



Covering the 2026 Campaigns (Part 5)

Capitalist, Communist, Socialist

Oh, My!

By

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It's up to journalists who cover political campaigns to cut through the 'name calling' to find, confirm, and report the truth about each candidate for public office. Candidates call their opponents many different names including **Capitalist, Communist, Socialist, Fascist, Nazi, Marxist, Racist, Radical, Lunatic, UnAmerican,** etc.

Two questions for journalists: what do those 'names' mean? And is there any 'truth' to the accusations?

Let's begin by defining some of the names, then we'll look at how we discover the truth of each accusation. Keep in mind that this is not just for national election coverage. Candidates in local and state campaigns often 'throw mud' at each other in what's known as 'negative campaigning.'

It's been going on in the United States since at least the early 19th century. The 1800 presidential race between Thomas Jefferson and John Adams is an example of some very 'negative' campaigning.

“In addition to the often scurrilous things they said about each other, Adams and Jefferson had surrogates who attempted to outdo them.

As Rick Ungar wrote in 2012 for Forbes magazine, the president of Yale University, a John Adams supporter, suggested that if Thomas Jefferson were to become president, ‘We would see our wives and daughters the victims of legal prostitution.’

A Connecticut newspaper, noted Ungar, warned that the election of Jefferson would create a nation where ‘murder, robbery, rape, adultery and incest will openly be taught and practiced.’

Not to be outdone, James Callender, ‘an influential journalist of the time — wrote that Adams was a rageful, lying, warmongering fellow; a ‘repulsive pedant’ and ‘gross hypocrite’ who ‘behaved neither like a man nor like a woman but instead possessed a hideous hermaphroditical character.’”

[Chicago Tribune Opinion Page](#)

Look into most of the national campaigns from the last 200+ years and you'll find that the majority of them contained 'name calling.'

Here are some of the names I'm hearing candidates 'hurl' at each other during the 2026 campaign. Without looking at a dictionary, do you know the definition of each one?

Capitalist —

Communist —

Socialist —

Democratic Socialist —

Nazi —

Neo-Nazi —

Fascist —

Neo-Fascist —

Christofascist —

Marxist —

Nationalist —

RINO —

DINO —

Racist —

Radical —

Radical Left —

Radical Right —

Moderate —

Moderate Right —

Moderate Left —

Elitist —

Nepo Baby —

Establishment Member —

Misogynist —

Lunatic —

Crazy —

UnAmerican —

Anti-Semitic —

Pro-Semitic —

Now, look up the words in a couple of good dictionaries and see how you did. It's important that you know what candidates are calling each other. Why? Because 'names' often stick in voters' minds when they cast their ballots. If journalists don't challenge candidates on the 'name-calling,' the best candidates may not be elected to office.

Another reason is that name-calling can impact voter turnout. That occurs through a combination of 'mobilization' and 'demobilization.' Anger can become a driver in mobilizing people to go vote because of name-calling in campaigns. Some campaigners speak about it as 'mobilizing the base.' On the other side name-calling in campaigns can lead to voter fatigue and disengagement from wanting to vote. That's the 'demobilization effect.' Name calling can cause an 'erosion of trust' in the election system.

I rarely hear journalists ask candidates if they know the definition of the names they call their opponents or what evidence they have to back up their ‘name-claims.’ It’s the job of a journalist to ask questions that inform their audience about the qualifications of candidates to perform the duties of political office. If a candidate wants to call names — call them on that. Journalists can help return a sense of ‘trust’ in the election process by demonstrating a desire for credible campaigning.

Policy Views

Candidates also use other names to describe their policy views. Be sure you know what the policy terms mean and that you ask candidates what those terms mean if they either support or oppose them. While every community has policy issues, I'm listing those that impact all citizens from a federal level. Journalists should keep in mind that they have access to federal issues through members of Congress from their district(s) and members of the U.S. Senate. The following list contains some of the top mid-term election issues, but there many others. Add to this list as you hear candidates opposing or supporting other issues.

Pro-AI/Anti-AI

Pro-Marxism/Anti-Marxism

Pro-Communism/Anti-Marxism

Pro-Socialism/Anti-Socialism

Anti-Constitution/Pro-Constitution

Anti-American/Pro-American

Abolish the Senate, the Supreme Court, and All Other Institutions of Minority Rule/Don't Abolish the Senate, the Supreme Court, and All Other Institutions of Minority Rule

Nationalize Major Industries and Medical, Energy, and Transport Infrastructure/Don't Nationalize Major Industries and Medical, Energy, and Transport Infrastructure

Bring the Economy Under the Control of a Common Plan Decided by the Working Class/Don't Bring the Economy Under the Control of a Common Plan Decided by the Working Class

Medicare for All Including Undocumented Immigrants/
Medicare for Legal Citizens Only

Medicaid for All Undocumented Immigrants/Medicaid for Legal Citizens Only

Voting for All People Including Undocumented Immigrants/
Voting for Legal Citizens Only

No Voter ID Necessary to Show to Cast Ballot/ID Necessary to Show to Cast Ballot

Mail-in Ballots Accepted After Election Day/Mail-in Ballots Not Accepted After Election Day

No Deportation of Undocumented Immigrants/Deportation of Undocumented Immigrants

Racial Reparations/No Racial Reparations

Repatriation of Stolen Land from Indigenous Peoples/No Reparation of Stolen Land from Indigenous Peoples

Anti-Establishment/Pro-Establishment

Defund the Police/Fund the Police

Abolish ICE/Support ICE

No Police on College Campuses/Police on College Campuses

Anti-Prisons/Pro-Prisons

Anti-2nd Amendment/Pro-2nd Amendment

Anti-Guns/Pro-Guns

Close Overseas Military Bases and Abolish the Standing Military and Police/Don't Close Overseas Military Bases and Abolish the Standing Military and Police

Anti-Closed Borders/Pro-Closed Borders

Tax the Rich More/Don't Tax the Rich More

Eliminate the Presidency/Keep the Presidency

Eliminate the U.S. Senate/Keep the U.S. Senate

Eliminate the Supreme Court/Keep the Supreme Court —

Pack the Supreme Court/Keep the Supreme at Current Number

**Make Puerto Rico and Washington DC States/Don't Make
Puerto and Washington DC States**

Anti-Tariffs/Pro-Tariffs

Anti-Israel/Pro-Israel

Pro-Gaza/Anti-Gaza

Pro-Hamas/Anti-Hamas

**Pro-Government Owned Grocery Stores/Anti-Government
Owned Grocery Stores**

**Housing for Everyone Including Undocumented Immigrants/No
Housing for Everyone Including Undocumented Immigrants**

**Free College for Everyone Including Undocumented
Immigrants/No Free College for Everyone Including
Undocumented Immigrants**

Free Childcare for Everyone Including Undocumented Immigrants/No Free Childcare for Everyone Including Undocumented Immigrants

Pro-Climate Activism/Anti-Climate Activism

Pro-Green Energy/Anti-Green Energy

Anti-Fossil Fuels/Pro-Fossil Fuels

Pro-Government Sponsored Transgender Surgeries for All People Including Undocumented Immigrants/Anti-Government Sponsored Transgender Surgeries for All People Including Undocumented Immigrants

Pro-Sanctuary Cities/Anti-Sanctuary Cities

Pro-Trump/Anti-Trump

Be ready to ask tough questions and to be on the receiving end of a candidate's 'wrath' for asking them tough questions. Candidates today are used to softball questions from journalists without any pushback or follow-up questions, so if you are the only journalist to ask tough questions and follow up you will stand out in the crowd.

To do **'real journalism'** includes growing some 'tough skin' when it comes to dealing with candidates involved in political campaigns. And, I might add, that includes their staff. Be ready for them to call your boss and complain about your being 'too tough' and 'unfair' toward their candidate. I know that's true because it happened to me many times. I was fortunate to be a street reporter when news directors and general managers protected their journalists from angry candidates and campaign staff. That taught me to do the same for my team when I became a manager,

This is no time to play ‘nice’ with people who want the power and influence that come with holding political office. Hold their ‘feet to the fire.’ Journalists have a powerful recourse for candidates who refuse to answer questions — quote their refusal. If you’re in television or radio, let your audience see or hear how the candidate treats you and your question. Their refusal or unkind way of responding will give voters an important insight into whether that candidate deserves their vote.

Discover, uncover, confirm, confront, and report the truth. That’s your job as a journalist. Anything less is a disservice to the public and to the U.S. Constitution.

Next Time

October Surprise! Are you ready to cover it? Some thoughts about how journalists can handle an ‘October Surprise’ in your city or state campaigns in the next part of my series, *Covering the 2026 Campaigns*.



1960s Radio News, © Mark McGee