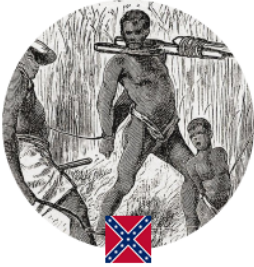


Nazis, African Americans, and Donald Trump: How Rhetoric is Used to Dehumanize Minority Groups

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Introduction

Language is a powerful tool. Rhetoric is often used as a tool to manipulate the perceptions of certain groups, such as racial and ethnic minorities, and alter the discourse surrounding them. This was especially evident during the Nazi regime, as evidenced by Steven B. Katz's famous article "The Ethic of Expediency." However, the use of language in this way is not limited to the 1930s. Rather, using language to dehumanize, degrade, and "other" ethnic and racial groups is a practice seen long before World War II, such as with American slavers, and to this day, such as with the rhetoric of United States President Donald J. Trump. I aim to connect the dehumanizing language surrounding racial minorities and reveal the similar rhetorical strategies used across history.

Methods

Research for this presentation included observing and watching over 10 hours of Donald Trump speeches, as well as reading articles published through the White House, to notice and cite trends across Trump's language. Particular attention was paid to Trump's rhetorical strategies when discussing Mexicans and relating them to animals and the *Mara Salvatrucha* criminal gang. This use of language was then related back to the dehumanizing language used from the 18th to mid-20th century to dehumanize Black and Jewish people and 20th century philosophical theories were used to explain why this use of language is dangerously effective.

Results and Conclusions

Katz's "Ethic of Expediency" revealed what happens when we let expediency overtake morality—ethics get pushed to the side and language becomes weaponized and used to dehumanize groups. However, to dehumanize, one must disassociate these groups from humanity. According to Wittgenstein's picture theory of language, this is done by misrepresenting the groups and stripping them of ethics, morality, and civility. Instead, their humanity gets replaced with animalistic tendencies or some other inhuman trait; this makes it easier to harm or otherwise act against these groups. While most often associated with slave owners and the Nazi party, dehumanization is an everlasting issue for Black and Mexican Americans. President Donald Trump made frequent use of dehumanizing rhetoric when referring to minority groups, often calling them "dogs," "animals," "uneducated," and calling for use of the death penalty on Black Americans.

Primary Literature Cited

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