Growing scorn and hate

I don't know if you saw the clip of Anna Soubry MP's interview which was halted when she paused to object to the chanting in the background of "Soubry is a Nazi." She was right to stop the interview, very politely pointing out that: "I do object to being called a Nazi."

The troubling thing is that hers is not an isolated case of abuse; it's increasingly part of our culture.

I think it stems from a natural point of correction. This is that at one point, there was a huge deference to political correctness, and anyone who, for example, brought up immigration levels was automatically labelled a racist and banned from the airwaves.

For half the population this was a good thing; for the other half, there was a resentful biting of tongues. The growth of the BNP in the early 2000s, to the point where their leader, Nick Griffin, appeared on Question Time in 2009 (remember that?) was built on ordinary men (and it was almost always men) 'only saying out loud what most people secretly thought'. UKIP took out the worst of the racism but made this even more mainstream and the referendum unleashed it even more. Not only was it no longer racist to express your worries about immigration, it almost became a point of pride.

And for racism, you can adjust for a number of issues: homosexuality, transgender identity, statues of Rhodes in Oxford University etc.. There's a progressive lobby at one end; and there's a resistant strand at the other pointing out how ridiculous it all is.

In the last five years, each side has got more and more convinced of its own correctness, and more and more convinced of the idiocy of their opponents.

It's a bit like football supporter mentality, where the chant goes up, "Stand up if you hate Arsenal/ whoever" and the supporters cheerily stand as one, singing out their hatred with pride. I don't really like seeing that on football terraces; I actually worry now that it is spilling out into wider discourse.

So at the one end are Brexit supporters branding Soubry a Nazi (I'm not quite sure even why); at the other end are some Remainers, airily dismissing pro-Leave people as basically thick and bigoted. You remember Hilary Clinton dismissing half of Trump supporters as 'a basket of deplorables'; you remember Gordon Brown and 'that bigoted woman' and it's that kind of thing.

The echo chamber of social media (where we only follow/ mix with 'people like us' paradoxically amplifies it. Anyone outside gets abused. Superficially, some could claim it's banter. Actually, it's awful.

The psalmist wrote, 'Happy are those who do not follow the advice of the wicked or sit in the seat of scoffers'. It's almost fashionable now to be a scoffer, but it needs to stop, and we need to respect each other once more.

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