For the past year I have written numerous op-eds denouncing the President for his hateful, bullying and racist discourse. My arguments are not primarily partisan. As a scholar and teacher of rhetoric, I have argued that Trump’s words have real consequences for which all Americans must be concerned.

On Tuesday we learned that suspicious packages were sent to President Obama, the Clinton’s, John Brennan (via CNN), Eric Holder, Maxine Waters and George Soros. All of these individuals are political figures critical of President Trump and all have been viciously attacked by the President and his followers in speeches and Tweets. Coincidence or pattern?
To be clear: I do not believe that Trump “directly” caused or perpetrated these violent attacks. I also believe the White House was sincere when they immediately condemned what transpired. Nevertheless, we must admit that, when you have a leader preaching hatred, demonizing people and groups, and making ad hominem arguments, this increases substantially the likelihood that such rhetoric will breed more hatred, empowering and enabling others to engage in despicable behavior.

Words do indeed matter. Applauding an elected official for body slamming a member of the media, calling the press “the enemy of the people,” and inciting those at his rallies to chant “lock her up” have consequences. It is time for President Trump to be held accountable. American citizens should not vote for any candidate or incumbent who fails to rebuke—or has a record of failing to rebuke—the President.

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