

# Words matter

PROGRESSIVE VIEWS



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Once again I write on a Monday afternoon, bereft about the weekend's headlines. My July 19 "Speak Out and Act" column on the president's racist rhetoric also opened with this sentence.

"I write to throw a bucket of cold water into the faces of Republicans to urge them to wake up from their 'ends justify the means' stupor. Words matter, and the president's words are adversely affecting both our citizens and our standing in the world," I said.

Words. Matter. And now we see exactly how and why.

In the wake of last Saturday's shooting in El Paso, Dan Rather said, "We know words of hate can inspire actions of hate." We now have definitive and incontrovertible proof. He also said, "It is hard to say anything new on the subject of gun violence and the twin evils of racism and white supremacy which seems to be fueling a lot of the carnage." But we keep raising the issue in the hopes that more people will wake up and see these "twin evils" for what they are and take definitive action against them.

White nationalism is domestic terrorism. We've suffered far more from these home-grown miscreants than from ISIS or Islamic terrorism or immigrant gangs. It's long past time to hold to account the president (and his enablers) on the rhetoric that empowers acts of violence. Such words create a climate that fosters just this kind of evil.

The editorial board of the *New York Times* stated, "If one of the perpetrators of this weekend's two mass shootings had adhered to the ideology of radical Islam, the resources of the American government and its international allies would mobilize without delay." Yet Republicans persist in offering only "thoughts and prayers." (While motives for the weekend's second shooting in Dayton are still under investigation, the incident further highlights the need for common-sense gun control.)

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The shooting was *not* due to "mental health issues" (an "excuse" only deployed when the perpetrator is a white male); due to excessive use of video games (no credible science exists to support this conclusion); or due to a "ban on students praying in school" (no such ban exists in Texas).

All of these are smokescreen words used by Republicans to justify their continuing inaction on any kind of gun control. Sen. Mitch McConnell has steadfastly refused to allow

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the Senate to even consider gun control legislation passed by the House in February.

Last Sunday in the *Houston Chronicle*, Monica Rhor wrote, "We should scream in anger and rage — and keep screaming until the people we elect to protect us do their jobs. For those who don't, we should take our anger into the voting booth and hold them accountable."

The *New York Times* further stated, "While its modern roots predate the Trump administration by many decades, white nationalism has attained a new mainstream legitimacy during Mr. Trump's time in office. Discussions of Americans being 'replaced' by immigrants, for instance, are a recurring feature on some programs on Fox News."

Those in political leadership should all speak out forcefully against this speech and its now demonstrated results. But Republicans won't because they're too afraid of getting voted out by "the base."

I've got news for you, silent Republicans. You will be voted out, but not by "the base." By the rest of us who, either long-ago or just since last Saturday, have reached our tipping point and will vote for your opponents. An eye-popping number of prominent Republicans have seen this writing on the wall and announced their retirement — yet another one, Rep. Kenny Marchant, as I drafted this column.

Words. Matter.

I'll close the same way I did on July 19. It's time to vote out the Republicans engaging in or enabling by their inaction and lack of condemnation of these words and select new leadership who will create a more just, compassionate and equality-filled Texas and nation.

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