

# Does The New N-Word Start with a T?



There is a split in America and it's as wide as the Grand Canyon.

We can look at what's been going on in Baltimore and depending on what team we're on, we see what we want to see. Liberals, black and white, see poor people who have had enough. It wasn't a riot to some on the left. It was an "uprising," the actual word used by a left wing professor on CNN.

Conservatives, yes, mainly white, but more than a few blacks too, see dysfunction. They see crime and drugs and kids dropping out of school. What entrepreneur, they wonder, wants to invest in such a community. They don't see an "uprising" – they see a riot.

Liberals shake their heads. Conservatives just don't get it, they think. This is what the great divide in America looks like.

And now six Baltimore police officers have been charged in the death of Freddie Gray, whose spine was severed and who died in police custody. In Baltimore, there were celebrations in the streets when they heard the news.

It's a safe bet that a lot of other Americans aren't celebrating. If the police did something wrong, they want them to pay a price. But I'm pretty sure a lot of Americans

are wondering why Freddie Gray ran from the police in the first place, resulting in a chase and his arrest and subsequent death. Let's be clear: You're allowed to run from a cop who hasn't charged you with any crime. But if you're a cop, in a neighborhood known for drugs and crime, you wonder why this guy is running – and you chase after him.

And in the midst of all this, in case you hadn't noticed, there's a debate playing out on cable television, a debate stemming from the mayhem in Baltimore.

Here's the question at the heart of the debate: Is the word "thug" the new "N word?"

Seriously.

If this were a Saturday Night Live routine, it might be funny. That's it's a question taken seriously on television news programs, is sad.

Here is Alex Wagner, a host on MSNBC, to Brittney Cooper from the liberal online magazine, Salon:

"To the use of the word [thug] itself, Brittney, I mean, I think there are folks like CNN's Erin Burnett who don't understand why it's offensive, and why some people are saying the 'T' word is the new 'N' word. Give us your take."

To which, Ms. Cooper replies:

"Sure. It's rooted in a racialized understanding of black people. So, for instance, no one is calling the police who put this kid in a van and snapped his spine and crushed his voicebox 'thugs' – right? They're only applying it to acts of violence against property – right? Acts of – and sure, acts of harassment, sure – acts of anger. But when are we going to have the language to talk about the systemic violence that white folks do in the name of anti-blackness and white supremacy in this country? We don't have a language for that."

I saw a similar discussion on CNN, where liberal professor Marc Lamont Hill didn't like the word "thug" either ... and while we're on the subject, he's the one who thought what was going on in Baltimore was an "uprising" – not a riot.

Now to the Erin Burnett reference. Here's an exchange between Ms. Burnett and Baltimore City Councilman Carl Stokes.

"Erin Burnett: Isn't it the right word?

Councilman Stokes: No, of course its not the right word to call our children, thugs. These are children who have been set aside, marginalized, who have not been engaged by us. No, we don't have to call them thugs.

Erin Burnett: But how does that justify what they did? I mean, that's a sense of right and wrong. They know it's wrong to steal and burn down a CVS and an old person's home. I mean, come on.

Councilman Stokes: Come on? So calling them thugs – just call them niggers. Just call them niggers. No, we don't have to call them by names such as that. We don't have to do that. That's exactly what we've sent them to. When you say 'come on,' come on what? You wouldn't call your a child a thug if they did something which was not what you'd expect them to do.

Erin Burnett: Look, I respect your point of view. I would hope I would call my son a thug if he ever did such a thing."

Good for Erin Burnett; good for her for not doing what so many liberal reporters do to show their good racial manners: She didn't agree or start stammering just because the councilman is black.

My pal Bill O'Reilly has a column [nearby] on this subject, and in it he also took note of Councilman's Stokes aversion to the word thug. "So what would the esteemed councilman call young men who smashed the windows of his clothing store and

cleaned out the joint? Perhaps he would characterize them as 'undocumented shoppers.' Or he might reach way back to West Side Story and those timeless lyrics by Stephen Sondheim: 'Hey, I'm depraved on account I'm deprived.'"

I wish the councilman and others who take offense to the word "thug" would go back and watch those old Hollywood gangster movies. Every thug in those movies is a white guy.

And just for laughs, Google the words "Thug Life" and guess what you'll find: pictures of a bunch of young black men showing off their bling. posing and preening, languishing in the image that they are ... thugs!

So what's going on here? How about this? If critics of the "T" word can convince enough people that rioters aren't thugs, that they aren't even criminals, then they can more easily portray them as victims – victims of a white culture that has left them behind in crummy neighborhoods devoid of jobs and hope. This is precisely why Professor Hill calls it an "uprising" instead of a riot. The looters are just throwing off their shackles, they're just fighting back.

Early on during the mayhem in Baltimore, City Council President Bernard Young, a black man, called the rioters thugs. He later apologized, saying "They're not thugs. They're just misdirected."

Like I said, if this were a Saturday Night Live routine it might be funny.

A final note about those six police officers charged in Freddie Gray's death: At this point, we don't know what happened. A trial will determine that. But if those officers did something to cause Gray's death, then they're thugs too – regardless of their race.