern in a lot of the language found on hate-breeding sites. The article goes on to question, “Have YOU considered what your children learn at school? Are they learning that homosexuality and lesbianism are cool?  Are they learning that interracial dating and marriage is acceptable? Have they been told that the white race has been the scourge of the earth - destroying everything in its path?” Instead of truly questioning if this is really what one’s children learn at school, it is more so an inference of what they *must* be learning at school. This play on language is how a lot of people can be sucked in, an attempt to make the spectators and sympathizers more pro-active. The website makes a point to assert that “The name ‘ku klux klan’ is in the public domain.  This means that ANYONE - ABSOLUTELY ANYONE - Can say they are in the ku klux klan, are the leaders of the ku klux klan, or can start a group or club called the ku klux klan.” This was undoubtedly included in order for people to justify their involvement; use the notion that the KKK members they heard about before were simply “radicals”. This is followed by “DO NOT be fooled! The Knights Party is the legitimate Klan association in the United States.  We are not some fringe fly by night group of disgruntled losers who decided to start a "Klan" group.  We are a legally recognized, white rights political organization working to promote western Christian civilization - This means LAW and ORDER! We do not offer gun training.  We do not promote violence - EVER!” What is most interesting is the last sentence pertaining to “not” promoting violence. Is it not recognizable that spreading hate towards others in the American race does in fact, “promote violence”? Perhaps the most disturbing was their national goal, which is to gain political power. If they were able to do so, the Klan would proudly “stop all foreign aid and keep American money in America,” “ban homosexuality,” and “admit everyone with HIV/AIDS into national hospitals permanently,” (such as they used to do with tuberculosis patients).

The American Nazi Party (ANP) was a particularly interesting group to observe. The choice to even use the term Nazi could be seen as offensive in itself, for Hitler and his political party were so extreme and horrifying. The group is quite bold and unnerving in itself, as was its founder, George Lincoln Rockwell. Rockwell was an outspoken, arrogant bigot, which is most apparent in his speech given on Canadian Television in the mid-1960s. Rockwell plainly states, “…what we are is Nazis, which basically means we are racists,” along with “Did we *exterminate* the Rosenburgs, would you call that extermination?”, (referring to what the orator calls the extermination of the Jews in Germany). When the orator asks Rockwell his thoughts on Hitler, Rockwell proudly claims “If I were religious I would look upon Hitler as the second coming of Christ,” followed by announcing that his own intentions were to continue what Hitler started. He played on McCarthyism, claiming that majority of the Jews and Blacks residing in America were communists, therefore needed to be dealt with as they were by the Nazis of Germany. From this, the modern day ANP was born. The website, [www.americannaziparty.com](http://www.americannaziparty.com), uses a very interesting technique in gaining support. The first words of the article on the home page refer to Illegal Immigration, a very hot topic in America right now. Using a controversial issue like this begins to reel people in, before moving into the more extreme views. After spewing some “facts and statistics” at readers, (the validity of which has been neither confirmed nor denied), there is finally this message: “If you are tired of being blamed for all the world's problems - simply because you are White. If you are fed up with a government that is more concerned about everyone and everything on this planet - EXCEPT the well-being of the people who FOUNDED and BUILT America - the WHITE WORKING CLASS population, and are intelligent and clear-sighted enough to see REALITY when it stares you in the face - JOIN WITH US.” In doing so, the ANP wants you to believe that all your problems will be gone, because you will openly be able to hate the “cause” of your problems, undoubtedly the Blacks, Jews, and Illegal Immigrants. Blaming others is used in all hate-based organizations. It is essentially the foundation of the arguments. The ANP associate themselves with ideals of “Pride, Honor, Loyalty, Courage, Discipline, and Morality.” They identify themselves with those who are reading their information, stating “We are your brothers and your sisters, we are your fathers and your mothers, your friends and your co-workers - WE ARE WHITE AMERICA, just like YOU!” Singling out a reader is a very common technique used in any type of language, but can be especially concerning when used in hate language. “Yet, ask yourself THIS - "WHO" have you to "THANK" for ALL the PROBLEMS FACING YOU? The creatures who HAVE been in total CONTROL - or - those of us resisting the evil? The TRUTH is right there in front of you - DON'T be afraid to understand it and to ACT upon it! You hold the FUTURE - BRIGHT or DARK - in YOUR hands, and TIME IS RUNNING OUT!” By using the term ‘creatures,’ they are dehumanizing those people they want you to hate and blame, which is the soul objective of this allegation. The ANP Audio Message for January 13th is quite interesting, for the reason that it calls out members for not doing enough for the cause. The orator did a poll on the website, and found that most people aren’t pro-active because they were afraid of being considered racist. He goes on to say that “there is so much you can do while remaining anonymous.” But if one feels the need to remain anonymous, wouldn’t that represent the knowledge that they are doing something wrong?

National Alliance is yet another white supremacist organization, with goals similar to that of the ANP. Once again, the issue of Illegal Immigration is the first topic addressed, undoubtedly to assert validity to sympathizers and spectators. It also suggests passing out pamphlets and white supremacy literature “wherever receptive Whites may be.” Their annual newsletter, *Free Speech*, which is available on their website [www.natvan.com](http://www.natvan.com), had some very interesting views on equality, or rather, lack thereof. “The greatest and most dangerous lie that the Jewish establishment injects into our minds is the lie of human racial equality. This ‘equality’ lie is dangerous because it leads, ultimately, to racial mixture and racial mixture leads to the extinction of our people (and indeed of any people who practice it),” (Strom 5). This is a tactic in order to produce fear. The author wants YOU as a White person to fear the loss of our race. Furthermore, the author states “It is tragic that, to many White people today, the idea of racial equality has been drummed into their heads almost from birth to the point where it is accepted as an axiom, an assumed part of the nature of reality,” (Strom 5). The most disturbing part of this claim is that racial equality should be viewed as “tragic.” Interestingly enough, in this same issue, produced in 2002, the author addresses the apartheid of South Africa.

“In 1994, after decades of propaganda in the media and sentimental whimpering from the churches, South African Whites were finally persuaded to hand power over to Black Communists who, with the decisive help of the Jews, installed an ANC (African National Congress)/Communist government that, for some strange reason, failed to follow Marxist ideology when it came to expropriating the business interests of the Jewish Oppenheimer family, who dominate South Africa’s economy. They did succeed however, in making South Africa into a multiracial sewer with one of the highest violent crime, murder, rape, and AIDS infection rates in the world,” (Strom 15).

Any individual who has any background knowledge pertaining to the apartheid of South Africa can easily determine what horrible misconstruing this is of historical fact. The author twists the facts, making it seem as though the Black population was a horribly extremist group that overthrew the government, sending the entire country in chaos. In fact, if the White government hadn’t oppressed the Blacks, Jews, Coloreds, and Muslims of their country, their would be no need for an entirely new government, and the country could live together in harmony, as Nelson Mandela had always suggested. Before finally leaving the subject of South Africa, when speaking of the crime rate the author asserts that “In other words, killing the White man, raping and killing the White woman, raping and killing the white child are the real motivations. And yet this is not an issue in the Jewish media,” (Strom 15). This is another act of dehumanizing the Black population, making them seem as though they are savages. This use of language to spin facts is quite a conniving and manipulative technique of fear-mongering and hate-breeding.

Stormfront, proudly presenting their “White Pride World Wide” logo on their website, [www.stormfront.org](http://www.stormfront.org), allows white supremacists to converse amongst each other via message boards, most of which are available for viewing without membership. The first topic of discussion that is encountered upon entering the site was that of social class, and disorder between the classes. The member who started the discussion recalls, “Looking back at some Hitler speeches, I think he knew that there were big class divides among the Germans that got in the way of joining as a country.” He/she goes on to pose the question, “Should we bridge the divide among classes? Or just have separate WN (White Nationalist) movements, one for the white collar and one for the blue collar?” This is extremely interesting, because classification based upon class can be seen as prejudice in itself. Responses were mixed, and while the 87 pages of them were too long to sort through, it can be assumed the first couple pages were representations of further arguments. Some, most likely the white collar, supported the idea of splitting the movement, stating “We absolutely should. Bother serve their purpose, and each is equally important.” Others, more likely the blue collar, took a totally opposite side, “Class divide is as big an enemy as the Jew himself. We don’t need separate organizations for different classes, what we need is ONE organization that offers a position to a man and woman of every class.” One might think the hatred of groups such as Blacks and Jews would bring together those who share these horrifying and twisted ideals, but it seems as though they found a way to be bigots amongst themselves. The issue of social class was by no means the only one discussed on this website. Another argument, which seemed to highly engage the writers was the issue of whether or not a woman can be “tainted” by a different race. Many admitted to finding non-white women attractive, (though they would never date them), while others found non-whites to be completely repulsive. One of the more bolder writers said “I find some African women attractive (as much as it shames me to admit..) but out of NO circumstances would I ever be romantically involved with one.” This was followed by a more negative response, stating “Wow. Surprised to see so many saying they find non-whites attractive. Sounds like a disorder to me.” One of the most ignorant and unfounded claims was found in this discussion, with a member posting, “Oh sure, there are alot of things that can taint white women. First of all, racemixing which is the obvious one. once you go black we dont want you back! is surely true. also because once they go black they have herpes and syphilis and clamydia and who knows what else.” This is quite possibly one of the most ridiculous things one can assert, and if it wasn’t so tragic it would be almost comical how ignorant people can be.

White Americans are not the only organization or race that use controversial language to alter stereotypes of other races. White Americans, and Americans in general have been targeted by radical sources as well. After 9/11 the Taliban removed their promotion website, probably to keep their whereabouts obscure. African Americans are not strangers to prejudices, for a large percentage stereotype Whites. A poll of 3000 Americans taken by the National Conference for Community and Justice in 2000 found that, “people of color and especially Black Americans have adopted a largely unflattering view of White Americans. More than 75 percent of all Black Americans reported believing that Whites are bigoted and prejudiced, bossy, and unwilling to share their inordinate wealth and power. More than 50 percent of all Latino Americans also share this view of White Americans,” (Levin 23). The Black Panther Party, stemming from the ideals of civil rights leader Malcolm X, has also created its share of prejudice against Whites. In their latest seasonal publication, it was asserted that “The Philadelphia polling place is not invincible to white racism or attacks on black life, therefore, the Philadelphia chapter of the New Black Panther Part had to respond. When the live of our children, babies, mothers, fathers, grandmothers, and grandfathers are at stake, it is our duty to respond,” (Reynolds 2). This view tends to seem extreme. This insinuates that White racists had intentions of physically harming Black voters, even bringing into question the safety of one’s children. The current president of the Black Panther Party, Malik Zulu Shabazz recently stated “These white right-wing, red-faced, red-neck Republicans are attacking the hell out of the New Black Panther Part, and we’re organizing now to fight back.” Once again, primary potency is used as a defense mechanism, ascertaining that all Republicans must be ‘red-neck.’ Stereotyping and prejudices are what minority groups are attempting to fight against, yet it seems that no one is immune to classifying others who have different views, or what they may assume to be different.

It seems that as long as at least one group continues to spew hate, that can only cause hatred to come back from the target, thus creating a circle. Even on [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com), this proves to be the case. In response to a video on Nazi Germany, one user posted “And this is a proof ? a dead bodies?! maybe yankees killed them so that they had something to show....” This comment was quickly rebutted by another user, who stated, “Are you really trying to suggest that this didnt occur in Nazi Germany? If so you are truly retarded.” Language is used to show aggression and power, in order to demean others. This is most unfortunate, because ideally, but most improbably, all races would be able to live in harmony, and truly live and let live.3 It seems as though the old saying “sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me,” doesn’t seem to hold much merit. Perhaps what we should live by and pay respect to is the idea that “the pen is mightier than the sword.”

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