

Urban Novel Fuses Hip Hop and Civil Rights - 'SnitchCraft'

Written by Robert ID4408

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To Snitch or Not to Snitch: Yale National Initiative Adds Urban Fiction "SnitchCraft" to Curriculum

SnitchCraft, an urban novel by Edrea Davis, recently landed on the required reading list in a curriculum guide examining snitching at the Yale National Initiative of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute.

The Introduction to Criminal Justice course, Police Investigative Challenges: To Snitch or Not to Snitch, That is the Unanswered Question, seeks to teach a comprehensive curriculum on the problems and repercussions associated with uncooperative witnesses.

SnitchCraft is required reading, notes Christine F. Shaub, a Yale National Fellow and creator of the curriculum unit, "because it looks at the present day social phenomenon of snitching, police corruption and the use of paid confidential informants in solving crime." The guide also points out that many students have not been introduced to crime fiction and do not realize it can help them identify issues connected to real life situations.

Highlighting the impact of the course, Shaub expressed how students in Wilmington, Delaware took ownership of the topic after reading the book. ""They researched and developed informative brochures about snitching and conducted a "Snitching Awareness Campaign" in the city. They then presented their campaign to the Mayor of Wilmington, the Wilmington Police Department Chief of Police and also visited 9th grade classrooms in school to make youngsters aware of the snitching problem and its affects," reveals Shaub

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The students wanted to put city officials on notice about things they felt the officials had the authority to improve. Shaub adds, "They also addressed police corruption as it relates to snitching. I was really impressed with their efforts. These students went on to be recognized by the State of Delaware in April 2008 with a Silver Medal from an organization called SkillsUSA!"

Legendary civil rights leader and vocal advocate for criminal justice reform, Rev. Joseph E. Lowery, praised Davis. "Edrea shrewdly weaves critical information and spiritual messages into a gripping urban story," Lowery said. The co-founder of SCLC with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. added, "SnitchCraft provides a glimpse into the flawed snitch system, offers a historical perspective on the distrust of law enforcement, and promotes civic engagement. It's an excellent teaching tool for inner-city youth."

SnitchCraft (Dogon Village Books ISBN: 097869740-5) fuses Hip Hop with civil rights to tell the story of a hustler-turned-nightclub owner set up by a dishonest snitch. The fictional saga juxtaposes the themes of family, spirituality, and social justice, against the backdrop of a popular Southern California nightclub battling escalating gang violence.

"I am thrilled to be on any list that includes Edgar Allen Poe," said Davis. "But, I am most honored that someone in a program focused on developing effective teaching strategies for youth in low-income communities recognized the value of the messages embedded in SnitchCraft."

Shaub, a high school vocational instructor in Wilmington, Delaware, underscores the valuable "After the Book" section that offers statistics, discussion questions, and a "take action" section. SnitchCraft also includes a resource list of contacts for organizations working on criminal justice reform including, The November Coalition, FAMM, Stop the Drug War, Drug Policy Alliance, and The Coalition for the Peoples' Agenda.

"I wanted to convey important information in a language that the Hip Hop generation would appreciate, and also demonstrate that 'street lit' can be used to deliver positive messages that inspire young people," said Davis, a communications consultant with [Jazzmyne PR](#). "I

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commend Ms. Shaub and the Yale National Initiative for seeking innovative approaches to teaching 21st century students," adds the Englewood, NJ native and member of the National Association of Black Journalists.

SnitchCraft is available online at www.snitchcraft.com and most online book retailers, and is distributed to bookstores nationally through Ingram Book Group.

To view the curriculum guide, go to http://teachers.yale.edu/curriculum/search/viewer.php?id=initiative_07.02.09_u