

Essay Cover Sheet

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Chosen Theme: No R Word

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Zach Boarman

“Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.” Doctor Martin Luther King Jr. said this, and I believe it to be 100% true. So why are so many people ignoring the enormous issue at hand, the absolute wrongness of the “R” word?

When Dr. King said this, he was not referring to stopping the “R” word. He was talking about stopping segregation and attempting to obtain fair treatment for all. As a result of Dr. King and all the other men and women who fought for the rights of African Americans, the “N” word has been made into a word that is not acceptable to use. Most will agree that the “R” word is just as offensive as the “N” word. Why then, would the “R” word be acceptable to call anyone?

The word “retard” has become a word used mainly to insult someone. This fact in itself should be an insult to those who use the word as a weapon. The “R” word was first introduced as a medical term. It has been vandalized and twisted into an insult. I am offended when people use the word “retarded” around me. Any time I witness this word being used, I try to speak up and let people know that using that word is not okay.

The word “retarded” was introduced as a medical term, a diagnosis. Much like the word “gay” used to mean “happy” society has taken both of these words, and twisted them into words used to hurt, degrade, and offend. If you ask many people what the “R” word means, they will most likely respond with “stupid.” To add to this, the word “queer” means “strange.” Now, when the word comes up in a story or poem, instead of the class thinking it means different, most of the class smirks and tries not to giggle.

The "R" word is an extremely offensive word that must be stopped. The words "gay" and "queer" are also words that have suffered the same fate as the "R" word. Society has changed the meaning of these words. Now it is time we change society! We have to end the "R" word. If this generation does not put a stop to it, the next generation will fall into the same awful, unacceptable habit. You've heard the expression "sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me." Well, words can hurt just as badly as any rock that may be thrown.

We need to make sure we all do the most we can to end the awful "R" word. There has been talk of how we need to save the Earth, and save the environment for future generations, but what about preserving mankind's morality and dignity? What about safeguarding the feelings of others? Our number one priority as a generation should be to put an end to offensive language like this forever.