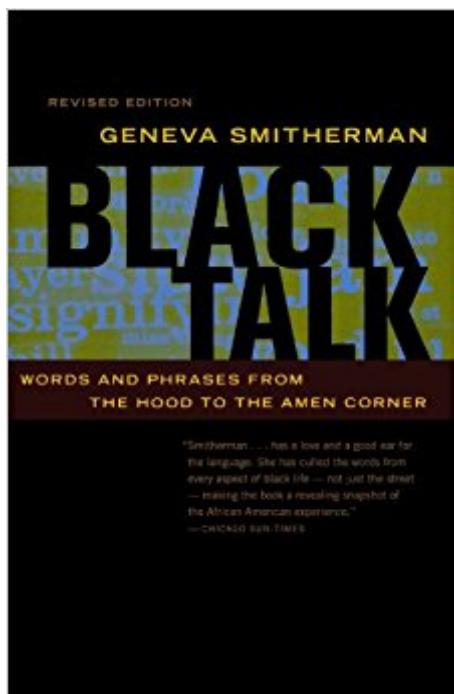


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# Black Talk: Words And Phrases From The Hood To The Amen Corner



## **Synopsis**

Fully revised and updated -- the ultimate guide to black talk from all segments of the African American community. Do you want to be down with the latest hype terms from the Hip Hop world? Black Talk is the perfect source. "Even if you think you're hip, you'd better look up kitchen, got her nose open, jump salty, and hundreds of other sayings, former or current, that testify to the linguistic originality of Black speakers," said Frederic G. Cassidy, chief editor of the *Dictionary of American Regional English*. This new edition of Black Talk includes more than 300 new words and phrases and, now more than ever, reflects the ever-changing meanings and uses of this vital and rich part of our language. In a style that is always informative and always entertaining, Geneva Smitherman takes this dictionary far beyond a list of words. Black Talk is a cultural map that charts word meanings along the highways and byways of African American life.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

The speech of African Americans has been defined by many terms--black English, Ebonics, African American vernacular, and African American language. Smitherman (*Talkin' That Talk: Language, Culture, and Education in African America*) traces the history of black language, describes its unique features, and demonstrates its impact on "standard English" in her excellent introduction to this volume. She also provides a provocative discussion on the recent Ebonics' debate--whether black youth should be instructed in their "native language" as well as "standard English." The bulk of Black Talk, however, is a dictionary of black language. Unlike most dictionaries, this one

"concentrates on the historical and contemporary significance of words and phrases in the context of African American culture and the Black experience" rather than providing the origin or etymological history of a word or phrase. This revised edition (the first was published in 1994) gives hundreds of definitions for words in current usage, including recent additions like "jiggy," "flava," "benjamins," and "D.W.B." (Driving While Black). An essential volume for all libraries; smaller libraries that own the earlier edition need not purchase the update.-Louis J. Parascandola, Long Island Univ., Brooklyn, NY Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.

We liked the first edition of this book [RBB S 15 94] for its contemporary coverage. This edition has more than 300 new words and phrases and also adds a discussion of Ebonics. Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

This is a great reference. As a working screenwriter and published novelist, I find I use this book almost every day. One nit, however: it would be a lot more helpful if the book were cross-referenced so that you could look up a common word and find the Black Talk "translation." Just a thought for those of us who aren't hip. BTW, this author is very good, a fine writer and her work is extremely well researched. Check out her other books.

So, I hate to say this, but my husband's father is a terrible racist. So for Christmas, I decided to buy him this book in hopes that he would learn some respect for people. Needless to say he hasn't said anything around me ever since.

I'm Caucasion, and lately, have been concerned with all the rioting and fire damage of neighborhoods (often to black businesses and property) in St Louis and other big cities. I like to think of myself as color-blind as regards to race, habitually liberal in politics and thinking. But I've never lived in a neighborhood that had any blacks, and I have been frightened elsewhere by a group of black guys walking toward me on the sidewalk. So I have to realize I'm not color-blind. This book helps me "feel like" I'm in a black neighborhood or home. Yes, I would think different if I were black and the language difference young blacks often use has positive benefits of the security of a supporting community (as well as negative, rebellious influencing--my view). This author helped me look with fresh eyes at their issues by learning how the author feels about her language, as well as black people's position in our society (in which African American English is not the language of commerce). But mainly, this tries to be a dictionary of black phrases, that I look at as colorful, often

fun modifications to American English (through Ebonics or African American English). Political positions of the author (and presumably much of the hip, black community) are hinted at, some of which I disagree with and some which I am modifying my opinion of as I read. So this book is what's helping me a lot most to understand 40% of our large-city population. Furthermore, I am writing a short story where I'm writing the roles of a black activist type and his more conservative, traditionalist father, and a white servant they have. I think the book will make for pepped-up dialog and more accurate position statements for my characters, so it's very worthwhile for me.

This is an important book. Dr. Smitherman has been a longtime champion for black language. I took a class with her using her book *Talkin and Testifyin*. I enjoyed both and took them seriously as did most. However, I do remember a woman angrily walking out of the class. She did not return. Unfortunately this is the way many people react to "Ebonics." They see it as wrong, lazy talking, ignorant, and so forth. The hypocrisy comes to light when whites co-op what black people say and sell it back to us in entertainment, on t-shirts, ball caps, key chains, and the list goes on. I have witnessed black people who know the talk pretend they don't understand it and listen disapprovingly. They are ashamed of its usage and angrily denounce it. Many forget it is necessary in some communities and situations. It is also the first/home language for a majority of us. They feel we should leave it behind and master "standard" American English. People whose first language - such as French - are seen as legitimate but a novice to English may face similar treatment if their command is - how you say? - not good. However, the scorn that is reserved for black people may not be present or presented. *C'est la vie*. I explain to people in my writings that just as a person may learn another language does not mean they have to leave the other behind. And so it is with black language. I advocate for it as well as other colloquial languages. However, I encourage others to learn the dominate language of where they find themselves so as not to be restricted or disparaged when the language is preferred and expected. And that includes learning to speak the language of other countries my fellow Americans! I wanted the book to go into more detail about where the words originated and how slang, hip hop, etc. are offshoots and what keeps the language fresh and more useful in present time. Many of the popular ones have merely been recycled. And I know Dr. Smitherman knows that black language is just like any other. It has roots, rules, and a multitude of users. That fact that our president and first lady do not hide their usage and knowledge of it has makes headlines. The Obamas are not pretentious as those who reserve it for home only. They appear totally comfortable applying the language when it suits them and the situation. But no one can deny their facility at what is known as code-switching. An Ah knows Ah'm a perfeck xample a dat

... guys.P.S. I attended a book signing of author Diane Proctor Reeder on the same issue and she says a new term is being used to describe how we switch: code-MESHING! Dig that!

This book is indeed what it's all about: BLACK TALK! I found the book to be an excellent resource on how certain words and phrases are expressed among African Americans. On television and among blacks, I have heard certain words and phrases, such as "raise up," which means to leave or go away, and "dis," which means to show disrespect toward someone. I had no idea what these terms meant until I looked through Smitherman's book BLACK TALK at a library. I could not put this item down! Various terms and phrases were arranged in dictionary format and the definitions were easy to understand. I was happy to get this book and I use it quite a lot whenever I hear a slang word or phrase I don't understand. It's an interesting book to help me understand black slang. I like it!

There is a usefulness for this book, but remember this book dates from the years 1994 and 2000. Here is one example of where things are outdated. The definition of 'beast' is said to be a derogatory term for a white person. Now as of this writing, circa 2011-12 'beast' is a term for something or someone who is extremely good at something. Note these may be some outdated parts of this book but there is still useful parts of this. Also this book is a dictionary, and I was expecting it more to be a study on Ebonics and information and less definitions. Oh well it is still good.

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