

“I’ve done heard it so much it doesn’t bother me at all,” Sophomore Michael Lee. “There’s a difference; when it ends an ‘a’, you’re cool with them, but when it’s with an ‘er’ it’s disrespectful,” Freshman Bryan Grant. “If you use it jokingly, you’re not really offending anybody,” Sophomore Michael Hudson . “It’s not as bad as most people think it is, it just means ignorant.” Sophomore Jared Pike . “Nigger – a black man with a slavery chain around his neck; Nigga – a black man with a gold chain on his neck.”

Tupac Shakur

**The “N”
Word**

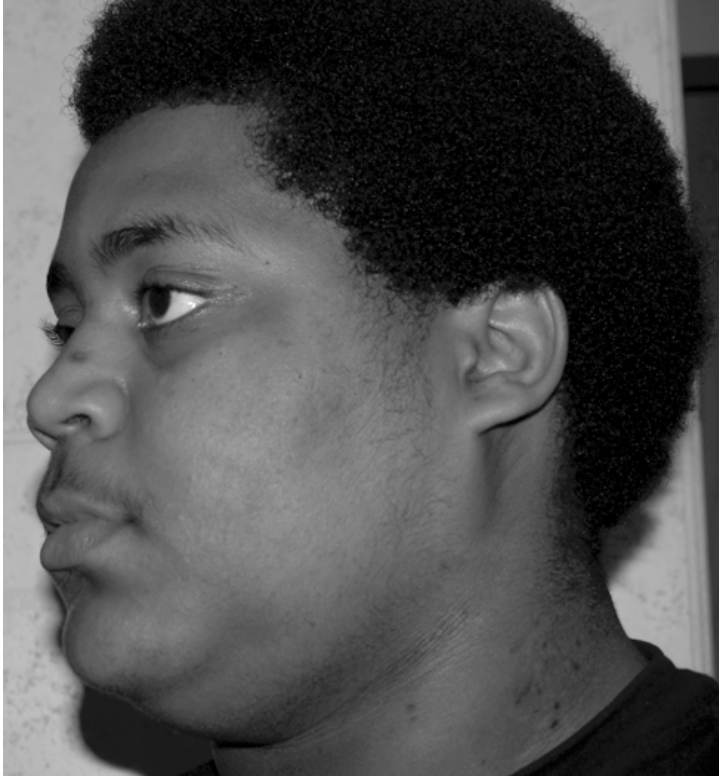




The “N” word: in our own words

Two students discuss how they feel about the “N” word and why they feel that way

Different



Jeda Robinson, 12

I use the “N” word because it’s a habit. It has become synonymous with not only black culture, but with what is considered “black”. It should NEVER be a term of endearment to call each other ignorant. It’s also never okay for a white person to use the “N” word because of the negative history behind it. It’s extremely hurtful and is really in bad taste. It’s not okay for my friends to use the word because it shows a lack of appreciation for your people and culture. To me the “N” word means

ignorance. It’s an insult to what several people fought and died for. Civil rights activists like Martin Luther King would be disgusted at what today’s black people define as good. To other people the “N” word is just a word no more, no less. It has become skewed to mean no more than “dude” or “man”. It’s like one large misinformed fraternity. The word is important around school because the school has a large black population, that combined with the fact that the word is carelessly spewed

from the mouths of many students, makes it well known. I wouldn’t say the word to an adult because I respect my peers. The word’s history goes back as far as black people go back in the United States. Then somewhere down the line black people decided, “Yeah, I am a nigga. In fact I am a super nigga, and don’t you wish you were one too?” I don’t know why but the word changed. Substitutes for this word could be “brotha” or “dude” or whatever -just something less destructive.



Viewpoints

Jake Barrickman, 10

I said it once, and I ended up getting jumped for it. I had no idea what was so wrong with me saying it. It is a word with its own set of rules. One person can say it, and they have nothing to worry about, it’s ok. While if another person says it there will be consequences.

At the Martin Luther King assembly, Reverend Eure emphasized the fact that we need to wipe that word from our vocabulary. I find it ironic that the ones who get so mad at

people, who say it to them, were the ones screaming it while walking out of the assembly.

The word is like illegal drugs, even if it gets outlawed, it will still be used without any fear. Here in school, we use much worse language, the “F” word for instance; there is not a day when anyone doesn’t hear it used. If a person says it in the halls, a teacher might say “watch your language.” If it is used in the classroom “That’s a referral, go to

your administrator.” It’s always frowned upon.

The “N” word is different though, when it’s said that same person who told you to go to your administrator would pretend not to hear it, and for those teachers who are brave enough to say something will at the most only give you a warning.

I do not support the word, I do not think anything will ever be done about it, but I do my part and try not to use it.

Photos by Bri Holland

Rules of a word

Jeremy Bagby
Staff Writer

Nigga is a word frequently heard in school, music, and on the streets. The word, which stems from “nigger,” has gained popularity in the black community, but it has also developed an equal amount of controversy.

The word “Nigga” is a term used to greet, compliment, or put down a person of the African American ethnicity, but this word comes with rules. The first of the unspoken rules is no person of any other race can use it and the word can only be used with an “a” ending, not an “er” ending.

These rules, however, have not taken away from this word’s history and weight; to many, it is still offensive.

“Personally I find it offensive and I believe that my feelings on that comes from my age,” said Dean of Students Rich Hood. “When it was used when I was young, it was used to be derogatory. It was used to put down somebody, so when I hear younger people use it, it’s offensive.”

Many teachers already believe the word should not be used by anybody and treat it like any other curse word.

“My personal feeling is even if you’re black or white or Hispanic or Asian, we treat it the same way as any other profanity or vulgarity,” said Hood. “It’s not allowed.”

Students still continue to use the word because most of them do not see the harm and

don’t think its offensive. Some students have heard this word used throughout their lives and it has become a part of their regular vocabulary.

“I’ve been saying it all my life, I grew up hearing it,” senior Jaron Jackson said. “White people can’t use it, nobody can say it but black people; it’s disrespectful for them to say it to us,” said Jackson.

In Benson there are many students who use the word simply because they heard their parents or grandparents using it.

“I use it rather often, it’s like I was known for sayin’ it, it was used in my family,” said freshman Lary Erye.

The word’s vast and disturbing history should cause the number

of its users to diminish its use. Ironically the people who started it can no longer use it while the people who were endlessly victimized by it can freely use it to address each other.

“They shouldn’t be able to use it because that’s not what they are, plus a lot of people get offended when they use it,” junior Letisha Nunn said.

Athletic director Francis Szynskie doesn’t agree with the balance of the rules for the word nigga. He believes that if someone can call you a name but you can’t call them that name back then the word shouldn’t be used.

“If you’re calling me a name but I can’t call you back that name, no matter what race you are, there’s something wrong

with that,” said Szynskie.

Unspoken rule No. 2 states no one can use the old pronunciation nigger in the place of the word nigga. Apparently using nigger is offensive but if the “e” and the “r” are dropped, it is just fine.

“To me it doesn’t make any difference, to me it’s like hearing the word ‘frickin’’. It’s just like using the ‘F’ word, you’re just trying to dress up or camouflage the word,” said Hood.

Ironically, changing the ending to an already offensive word can make it less offensive, almost friendly. The reason may be that when students look back in any history book or film about the days of racism, “nigger” was always used, therefore that word probably

sounds much worse than calling your homeboy “your nigga”.

“I would say nigger is more offensive than if you use an “a,”” said Erye.

“Back then white folks used to say it to be mean and they still say it now,” said Nunn.

Currently, the school system is at a loss. Banning the word from use will probably not prevent it from being used because of the wide range of users.

New York City Councilman Leroy Comrie is heading a movement to try and get the word nigga banned from use all around the country. He has already gotten it symbolically banned in NYC but students are already not following this ban because they don’t find the word offensive.

Student panel Q&A

Ethnic studies teacher Curtis Weber allowed the Gazette to interview his first hour class to discuss what they thought about the “N” word

SS: What comes to mind when you hear the “N” word, how does it make you feel?

JC: That word brings to mind anger and degradation. I believe if anyone’s using it that nobody should have to hear it.

JJ: Ignorance, people just say it and they think it’s cool, but they don’t really know what it means.

JL: If a white person says it, everyone makes a big deal about it. And then if a black person says it, it’s just like a regular everyday usage. If a white person can’t say it, why should a black person? It’s really kind of not fair and giving the right to black people to say it is not fair.

RB: There’s different meanings to the “N” word. Like, you use it in different ways. It’s like the way you say it, or the sentence that follows that is what predicts the meaning of which way you’re using it.

I think everybody is involved ...it’s a white and black society...everybody knows what’s going on.”
- RB

SS: Is this an issue just for black people, should white people leave it alone?

JJ: If the word offends you, it doesn’t matter what your race is.

JC: I believe that as a generation as a whole, we have become desensitized to the word. Because we just hear it so much that it has become part of our every day lives.

Mr. Weber: Just to add to that... Ludacris has his own take on that word. He said the purpose of the use of the word and the culture that uses the word today is to take away from the meaning and by what Jeff says, you know, “Why is it okay for someone who’s black to say it but for someone who’s white to say it?” I think that Ludacris’ point is kind of shown there by saying it’s desensitizing that word because of the fact that there is a culture today that CAN say that word, and nobody else can, NOBODY else can.

RB: I think everybody is involved because it’s not just a black society and it’s not just a white society, it’s a white and black society so everybody knows what’s going on.

SS: What is the history of the word? What does it mean to you?

JC: I believe that in the context it’s used, that it could be a term of endearment or it could be a hate filled word. It’s all in the way you’re using it. You could go up to someone and say, you know, “you’re a stupid n-----,” and they’re gonna get pissed, you know? And then someone could go up and say, you know, “Hey what up n-----,” and it could just be a term of endearment, you see what I’m saying?

RB: I think it has another meaning from what it used to be,

there’s two ways you could think of it, it’s not just one any more.

AT: For me, I don’t try to use it. But, if I see a person of

“It’s like the same thing as going up to someone and saying, ‘What up, dude?’ or something like that, you know?”
- JC

another race that does use it, I really don’t care because it really doesn’t offend me. I try not to use the word, but I try to let them know, “Hey, it’s not cool to use it. Because other African Americans do not like other races saying that word. So just be careful where you say it. But to me, if you say it, you say it.

Mr. Weber: My question would just be why would someone who’s white want to say it?

AT: Just to fit in.

JC: Well if you’re a hate filled person, you’re going to want to say it.

Mr. Weber: Right, so it could be a hate filled word, but why would you want to say that word to try to fit in?

JC: That’s just the culture that it is today, with the music and everything.

AP: ... Some people refer to white people as “white boy” and “cracker,” and I mean, I don’t take offense to it personally

Anonymous: “or honky”

AP: But yeah, why should that be okay?

Anonymous: Yeah, like if a white person said, “oh yeah, look at the BLACK boy right there,” that would be a big issue and everything.

Mr. Weber: So it’s like some reverse discrimination, sure.

GY: I would want to know why an individual would want to use the “N” word to begin with. Because, can’t you just greet a person by their name? I think it’s stupid.

JC: Well, it’s like the same thing as going up to someone and saying, “What up, dude?” or something like that, you know?

LO: But “dude” doesn’t have a historical background to it.

JL: Say you were back then and someone would have called you a “nigger,” people all around you would have beat the crap out of that one guy.

Anonymous: Yeah, that’s why it changed.

JL: But that’s your ancestors who died to get you where you are today. If they wouldn’t have done it, people would still be doing dishes and everything for a living, and they’d still be calling you the “N” word.

RB: But people still do that, anyways.

Mr. Weber: Yes, that’s the hard part. That’s where you get back to “okay what is something that we can have that nobody else can have? This is something that we can have that we can share that

if you said it or he said it or she said it that, now that’s offensive.”

AP: If someone’s offended by it, then they shouldn’t say it.

SS: So you mentioned your ancestors and the legacy of the word.

How do your parents and grandparents feel about that word?

AT: My grandma’s like, “Don’t say that word.”

JL: My great grandparents are still really racist. Every time I walk in to go see one of them, they’re just always saying the word and everything. They’re always calling people “niggers” and everything. Oh well, they’re going to die in a couple years anyway.

Mr. Weber: Unfortunately, we just saw a video where people were trying to sanction segregation in 2002, a small segregated prom, you know? Unfortunately Jeff, your great grandpa is not the only one out there with those feelings.

SS: After the Michael Richards tirade, where he openly called audience members the “N” word and used racial slurs referring to lynching,

“My great grandparents are still really racist, they’re just always saying the word.”
- JL

JJ: He talked about hanging people upside down, sticking a fork in their asses.

SS: People started taking a stance on the word. For instance, a mayor in Texas actually banned the word, and if the person saying the word is reported by another person, they could have to pay up to a \$500 fine.

JC: It’s breaking your first amendment right. Even though it’s a bad word, it’s still freedom of speech, and that’s taking away your freedom of speech right, right there.

JJ: It’s unconstitutional.

SS: So Michael Richards apologized on the Late Show with David Letterman,

Mr. Weber: Did you see that? It looked pretty scripted to me.

SS: Should someone just apologize for something like that and expect everything to be okay or should there be punishment in a court of law?

JC: I take Paul Mooney’s stand, and I think he should go to the Apollo Theater and do that same bit and see what happens.

AT: I see why he apologized, but a lot of people just see it as a publicity stunt. They think, “Oh, he isn’t serious.” Because if he was serious, he wouldn’t have said it in the first place.

JC: The “N” word is just a term that is generally accepted but shouldn’t be.

What the students have to say

Can white people say the “N” word even if it is to friends?

130 say no

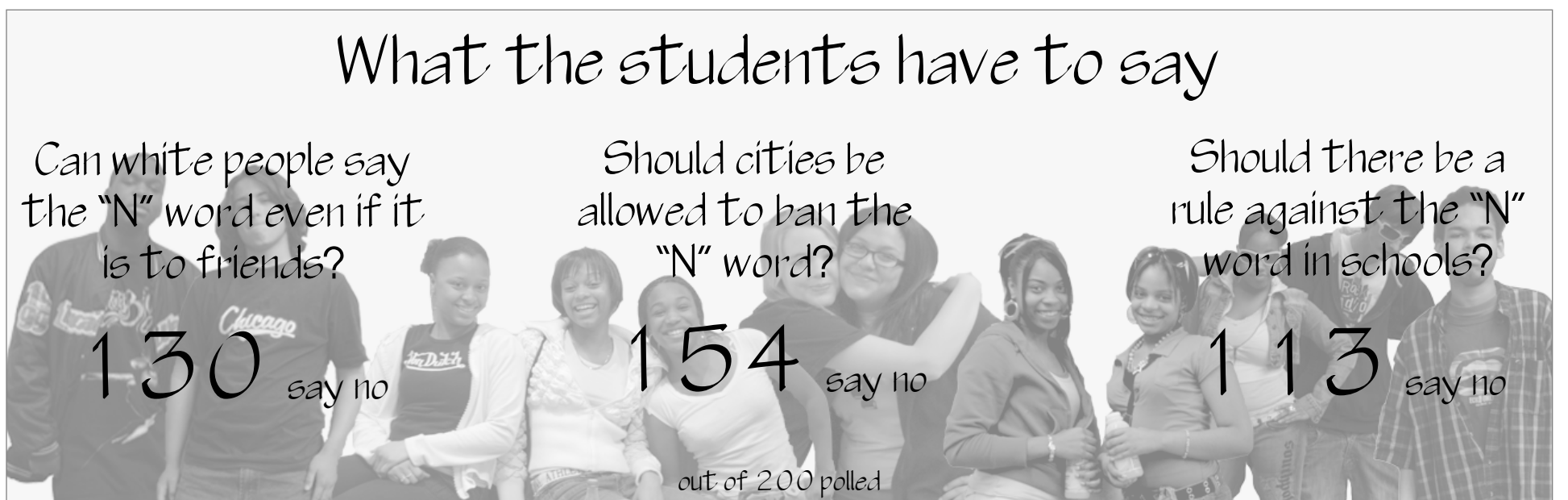
Should cities be allowed to ban the “N” word?

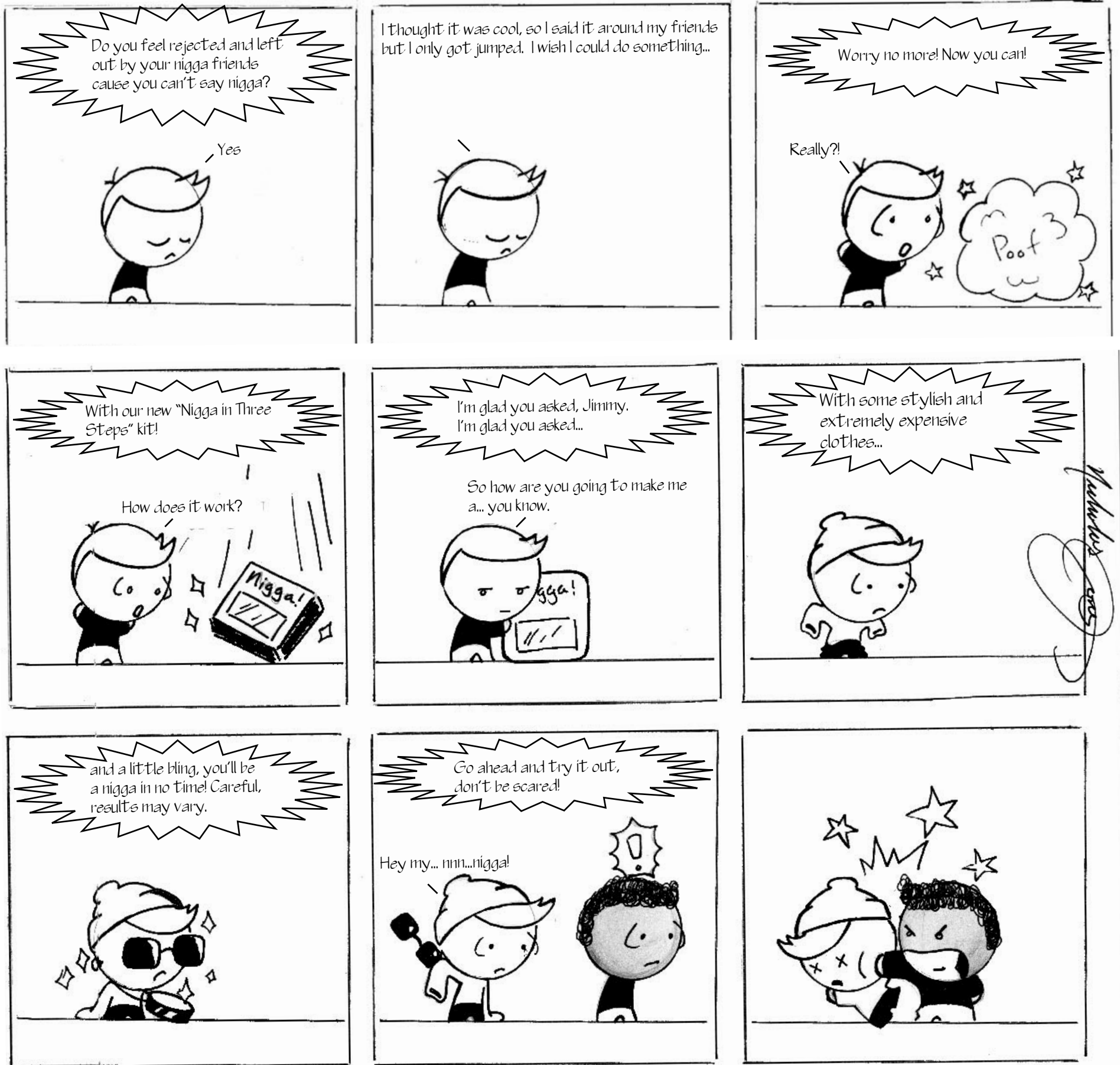
154 say no

Should there be a rule against the “N” word in schools?

113 say no

out of 200 polled





A word to my honkies and homies

Nick Daehling
Opinions Editor

If I want to call one of my black friends a nigga I have every right to, just as long as I mean it in a friendly manner. The same terms apply if I want to call a Latino friend a "beaner." Or what if I want to call my Asian friend a "chink" or a "yap" – it's OK as long as it's not mean or hateful.

In fact, it could be the best way to solve all of our hate crime problems. A lot of teens are using derogatory words in a friendly way to establish relationships. If adults and youngsters learn to add these words to their vocabulary,

imagine the possibilities.

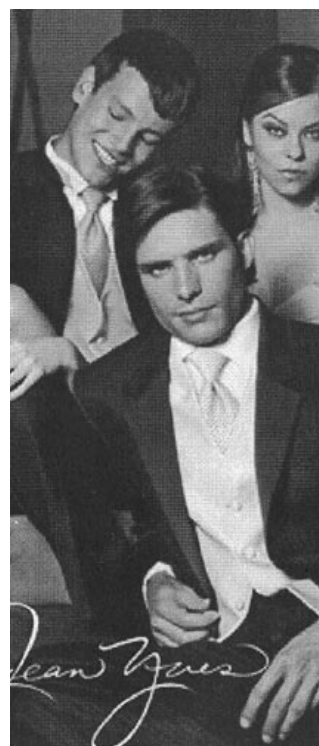
Forget that these kinds of words have been used for ages to demean, belittle, disparage and decry the various races, religions, sexes, statuses, ages, etc. Those times have passed when a word of said unforgivable nature could render a class silent or send shivers down the spine and it's time for change.

I've started to refer to all of my white friends as "honkies," "whities," and "crackers." They sure enjoy it and gladly reply with a humorous "Shut up!" accompanied by a smile.

This of course means that they approve of what I'm doing and respect it undoubtedly.

As a matter of fact, I encourage people to use the word nigga because it is, by far, the most popular hate-word in the universal dictionary of hate-words.

There are no downsides, only endless possibilities. Animosity and hate crimes will be things of the past. By using this word in an endearing form as many African American people are already doing, we may soon alter the true, hateful meaning of the word all together.



ANTHONY'S
FORMAL WEAR

PROM SPECIALS

TUXEDOS \$39⁰⁰
STARTING AT

In Celebration of our 35th Year Anniversary!

9001 Arbor St. #207 Omaha, NE
(One Block North of 90th & Center)

402-391-2012

www.anthonysinomaha.com

MON-THURS 10-8

SAT 10-4

FRI 10-7

SUN 12-3