

What to do about You-Know-Who

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MADISON - Wisconsin Democrats have a bad case of Scott Walker on the brain.

The governor is in the news constantly, especially now that he is unofficially but obviously running for president. His opponents do a great deal to help keep him in the news, ridiculing his every move and parsing his every word and filling the blogosphere and twitterverse with a daily recital of his transgressions and shortcomings and overall unfitness for office. Whether any of it is true or false is beside the point. It all does Walker a considerable service.

In his book *Don't Think of an Elephant!* and other writings, noted linguist George Lakoff examines how the human brain works, politically speaking. In our minds, words and images fit within what he calls moral “frames” and what us non-linguists would probably call core values. One of Lakoff’s key teachings is that when faced with facts that conflict with a moral frame, many if not most people will ignore the facts and hold tight to the frame. Lakoff also has observed that negating a frame paradoxically evokes the frame. For example, when Nixon told the country “I am not a crook,” the negation conjured the frame. The president unwittingly made people think of crooks when they thought of him.

There’s an old saying, “Speak of the devil and he appears.” When Walker’s enemies talk endlessly about what a bum the governor is, they keep the governor top of mind. Negating Walker evokes Walker . . . and relegates his critics and their ideas to the political equivalent of a dusty attic.

Democrats would be better off giving the governor the Lord Voldemort treatment. Do not speak his name. Resist the temptation to vent about You-Know-Who's latest slip of the tongue or divide-and-conquer maneuver. Think twice when He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named does one more thing prompting the urge to hurl insults. Counter the impulse to spew more venom with a conscious effort to concentrate on [hopes and dreams and big plans](#) for making Wisconsin a better place.

It has been well established that Wisconsin Democrats cannot beat Walker by hating Walker. Hating him has helped him immeasurably, made him stronger. Wisconsin has been reminded daily what the Democrats are against. What they are for is more of a mystery to state voters. It will remain a mystery until the choice is made to stop obsessing – and mourning – over what is being torn down and start drawing up blueprints for what will be built up.

If Democrats could just channel their inner Harry Potter, they would see that's the power the Dark Lord knows not.

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