

HOW TO DEBATE LEFTISTS AND DESTROY THEM

11 RULES FOR WINNING THE ARGUMENT



TR BEN SHAPIRO

"...a foe of extraordinarily polemical agility"
- ERIK WEMPLE, WASHINGTON POST

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How To Destroy Leftists In Debate

By Ben Shapiro

How The Left Wins Arguments

All that matters is victory.

That's a message that seems to have been lost among conservatives, who are constantly focused on the virtue of their message, the intellectual honesty of their cause, and the frustration of having nobody care about either.

But it's because conservatives don't think about how to win that they constantly lose.

Take, for example, the election of 2012.

Conservatives lost the 2012 election for one blatantly obvious reason. It wasn't just their technology was no good, though the Obama campaign did have an obvious technological advantage. It wasn't just that conservatives did a poor job with the media -- although they did.

The reason that conservatives lost the 2012 election was garishly simple: most people in America don't follow politics that closely. What they see about the various candidates are what the candidates say about each other, and what the media say about the candidates.

So, let's assume for a moment that you're a typical American voter: you care more about Miley Cyrus twerking on the Video Music Awards than you do about the vagaries of Obamacare. Let's assume all you've really seen about the elections is the coverage in the mainstream press and what the candidates said about each other during the debates.

What exactly did the candidates say about each other during the debates?

Here's what presidential candidate Mitt Romney said about Barack Obama: Barack Obama is not a very good President. He said Barack Obama doesn't do a very good job on the economy; he said that Obama's foreign policy has a lot of holes in it; he said Obama has done a pretty poor job across the board of working in bipartisan fashion. But, Romney added, Obama's a good guy. He's a good family man, a good husband, a man who believes in the basic principles espoused by the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. He is not someone you should be afraid of in any way. Essentially, Romney's campaign slogan was this: "Obama: Good Guy, Bad President."

And here's what Barack Obama and his surrogates said about Mitt Romney: Mitt Romney is the worst guy since Mussolini. Mitt Romney is the guy who straps dogs to the top of cars. Mitt Romney is the kind of guy who wants to "put y'all back in chains." Mitt Romney is leading a "war on women" and, in fact, has compiled a binder full of women that he can then use to prosecute his war. Mitt Romney is the type of guy who would specifically fire an employee so that five years later his wife would die of cancer thanks to lack of health insurance. Mitt Romney would take his money and put it in an overseas bank account specifically to deprive the American people of money. The Obama campaign slogan: "Romney: Rich, Sexist, Racist Jackass."

Now, back to the American voter. Let's assume you've been watching this messaging battle, and now you have two choices: Barack Obama, Not a Very Good President vs. Mitt Romney, The Worst Guy Ever. Who are you going to vote for? Most people would pick "nice guy, bad politician" over Mussolini. And they did.

The exit polls showed that on the major issues of the day, Americans agreed with Mitt Romney. They didn't like Obama's record on jobs, the economy, Obamacare. But when it came to the key question – which candidate cares more about people like me? – Romney got blown out, 81 percent to 18 percent.

Now, that's not because Barack Obama is a warm and fuzzy guy. Even those who surround Barack Obama all day describe him as a cold fish. Obama is not someone who will bring over a bowl of chicken soup when you have the flu; he's not even the guy who will drive you to the airport when it inconveniences him. Yet, somehow, he was considered the more empathetic of the two candidates. Why? Because Romney was perceived as so darn mean.

No wonder the left seeks to avoid political debate at all costs. Why bother? Members of the left are not interested in having a debate about policy. They are not interested in debating what is right or wrong for the country. They are interested in debating *you* personally. They are interested in castigating *you* as a nasty human being because you happen to disagree. This is what makes leftists leftists: an unearned sense of moral superiority over you. And if they can instill that sense of moral superiority in others by making you the bad guy, they will. People on the left are taught from childhood that they are *better* than conservatives – it makes them *feel* good to hate conservatives. And that hatred is justified because, after all, conservatives are bigots.

This is why it's so comfortable to be on the left: that unearned sense of moral superiority. Unearned, because folks on the left haven't *done* anything positive for decades. College students' sense of moral righteousness doesn't come from achievement – it comes from believing that you are a bad person. You are a racist and sexist; they are not. That makes them good, even if they don't give charity, have never met a black person, stand for policies that impoverish minority communities across the United States, and enable America-haters around the globe. It doesn't matter that if they pointed out a KKK member to you, you'd run across the lot to knock him out; in order for them to be morally superior, you must be morally inferior. Calling you a racist and sexist, a bigot and a homophobe, gives them a sense of satisfaction with their status in the universe, even if they never help a single individual human being.

This is a bully tactic. When someone calls you a racist, sexist, bigot, homophobe because you happen to disagree with them about tax policy or same-sex marriage or abortion, that's bullying. When someone slanders you because you happen to disagree with them about global warming or the government shutdown, that's bullying. When someone labels you a bad human being because they disagree with you, they are bullying you. They are attacking your character without justification. That's nasty. In fact, it makes *them* nasty.

The Institutional Takeover

The leftist bullies have taken over the major institutions of the United States.

The university system has been monopolized by a group of folks who believe

that it's no longer worthwhile debating the evidence on tax rates, or whether the Laffer curve is right, or whether Keynesian policies actually promote economic growth. They don't want to debate those issues. What they want to teach instead is that if you are personally ignorant, bigoted, corrupt, and mean if you disagree with them. Their opinions are not opinions; they are fact.

This is the hallmark of being stuck inside a bubble. The people who occupy the professoriate have not had to work a real job – a job with real-world consequences -- in over 30 years. They've lived on a campus where everyone agrees with them, convincing them that their beliefs are universally-held. Anyone who disagrees is a “flat earther.” Anyone who disagrees is a monster. *You* are a monster.

They used to call this Pauline Kael syndrome. Pauline Kael used to be a columnist for *The New Yorker*. Back in 1972, writing about the George McGovern/Richard Nixon landslide election, she famously observed, “I live in a rather special world. I only know one person who voted for Nixon. Where they are I don't know. They're outside my ken. But sometimes when I'm in a theater I can feel them.” She could feel the evil rolling off those people.

At the university level, this perspective is commonplace – and that leads to ideological discrimination. That discrimination generally doesn't manifest as purposefully giving conservatives bad grades; most professors try to stay away from that, and do not attempt to destroy people in the classroom, except for a few not-that-rare exceptions. Professors *will*, however, grade conservative perspectives down unconsciously, because they believe those perspectives are wrong, and the people who advocate for them are bad. That's why when I was in college, I wrote like a communist on my tests -- thank God for blue books! I would put my student ID number on my blue books, and I was now indistinguishable from a member of the Spartacus Club. I recommend this strategy for all conservative students at liberal organizations and liberal universities: there's no reason to sacrifice your grades because the professor's a jerk.

This sort of bullying isn't just present at the universities. It has taken over the media wholesale. For the media, all arguments are character arguments. If you disagree with the members of the media about something, you are a fundamentally bad human being. The same is eminently true in Hollywood,

where moral narrative is the heart of the business. Hollywood is incredibly clever about pushing their narrative. They create a set of characters that you believe in, like and want to hang out with; you want to come back and hang out with those characters week after week after week. Then Hollywood twists your newfound friends into exemplars of absolutely irresponsible behavior, representatives of behavior you find personally unpalatable. But you like the character – and so, the Hollywood emotional appeal goes, you’re supposed to like what he or she does. This is the Hollywood argument same-sex marriage: you like certain characters, so if you don’t like their behavior, it’s because you’re mean and nasty. This is what Hollywood does best.

If you watch *Friends*, for example, and you don’t think that it’s moral for Rachel to sleep around and have a kid out of wedlock – especially given that she’s actually in love with the father of her child – then that’s because you’re intolerant. If you think that when Murphy Brown has a child out of wedlock, it’s wrong to paint her as a saint, as Dan Quayle pointed out – if you say that Murphy Brown pushed the lie that there are no real negative life consequences for having a baby without a husband -- , you are castigated as being a thickheaded bigot, as Quayle was. Now, twenty years later, Candice Bergen, who played Murphy Brown, admitted Quayle was right – but at the time, Quayle was running for re-election, and so he had to be wrong.

The left no longer makes arguments about policies’ effectiveness. Their only argument is character assassination.

When To Debate a Leftist

Before getting to *how* to debate a leftist, the first question to ask is why debate a leftist in the first place. Not every fight is worth having. You have to pick your fights; there are only so many hours in a day, and if you spend them battling with your hippie ex-roommate from Cal State Northridge on Facebook, you will regret those spent hours on your deathbed.

There are truly only three situations in which debating someone on the left is worthwhile. First, you must: your grade depends on it, or your waiter threatens to spit in your food unless you tell him why same-sex marriage is a detriment to Western civilization. Second, you found an honest leftist actually willing to be

convinced by solid argumentation. Congratulations! You found him. He actually wants to sit down and have an evidence-based conversation with you; you want to have an evidenced based conversation with him. Everything is just hunky dory! Then you ride off on your separate unicorns.

Third, you should debate a leftist if there is an audience. The goal of the debate will not be to win over the leftist, or to convince him or her, or to be friends with him or her. That person already disagrees with you, and they're not going to be convinced by your words of wisdom and your sparkling rhetorical flourishes. The goal will be to destroy the leftist in as public a way as is humanly possible.

Here is how you go about doing just that.

The Eleven Rules for Debating a Leftist

Rule #1: Walk Toward the Fire. This is a rule I learned from my late mentor Andrew Breitbart. He was a very clever tactician who understood the fight at a gut level: he got that politics is warfare by other means, and that you have to treat it like war.

Andrew used to say you have to embrace the fight, walk toward the fire. He would explain that you are going to get hit with the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune no matter which way you turn. You can try to hide from the attacks of the left; you can run away from them, attempt to ignore them, pretend that the left has reached some sort of quasi-consensus in which they live and let live. That will last until the protesters are outside your business, the government regulators are outside your house, or the administrators are inside your child's classroom. Then you'll realize that while you were willing to let live, the left simply wasn't.

There is no detente. Detente does not exist. No matter how nice or polite you are, they will come after you. Mitt Romney learned this the hard way. Mitt Romney is one of the most polite people to ever run for President. That didn't stop Mitt Romney from being excoriated as the world's most worst human being. John McCain is best friends with people like Senator Chuck Schumer (D-NY) -- and it did not matter one iota when it came time for McCain to run.

McCain was called a radical right-winger and was painted as a crazy, old kook to the vast majority of the American public.

The left knows this is war. And they know you are the enemy. You will be castigated. You will get punched. That's the way it will go because that's how the left wins: through intimidation and cruelty. You have to take the punch, you have to brush it off. You have to be *willing* to take the punch.

Rule #2: Hit First. Don't take the punch first. Hit first. Hit hard. Hit where it counts. Mike Tyson used to say, "Everybody has a plan 'til they get punched in the mouth." That's exactly correct. But throwing the first punch requires game-planning. Walking through the door, you have one shot – one! – to put someone down for the count from the beginning of a debate. If done properly, any debate on a single topic can be over within the first 30 seconds.

This takes research. You have to know your opponent. You have to know what he's going to say, what his favorite tactics are, and what his default positions will be. You need to learn your opposition inside-out. If you can spar with a standin before a debate, do it: there's a reason that both Romney and Obama did this before their presidential debates. In most debates that aren't presidential, your opponent will likely take the debate lightly. There is no substitute for preparation. Know your opponents' tendencies – particularly if he has a tendency to lower his hands. That's where you punch.

Rule #3: Frame Your Opponent. I have argued that the left's entire playbook consists of a single play: characterizing the opposition. It's incredibly effective. And the only way to get beyond character arguments is to frame your opponent – make it toxic for your opponent to slur you. Then, hopefully, you can move the debate to more substantive territory.

This is the *vital* first step. It is the *only* first step. It is the reason that the right consistently loses the black and Hispanic vote – not because the right's policies are so abhorrent to blacks and Hispanics, but because blacks and Hispanics have been told for generations that conservatives hate them.

There is no way to convince someone that you don't hate him or her. You *can* convince him or her, however, that your opposition is a liar and a hater. When a leftist calls a conservative racist, the conservative tendency is to defend

yourself by explaining why you aren't racist. This is a losing battle. In fact, you've lost the argument the minute you engage in it. The proper response to a charge of racism is *not*, "I'm not a racist. Never have been. I have black friends, black bosses, black employees." You've already given away the store by dignifying the charge with a response. The proper response to a charge that you beat your wife is *not* to explain that you don't beat your wife and are in fact an ardent feminist: it's to point out that throwing around accusations without evidence makes your opponent a piece of garbage. The truth is that your opponent, who labels you a racist without evidence, is the actual racist: it is he who waters down the term racism until it is meaningless by labeling any argument with which he disagrees racist.

No rational conversation is possible with someone who insists you are not worthy of debate. In fact, if your opponent thinks you're not worthy of debating, *he* isn't worthy of debating. If your opponent wants to enter a world in which we can have rational conversations about the costs and benefits of particular policies, you're happy to do that. If not, the conversation is over. There will be no conversation in which you call me a racist, and I explain why I'm not a racist. That's a conversation for idiots.

Now, there's another important point here: *don't wait for your opponent to call you a racist before going on the offensive*. You've researched your opponent; you've game-planned him. You know he's going to call you a racist, because he *always* calls his opponents racist.

So hit him first by pointing out his vicious tactic.

This is what I did with CNN's Piers Morgan when I debated with him on gun control. Piers Morgan had made himself the face of the gun control movement in the aftermath of the horrific Sandy Hook Elementary massacre, and he did it by bringing on folks from the right and then suggesting that they were evil for disagreeing with him. Or, alternatively, he'd bring on kooks like Alex Jones, wait for them to go berserk, and then suggest that all gun owners were berserk nuts waiting to go off. When he had on Larry Pratt of Gun Owners of America, he called him an "unbelievably stupid man" after Pratt pointed out gun control's failure in municipalities across the country. He then added, "You have absolutely no coherent argument. You don't actually give a damn about the gun murder rate in America."

In the aftermath of that conversation, I wrote a column in which I suggested that Morgan had been “off the rails for days in the wake of the massacre at Sandy Hook.” Morgan invited me on to discuss the column.

Here’s how the conversation went:

PIERS MORGAN, CNN HOST: My next guest has strong words for me. He says I’m off the rails on guns in America. Ben Shapiro is editor-at-large at Breitbart.com and the author of Bullies: How the Left’s Culture of Fear and Intimidation Silences Americans. So, why am I off the rails, Mr. Shapiro?

SHAPIRO: You know, honestly Piers, you have kind of been a bully on this issue, because what you do, and I’ve seen it repeatedly on your show. I watch your show. And I’ve seen it repeatedly. What you tend to do is you tend to demonize people who differ from you politically by standing on the graves of the children of Sandy Hook saying they don’t seem to care enough about the dead kids. If they cared more about the dead kids, they would agree with you on policy. I think we can have a rational, political conversation about balancing rights and risks and rewards of all of these different policies, but I don’t think that what we need to do is demonize people on the other side as being unfeeling about what happened at Sandy Hook.

It was at this point that Morgan, in the words of Breitbart’s John Nolte, clutched at his pearls.

MORGAN: How dare you accuse me of standing on the graves of the children that died there. How dare you.

SHAPIRO: I’ve seen you do it repeatedly, Piers.

MORGAN: Like I say, how dare you.

SHAPIRO: Well, I mean, you can keep saying that, but you’ve done it repeatedly. What you do, and I’ve seen you do it on your program, is you keep saying to folks if they disagree with you politically, then somehow this

is a violation of what happened in Sandy Hook.

Later on in the interview, Piers would come back to this point, belittling me personally because he disagreed with my arguments on Second Amendment rights. Again, I hammered home the point: Piers was a loudmouth and a bully:

MORGAN: Do you know how absurd you sound?

SHAPIRO: Here's where you go into the "absurd" and the bullying. "You're absurd, you're stupid." I understand --

MORGAN: I'm not bullying.

SHAPIRO: Of course you are.

MORGAN: I'm not the one who came in here and accused you of standing on the graves of dead children --

SHAPIRO: Because you're the one who is doing that. I'm punching back twice as hard.

MORGAN: That's what I call bullying.

SHAPIRO: You know what I call it? Punching back twice as hard, in the words of President Obama.

MORGAN: That's what I call bullying.

SHAPIRO: This is astonishing.

MORGAN: What's astonishing?

SHAPIRO: What's astonishing about it is for weeks now, you have been saying that anybody who disagrees with your position is absurd, idiotic, and doesn't care about the dead kids in Sandy Hook. And then when I say that it's a bullying tactic, you turn around and that say I'm bullying you for saying that. It's absurd. It's ridiculous.

It's important to do this. The left doesn't have a playbook. They have a play. One play. The play: you're a jerk. they have a play. One play! The play is you're nasty. Take that away from them, and they have nothing. There is literally nothing Piers Morgan could say, because he had no facts or evidence at his disposal – at least not for the arguments he was making.

When I took that tactic away from Piers, he was essentially finished.

The interview was a two-segment interview. During the break, Piers had one of his producers wheel out a victim of a shooting. Undoubtedly, he was preparing to swivel the camera – I could actually see the cameraman prepping to do so – and force me to make my pro-gun rights arguments to someone who had been wounded in a shooting. But because I had already called out his bully tactic, that gambit was off the table. The minute he pulled that cynical ploy, I would have told him that he was perfectly comfortable not only standing on the graves of the children of Sandy Hook, but standing on the wheelchair of a shooting victim. I would have said, “Why do you have to use victims to illustrate your point? Why can't you just convince me on the basis of the evidence that what you're proposing is the right solution for America?”

Suffice it to say, Piers was quite unhappy during the debate.

Rule #4: Frame the debate. The left is expert at framing debates. They have buzzwords they use to direct the debate toward unwinnable positions for you. They are tolerant, diverse, fighters for social justice; if you oppose them, by contrast, you are intolerant, xenophobic, and in favor of injustice.

Now, all these terms are – to be polite – a crock, if considered as absolute moral values. The left is wildly intolerant of religious people and conservatives; that's why they're interested in forcing Christian bakers to cater to same-sex weddings. They are anti-intellectual diversity, particularly in areas of American life in which they predominate; that's why they stifle conservatism on campus and in the media. And as for social justice, if social is supposed to be opposed to individual, then social justice is by definition unjust. The left's use of magical buzzwords places you in a corner, against supposed universal values that aren't universal or universally held.

It's important that you neuter those buzzwords quickly, because otherwise

you will be arguing against nonsense terms that can be used against you. You can't argue against empty terms. So *don't* accept the premises of their arguments, which are largely buzzword based. On same-sex marriage, the question is *not* how same-sex marriage hurts your marriage – that's a nonsensical and stupid question, like asking how enslavement of others hurts you personally. The question is whether a child needs a mother and a father. The question is *not* whether two people who love each other should be given state sanction – even the left recognizes that such a definition is too broad, given that it would include incestuous relationships. The question *is* why marriage should be redefined, and how same-sex marriage will strengthen the institution.

On gun control, I used this rule against Piers Morgan when I redefined the debate from why Americans *need* a particular type of gun – a silly question, given that Americans don't *need* many of the things we consider essential manifestations of freedom – and toward the question of how to square the Second Amendment with demands of public safety. To that end, I handed Morgan a copy of the Constitution. I told him I was happy to discuss the evidence on gun control, happy to discuss risks and rights and rewards of particular policies. But we had to bring the Constitution into the conversation. "I would really like to hear your policy prescriptions for what we should do about guns because you say you respect the second amendment. You know, I brought this here for you so you can read it. It's the Constitution," I told him. The point was to force Morgan into an area in which he was uncomfortable. Morgan would later slam down that copy of the Constitution and call it "your little book" – rejecting a universally-accepted framework for discussing gun control, and throwing it in the American people's faces. Just over a year later, Piers was off the air.

This tactic – forcing the left to debate within frameworks they dislike – is useful on virtually every front. When you're discussing global warming, for example, the proper question is *not* whether man is causing global warming. The question is whether man can *fix* global warming – a question to which the universally-acknowledged answer is essentially no, unless we are willing to revert to the pre-industrial age. This is a more useful question, and it also avoids the left's preferred line of argument on global warming, which is a variation on their preferred line on gun control: "Global warming is man-made. Don't agree? That's because you're stupid and hateful." As a general matter, the left's favorite

three lines of attack are (1) you're stupid; (2) you're mean; (3) you're corrupt. Sarah Palin is supposedly stupid; Mitt Romney is supposedly mean; Dick Cheney is supposedly corrupt. Take away those lines of attack and watch the discomfort set in.

Rule #5: Spot Inconsistencies in the Left's Arguments. The left's arguments are chock full of inconsistencies. Internal inconsistencies – inconsistencies that are inherent to the left's general worldview. That's because very few people on the left will acknowledge their actual agenda, which is quite extreme. Leftists prefer to argue half-measures in which they don't truly believe. For example, they say they want to ban assault weapons to stop gun murders. But that argument is silly, because handguns are used to kill far more people than so-called assault weapons. And yet the left won't argue in favor of a blanket gun ban, because they know they will lose.

To take another example, with regard to healthcare, the left suggests that their entire goal is to make healthcare available to everyone. But they don't mandate that a certain percentage of the population go to medical school. That's because in order for government to *guarantee* a product's availability, the government must either hire workers or force workers to get into a given industry. The government hiring workers would require paying money for doctors – and the left argues that doctors already make too much money. And the left won't argue openly for what they would prefer: forcing people to practice medicine for patients deemed worthy by the government. Unless you are willing to force people using the law to go to medical school, you cannot have a successful universal healthcare system. That's what they're finding out in Britain, Canada, and Israel – all countries in which private medicine is on the rise, legally or illegally, outside government auspices.

Healthcare and gun control aren't the only examples. On same-sex marriage, the left claims that the state has no business regulating someone's private life... unless the left is simultaneously proclaiming that the state *must* sanction someone's private activity. On abortion, the left says it is for choice, but ignores that the baby has no choice.

There are almost invariably unbridgeable inconsistencies in the left's publicly stated positions that are at war with their actual fundamental principles. Your goal is to make the left admit once and for all what they believe about policy by

exposing those inconsistencies.

Rule #6: Force Leftists to Answer Questions. This is really just a corollary of Rule #4. Leftists are only comfortable when they are forcing you to answer questions. If they have to answer questions, they begin to scratch their heads. The questions they prefer to ask are about your character; the questions they prefer not to answer are *all of them*. Instead, they like to dodge issues in favor of those character arguments.

If you force a leftist to answer whether he or she would prefer to give up mom or dad in the name of political correctness – after all, all families are equal, so what difference does it make? – they will avoid. If you force a leftist to answer whether they would force churches to perform same-sex marriages, they will avoid. If you force a leftist to answer why we should all give up our nice cars while the Chinese and Russians continue to dump toxic waste into the atmosphere, they will avoid.

Forcing the left to answer questions is often like trying to pin pudding to the wall – messy and near-impossible. But it's uncomfortable for them to be on the defensive.

Rule #7: Do Not Get Distracted. You may notice when arguing with someone on the left that every time you begin to make a point, that leftist begins shouting about George W. Bush. It's like Leftist Tourette's Syndrome. "Why did Obama blow out the budget?" "BUUUUUUSHHHH!!!!!"

Don't be fooled. You don't need to follow the idiotic rabbit down into his Bushy rabbit hole. The same holds true of same-sex marriage, which leftists bring up no matter what the context. You don't like the current tax rates? Well, you probably think those taxes are too because PROPOSITION 8.

Arguing with the left is like attempting to nail jello to the wall. It's slippery and messy and a waste of resources. You must force them to answer the question. So the next time they mention Bush, your reply should be, "WILLIAM MCKINLEY." Bush has nothing to do with anything.

In our gun control debate, Piers Morgan tried exactly this tactic; during the break, one of his Oompa-Loompas scurried out with several boxes of Sudafed.

Being from California, I, of course, thought that we were preparing to cook some crystal meth. But what was about to ensue was less profitable. He tried to contend that I was inconsistent because there are restrictions on the amount of Sudafed you can buy, but not on the amount of ammunition. I simply stated that I didn't see the relationship between the two laws. I'd be happy to discuss either in isolation, but I found the connection unnecessary and distracting. He had to move on.

Rule #8: You Don't Have To Defend People on Your Side. Just because someone is on your side doesn't mean you have to defend everything he or she says. Conservatives get trapped in this gambit routinely, because they figure that the enemy of their enemy is their friend: if the left is attacking someone, he must be worth defending. But that's not true. I liked George W. Bush, but his second term was a disaster area. So was much of his first term. I don't feel the necessity to defend his Iran policy, because it was terrible. Period.

Ronald Reagan was not a god. He himself would have said that. Don't follow people. Follow principle.

Rule #9: If You Don't Know Something, Admit It. I remember one time when I was younger and was in a business meeting with a client I was trying to convince to invest. The client asked me if I knew about something he had written. I nodded absently; he then asked me what I thought. I attempted to BS a response, but failed miserably. Later, someone older and wiser took me to task for it.

I made it my mission from then on to admit it if I didn't know enough about something. Don't get caught in the trap of believing you have to know everything about everything. Your opponent will undoubtedly know something you don't. It's fair to simply state, "I didn't know that, but I'll be happy to research and get back to you."

Another side-note here: don't bring up a topic with which you aren't passingly familiar.

Mitt Romney would have benefitted from that strategy. When he brought up Benghazi in the Candy Crowley debate, it was clear he wasn't fluent with the topic. The result: he got pantsed publicly, even though he was correct.

Rule #10: Let The Other Side Have Meaningless Victories. This is a parlor trick you can use to great effect with your leftist friends. Leftists prize faux moderation above all else; by granting them a point or two, you can convince them that you aren't a radical right-winger at all. After all, everyone can admit both parties are terrible!

These are points that mean nothing. You lose nothing by stating that both the Democratic and Republican Parties are awful – and they look immoderate by refusing to acknowledge the same. The same holds true with regard to the left's language.

If the left engages you on immigration reform, your answer should always be that you are *for* immigration reform. Now, how do they define immigration reform? That's the key question. But because you've already granted the premise that you like the idea of immigration reform, you don't look like a naysayer off the bat. The truth is that like most political buzzwords, immigration reform can mean virtually anything: it can mean erecting a moat on the border, or granting blanket amnesty. The conversation is meaningless until you force the left to define terms. Until then, we can all agree on useless platitudes.

Rule #11: Body Language Matters. Remember back in 2008 when John McCain was debating Barack Obama? The imagistics were relatively horrible for Republicans. You had a tall relatively good-looking black dude versus a short, hunched-over, angry-looking, balding white refugee from casting for Emperor Palpatine. During the ridiculous walk and talk debate, John McCain throttled the mic as if to strangle it. Whomever looks angriest in debate loses. Immediately. And during the DNC, Obama looked like a Greek god descending from the clouds on an Olympian stage, while McCain looked like he had gotten lost in front of a green screen in a porn studio in the San Fernando Valley.

Nixon lost the 1960 televised debate with Kennedy, but won the radio debate. They were the same debate. Nixon just looked awful.

The left is expert at imagistics. The right is not, because the right falsely believes that shallow imagistics can be beaten with substance. Which has worked out fabulously for every great actress who is 300 lbs. in Hollywood – all two of them who are working.

Everyone laughed at Marco Rubio for swigging from a water bottle during his response to the State of the Union; the right protested that such laughter wasn't fair. But the truth is that it was fair. The water-swigging said two things: that Marco Rubio was nervous and the Republican party was too incompetent to remember to put a bottle of water on the podium before him. Imagistics matter.

Bill Clinton knew that body language mattered. He bit the lower lip, because it conveyed emotion and control. He had varying types of handshake for various levels of potential donors (and he had one special type of handshake for Monica Lewinsky). He gestured with the elevator-button-push: a fist with the thumbpad forward, conveying power and gentleness. He uses wide and open arm motions.

There's a reason that major Democratic candidates work with Hollywood. President Obama – then Senator Obama – was the first major candidate to ever use teleprompters in his Iowa caucus win. He knew he was speaking with the American people, not the people in the room. People in the room may have mocked him. He knew better. Ted Cruz should have been staring into camera during his filibuster. And he should have been biting his lip when he read *Green Eggs and Ham*.

You have to look like you're a nice person in order for people to believe that you are a nice person. Scientific studies show that people will judge you literally within milliseconds of seeing you. Make them see what you want them to see.

Conclusion

In February 2014, about a year after Piers and I debated gun control on his show, CNN announced that he would be tossed off the program. I'm glad to have had a hand in exposing his nasty line of argumentation for what it was. But honestly, debating those on the left is a skill that anyone can learn if you're willing to put in the time, get to know your own arguments, and get to know the arguments of the left even better.

And you will be dragged into these debates. You will be dragged into a fight. It may not be fun; you may hate it. But you don't *have* to hate it. In fact, it can be an absolute blast. The moment you don't give a damn what they say about you because you realize they're lying is the moment you have the upper hand.

It's a thrill when you know how to respond to someone who calls you a racist without evidence. It's a thrill to go on the offense. And it's a double thrill to do so when you know the future of the country is at stake, and you're taking a vital role in fighting back.

In 2009, Obama surrogate Jim Messina told Democratic Senators that they could defend Obamacare as stridently as possible – because, after all, “If you get hit,” Messina said, “we will punch back twice as hard.”

For decades, conservatives have been hit by bullies. And there's only one way to deal with bullies. In the words of the White House, punch back twice as hard.