

## NAMES

The comedian Milton Jones has this to say about name-calling....  
*"My mum used to say that 'Sticks and stones will break my bones but words will never hurt me'. That was until I fell into a printing press...."*

The truth of the matter is that names **can** hurt deeply. A test of society is how we treat one another and what is deemed to be acceptable behaviour - and that includes language.

**Enable Scotland** works with people with learning disabilities and has just begun a campaign called **#bethechange**. The charity's findings are that many of the people they work with are routinely the victims of offensive language.

At the same time, statistics have emerged of homophobic bullying in schools. Teachers claim it's widespread with 9 out of 10 saying it happens in *their* school, and a third saying they hear it from other staff members. The vast majority of teachers have not had any training on how to deal with this.

It's up to all of us to care about this issue and to speak up against bullying and offensive language - especially when many of the groups on the receiving end constitute a small percentage of our population.

On this week of Remembrance, when war is on our minds, it might be worth recalling the words of Protestant pastor Martin Neimoller who spoke out against Hitler, and who ended up 7 years in a concentration camp.

He was expressing the importance of solidarity when he said,  
*"First they came for the Socialists, and I did not speak out - because I was not a Socialist.  
Then they came for the Trade Unionists, and I did not speak out - because I was not a Trade Unionist.  
Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out - because I was not a Jew."*

He continues with a list of different groups of people until he reaches the punchline.  
*"Then they came for me - and there was no one left to speak for me."*

The message is straightforward – we need to stand up for one another.

We ourselves may not have learning difficulties or suffer from homophobic bullying, but if our society is to be as it *should* be, we need to raise our voice on the side of those who are being targeted.

Our voice, coupled with that of others, might just turn out to be the difference, and begin turning the tide.

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