



## **Control the words, control the culture**

By Michael Knowles, Guest Columnist

What's in a word?

Why does it matter whether we call someone who breaks the law to enter the country an "illegal alien" or a "undocumented immigrant"? What's the difference between a Christmas tree and a "holiday tree"?

It's just semantics, right?

Yes...and no.

It is just semantics, but "semantics" means the meaning of words. Words exist so that we might discriminate one thing from another. Without words we have chaos. And it starts with the first words; a baby says mama to distinguish mommy from daddy. Words shape how we think; they color how we view the world.

No one understands this better than the Left. They are the masters of words. Because they know that words matter.

The Left has a special gift for euphemisms --soft words selected to sugarcoat harsh realities so as to make those harsh realities easier for us to swallow. But these soft words are insidious. Their sole purpose is to deceive.

Race discrimination in hiring and college admissions is refashioned as the much nicer sounding "affirmative action." Who would ever oppose an affirmative action?

Global warming, which can be measured and challenged, has morphed into "climate change," which means essentially nothing because the climate is always changing.

When Barack Obama became president, George Bush's war in Afghanistan suddenly transformed into the far less ominous and threatening "overseas contingency operation." That's one way to try to end a war. Just rename it.

The examples are endless. There's a new euphemism every week.

In the make-believe world of leftist language, young criminals have become "justice-involved youth." Mandates and taxes are "individual shared responsibility payments." Government spending becomes an "investment." Wanting to keep more of your hard-earned money becomes "greed"; taking more of someone else's money is them "paying their fair share." Opposing a Democrat in the White House is "obstruction." Opposing a Republican in the White House, "resistance".

In the name of "diversity" the left enforces intellectual conformity. It censors opposing views in the name of "tolerance." And it labels all non-left views "hate speech."

Consider the ongoing battle over pronouns, whether to call a man who thinks he's a woman "he" or "she." Very few people in the country suffer from gender confusion, and we should have compassion for those who do, but the Left has invested countless funds, time, and energy to make everyone refer to some men as she and some women as he.

Why? Is it because the Left is so compassionate? Or is it more likely because so much of the Left's cultural agenda is about blurring, even denying, the natural distinctions between men and women?

Sometimes it's just an adjective that can change or even negate the entire meaning of the word it describes.

Take "social justice."

Justice means getting what you deserve without favor. "Social justice" means getting what you don't deserve because you are favored.

Here's one we hear a lot these days. "My truth." Truth is reality regardless of any individual's feelings or perceptions. "My truth" is how I perceive things regardless of how they really are.

And how about "Same-sex marriage." Let's not get into the politics; let's just look at the language.

Throughout history, in every culture, marriage has been the union of husbands, men, and wives, women. "Same-sex marriage" is the union of men with men or women with women, but it is most certainly not the union of husbands and wives.

Once the phrase "same-sex" was placed before the word marriage - that is, once the definition of marriage changed, the debate changed. It became about "marriage equality." It was suddenly an act of bigotry to limit marriage to husbands and wives.

All this manipulation of language has paid off for the left: because whoever controls the words controls the culture.

Don't believe me? Just try using plain language instead of the Left's politically correct jargon. But be careful. Use "the wrong words" and you might lose your job, your home and your reputation.

The culture war is largely a war of words. Right now, the Left is winning. You can see the consequences everywhere: in politics, in education, in media.

It's time to fight back. We should not cede another syllable.

What's in a word? Everything.

*Prager University, helps millions of Americans understand the fundamental values that shaped America and provides the resources to articulate them. Published with permission.*

*The Language of Liberty series is a collaborative effort of the Center for Self Governance (CSG) Administrative Team. CSG is a non-profit, non-partisan educational organization, dedicated to training citizens in applied civics. The authors include administrative staff, selected students, and guest columnists. The views expressed by the authors are their own and may not reflect the views of CSG. Contact them at [CenterForSelfGovernance.com](http://CenterForSelfGovernance.com)*

Word Count: 805