

Rehab for Coulter

by The San Diego Union-Tribune

Conservative pundit Ann Coulter built her reputation by making inflammatory statements designed to infuriate her liberal critics. But her use of an anti-gay slur to describe Democratic presidential contender John Edwards was not merely inflammatory. It was bigoted hate speech warranting condemnation from liberals and conservatives alike.

Speaking to the Conservative Political Action Conference in Washington, Coulter said "it turns out you have to go into rehab if you use the word 'faggot,' so I - so kind of an impasse, can't really talk about Edwards." Her employing the term as a crude condemnation of gays was far more offensive than whatever criticism she intended of Edwards.

There was a time when politicians were free to single out virtually any minority group for derision. But that day has long since passed - or so we thought. The sad truth is, America's political discourse has grown stunningly coarse with the proliferation of voices on cable channels and the Internet.

Consider the foul postings of bloggers who expressed enthusiastic regret that Vice President Dick Cheney was not killed in last week's suicide bomb attack in Afghanistan. Liberal TV comic Bill Maher joined the frenzy, lamenting that Cheney survived the blast.

Neither liberals nor conservatives have a monopoly on incivility or bigotry. Such extremist hate speech has no place in the political process. Coulter, however, is right about one thing. Going into rehab for spewing hatred is not a bad idea.

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