

## The Crux - November 2021

### The N Word

[Listen: The N-Word, the hosts of Still Processing confront the most offensive word in the English language - and discover its “impossible beauty”](#)

#### What it’s about:

Jenna Wortham and Wesley Morris, the hosts of the podcast *Still Processing*, make the “episode [they’ve] been wanting to make for years.” In the podcast's season premiere, they tackle the N-word.

#### Why it’s important:

While many older Black Americans preferred to avoid all use of the N-Word, others have attempted to reclaim the word. Amid this reclamation, and with diverse views within the Black Community, some non-black people misjudge the weight of the word - causing pain and significant offense without understanding why. Since being aware of any one person’s perspective is often unknowable, it’s clear that non-black people should refrain from any usage of the word - yes, including when singing along to hip hop.

The word is complicated, feared, offensive, and, by some, revered. “It’s a word both unspeakable and ubiquitous. A weapon of hate and a badge of belonging. After centuries of evolution, it’s everywhere – art, politics, everyday banter.” It can fundamentally undermine the humanity of some people, while others use it flippantly. Thus, Wortham and Morris show us that “it can’t be ignored.”

#### Reflect & Discuss:

- When was the first time you remember hearing the N-Word? What was your reaction to it?
- For non-black people, why is it unacceptable to use the N-Word?
- Based on the resources provided, why do you think some in the Black community use the word in certain circumstances while others are deeply offended by any use of the word?

#### Want to learn more?

- [Dave Chappelle and Maya Angelou Discuss the N Word](#) *\*until 8:35\**
- [“Nigger” Author Randall Kennedy on how the N-Word became the Atomic Bomb of Slurs](#)
- [Richard Sherman on how “Thug” is the New N-Word](#)
- [Nigger: The Strange Career of a Troublesome Word](#)