

Biden team is using identity politics to shut down debate about Jill Biden's 'Dr.' title



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Longtime columnist Joseph Epstein created quite the stir this weekend when the *Wall Street Journal* [published his op-ed](#) questioning Jill Biden's use of the honorific, "Doctor."

I admit I found Epstein's language a bit condescending, even though I agreed with the substance of his argument. It's one thing to question the point of useless academic degrees intended to boost one's status; it's another to diminish a person's status by referring to a grown woman, who will soon be the first lady of the United States, as "kiddo."

However, this criticism quickly turned into an avalanche of outrage that's hard even to explain. Northwestern University, which Epstein was once affiliated with, wiped its connection to him from the college's website and released a statement condemning his "misogynistic views." President-elect Joe Biden's entire team rallied to decry Epstein's op-ed as "sexist" and "demeaning," and demanded that the *Wall Street Journal* retract it and publish an apology.

To its credit, the *Wall Street Journal* did not cave. Paul Gigot, the paper's opinions editor, [published a response](#) condemning the Biden team's attempt to turn Epstein's argument into an identity politics sledgehammer with which to bully the publication. He's right. There was nothing inherently sexist about Epstein's argument — [similar criticisms are often launched at men who use the title "Doctor"](#) — but this claim allowed Biden's camp to dismiss the argument entirely and stifle any future criticism about Jill Biden's title.

Epstein made a fair point and one that does not just apply to Jill Biden. Academic credentials are overrated and unnecessary. That doesn't lessen Jill Biden's educational achievements so much as it reminds everyone that she is no better than the rest of us just because she went to graduate school. Surely, Jill Biden would agree.

But, if we've learned anything over the past few years, it's that it is much easier to dismiss criticism, whether it is earned or not, on the grounds of identity politics than it is to admit that maybe your critics have a point. In a brief response to Epstein's op-ed, Jill Biden said, "Together, we will build a world where the accomplishments of our daughters will be celebrated, rather than diminished."

Again, Epstein's op-ed had nothing to do with the fact that Jill Biden is a female. And he admitted that Jill Biden's doctorate degree was "hard-earned." But this is how identity politics works, especially when it goes on the offensive: By simply asserting that an argument is a race- or gender-specific attack, one can discredit it without actually engaging it.

The result, in this case, is that Epstein's innocuous op-ed looked much more serious when compared to the embarrassing response it provoked.