


Jim Bonner 2014

Political news and commentary and some reflection on days that may never come again.

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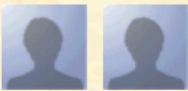
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FRIDAY, JANUARY 7, 2011

Enie Meanie Mighty Moe...

"I don't care shucks for the morality of it nohow. When I start in to steal a nigger, or a watermelon, or a Sunday-school book, I ain't no ways particular how it's done so it's done. What I want is my nigger; or what I want is my watermelon; or what I want is my Sunday-school book; and if a pick's the handiest thing, that's the thing I'm a-going to dig that nigger or that watermelon or that Sunday-school book out with; and I don't give a dead rat what the authorities thinks about it nuther."

Said Huck Finn on trying to dig nigger Jim out of his imprisonment.

Next month, NewSouth Books will publish a combined edition of Mark Twain's "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn" and "Tom Sawyer" Edited by Auburn University-Montgomery professor Alan Gribben which will omit the word "nigger." The new edition will substitute the word "Slave."

The word, uttered 219 times in the original text has been considered such incendiary language that many college English professors and most high school English teachers pass up the novel for more easily digestible fare. They would rather pick some inferior work rather than deal with "the word" in the classroom. I have personally seen grown men and women walk out of a graduate classroom because the instructor used the word as part of his history lesson. Gribben said, *"For a single word to form a barrier, it seems such an unnecessary state of affairs,""I'm hoping that people will welcome this new option, but I suspect that textual purists will be horrified."*

And horrified they seem to be. Although most of the "Textual Purist" have decried the "Censorship" of Twain's work most of the outraged were too pantywaisted to actually use the word in their own criticism, substituting the somehow more socially acceptable "N-word." Perhaps the Twain text should be rewritten substituting "N-word" at all the appropriate places?

Which is why, gentle reader, you may be surprised to find that I rise to the contrarian view in support of the new "Slave" edition.

My immediate question is " What word do they use for "nigger" in the Norwegian translation? In the Chinese text? As to Twain being sacred text, what about the sacred text? I personally carry a King James Bible. Mostly for show because the leather binding is prettier than my NIV. But if have to actually read it I use the NIV. Because the KJV is not written in English! At least not so far as I can tell.

I argue that the change of the word 'nigger' to the word "slave" is actually a modern translation of the text and language of the day into the text of to-day. The word "slave" is what Twain meant when he used the word in the first place. Words mean different things in different times and cultures.

Ennie Meanie Mighty Moe/ Catch a Slave by the Toe.

Less offensive? Probably not.

A more accurate interpretation of the original meaning?

Very likely.

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