

Shmanners 524: Slang

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[theme music plays]

Travis: Hello, internet! I'm your husband host, Travis McElroy.

Teresa: And I'm your wife host, Teresa McElroy.

Travis: And you're listening to Shmanners.

Teresa: It's extraordinary etiquette...

Travis: For ordinary occasions! Hello, my dove.

Teresa: Hello, dear.

Travis: How are you?

Teresa: I'm alright.

Travis: Yeah? Keeping it cool?

Teresa: Yeah!

Travis: Keeping it fresh, hip? Keeping it, uh, bangin'? Keeping it... 100?

Teresa: Ooh.

Travis: Keeping it a buck? Keeping it... real? Keeping it, uhh... keep on keeping on?

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Uh, keep on trucking?

Teresa: Yes. All of those.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Yes. There were so many! I had no idea.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: They all were keeping... going.

Travis: Yeah, there's a lot of keeping. A lot of going. A lot of totally. Uh, a lot of--

Teresa: Totally awesome, tubular.

Travis: Totally awesome, hip, cowabunga, uh, tubular. Um... you know, all of these.

Teresa: All of those.

Travis: That's how we're keeping it! Keeping it tubular.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: In a round shape with a hole through the middle. Totally tubular.

Teresa: And the reason--

Travis: Which I know comes from a wave.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: I know that one.

Teresa: You're right. I think we've done--

Travis: Because the wave, when it's totally tubular, the wave is curled over on itself and created a tube.

Teresa: We have done some surf slang before.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: That was part of an episode.

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: But today, we are doing our inaugural episode of... slangisode! Tada! You don't like it?

Travis: It's just not a great portmanteau. You know what I mean? 'Cause ep- isn't in slang. Slanglauge. Slanguage is a great portmanteau.

Teresa: [laughs] Okay.

Travis: That's S-tier. Slanguage.

Teresa: Yeah, but we're doing a podcast.

Travis: No, I understand.

Teresa: Episode.

Travis: No, I understand.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: I understand that for necessity's sake, slangisode is what it is.

Teresa: Oh, okay.

Travis: I'm just saying as a portmanteau, it leaves something to be desired.

Teresa: Sh—shmang...

Travis: No.

Teresa: No?

Travis: Not any better.

Teresa: Shmangers?

Travis: No!

Teresa: Shmang...

Travis: Shmangers sounds dirty.

Teresa: [laughs] 'Cause we'd have to get the--

Travis: Like, you would start with "Check out the shmangers on... " and then it—like, eww. Eww!

Teresa: No! Well, we have to get the G in there. But there's already the N, so you're triple N?

Travis: Perfect Shmangers.

Teresa: Shmangers. [laughs] Okay. Here we go. These--

Travis: Away in a Shmanger. Sorry, go on.

Teresa: Not all of these were audience suggested. Some of them are from me, some from Alexx. But if you have, listeners, if you have slang that you would like for us to explore etymol... etymologically? Etymologically?

Travis: Etymolola—etymologically.

Teresa: There it is.

Travis: Even that doesn't sound right, but I think it is. Etymologically.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: I had to say it with confidence and full speed.

Teresa: [laughs] Just headstrong, right on in there.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Please send them to us, shmannerscast@gmail.com. And we will continue also our idioms, which I think these are kind of like playmates. They go hand in hand.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: So we're gonna start this out, and I'm gonna try not to sound weird, because I...

Travis: Not to sound like a grandma?

Teresa: I don't feel cool enough to say a lot of these things.

Travis: I—listen, I love you very much.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: You're, like, my favorite person in the world.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: You're not...

Teresa: I'm not cool enough.

Travis: ... cool. Like, if someone said, like, "Name, like, five words that describe Teresa... "

Teresa: Cool is not one of them.

Travis: Cool is not in the top five. Maybe—maybe top 20?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Not top five.

Teresa: That's why--

Travis: You are many other things that are better than cool.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: Ice cold. You know what I mean?

Teresa: [laughs] Like I said, I'll do the best I can. Okay, let's start.

Travis: Now, me, [holding back laughter] I'm cool.

Teresa: You—[wheezes]

Travis: Everybody--

Teresa: See, you couldn't do it either!

Travis: Only 'cause you giggled!

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: People at home don't know that I'm not cool. If you had been like, "Aww, yeah."

Teresa: Oh, they know.

Travis: What?!

Teresa: They know that we're not cool!

Travis: Who told? Who told? Aww, man!

Teresa: Ahh...

Travis: Beans.

Teresa: Yeah. [laughs] Maybe we won't do more of these. [laughs]

Travis: No, we'll just do slang, but it'll be old person slang, like 23 skidoo and stuff.

Teresa: [laughs] Well, we have to do the ones that we have now, so.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Let's get through it. I asked for this one. No cap.

Travis: Yeah, no cap is no lie. Like, "I'm not lying." Or you would say to someone, uh, inquisitive. Like, you telling the truth? No cap? Right? It's like, are you capping? No cap? I have no idea where it comes from.

Teresa: Well, I'm gonna tell you. It implies a seriousness, I think. Not just a truthfulness but a seriousness.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: So, as is the case with many of our slang words in culture today, we have the Black community to thank for this one, and this will not be the last time that we hear a slang saying that has been credited to them.

Travis: A lot of them, the LGBTQ+ community.

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: Yeah. These things get borrowed, stolen, appropriated, however you want to—however you want to use it.

Teresa: Shared.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: In African-American Vernacular English, cap has long been a term that means to exaggerate, lie, or insult. And this is going to be important. You've probably heard the phrase "cap on" or "capping on" to describe making fun of someone.

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: And this is a distinct form of wordplay where people will trade intensifying insults, usually about one another's family members.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: So I recall a moment in our culture where people would do jokes like "your momma" jokes.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: Right? And I believe that that is also a descendant of this. But where this came from specifically, it was called the dozens.

Travis: Uh-huh?

Teresa: And it involves coming up with put-downs that get crazier and crazier until one person admits defeat, right?

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: And so capping became common slang in the 20th century, but the game the dozens and the idea of capping goes way, way back to the slave trade in America.

Travis: Okay. I was not expecting that, but go on.

Teresa: Well, so the theory is that playing dozens, the dozens with each other, particularly in front of an audience the way that you might on movies and TV, like, depict, like, a rap battle or something, right? It was a survival tactic that helped Black people deal with the dehumanization of slavery.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: So the idea was to say things that were, like, outlandishly ridiculous and offensive and dirty, and it would build up your kind of, like, emotional tolerance. I mean, you would definitely need that to survive slavery, right? And it offered humor and community, due to the fact that people would gather around and watch you do this, right?

Travis: I bet it was also that feeling, you know, where, like, I can make fun of my brother, I can make fun of my friend, right?

Teresa: Certainly.

Travis: But when someone else does it, like, we're gonna have a problem, right? Very much that community thing of, like... it's almost humanizing to be able to identify a specific thing to insult about someone versus just insulting them in a general way because, like, the way they look or, like, skin color or anything like that, right? Of, like, "Actually, I know you well enough to insult this specific thing about you," right? And it's like, it feels--

Teresa: And so it also is, like, teasing you because I love you type thing.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Which is not something that I enjoy.

Travis: No.

Teresa: But there are people that enjoy that facet of being loved. So, back to the present day. This is where the term capping or capping on came from, since your insults are overblown and exaggerated, right? So it's kind of like that hand game where you put one on top of the other, right?

Travis: Yeah. Like, literally, like, someone would say, like, to cap it off, right? Of, like, I put this thing on top.

Teresa: Yes, mm-hmm. I put this thing on top, and then we keep putting things on top until somebody gives up.

Travis: Like that story about the guy who sold hats, and he had a stack of hats on top of his head, and he fell asleep under a tree and a monkey stole all his hats. Then he had to get the hats back from the monkey. You don't know this book?

Teresa: I don't know that story.

Travis: You don't know that book? I'm not crazy. That's a real book that existed.

Teresa: Is that, like, a Curious George?

Travis: No! It's about—I think I saw it on Reading Rainbow, where I found all good books. But about a hat salesman who walked around with all the hats on his head, and he fell asleep under a tree and a monkey stole his hats, and they all had his hats, and then he had to get his hats back from 'em.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: It's a classic.

Teresa: I believe you.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: So, now we're going back to no cap, meaning the opposite of that. No exaggeration, or "I'm not playing around right now."

Travis: "Are you kidding me, bro?"

"No, I'm not kidding you."

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: No cap.

Teresa: No cap.

Travis: God, we're cool.

Teresa: And one of the ways that we have found this today is from rappers in Atlanta who brought the lyrical part of it into the general lexicon in the late 2010s, early 2020s.

Travis: Got it. Cool!

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: [singing] The more you know!

Teresa: Etymology's neat, so.

Travis: It is!

Teresa: [laughs] Okay. Here's the next one. Rizz.

Travis: Rizz is short for charisma.

Teresa: Yes?

Travis: In that it's, like... I almost said game, which is also slang. Are you able to be charming to someone? Usually denoted with a romantic or sexual interest.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: But I've heard it used as just, like, being a charming person that's able to, like, charm people or charm your way into things, right? Not just like in the way you speak, but general body language, attitude, the way you carry yourself. Like, "They've got rizz."

Teresa: Right, exactly. This is another one from the Black community as well. Rizz, like you said, is the shortened form of the word charisma, which was used as slang to describe someone who was suave, particularly when it

came to picking up women. So it was originally used as a male attribute in, like, heterosexual-normity, right?

Travis: Yeah. I would also say that there's a lot of terms when it comes to especially, I think, the idea of picking up women, right? Where it starts having, like, a very—it's a cool thing to say about someone, to then almost as people find out about it, it almost becoming, like, an inherently mocking thing. Like, "Yeah, you've got rizz." You know, right? Like, that kind of thing. Of, like, "Well, don't say that." You know what I mean? Like, that thing of, like, "I am using it ironically."

Teresa: Oh.

Travis: In a way. You know what I mean? Where people start using it ironically.

Teresa: Sure. A lot of things turn that way. Especially if you're telling someone about themselves doing it, instead of--

Travis: Yeah, and they think they're very cool.

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: Like, someone who maybe in their own mind would be like, "I've got a lot of rizz."

But then hearing someone else say it in a different tone of voice and they're like, "Oh, no."

Teresa: Right. I think that a lot of these terms are best used when you're talking about someone else who isn't there, right?

Travis: Yeah. Don't describe yourself.

Teresa: In a descriptive manner for someone else.

Travis: You would not describe yourself as—"I am—oh, me? I've got rizz!"

Don't do this.

Teresa: So, there are some different theories about where it was born. Perhaps Baltimore, Atlanta, or New York.

Travis: I've heard of all three of those cities.

Teresa: You surely have. It hit the internet in 2021 with a Twitch streamer, Kai Cenat.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Who started to say it in his videos as a shorthand for being great at seducing women.

Travis: Sure. Just hearing you say that series of words gave me chills.

Teresa: [laughs] He's from the Bronx, and claims that he and his friends came up with the term. I mean, probably not. But may--

Travis: Well, may—I mean--

Teresa: Maybe.

Travis: They might have. I think that this is a thing, like we've talked about, you know, different origins for things where there's, like, simultaneous things of like that.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Because, like, charisma is a word.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Right? And cha- and ma- don't mean anything, right? Like, you would be like, "What is that?" But rizz is a very noticeable part of the word charisma. So I could see it being used multiple places without those things ever connecting, right? Not like "I heard it from this person," right? But one

group using it as a shortened form of charisma naturally, as well as many other groups doing it too.

Teresa: Right. This word especially seems to have a little bit of a co-opting from the manosphere.

Travis: Oh yeah, that's what I mean, right?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: When it gets into that ironically, yeah.

Teresa: Right. Especially rizz king, right? A person who picks up a lot of women. But, I mean, the word itself, like you said, when you kind of, like, poke fun at yourself for saying that you have it or don't, that's harmless, right? Like, it's just something that if you hear someone talking about themselves in a serious way about having rizz or being a rizz king, I would say maybe that's not such a great thing.

Travis: Same with alpha.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Alpha is, like, a thing if someone says about themselves in seriousness, is the easiest way to know that they're not the things that they think they are describing themselves as.

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Exactly. Cheugy. This had a real moment on the internet, I think, a couple of years ago.

Travis: This--I think this is, like, overly posh? This is overly... or, like... I don't know. Like, uh—just tell me.

Teresa: Well, so it's an adjective, so not a someone. But the act of trying too hard to be young and hip.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: That's the word I was looking for. Hip.

Teresa: Hip. [laughs] This is literally from a teenage girl.

Travis: That makes sense.

Teresa: And so much of language has evolved from teen girl speak, it is... it boggles the mind.

Travis: Terrifying.

Teresa: It's terrifying! But it is a common theme. It happens a lot where teenage girls start using words, and then they just kind of explode all over everything.

Travis: Well, especially in this day and age with, like, streamers and influencers and stuff.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Where it used to be, you know, a hundred years ago, for something to become slang it would have to be like, someone would use it maybe in writing, right? In a newspaper story or, I don't know, a radio play. A hundred years ago? Yeah. And then it's like, everybody would be quoting that, right? But it would have to slowly disseminate through the population.

Whereas now, even if someone's like a mid-tier streamer, right? They have enough people watching that instantly the field is seeded with people using that term 'cause they like it.

Teresa: Certainly. And I think that there's no better example of this than the word "like" adding to things, making it—when you use it for a simile, right? Also when you use it as a word filler.

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: Also as you use it when you are talking about something that someone said. All of those things.

Travis: "And they were like," yeah.

Teresa: It all originates back to the kind of teenage girl slang, right?

Travis: Terrifying teenagers, yes.

Teresa: So this term--

Travis: Kids these days!

Teresa: [laughs] This term specifically was invented in 2013 by Gaby Rasson, who was a teen in LA. And while attempting to find the origin of the word, journalist Taylor Lorenz tracked it all the way back to Gaby, who said that it was her and her friends trying to come up with a word that pointed out someone who was behind on the trends. Some really great quotes from the interview, here.

Gaby says, "Cheugy wasn't supposed to be mean, just descriptive."

When she was asked where the word came from, it was a nonsense formation, but it's just something that sounded right to them. So it doesn't really, like--

Travis: I would also point out, hey, Gaby?

Teresa: --come from anything.

Travis: Sometimes the meanest things are when they're strangely accurate descriptions.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Right? You weren't trying to be mean, but just hitting the nail on the head sometimes, like, oof. Ow. Uh, yeah. Yeah, you got it. Yeah, you summed it up in one word. Okay. Whew!

Teresa: Yeah. I think it's so interesting that this particular word was founded because it has the sound to it. It's almost like onomatopoeia, almost. Right?

Travis: Yeah. I would also say that there—listen, am I tapped in to Gen Z? Gen Alpha? No. Slang. But I know enough to say, like, there are some slang words that the point of them is almost like they're nonsense things, right? Where it's like, it doesn't mean anything. It's, like, self-referential, right? As if it was made to confuse older generations to be like, "What does that mean?"

Teresa: The internet really assists with this.

Travis: Yeah. And then they almost find meaning. Like 6-7 for example, right?

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Where it's like, it means—it's not a reference to anything. It doesn't mean anything. Right? It just caught on as, like, nonsense.

Teresa: It was in a song.

Travis: But then it's like, it becomes defined by its thing to be like, "Oh, that's like brain rot." Right? Of, like, that thing—like, the definition is born after the usage, you know?

Teresa: Mm-hmm. Where it doesn't mean anything. We tried to explain that to our children, 'cause they were trying to use it to, like, count or something?

Travis: I don't know. Who knows?

Teresa: Bebe was like, "You don't know what you're talking about, Dottie."

And Dottie was like, "[sing-song] Six-seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven!"

Travis: It was great. Frankly, it was top tier.

Teresa: [laughs] Okay.

Travis: You know what else is top tier?

Teresa: What?

Travis: A word from another Max Fun show.

[theme music plays]

[ad break]

Teresa: Okay. So, we're back, and here's another one. Stan.

Travis: Oh, stan! Okay. Stan is when you're, like, a fan plus, right? Another slang term for this is, like, you're in the such-and-such army, right?

Teresa: Sure, yeah.

Travis: Where, like, you're someone who would, like, go to bat for this person. There's almost like a parasocial implication to it.

Teresa: There definitely is, yeah.

Travis: And for a long time I thought this was a reference to the Eminem song Stan.

Teresa: It is, actually. Sort of. It's not just about that song, the person that he's writing about named Stan, right?

Travis: Uh-huh.

Teresa: But it is because stan is a stalker fan.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Right? So...

Travis: It's not just because of Stan. It's because of the—yeah.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: The—I guess it--

Teresa: Portmanteau!

Travis: Yeah, it's a portmanteau. Port-stan-teau.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: [laughs]

Teresa: So it's double that way, right? The song is Stan, right? About a person who is kind of, like, parasocial about Eminem, right?

Travis: Yes. Played by Devon Sawa in the music video, I think.

Teresa: Oh, really?

Travis: I think so.

Teresa: Hm.

Travis: Is that true? Okay.

Teresa: So that was in the year 2000, right? The song Stan. First of all, if you read the lyrics, they are pretty good at, like, bumming you out.

Travis: I was right, it was Devon Sawa. Boom.

Teresa: It was, you did it.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: They're pretty much a bummer.

Travis: Oh, yeah!

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Yeah! Oh my gosh, yeah!

Teresa: But now, the word stan has less of a negative effect in general, because you can describe yourself kind of ironically as a stan.

Travis: Yes. It's the arc of a--

Teresa: Or that you stan something.

Travis: It's arc of a lot of, like—a lot of slang, right? Where you have, like, a primary meaning, and then you have, like, an ironic secondary meaning that comes out of it, right? Like, I would say, you know, how cool used to actually be a cool thing to say. Right? And then it became like, "I'm cool! Right, guys?"

Teresa: "Right?" [laughs]

Travis: You know? And, like, that thing of like, "Oh yeah, you're cool." Right? Of, like, as things get used, the specific definition gets watered down, you know?

Teresa: And we also find the flips of those, right? Because when something was cool, that was great. But when something was bad, that was also really cool, but in the better way.

Travis: And it was hot. That was great. So it was cool, it was hot.

Teresa: All of those.

Travis: Was it cold? That's bad. Lukewarm? Never mind, right?

Teresa: [laughs] All of those. And like we said, this is a word that's generally harmless on its own.

Travis: Now.

Teresa: Now. Right. But it could be a little bit of a red flag--write that down for another slang--depending upon how it's used, right? I think that when we're talking about things that are generally, like, innocuous, like if you talk about being a Bake Off stan, that's us, right? We love Great British Bake Off, and we watch it.

Travis: I would not, just so you know, describe myself that way.

Teresa: Oh.

Travis: Um, because--

Teresa: I'm—I would.

Travis: No, I'm a—I'm a Great British Bake Off fan.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: Because I'm 42, almost 43 years old.

Teresa: [laughs] Right, right, right.

Travis: So I wouldn't say, "Oh man, I'm a Bake Off stan." Because what am I doing, at that point? You know what I mean?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Yeah, you get it.

Teresa: But it does have the problematic kind of roots. And also, once you go into being stans of people who are problematic, there's a little bit of a slippery slope there.

Travis: Now, here's—the two things that I do really like about stan, as its used now, is it does imply... okay. Before I say the two things that I like, there is almost a gatekeeping thing to it of elevating oneself to a level above just fan.

Teresa: Oh, like I'm the—the leader of the fan club kind of thing.

Travis: Right. "Well, I know you guys are fans, but I'm a stan." Right?

Teresa: Yeah, sure.

Travis: Like, "I show up, I do everything," right? But I do like that idea of, like, yeah, many people are fans of things, right? Like, I'm a fan of Doctor Who. There are people for whom they're on another level of that.

Teresa: That's true.

Travis: And it's like, yeah, I understand that I will respect that. What I also like about it is the usage of something like "We have no choice but to stan." Where you couldn't say "We have no choice but to fan."

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: Right? Because that...

Teresa: Sure.

Travis: That's a different verb about being, like, warm or whatever, right?

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: But "We have no choice but to stan," and it's like, yeah, I know exactly what you mean. Right?

Teresa: That's great.

Travis: The succinct nature of that phrase. To be like, yeah, when you see something like that, what are you gonna do? Not be a fan of it? Right? But we can make that much shorter by saying "We have no choice but to stan." And, like, that as a phrase of like, yeah, you can almost say that matter-of-factly, now.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: And everybody's like, "Yeah, absolutely, yeah."

Teresa: We know what we're doing. Okay. Here's another one. Unc.

Travis: Unc is an older gentleman, or somebody that you may or may not be related to but is, like—that's how I've always heard it. Am I wrong?

Teresa: Well, yes and no. So, it's affectionately teasing in a way of calling someone old.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Right? But do have to kind of be almost an authority figure to become an unc. On two sides of the same coin, we have unc and we have boomer. Alright?

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: So, boomer is always derogatory.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: Unc is not.

Travis: It is lovingly derogatory?

Teresa: Lovingly teasing, again.

Travis: Okay. I've always thought it was like, you know, how your parents have friends that are like, oh, we call 'em aunt such-and-such, but they're not aunt such-and-such.

Teresa: Well, sure.

Travis: Maybe that's a more southern thing, right? For me.

Teresa: Sure. I mean, no, they can definitely—it can be that way. But it's not about the relationship. It's more about the perceived kind of, um, differences between you and I.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Right? It's not that we've always hung out together and, like, your family knows my family, and I call your uncle my uncle, right? It's not exactly that.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: There is a kind of, like, older person, authority figure about it. But it's more like a tease.

Travis: Like you would call someone a grandpa when they're like, "I don't know how this new thing works." And you're like, "Okay, grandpa."

Teresa: Yes. Yes.

Travis: Right, okay.

Teresa: Yes, like that. Again, another word that we have from the Black community, a term of affection for an older family or community member that has just been around for a while. Shortened version of uncle, expressing affection for someone older than you.

Travis: I've also heard with, like, auntie.

Teresa: Sure.

Travis: As well, yeah.

Teresa: Sure.

Travis: The other version.

Teresa: But I think that auntie is more reverence, where unc is more irreverence.

Travis: But—yeah. I mean, that makes sense, right?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Yeah. Because we should live in a matriarchy, you know what I mean?

Teresa: We surely should.

Travis: Where we are more reverent of older women.

Teresa: For example, Snoop Dogg is often called unc, since he's, like, an older trailblazer of the rap community.

Travis: Yeah!

Teresa: Okay, so this term exploded in 2021, where calling someone unc or being in unc status became a way to make fun of someone, affectionately, for being older. Maybe they don't know who a new celebrity is, or they use too many emojis when they text, or they make a big deal about going to bed at nine. Like, all of those kind of, like, older person things, we love you anyway, kind of deal.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: Exactly. Here's one that I had not heard. Up until now, all of these had been familiar to me. Based.

Travis: Oh, based is when you say something that's, like, just complete fact or, like, absolutely true. But it's like, you have a good opinion. That's a right opinion to have.

Teresa: Right, agreement.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Yes. And that they are expressing themselves fully, regardless of the fact that other people may not agree with them, right? It doesn't have to be a controversial opinion, but it is an opinion, and you agree with it, and so they are based.

Travis: Like if somebody says, like, their favorite character from a thing, right? And it's like, yeah, it's based. That's a based opinion, yeah.

Teresa: Yes, yes. Usually it is cool, it is admirable, but it's authentic. Let's think about based as, like, the opposite of cringe, which we will be exploring soon.

Travis: Well, we've kind of already been exploring it casually, you and I.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Just in our behavior throughout the episode, I mean.

Teresa: Yes, but I think that cringe has come around again in the ironic way, where it used to be derogatory, and now it is something that people express having pride in.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: So it's more like cringe and whimsy.

Travis: We'll get to it in a sec. Based—based is good.

Teresa: Cringe and whimsy are cousins. But we're talking about based, which is kind of the opposite of what originally cringe meant. So, we have to go back to the 1980s for this one.

Travis: All the way back, 46 years ago.

Teresa: All the way back. And this actually came from the crack cocaine epidemic. People assume that based is a shortened phrase for "based in fact," but that's not it. It comes from this. It's a direct reference to a drug habit.

Travis: Is it freebasing?

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: How?! How is it connected to that?

Teresa: Okay. Well, so when you do that, you take the substance and you distill it down to its most potent solid form.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Okay. And so that when you call someone based, or a basehead, in the 1980s it was equivalent to saying that they were a person addicted to crack cocaine.

Travis: Okay. And so then it came to mean a correct opinion.

Teresa: Okay. So, here we go.

Travis: Uh-huh?

Teresa: Rapper Lil B...

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: ... changed the way that we think about the word based, because he evolved the phrase through music and through the way that he spoke to

people, to mean uninhibited by the thoughts and actions of others. So again, a kind of, like, distilled thought process, right?

Travis: Uh-huh. A pure thought.

Teresa: A pure thought.

Travis: That is unaffected by the opinion—you haven't been influenced.

Teresa: And being pure, right. Non-influenced, a pure opinion from yourself that is authentic to you.

Travis: That almost makes too much sense for, like, for me. I'm like, okay, yeah, I see it logically. It's just a weird origin to derive that from, but okay.

Teresa: So, what he says: "Based means being yourself. Not being scared of what people think about you. Not being afraid to do what you want to do. Being positive. When I was younger, based was a negative term that meant, like, dopehead. People used to make fun of me. They were like, 'You're based,' and use it as a negative. What I did was turn a negative into positive, and started embracing it. I made it mine."

Travis: Love that. I love that.

Teresa: That's very cool.

Travis: So maybe I'll start using big head--

Teresa: That's what Lil B did.

Travis: I'll start using big head. "You have a big head" to be, like, a good thing. [crosstalk]

Teresa: Well, I think that you guys have. I do! You even have your company called Big Giant Head.

Travis: Big Giant Head, that's true.

Teresa: You've reclaimed it.

Travis: That's about a sculpture, though, that we always passed by on our way to church.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Where some dude was carving, like, a George Washington head that was, like, four times the size of normal George Washington head. I guess! I've never seen George Washington in real life. Maybe he had a giant head that was four times the size of his proportional body. I don't know! Dig him up!

Teresa: There's no way to know. There has been a little bit of a grab from making it a rude term again, right? As kind of, like, an ironic thing.

Travis: We shouldn't be taking any direction from 4chan.

Teresa: Exactly. Let's take it from Lil B instead, so that you can celebrate being authentically yourself.

Travis: Uh-huh.

Teresa: I've got one more.

Travis: Is it cringe?

Teresa: Bet.

Travis: Oh, bet is like an agreement, right? Where someone says something and you're like, "Ah, bet." Right? You're agreeing with them and saying "Yeah, let's do that." Or "Oh, I'm in." Right?

Teresa: Absolutely. So, we've got enthusiastic affirmation. Also, playful way to accept a challenge, right?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: "You can bet on it" is basically where it comes from, right? 1980S, again. "You can bet on it" or "You bet." This is a common theme for a lot of the slang that is popular today. Again, African-American slang. Literally, "You can bet on it" started being used as far back as the 1850s, and then the African-American slang shortened it to just "bet," but it means the same thing. Something that was so sure to happen that you could put money on the outcome.

Travis: Yeah, a safe bet.

Teresa: Exactly. And this, again, gained prominence through TikTok in the early 2020s.

Travis: Bet.

Teresa: Bet.

Travis: Based.

Teresa: I think that the rhythm of slang is different--

Travis: The rizz-m.

Teresa: ... is different these days. Because it's less of, like, a common, like, language. It's more of, like, a shortening. Like, the idea that you can say one thing, and I know the whole thing about what you're talking about.

Travis: I think that's always been true. I think that the usage of taking a very... not necessarily complex, but much larger idea, and condensing it down to one word, right? Almost like a code word that people who are in the know of that slang would understand right away. Right? Think about, like, the term "on sight." Right? Of, like, anybody who doesn't know is like, "What is that?" Right?

But I hear "on sight," it's like, oh, okay. The second we see that dude we're fighting him, right? It's on sight, right?

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: And, like, that idea of taking a complex idea, condensing—to the point where now everybody knows what saying something like "Oh, cool," right? Means. Or, like, tubular. Like, these things that are outdated, right? Because it's almost like the code got deciphered, and the people who weren't supposed to know the code knew the code and started using it. So then a new code has to be developed for the same idea, right? But the group is smaller.

Teresa: It's very reminiscent of that Star Trek: Next Gen episode where they meet the alien race that only speaks in references.

Travis: Yeah. Darmok something.

Teresa: Something like that.

Travis: God, we're cool.

Teresa: But because they don't understand the references, they don't know what people, like, they're talking about. But it's all like a shared kind of experience that they are using to talk to each other, which is so cool.

Travis: Well, and I also think it's one of the reasons that, you know, boomers like us, um...

Teresa: [laughs] No.

Travis: No. But it can feel like all of this slang is just kind of, like, the Gen Z, and now even more so Gen Alpha, is just kind of, like, gibberish, or whatever. Because the speed at which information is being shared is so much faster than when it was when we were, like, 12 or 13, you know?

Teresa: The terms come in and out, and switch ironically much faster.

Travis: Because the code gets broken so much faster, right? That it's like, oh yeah, now 40-year-olds like us are using them. And we just started using it a year ago, right? So now we need to keep developing new terms. And also, because so much of, like, streamer and influencer stuff is about being

unique and standing out in a very crowded platform is like, well, I don't want to use the same term for this thing that everybody else uses, so I need to iterate on it and have a more interesting kind of catchier version of it than this person used before, right? And constantly in this, like, arms race, almost, of slang, right? Of, like, how do I develop the next cool slang term for this thing that everybody else has been using?

Teresa: Yeah. Which is also why middle school teachers are the backbone of the slang society.

Travis: Couldn't do it without you.

Teresa: Because they bridge the gap. [laughs]

Travis: You're behind enemy lines.

Teresa: Exactly. [laughs]

Travis: You're doing, you know, that, like, enigma work.

Teresa: They're the codebreakers. [laughs]

Travis: Yeah, you're out there doing, like, the Alan Turing work of, like—every day at your machine being like, "I don't know, guys. They just started saying boogity. I have no idea what it means. Stay with me."

Teresa: "Stay with me." [laughs]

Travis: "We're gonna figure this one out. Stay tuned."

And speaking of staying tuned...

Teresa: Yeah, we're gonna do some more. Send some in.

Travis: Hey, thank you all so much for listening. Thank you to our researcher, Alexx, without whom we could not make this show. Thank you to our editors, Rachel and Gino, without whom we could not do this show. Thank you to you for listening. You're 6-7.

Teresa: No. That's not it.

Travis: No. You're based?

Teresa: Sure, I guess.

Travis: Oh, god.

Teresa: I don't know.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Get us outta here! What else, Teresa?

Teresa: We always thank Brent "brentalfloss" Black for writing our theme music, which is available as a ringtone where those are found. Also, thank you to Bruja Betty Pinup Photography for the cover picture of our fan-run Facebook group, Shmanners Fanners. If you love to give and get excellent advice from other fans, go ahead and join that group today.

And, like I said, as always, we are taking your topic submissions. Send us your idioms, send us your slang. We'll go through it. But also, if you have a biography or a question or, you know, send it in. Say hi to Alexx, she reads every single one that comes to shmannerscast@gmail.com.

Travis: My only hope is that by repeating how uncool we are and not trying—like, not saying this stuff as though it comes naturally to us, that we'll avoid... [laughs]

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: ... seeming like we think it does and seeming like we think we're cool. We'll see. Join us again next time!

Teresa: No RSVP required.

Travis: You've been listening to Shmanners...

Teresa: Manners, Shmanners. Get it?

[theme music plays]

[chord]

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