

# Sticks and Stones (Op-Ed)

✘ By Jennefer Witter, CEO/Founder, [The Boreland Group Inc.](#)

We all know the saying:

*Sticks and stones can break my bones,*

*But words will never hurt me*

Words can do a lot. They can encourage...inspire...foster change. At their respective nations' darkest hours, President Franklin D. Roosevelt ("There is nothing to fear but fear itself") and Prime Minister Winston Churchill ("We shall never surrender"), used the power of words to lift people to heights that they previously thought were unimaginable.

Words can also incite...hurt...destroy. We're seeing a lot of that now. In recent weeks, among the statements that [Donald Trump](#), the Republican presidential front-runner, has said in relation to protestors at his rallies: "Knock the crap out of (them)" and "I'd like to punch him in the face."

Well, John McGraw did. The 78-year old Trump follower sucker punched a protestor as he was peacefully exiting a Trump rally. As the *Daily News* reported, McGraw said after the assault "Next time, we might have to kill him." Trump indicated his team was looking into paying McGraw's legal fees.

It is well-documented that protestors at Trump's rallies are being shouted at, pushed, shoved and hit. The violence over the past weekend before a Trump appearance at the University of Illinois at Chicago Pavilion was reminiscent of the unrest at the 1968 Democratic convention held, ironically, in the Windy City.

[Trump](#) has not taken ownership of his words. While he has said he does not condone violence, he has done nothing to tamp down

the escalating disturbances at his events. Yes, those who push, shove, hit and punch must and should take responsibility for their actions and be dealt with appropriately. But Trump must also accept responsibility that his words are creating an environment where such behavior is not only condoned, but encouraged.

A culture of hate is being fed. "White Supremacist Groups See Trump Bump," a December 15<sup>th</sup> article in Politico, noted that the Klu Klux Klan and Stormfront, a prominent white supremacist website, are benefiting from Trump's rhetoric. In the piece, Marilyn Mayo, the co-director of ADL's Center on Extremism, is quoted as saying that since Trump announced his candidacy, they have "...definitely seen that a segment of the white supremacist movement, from racist intellectuals to neo-Nazis, have been energized."

Republican strategist Frank Luntz was on CBS This Morning on March 14<sup>th</sup> to discuss the Chicago rally. Echoing many of his colleagues and politicians on both sides of the aisle, Luntz predicated that if the Republican candidate does not come out and tell his supporters to stop, the situation is "going to get worse."

A chill wind is blowing through United States, kept aloft by words that bring out not the best that this wonderful country has to offer, but its worse. Words that separate and anger, inflame and divide. No, words may never hurt you...but they can still do harm.

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