



Should We Call Them ‘Alt-Right’ — or ‘White Nationalists,’ ‘Neo-Nazis,’ Something Else Entirely?

Lana Adler

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By this point, we’ve been forced to acknowledge the existence of a certain group among Donald Trump supporters — a group that is arguably defined by white nationalism, bigotry, and all the worst undercurrents in American thought that helped bring Trump to power. That group, whether we like it or not (and, decidedly, this author does not) has become necessary to discuss on a national level. The question that arises, however, is “How?” Do we continue using their self-appointed moniker, the “alt-right”? Or do we call them out directly, opting for a title like “white nationalists” or “neo-Nazis”?

Thoughts on this subject have been generally divided into two camps:

Keep Calling Them Alt-Right

- **Julian Sanchez** of the Cato Institute holds that, in purely practical terms, the term isn’t going anywhere, and that tip-toeing around it by grouping them with a historically broad moniker like “white nationalists” obfuscates rather than clarifies.
- **Matthew Lyons**, a writer concerned with “the struggle...against fascism,” believes that using the term “alt-right” to describe these people actually helps their opponents fight them, as they’ve made the term synonymous with overt bigotry with their own actions.
- **Sarah Jones** (supported by the ADL’s Mark Pitcavage) argues that using the term “alt-right” is not a sop to “white nationalists” — rather, it’s careful reporting about a specific group with specific goals and specific methods to achieve them.

Don’t Call Them Alt-Right

- Publications like **ThinkProgress** have announced that they will stop using the term “alt-right,” as have a large number of people on **Twitter** arguing that it normalizes bigotry and conceals the real, dangerous hatred behind the movement.
- Writer **Lindy West** asserts that, especially in the wake of the overtly neo-Nazi actions and ideas of group leaders like Richard B. Spencer, using the term “alt-right” is an act of denial and only serves the efforts to legitimize those actions and ideas.

- **Noah Rothman** of Commentary Magazine **argues** that using the term “alt-right” is objectionable from a conservative standpoint, as it implies that the group and its standpoint are valid options under the umbrella of conservatism in America.

This writer believes firmly in describing white nationalists, white supremacists, and neo-Nazis as such. Words are vectors that have the power to normalize or to repel, and now more than ever, it’s important to be clear about what’s acceptable and what’s unacceptable. Especially when dealing with such hateful and potentially violent ideologies, we need to know exactly what it is we’re dealing with.