

Bill Rea ? Unfair comparisons

I might just be dreaming, but I look forward to the day when people who disagree are not subjected to various uncalled-for attacks. On the other hand, putting up with jerks is just part of life, and learning how to deal with them is part of the growing-up process. But there are some who tend to go too far.

There was an interesting article in the Toronto Sun last week by Laurie Goldstein, and it included references to another article. They deal with an idea that some people are spreading around, complete with efforts to compare American President Donald Trump with Hitler.

Trump is no Hitler, and Goldstein went to considerable lengths to state that the chances of a guy like Hitler coming to power in a country like the United States are less than remote. Anyone who has ever taken a course in American history or politics knows the Constitution of the United States was carefully designed to prevent such an occurrence. The concept is known as 'checks and balances.' Trump is in charge of the executive branch of the government, but if he wants to get anything accomplished, he's going to need help from the legislative branch, and that includes 435 members of Congress who are going to be up for re-election in 2018. I was watching CNN Friday night and saw accounts of Town Hall meetings some of these politicians were holding which degenerated into yelling contests. One Congressman eventually cut his meeting short by about an hour. I guess he got tired of being shouted down. Trump had better keep that in mind. Those 435 people are going to know which side of the political bread to butter up. And there is the judicial branch of government, and Trump has been on a learning curve of late on the impact they can have on his working life. The courts have put the brakes on at least one of his executive orders. He's obviously angry, but the lesson is he's not allowed to break the law, and the judicial branch is there to make sure he doesn't. Richard Nixon learned the same lesson the hard way.

So to compare Trump to Hitler is not fair. It demonizes a man far beyond what he deserves and, as Goldstein alluded to, it elevates one of the greatest genocidal maniacs in history far beyond what he deserves.

It has become a habit of too many people to come up with comparisons to Hitler, or what he represented, just because someone has been elected to a position of authority that they don't like.

It is no secret that a lot of Americans don't like the fact that Trump won the election. but the other fact is the guy won the election. The problem is Trump is not the first president who's been subject to these comparisons, and he won't be the last.

It seems these comparisons come up when frustrated people try to come to grips that some one they don't like is in charge. But they can also come when certain issues are being discussed.

During my time working in Toronto, I once attended a Town Hall meeting hosted by one of the local Liberal MPs. This was around the time when gun control and the Long Gun Registry were hot items of debate, and they came up at this meeting.

At the end, I saw a man approach the MP and hand her a piece of paper, folded in such a way that much of the page was hidden, but there was writing visible at the bottom.

'I've seen that,' the MP said, looking not at all fazed.

The guy then looked at me and I guess he recognized me as a member of the media (that camera bag and note pad always gives me away). He showed me the paper. I forget the exact words at the bottom, but recall they were a reasonable argument in favour of gun control. Once the page was unfolded, it was clear the words were attributed to Hitler.

'What's your point?' I asked the guy, and he told me there was no point.

I've never understood why he said that. He brought that piece of paper to the meeting for a reason, but I guess he just didn't have the guts to publicly make the comparison to Hitler.

Such comparisons don't even have to mention Hitler by name to be offensive.

About 10 years ago, I was working in a community that was dealing with a proposed new subdivision. As is often the case, there was a lot of opposition, but the developer took it upon himself to meet with local residents, and from their input, he tweaked his proposal into something that most of the community could support.

But not everyone was in favour. There were a couple of residents who were determined not to be pleased, so they took the whole matter to the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB), and lost; quite decisively too. The Hearing Officer's report was the most emphatic one I ever read.

As the local editor, I wrote an editorial that urged the various interested parties to set aside their differences, now that the hearing was over, let things pass and work together to make this development an asset for the community.

One of the people who pushed the matter to the OMB sent me an email, stating the editorial was something he would have expected to read in the 'Third Reich.'

I've had cheap shots like that taken at me before. Most of them amuse me. It's a sign people are reading what I write. This one made me furious.

I might not have much use for Trump, but it's going too far to have comparisons like that made against anyone.

