

THE ZOMBIE RIGHTS CAMPAIGN

Politically Correct Style Guide

We here at the Zombie Rights Campaign understand the difficulties that a writer or layperson faces when discussing the Zombie Community. What is the proper form of address? What titles and adjectives should one use, and what ones should be avoided? How best can a person be diplomatic in social situations with the Undead, and on a lighter note, what are some good icebreakers to use at a mixed Living/Undead party or gathering?

The Zombie Rights Campaign, the Web's Premiere Zombie Advocacy Organization, is more than happy to help, and so has prepared this short style guide to help you be courteous and respectful in all your conversations to, or about, the Differently Animated. Please enjoy.

Section One: Proper and Improper Terms and Adjectives

What follows is a short but relatively comprehensive list of good words to use, and 'bad' words that should be avoided, when discussing the Zombie community.

Good/Preferable	Bad/Disfavored
Zombie	Walking Corpse
Differently Animated	Walking Dead
Undead-American (or other nationality)	Revenant
Zombie-American (or other nationality)	Shambler
Respiration-Optional	Stench (rarely seen these days)
Post-Mortem Achiever	Living-Impaired (too negative)
	Fiend/Demon (inaccurate and negative)

Section Two: Avoid Using 'Zombie' As Pejorative

This is a relatively easy task, and yet we often see writers fail and improperly apply the term 'Zombie' to something that is not, in fact, a Zombie or Zombie-like entity. Usually when this is the case, the word 'Zombie' is being used as an epithet, a negative term that attempts to use the old negative stereotyping of Zombies against a more modern topic.

For example, you might see terms like 'Zombie bank' used to describe a careless financial entity that only survives through accounting trickery, or 'Zombie legislation' used to describe a bill that the speaker disfavors but cannot manage to defeat in the normal parliamentary process.

These uses are both inaccurate and offensive. Inaccurate, in that the entities being described usually are unlike Zombies in most respects (a bank that survives only through government bailouts hardly matches a Zombie for industrious labor, and a piece of legislation that persists due to support in Congress, while noteworthy, does not seem to possess the fierce individualism that allows a Zombie to rise from the grave, etc). Offensive in that one of the most commonly applied appellations for a group of people is being used as cultural shorthand for other negative terms, terms such as 'lazy', 'parasite', or 'insatiable cannibalistic monster'.

Thus the ZRC asks that the term 'Zombie' be reserved for describing actual Zombies, or very similar creatures/actors from the real world. For example, while Rasputin may not have been an actual Zombie, his repeated defiance of mortality in the face of assassination attempts could well be described as 'Zombie-like'. This is a literal case of a man surviving fatal injuries, after all. Likewise, a company that truly comes back from bankruptcy with renewed vigor and focus could be described as a 'Financial Zombie', in that it has exhibited Zombie like traits in its own sphere.

Section Three: Strive for Accuracy

This one seems simple enough, but a number of common pitfalls face many living people when they talk about Zombies.

For one thing, people often mean very different things, depending on where they are from and their own cultural traditions, when they talk about Zombies. Do they mean a Voodoo Zombi, which under some definitions is an individual that isn't even Undead, or perhaps a body that has risen from the grave? If it has risen, under what influence? You might think you're talking about a Zombie when in fact, you were discussing a Frankensteinian product of Mad Science, or a Demon using human bodies for hosts, or perhaps even a haunted Native American burial ground.

And wouldn't you feel silly when you found out the truth.

Even within the broad category of modern, undead, typically non-magical 'Zombies' there is considerable variation. Some Zombies are brought back to the state of Unlife via chemicals, others under astronomical or extraterrestrial influences, and yet others via chemical or microbial action. While in general the broader term 'Zombie' is appropriate for all these individuals, confusing one subgroup of Zombies from another is something of a social faux pas and frowned upon in polite society. Before you go and ask a Zombie about their Witch Doctor, or what the serial number of the secret black ops chemical drum that spilled upon their grave was, make sure that you haven't made a clumsy and foolish assumption about the background of your interlocutor.

Section Four: Writing (and Thinking) about the Differently Animated in a Sensitive Manner

A particular challenge faced by Zombies when dealing with the outside world is that, for many Living people, finding out that someone is a Zombie represents both the beginning and the end of the search for knowledge. Once they have learned that someone is Undead, they presume to know the whole story, and close the book on that individual. Thus being a Zombie comes to define the scope of a Zombie's entire world, and the totality of their person is ignored.

For example, if you saw a Zombie on the street, what would you think of them? If you're a typical person, you'd see only the greenish (or greyish) skin and fear for your personal safety. When asked to recount this event you would speak in fearful terms about the 'Dead Walking the Earth' and 'Romero' this, 'Romero' that.

This is plainly and sadly the result of decades of media disinformation and scare-tactics, especially in popular entertainment. But if you had looked a little closer, what might you have seen?

That Zombie individual you passed quickly on the street was, in fact, peacefully socializing with a Living friend. They were on their way to some social gathering, perhaps a party, and contrary to stereotypes, no one was being menaced or having their brains eaten. Since you never looked past their

skin color you failed to notice the snappy semi-formal dress of your new Zombie acquaintance or the careful shine he had applied to his shoes, hoping to make a good impression; you unfortunately assumed they were disheveled and dirty, because that's how Zombies always are, at least in the movies you watch on Netflix. And so an innocent encounter with the Zombie Man on the Street becomes fodder for another terrifying anti-Zombie prejudice.

Isn't that a shame?

This outcome can be avoided simply by taking the time to look a little deeper when dealing with the Differently Animated. Just because a person is a Zombie, that doesn't define them. Zombies come in all shapes and sizes, and several colors. Zombies may be dressed in all forms of attire, and contrary to stereotypes may be quite clean. If you saw a Living person, disheveled and dirty, limping on the street, why, you might stop to help them, to ask if they needed assistance. Why should this be any different for a Zombie?

Breaking out of that coffin for the first time can be quite a workout after all.

Don't fall prey to ugly stereotyping of the Differently Animated! There are good Zombies and bad Zombies, just like with any other group of people. Zombies are just like you, in most respects. They eat, they laugh and joke and hang out with their friends. Does it really matter if their hearts are beating, or if they have a dietary restriction to eating only uncooked flesh? If so, perhaps you should ask yourself why.

Maybe being uncomfortable with Zombies is really a sign that a person isn't comfortable with themselves.

So when you next encounter a Zombie, ask questions, seek deeper meaning. Employ both your observational skills and your empathy. Who knows? You might learn something not just about your Undead fellow man, but about yourself as well.