

Nigga

Nigga (/ˈnɪɡə/) is a colloquial term used in [African-American Vernacular English](#) that began as an [eye-dialect](#) form of the word *[nigger](#)*, an [ethnic slur](#) against [black people](#). In some dialects of English, the two words are pronounced the same in [non-rhotic](#) speech.

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Usage

In practice, its use and meaning are heavily dependent on context.^[1] Presently, the word "nigga" is used more liberally among younger members of all [races](#) and [ethnicities](#) in the [United States](#).^[2] In addition to [African Americans](#), other ethnic groups have adopted the term as part of their vernacular, although this usage is controversial.^{[3][4]}

There is conflicting popular opinion on whether there is any meaningful difference between "nigga" and "nigger" as a spoken term.^[5] Many people consider the terms to be equally [pejorative](#), and the use of "nigga" both in and outside black communities remains controversial.^[6] H. Lewis Smith, author of *Bury That Sucka: A Scandalous Affair with the N-word*, believes that "replacing the 'er' with an 'a' changes nothing other than the pronunciation"^[7] and the African American Registry notes, "Brother (Brotha) and Sister (Sistah or Sista) are terms of endearment. Nigger was and still is a word of disrespect."^[8] The [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People](#), a civil rights group, condemns use of both "nigga" and "nigger".^[5]

Some African-Americans only consider "nigga" offensive when used by people of other races,^[5] seeing its use outside a [defined social group](#) as an unwelcome [cultural appropriation](#). Used by blacks, the term may indicate "solidarity or affection",^[9] similar to the usage of the words "[dude](#)", "[homeboy](#)", and "bro". Others consider "nigga" non-offensive except when directed from a non-African-American towards an African-American. Yet others have derided this as hypocritical and harmful, enabling white racists to use the word and confusing the issue over *nigger*.^[3]

Cultural influence

The term "nigga, please", used in the 1970s by comics such as Paul Mooney as "a funny punctuation in jokes about Blacks",^[10] is now heard routinely in comedy routines by African Americans. The growing use of the term is often attributed to its ubiquity in modern American hip hop music.^{[11][12]} Examples include:

- Niggaz Wit Attitudes (N.W.A)
- A Tribe Called Quest's "Sucka Nigga"
- The Notorious B.I.G.'s "The Realest Niggaz"
- Jay-Z's "Jigga That Nigga" and "Nigga What, Nigga Who (Originator 99)"
- Jay-Z and Kanye West's "Niggas in Paris"
- DJ Khaled's "I Wish You Would"
- C Murder's "Down for My N's"
- Snoop Dogg's "For All My Niggaz and Bitches"
- Nicki Minaj's "Lookin Ass"
- Kanye West's "All Day"
- YG's "My Nigga"
- Bobby Shmurda's "Hot Nigga"
- Young Boss Niggaz (YBN)
- Metro Boomin's producer tag
- 6ix9ine's "Gummo"
- The Pharcyde's "I'm That Type of Nigga"

One of the earliest uses of the term in a popular song was the 1983 song "New York New York" by Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five, although it had featured in some very early hip hop recordings such as "Scoopy Rap" and "Family Rap", both from 1979. Ol' Dirty Bastard uses the term 76 times in his *Nigga Please* album (not including repetitions in choruses).^[12]

Comedian Chris Rock's routine "Niggas vs. Black People" distinguishes a "nigga", which he defined as a "low-expectation-having motherfucker", from a "black person". In contrast, Tupac Shakur distinguished between "nigger" and "nigga": "Niggers was the ones on the rope, hanging off the thing; niggas is the ones with gold ropes, hanging out at clubs."^[13] Tupac, who has been credited with legitimizing the term, said his song "N.I.G.G.A." stood for "Never Ignorant Getting Goals Accomplished".^[14]

Use in trademarks or brand names

Until a 2017 ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court in *Matal v. Tam*,^[15] the Lanham Act did not permit registration of trademarks containing terms that may disparage persons or bring them into disrepute.^[16] Registration by the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (PTO) of terms that are historically considered disparaging to groups of people has been allowed in some circumstances. Self-disparaging trademarks have been allowed in some cases where the applicant has shown that the mark as-used is not considered by the relevant group to be disparaging.^[17]

In 1995, two Houston, Texas men filed a trademark application with the PTO for the words "Naturally Intelligent God Gifted Africans", and its acronym. The application was rejected, as were numerous subsequent applications for variations of the word "nigga". Most recently, comedian Damon Wayans twice attempted to trademark a brand name called Nigga, "featuring clothing, books, music and general merchandise".^[11] The PTO refused the application, stating "the very fact that debate is ongoing regarding in-[ethnic]-group usage, shows that a substantial composite of African Americans find the term 'nigga' to be offensive".^[12]

See also

- Guilty or Innocent of Using the N Word*
- Reappropriation
- Murzyn

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External links

- "Let's Make a Deal on the N-Word: White folks will stop using it, and black folks will stop pretending that quoting it is saying it," (<https://web.archive.org/web/20100818035852/http://www.theroot.com/views/lets-make-deal-n-word>) John McWhorter, *The Root*

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