

The Delray Democrat

Godwin's Law of Nazi Analogies¹

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Long before Twitter, and years before the World Wide Web was launched, local bulletin boards and Usenet groups offered a platform from which people could anonymously demonize others from the safety of their own homes.

A young Texan named Mike Godwin who frequented those online forums became disturbed by the frequency with which debates devolved into name-calling, the ultimate trump card being to label one's opponent a "Nazi" or compare him or her to Hitler. As Godwin later recalled, "I wanted folks who glibly compared someone else to Hitler to think a bit harder about the Holocaust."

Realizing that simply asking or lecturing people to be more thoughtful would be fruitless, he half-seriously proposed the following "law":

As an online discussion continues, the probability of a reference or comparison to Hitler or to Nazis approaches one.

Godwin later [allowed](#) that he never intended an "actual law," but rather "a meme or a kind of contagious idea." He wanted "folks who glibly compared someone else to Hitler to think a bit harder about the Holocaust."

Some online forums then introduced a corollary that provided all debate ended once the Nazi analogy was made and the one making it was deemed the loser. As this applied without regard to whether the analogy was appropriate or thoughtfully argued, it actually operated contrary to the intent and spirit of Godwin's Law, namely, to encourage thoughtful debate and call out mindless name-calling.

After Trump announced his candidacy, Godwin published an [editorial](#) in *The Washington Post* explaining that, "If you're thoughtful about it and show some real awareness of history, go ahead and refer to Hitler or Nazis when you talk about Trump. Or any other politician."

Let's apply this corollary to other one-word epithets designed to foreclose further discussion, such as fascism/fascist and socialism/socialist.

"Who Da Cap Fit, Let Them Wear It"

This corollary was tested recently when President Biden likened the philosophy underpinning Trump and his supporters to "semi-fascism."

¹ [The Delray Democrat](#), December 2022, page 5.

Republicans were, predictably, outraged, as were the usual suspects in the unhinged media, demanding an apology. The so-called liberal media acquitted itself well, however, concluding that the label fit. See, e.g., [Biden Shouldn't Apologize to Republicans](#), by Charles Blow, in *The New York Times*; [If the semi-fascist shoe fits, wear it!](#), by Bill Press, in *The Hill*; [Biden called Trumpism 'semi-fascism.' The term makes sense, historically](#), by Federico Finchelstein in *The Washington Post*; [Biden's 'soul of the nation' speech and the battle against MAGA 'semi-fascism' in America](#), by Jason Stanley, NBC.

Indeed, “semi-fascism” falls far short of the mark. Comparing Trump and the Trumpian Republican Party to Hitler and the Nazis is more appropriate and equally defensible.

Like Hitler, Trump was perceived as an object of ridicule and not as a threat to democracy. Both men rose to power on the strength of Big Lies. Both men referred to the media as “the enemy of the people.” Hitler called them *Lügenpresse*, which translates as “lying press” or “fake news.”

The Biggest of the Big Lies circulated by Donald Trump and his Republican enablers is the claim that the 2020 election was stolen. Fully 147 Republican members of the House and 8 Senators (including the loathsome Rick Scott) voted to not certify an election that had incontrovertibly been won by Joe Biden. Some of them took part in the January 6 insurrection that sought to violently overturn the election results and keep Trump in [office](#) .

Trump's Big Lie was built on the Big Lie of “Voter Fraud,” one that Republicans have been spewing for decades, long before Trump became a Republican, one that has been thoroughly debunked, time and time again. See [The Fraud of Voter Fraud, the Reality of Voter Suppression](#), by Michael K. Cantwell, *Palm Beach Post*, for a summary of failed attempts to establish voter fraud.

Other Big Lies propounded by Trump are also retreads of longstanding Republican lies, such as claims that immigrants are violent and stealing American jobs or that the sorry state of the uneducated white working class is due to advantages given to Black Americans. In reality, immigrants are taking jobs no American would want (which is why two of Trump's three wives were immigrants) and commit fewer crimes than native-born Americans.

As to jobs, the reality is that workers of all colors have been victims of a half-century-long class warfare led by Republicans and fueled by increased automation, jobs shifted offshore and the destruction of unions. Ronald Reagan told unskilled white workers the Big Lie about “strapping young bucks using food stamps to buy T-bone steaks while you're waiting in line to buy hamburger.”

Does merely adopting Nazi tactics justify the “Nazi” epithet, or must we wait to see what they do if they seize power, as they have tried once already? German industrialists and conservatives thought that they could control Hitler . . . until they learned they couldn't. Republicans are learning the same but have ignored the problem because they place party over country, party over democracy. I repeat, Must we wait to see what Trump and his minions do if they manage to seize power again?

It's Time to Invoke Godwin Against Little Marco

When Biden's original \$3.5 trillion Build Back Better plan was being debated, Marco Rubio said, "it isn't socialism, it's Marxism." Now Rubio may not be a genius, but he's neither a moron nor an ignoramus and only a moron or an ignoramus would believe that.

Nothing advocated by any Democrat even begins to approach the actual definition of socialism, namely, "collective or governmental ownership and administration of the means of production and distribution of goods."

So get in Rubio's face. You can send him webmail at <https://www.rubio.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/>

Links on that page provide telephone numbers for his various offices. Ask his staffers how it feels to work for a cheap huckster. And invoke Godwin's Law.