

African-American English



Types:

- 1 African-American Vernacular English
- 2 African-American Standard English
- 3 African-American Appalachian English
- 4 African-American Outer Banks English
- 5 Older African-American English

Black English

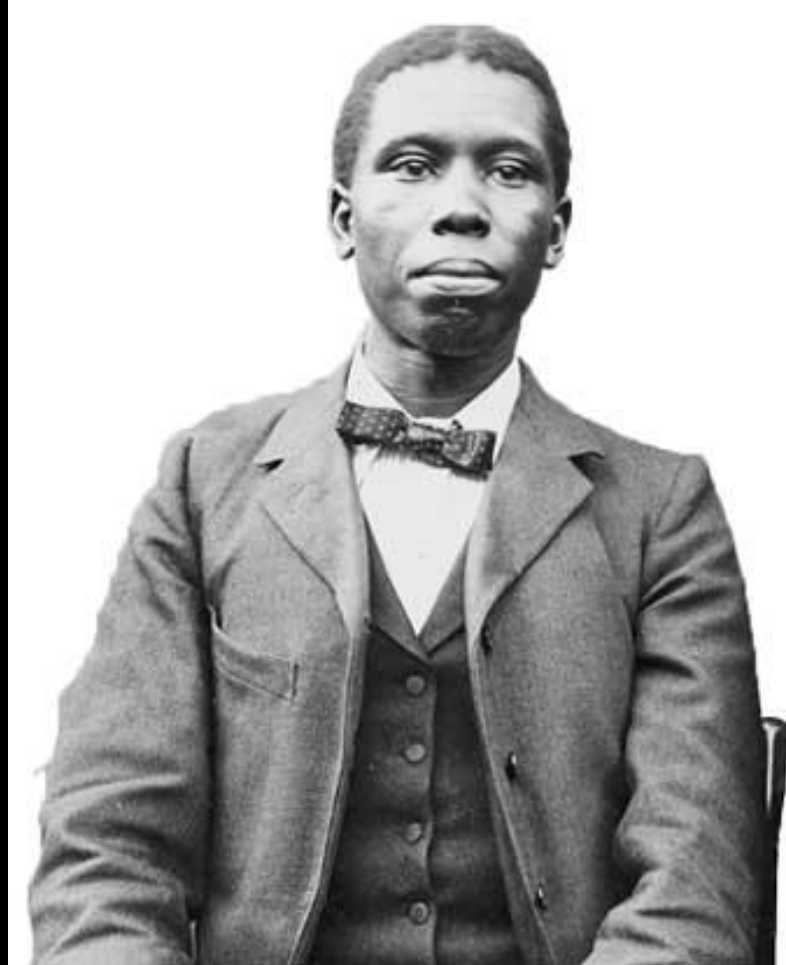
Ebonics simply means 'black speech' (a blend of the words ebony 'black' and phonics 'sounds'). The term was created in 1973 by a group of black scholars who disliked the negative connotations of terms like 'Nonstandard Negro English' that had been coined in the 1960s when the first modern large-scale linguistic studies of African American speech-communities began

What does Ebonics sound like?

Ebonics pronunciation includes features like the omission of the final consonant in words like 'past' (pas') and 'hand' (han'), the pronunciation of the th in 'bath' as t (bat) or f (baf), and the pronunciation of the vowel in words like 'my' and 'ride' as a long ah (mah, rahd). Some of these occur in vernacular white English, too, especially in the South, but in general they occur more frequently in Ebonics. Some Ebonics pronunciations are more unique, for instance, dropping b, d, or g at the beginning of auxiliary verbs like 'don't' and 'gonna', yielding Ah 'on know for "I don't know" and ama do it for "I'm going to do it."

What do people think of Ebonics?

- That depends on whom you ask. There are many popular authors who use this language. This type of language and consider it abusive.



Paul Laurence Dunbar



Zora Neale Hurston

Where did Ebonics come from?

On this point, linguists are quite divided. Some emphasize its English origins, pointing to the fact that most of the vocabulary of Ebonics is from English and that much of its pronunciation and grammar (e.g. double negatives, "I don't want none") could have come from the nonstandard dialects of English workers with whom African slaves interacted.

Arguments about and evidence on the origins issue continue to be brought forth. One thing is for sure: This dynamic, distinctive variety--thoroughly intertwined with African American history and linked in many ways with African American literature, education, and social life--is one of the most extensively studied and discussed varieties of American English and it will probably continue to be so for many years to come.