

Donald Trump is teaching our kids to be cyberbullies | Jasmine Daya - The Lawyer's Daily

Personal Injury

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By Jasmine Daya



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(October 24, 2018, 10:50 AM EDT) -- "Mommy, is Donald Trump a mean man?" asked my 6-year-old daughter at the dinner table.

My husband and I looked at each other and smiled. My other two children, ages 8 and 12, giggled at the question, likely knowing what I wanted to say, but also didn't want to say.

With CNN often playing on the television in the background at my house, my children are well informed on American politics, despite being born and raised in Canada.

President Trump started the stream of insults well before he clinched the GOP nomination in summer 2016, with monikers like "Low Energy Jeb [Bush]," "Lying Ted [Cruz]" and "Little Marco [Rubio]" for his fellow running mates.

And he kept going: "Crazy Joe [Biden]," "Crooked Hillary [Clinton]" and "Slippery James Comey." And let's not forget "Rocket Man," an intended slur against North Korea's leader Kim Jong-un that could have provoked an already volatile regime.

The *New York Times* is keeping track of President Trump's Twitter insults. In fact, President Trump's insults now have their own Wikipedia page.

In Pulitzer Prize winning investigative journalist Bob Woodward's new book, *Fear: Trump in the White House*, President Trump has called his own cabinet appointees names. According to Woodward, President Trump called Attorney General Jeff Sessions "mentally retarded." He called former White House chief of staff Reince Priebus "a little rat." And called his personal attorney Rudy Giuliani a "little baby. ... You're like a little baby that needed to be changed."

So, when my 6-year-old asks me if Donald Trump is mean, if he's a bully, there is lots of evidence in the affirmative that he himself has provided. The RCMP's cyberbullying page states that cyberbullying includes sending mean or threatening e-mails or text/instant messages; President Trump does this on a daily, and sometimes hourly, basis.

Is this not what we are seeing occur at the White House?

Don't we condemn cyberbullying as wrong?

Don't we teach our children that cyberbullying is wrong?

Don't we enact laws against cyberbullying?

Trump's conduct most definitely fits the profile of cyberbullying and the individuals that he has personally attacked have a cause of action against him if his conduct has caused them harm. Harm can be either psychological impairment or in the form of defamation.

Whether anyone actually commences a civil action against the president of the United States of America is yet to be seen.

My real problem with Trump's cyberbullying is the bad example he is setting for my children and other young people. Even worse, it is certainly looking like cyberbullying is really working for him. All summer long, he enjoyed a 41 per cent approval rating, according to Gallup. And no one has stepped up and called him out on his cyberbullying.

Back in May 2018, first lady Melania Trump launched her "Be Best" campaign to prevent bullying and cyberbullying among American children and teens. Not even the writers of *Saturday Night Live* or the supremely talented screenwriter Aaron Sorkin of *West Wing* fame could top the irony in this.

I have talked to my children about social media, perhaps more than most parents because I handle cyberbullying cases from a personal injury perspective. I'm a mother of three children and I'm also a personal injury lawyer. One of my specialties is cyberbullying.

I've seen firsthand the damage that words can inflict on the young, who are especially vulnerable, impressionable and dependent on peer acceptance. Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram and Facebook are the common social media platforms, but there are many more social media apps out there, that if used improperly, can cause irreparable harm. Once said, words cannot be unsaid.

Canadian teenager Amanda Todd committed suicide at age 15 in 2012 because she was cyberbullied. She developed anxiety, turned to alcohol and ultimately succumbed to the black dog of depression.

Returning to my daughter's question, I want my children to understand that they can disagree with someone's opinion, but at the same time be respectful. Everyone is entitled to have their own opinion. Regardless of your political affiliation, politicians were always, at least in public, respectful and generally respected.

The current president of the United States of America has chosen to tweet his fleeting thoughts, anger and resentment however he wants. He uses whatever adjective he wants. He demonstrates careless disregard for the harm that his words may do and the impact they may have akin to that of a cyberbully. What kind of example is the most powerful man in the world setting to children around the world?

In Canada, there are civil remedies available to anyone who has been harmed as a result of cyberbullying.

One recent and upsetting Tweet about his adviser Omarosa Manigault Newman blurted out: "When you give a crazed, crying lowlife a break, and give her a job at the White House, I guess it just didn't work out. Good work by General Kelly for quickly firing that dog!"

Regardless of what transpired behind closed doors, publicly speaking in this manner about another individual is contrary to my beliefs and not in line with how I am raising my children.

And President Trump openly mocking Dr. Christine Blasey Ford's Senate committee testimony at a GOP rally in Mississippi televised on Oct. 2, was again unprecedented. And sad.

I never thought that I would have to censor the evening news in order to bring up my children to be good, honourable and decent Canadians. I may have to stop watching the evening news when they are in the room.

Jasmine Daya is managing lawyer at Jasmine Daya & Co., a personal injury firm that specializes in club assaults, cyberbullying, claims involving minors and negligent landlord issues. She can be reached at jasmine@jdlawyers.ca.

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