Niggers, Bitches, and, Assholes

I’d now like to explore obscene language; whilst the previous example is still fresh in the reader’s mind. I will first explore profanity; and then, I will share an illustration of how we deal with swear words differently; because of our attitude towards words; an attitude which is influenced by the different structures found in our everyday languages.

SBARTDA

The above letters mean nothing. Furthermore, they offend no one.

BASTARD

However, bastard (i.e., an “illegitimate” child) somehow has the power to make a grown man who has just been called that to either punch whomever that called him that, or, to, less violently, wish that his parents used a condom; during the sexual encounter that led to him.

To a man who does not understand English, bastard is what it truly is (minus the meaning that English speakers have attached to the word); i.e., either an arrangement of eight letters, or, nothing but sound (depending on whether he was called that orally, or, through a writing).

I’d like to borrow a few lines from, The Meaningfulness of Words, an essay from, The Confessions of a Misfit, a book that I penned before this one. Although the essay discusses the very same thing — meaning and profanity — I would like to add a few points to it; hence I’m exploring the two topics again. Below, I borrow three lines:

Words only mean [to us] what we allow them to mean to us.

Calling a cat a dog doesn’t really make or change the cat. So, why be put down by being called a fool, a nigger, a loser, or, a kaffir?
DIVIDED AND CONQUERED

While the offender needs to offend to be, reality is that, to be offended is the choice of the offended.

Our stupidity is both sad and entertaining. Our supply of intelligence and common sense is so low that we find refuge in a self-deceptive device called “political correctness.” A citation of two paragraphs from a narrative that accompanied a cartoon (titled: *Proofreaders*) which I published a few months ago, too, is in order.

We write “F@#k” in place of “Fuck” — yet “F@#k” brings “Fuck” to the reader’s mind. “The Four Letter Word,” too, brings “Fuck” to mind, yet we think that by saying the “The Four Letter Word” instead of “Fuck” we are being polite. Go figure!

This is very same foolishness that Louis CK tried to bring to our attention with his “The N Word” joke. Which basically revolves around how some black people are offended by the word “Nigger,” but not the phrase “The N Word.”

Yet the “The N Word” and “Nigger” bring the very same race to mind. In the same way that, collectively, the so-called “black people” are a referent to which “black people,” “niggers,” “blacks,” “darkies,” etc. refers to.

Geography might also, as I am about to illustrate, influence the impact that a swear word is likely to have on the sworn at. For example, black South Africans, arguably the most, are not offended by the word *nigger*. However, the word *kaffir* has the likelihood of spoiling their weekend; if not the rest of their month. Chances are that the same happens with the so-called African-Americans. For while calling your average African-American a *kaffir*, in your attempt to offend them, might be as ineffective as barking at them, in your attempt to terrify them, calling them a *nigger* is more likely to offend them.

Knowledge is said to be power. I strongly disagree. For, as I have asserted in, *Knowledge is Not Power*, an essay that has permanent residency in *The Confessions of a Misfit*, knowledge merely has the poten-
tial to be what it is claimed to be: powerful. In the very same manner that a seed isn’t a tree; it merely has the potential to become one.

Swear words are arguably the best illustration of how we blindly see words as having meaning in themselves. As promised, I will, in my attempt to illustrate our senselessness, conclude this writing with an example of how one’s language influence what one is offended by. I will juxtapose Sepedi and English swear words.

Sepedi speakers have a hilarious attitude towards swear words. The simple act of referring to someone’s genitals or anus is enough to infuriate them. For example, “marete a gao” has the likelihood to leave a man feeling belittled — the likelihood is quadrupled in cases where those words are uttered by a female. (A translation is in order. “Marete a gao” roughly translates to “your penis.”)

This peculiar conception (conception in both senses: i.e., the formation and the perception) of swear words is by no means limited to Sepedi. Afrikaans has a similar approach to swear words. For example, an Afrikaans speaker might simply say “Jou gat” (which translates to “your hole” — “hole” referring to one’s anus — however, “jou gat” can also simply translate to “your ass”) to someone whom they want to offend. To say the same swear words, a Sepedi speaker would say “mogwete wa gago.”

Granted, there is asshole, an English swear word that could be said to be an equivalent of “Jou gat” and “Mogwete wa gago.” However, there is an important difference; which I hoped to have hinted with the above examples. By saying asshole to someone, you are not simply — as an Afrikaans or Sepedi curser would — referring to their anus, you are saying that that person is an anus. Anyways, still and all, I still find being offended by being called, say, an anus, intellectually childish.

(Side note: Granted, one would argue that the mere act of mentioning another’s “private parts” is “derogatory.” Be that as it may, I find our still having the notion of swear words to be a symptom of an intellectually shallow species. For it is our having invented clothes, not “nature,” that made private parts “private.”)
Hello, Boy or Girl.

Er ... this draft is from, *Divided and Conquered*, a book that I am busy writing. If it isn’t too much to ask, please feel free to forewarn me — hello@mokokoma.com — should you come across a typo or five that I am likely to have overlooked. For more excerpts from the book, visit [www.mokokoma.com](http://www.mokokoma.com)

One Love,

**Mokokoma Mokhonoana**

An Occasional Failure™

@Mokokoma