

American Heritage Dictionary Revises "Anchor Baby" Definition; Clarifies Offensive, Derogatory Nature

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Steven Kleinedler, executive director of the American Heritage Dictionary, took note when Immigration Policy Center criticized its definition of "anchor baby."

Kleinedler says American heritage will tweak the definition of the phrase for the third printing of the dictionary's Fifth Edition by noting that it is an offensive and derogatory term. He acknowledges that it "should have been done in the first place."

He wrote on New Times' initial blog post the other day that he'd been in contact with the executive director of the Immigration Policy Center "to discuss her very valid points" and that "a revision to the definition is in order, and the editorial staff and I are working on this."

"When I first read the blog post at Immigration Impact, I knew immediately that a revision would be order," Kleinedler says. "I didn't need anyone to convince me. It was an obvious error that needed to be rectified, and so that is what we did."

The revised definition:

n. Offensive Used as a disparaging term for a child born to a noncitizen mother in a country that grants automatic citizenship to children born on its soil, especially when the child's birthplace is thought to have been chosen in order to improve the mother's or other relatives' chances of securing eventual citizenship.

The original definition:

n. A child born to a noncitizen mother in a country that grants automatic citizenship to children born on its soil, especially such a child born to parents seeking to secure eventual citizenship for themselves and often other members of their family.

Immigration Policy Center director Mary Giovagnoli first blogged at immigrationimpact.com criticizing the definition of "anchor baby."

"This masks the poisonous and derogatory nature of the term, a term which demeans both parent and child and in the process suggests that it is acceptable to call a child born in the U.S--i.e. an American citizen--an "anchor baby," Giovagnoli wrote.

Kleinedler tells New Times that the term was included in the latest edition because the "phrase has been used in widespread national media coverage without an explanation of what the term means."

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