

# **SMOKEY ROBINSON**

# **WORDS**

**Words [wɜrds]**

**noun**

**1. Sounds or combinations of sounds that symbolize and communicate meaning.**

**THE POETRY OF WILLIAM "SMOKEY" ROBINSON**

**“Being A Black American”**  
*Written By William Smokey Robinson*

I love being Black  
I love being called Black  
I love being an American  
I love being a Black American  
But as a Black man in this country I think it's a shame  
That every few years we get a change of name  
Since those first ships arrived here from Africa that came across the sea  
There were already Black men in this country who were free  
And as for those who came over on those terrible boats  
They were called Nigger and Slave  
And told what to do and how to behave  
And then massah started trippin'  
Doin' his midnight tippin'  
Down to the slave shacks  
Where he forced he and Great Great Grandma to be together  
And if Great Great Grandpa protested  
He got tarred and feathered  
And at the same time the Black men in the country who were free  
Were mating with the tribes like the Apache and the Cherokee  
And as a result of all that we're a parade of every shade  
And at this late day and age you can be sure  
There ain't too many of us in this country whose blood line is pure  
But according to a geological-geographical-genealogy study  
Published in Time Magazine  
The Black African people were the first on the scene  
So for what it's worth  
The Black African people were the first on Earth  
And through migration our characteristics started to change and rearrange  
To adapt to whatever climate we migrated to  
And that's how I became me and you became you  
So if we're gonna go back let's go all the way back  
And if Adam was Black and Eve was Black  
Then that kind of makes it a natural fact  
That everybody in America is an African American  
Everybody in the Europe is an African European  
Everybody in the Orient is an African Asian  
And so on and so on  
That is if the origin of man is what we're gonna go on  
And if one drop of Black blood makes you Black, like they say  
Then everybody's Black anyway  
So quit trying to change my identity  
I'm already who I was meant to be  
I'm a Black American, born and raised

And brother James Brown wrote a wonderful phrase  
"SAY IT LOUD, I'M BLACK AND I'M PROUD  
SAY IT LOUD, I'M BLACK AND I'M PROUD"  
'Cause I'm proud to be Black  
And I ain't never lived in Africa  
And 'cause my Great Great Granddaddy on my Daddy's side did  
Don't mean I want to go back

Now I have nothing against Africa  
It's where some of the most beautiful places and people in the world are found  
But I've been blessed to go a lot of places in this world  
And if you ask me where I choose to live I pick America hands down

Now by and by, we were called Negro  
And after a while that name was banished  
Anyway, Negro is just how you say black in Spanish  
Then we were called Colored  
But shit, everybody's one color or another  
And I think it's a shame that we hold that against each other  
And it seems like we reverted back to a time when being called Black was an insult  
Even if it was another black man who said it a fight would result  
Because we had been so brainwashed that black was wrong  
Till even the yellow niggas and the black niggas couldn't get along  
But then came the 1960s  
When we struggled and died to be called equal and black  
And we walked with pride with our heads held high and our shoulders pushed back  
And Black was beautiful  
But I guess that wasn't good enough  
'Cause now here they come with some other stuff  
Who comes up with this shit anyway  
Was it one or a group of niggas just sittin' around one day  
Feeling a little insecure again about being called Black  
And decided that African-American sounded a little more exotic  
Well, I think you were being a little more neurotic  
It's that same mentality that got Amos & Andy put off the air  
'Cause they were embarrassed about the way the characters spoke  
And as a result of that action  
A lot of wonderful Black actors ended up broke  
When we were just laughing and having fun about ourselves  
So I say, "FUCK YOU!" if you can't take a joke  
You didn't see the Beverly Hillbillies being protested by White folk  
And if you think that 'cause you think that  
Being called African-American sets all Black people's minds at ease  
Since we affectionately call each other Nigga  
I affectionately say to you, "NIGGA, PLEASE"  
How come I didn't get a chance to vote on who I'd like to be?

Who gave you the right to make that decision for me?  
I ain't under your rule or in your dominion  
And I'm entitled to my own opinion

Now there are some African-Americans here  
But they recently moved here from places like Kenya, Ethiopia, Zambia, Zimbabwe,  
and Zaire

But not a brotha whose family has lived in this country for generations

Occupying space in all the locations

New York, Miami, L.A., Detroit, Chicago

Even if he's wearing a dashiki and sporting an Afro

And if you go to Africa in search of your race

You'll find out quick you're not an African-American

You're just a Black American in Africa taking up space

Why you keep trying to attach yourself to a continent

Where even if you got the chance to go, and you went

Most people there, wouldn't even claim you as one of them

As a pure bred daughter or son of them?

Your heritage is right here now

No matter what you call yourself or what you say

And a lot of people died to make it that way

And if you think America is the leader on inequality and suffering and grieving

How come there are so many people coming and so few leaving?

So rather than all this find fault with America shit you're promoting

If you want to change something, use your privilege

Get to the polls and commence to voting

All the wonderful Black Americans who served in the armed forces and gave their  
lives in all the wars

They didn't do that for Timbuktu or Cape Town or Kenya

They died for Mississippi and Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Texas and Virginia

Need I continue?

And if you don't acknowledge that, if you don't claim that

Then you're playing right into the hand of the white supremacists and the ku klux  
klan

Who claim that they own this land

We went through the Civil Rights Movement

And Dr. Martin Luther King gave his life so that you could have equal status

We withstood the dogs, the fire hoses, the beatings, the bombings, the burnings, the  
maiming's, the murders

And everything else they threw at us

God knows we've earned the right to be called American-Americans and to be free at  
last

And rather than you moving forward with progress

You're dwelling in the past

We've struggled too long, we've come too far

Instead of focusing on who we were

Let's be proud of who we are  
We're the only people whose name is always a trend  
When is this shit gonna end?  
Look at all the different colors of our skin  
Black is not our color, it's our core  
It's what we've been living and fighting and dying for

But if you choose to be called African-American and that's your preference  
Then I'll give you that reference  
But I know on this issue I don't stand alone on my own  
And if I do, then let me be me  
And I'd appreciate it if when you see me  
You'd say, "There goes a man who says it loud,  
'I'M BLACK, I'M BLACK, I'M A BLACK AMERICAN AND I'M PROUD'"  
'Cause I love being an American  
And I love being Black, I love being called Black  
YEAH, I said it and I don't take it back