

Nix the Nazi talk

Hate someone with a passion? Call them a Nazi. It's not exactly a new thing, but people are tossing about the term willy nilly lately. In the end, it says more about the person saying it than the person they're targeting. In an effort to criticize House Majority Leader John Boehner's golf meeting with President Obama, country singer Hank Williams Jr. recently said, "That would be like Hitler playing golf with Netanyahu." Or, not. President Obama might be a political adversary of Boehner's, but he's also not trying to round up Republicans and slaughter them by the millions. Because, you know, that's what Hitler did. He ordered the elimination of a people in his quest for power and domination. Williams' comment was a slap in the face of the survivors of the holocaust and to Jewish people everywhere. He lost his gig as the singer of the Monday Night Football intro and claimed his First Amendment rights were threatened. No, Hank, you were allowed to say it. It was stupid, immature, thoughtless and businesses didn't want to be associated with you. That's their right to react to your comment. Similarly, actress Susan Sarandon recently said she sent a copy of "Dead Man Walking" to Pope John Paul II, "not this Nazi one we have now." She was, of course, referring to German-native Pope Benedict XVI, a leader in the fight against the death penalty. Born Joseph Ratzinger, the pope was raised during the rise of the Nazi party and was forced, like all teenage boys of his age, to join the Hitler Youth. He was drafted into the anti-aircraft corps and eventually abandoned his service. His cousin, who had Down syndrome, was killed by Nazis. As Catholics, our natural, and justified, reaction to a comment like Sarandon's is shock. Can you imagine the terror that came with growing up during that era? It's sad that Sarandon, who grew up Catholic and in Catholic schools, threw out such a careless insult. It's become easy to refer to someone else as a "Nazi" of some kind these days. That doesn't mean it's appropriate, though. A person who uses such a term fails to understand the pain that it inflicts on the Jewish people as well.