

The Anti-Racist Racist

According to a CNN reporter: “Today marks the next great victory for the Black Lives Matter movement as Washington DC's mayor made [the difficult decision](#) to paint the words Black Lives Matter onto the road and rename the street as well. ‘This is the dramatic change protestors burnt down buildings for,’ the mayor proudly stated. In other news, Texan police officers fatally wounded an unarmed black man.”

“Wonderful!” cried Jenny, a Mississauga high school English and history teacher. However, she sadly remembered the bad news. “I cannot believe that Americans treat minorities so horribly. We must fix our past to create a brighter future.”

A few days later, Jenny learnt about the petition to change [Dundas Avenue's name](#) because the street was named after the racist anti-abolitionist, Henry Dundas. The description reported that Mayor John Tory believed that this is a necessary change since the street name gives Black Canadians PTSD.

“This is amazing! Although, I feel as if I should be helping the Black Lives Matter movement somehow myself,” Jenny thought while signing the petition. “I guess one method of supporting them would be to educate young students about the history of racism. As an English and history teacher, I should expose racism within classic American novels.”

After a few hours of research, Jenny stumbled upon Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Upon finishing the novel, she was horrified by its blatant racism and believed that change must happen.

A few weeks later, at a teacher's conference, Jenny was chosen to speak about Twain's novel and Ontario's education. Livid that such a book exists, she gave the following speech:

“As an English and history teacher, I find it absolutely disgusting that Ontario's education department would allow young innocent babies to read this blatantly anti-Black book. Firstly,

Mark Twain, a white man, had an Uncle who owned twenty slaves. If being related to a police officer makes you a bad person, being related to a slave owner makes you worse than Hitler. Does anyone know that Twain used the N-word over two hundred times? If we allow our students to read this novel, they will become racists or even anti-Semitic! I hope everyone here understands the terrible message we send our children by letting them read this novel. The solution is simple, just ban *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and let them read *To Kill A Mockingbird* instead. Despite containing racism, the other novel satirizes our racist society, which our students should be able to comprehend. Thank you for listening and I hope everyone here learnt that Twain's masterpiece novel is racist."

After the conference, a reporter interviewed Jenny about her blunt speech and her reasoning.

"Your main point regarding banning Huckleberry Finn is Twain's use of the N-word. The education department has been reluctant to ban novels so students will continue to read this novel. What alternative solution do you have now?" asked the reporter.

"Well, if that's the case, I suppose we could specifically use the modern edition that replaces the taboo word with 'slave'. At least, we are not using a slur based on an ethnic group being enslaved," responded Jenny.

The reporter followed up with "I take it that you do not know who the Slavs were. Anyways, have you ever read *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*? It's a great book that satirizes many aspects of society."

"No, I have not. I read Huckleberry Finn because I was inspired to fight against the racist past just as the Black Lives Matter protestors did by renaming a street name. Could you fill me in about the other novel?" Jenny requested .

The reporter answered, "Not a problem. The antagonist of Tom Sawyer is Injun Joe. The term 'Injun' is an archaic misnomer and was used to differentiate between Europeans and

Native Americans. It is similar to describing someone as a Black man, for instance. Do you have any comments?”

After pondering to herself, Jenny confidently responded, “I do not see the issue. As you described, it is no different from describing a man as Black or White. Nevertheless, ‘Injun’ was a part of the culture’s language and we should not police the past. How can the novel be historically accurate without accurate language?”

“Very well, I understand. Moving on, do you see how replacing the N-word would be considered censorship? Everyone, including Twain, has freedom of speech, so why should his work be censored?” the reporter inquired.

Jenny disagreed. “I would not exactly consider it censorship, at least not in its purest form. [Censorship is when the Chinese government blocks websites over one word](#) because they do not like it, not when we remove one particular word, which is harmful to both the story’s message and history, because we do not like it.”

The reporter quickly wrote down some nonsense Jenny said, saying, “thank you for your insightful analysis that *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* promotes white supremacy. I will get this interview reported immediately.”

A few days later, an Indigenous man was murdered by racist police officers at Twain Avenue. Sickened by the revolting news that the road is named after Mark Twain, Jenny petitioned Mississauga’s mayor demanding the road’s name be changed immediately. The officers involved were never arrested.