



# Nigger: The Strange Career of a Troublesome Word

*Randall Kennedy*

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## **Nigger: The Strange Career of a Troublesome Word** Randall Kennedy

It's "the nuclear bomb of racial epithets," a word that whites have employed to wound and degrade African Americans for three centuries. Paradoxically, among many black people it has become a term of affection and even empowerment. The word, of course, is *nigger*, and in this candid, lucidly argued book the distinguished legal scholar Randall Kennedy traces its origins, maps its multifarious connotations, and explores the controversies that rage around it.

Should blacks be able to use *nigger* in ways forbidden to others? Should the law treat it as a provocation that reduces the culpability of those who respond to it violently? Should it cost a person his job, or a book like **Huckleberry Finn** its place on library shelves? With a range of reference that extends from the Jim Crow south to Chris Rock routines and the O. J. Simpson trial, Kennedy takes on not just a word, but our laws, attitudes, and culture with bracing courage and intelligence.



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