



# Ghettonation: A Journey Into the Land of Bling and Home of the Shameless

*Cora Daniels*

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**ghet-to** *n.* (Merriam-Webster dictionary) Italian, from Venetian dialect *ghèto* island where Jews were forced to live; literally, foundry (located on the island), from *ghetàr*, to cast; from Latin *jactare* to throw

**1:** a quarter of a city in which Jews were formerly required to live

**2:** a quarter of a city in which members of a minority group live, especially because of social, legal, or economic pressure

**3a:** an isolated group **b:** a situation that resembles a ghetto especially in conferring inferior status or limiting opportunity

**ghet-to** *adj.* (twenty-first-century everyday parlance)

**1a:** behavior that makes you want to say “Huh?” **b:** actions that seem to go against basic home training and common sense

**2:** used to describe something with inferior status or limited opportunity. Usually used with “so.” ;

**3:** a quarter of a city in which members of a minority group live, especially because of social, legal, or economic pressure.

**4: common misuse:** authentic, Black, keepin’ it real

As current and all-consuming as “ghetto” is in these days of gold teeth, weaves (blond and red), Pepsi-filled baby bottles, and babymamas, ghetto has a long history. The original ghetto was in the Jewish quarter of Venice, a Catholic city. Before it became the Jewish quarter, this area contained an iron foundry or *ghèto*, hence the name. These days, ghetto no longer refers to where you live, but to *how* you live. It is a mindset, and not limited to a class or a race. Some things are worth repeating: ghetto is *not* limited to a class or a race. Ghetto is found in the heart of the nation’s inner cities as well as the heart of the nation’s most cherished suburbs; among those too young to understand (we hope) and those old enough to know better; in little white houses, and all the way to the White House; in corporate corridors, Ivy League havens, and, of course, Hollywood. More devastating, ghetto is also packaged in the form of music, TV, books, and movies, and then sold around the world. Bottom line: ghetto is contagious, and no one is immune, no matter how much we like to suck our teeth and shake our heads at what we think is only happening someplace else...

From an award-winning journalist and cultural commentator comes a provocative examination of the impact of “ghetto” mores, attitudes, and lifestyles on urban communities and American culture in general.

Infused with humor and entertaining asides—including lists of events and people that the author nominates for the Ghetto Hall of Fame, and a short section written entirely in ghetto slang—*Ghettonation* is a timely and engrossing report on a controversial social phenomenon. Like Bill Cosby’s infamous, much-discussed comments about the problems within the Black community today, it is sure to trigger widespread interest and heated debate.

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