

Like most of you I just scan my alumni newsletter but this month there was an article that caught my attention.

The University of Denver has been chosen to receive a grant from the National Association of Theoretical Semanticists to research the effects of semantics as they relate to the analysis of American history, in particular the Civil War.

The Association was prompted to fund the academic work due to recent suggested changes in text books approved by the state of Texas and the predominant use of the word “folks” in today’s news programs. Also under review are colloquialisms used in classic American novels written during the same time period.

The genesis of the argument relates to the substitution of the word “folks” in certain instances to soften, if you will, the actual impact of other more commonly used words.

This study has lead to an unfortunate schism between the applied linguists and the sociolinguists. No real agreement has been reached. However some examples of historical substitutions using the word “folks” have been submitted to the board. They are:

Bill of Rights to begin: We the folks not We the people  
Gettysburg Address to refer to our folks not our forefathers  
Border ruffians will be referred to as Folks along the Border  
When Johnny Comes Marching Home to When the Folks Come Marching Home  
Fugitive Slave Law will be referred to as the Fugitive Folks law

The association is accepting suggestions through April 1, 2011. They can be submitted to their web site at [www.nats.com](http://www.nats.com).

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