

# PIG

**The Etymological Roots of Pig as Slang for Police**



**Bag of Snakes Micropress**

**WHY HAS *PIG*  
BECOME *PIG*  
SYNONYMOUS WITH  
*POLICE?***



While its origins are British, the term wasn't solely used in reference to police, but anyone who was disagreeable or seen as taking more than their share.



The term dates as far back as 1874, when a slang dictionary in London defined pig as “a policeman, an informer.” Some have speculated that “pig” may be an allusion to early officers and detectives who were sniffing out a crime, like a pig sniffs with its snout.

*THE SLANG DICTIONARY.*

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**Pig**, a policeman; an informer. The word is now almost exclusively applied by London thieves to a plain-clothes man, or a “nose.”

**Pig**, a pressman in a printing office. *See* DONKEY.

**Pig**, or SOW'S BABY, a sixpence.

**Pig**, to live in a crowded, filthy manner. The lower orders of Irish are said to PIG together. A suggestive, if not elegant, expression.

**Pig and Tinder-box**, the vulgar rendering of the well-known tavern sign, “Elephant and Castle.”

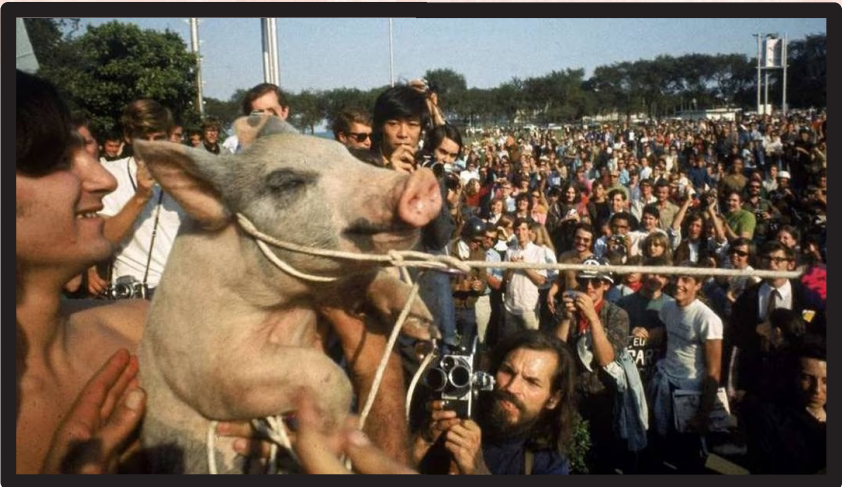


***THE PROTESTS  
OF THE 1960S  
BROUGHT ABOUT A  
RESURGENCE  
OF THE TERM.***



**On January 16, 1968, the Yippies, a countercultural offshoot of the anti-war movement, released their first manifesto as an open invitation to occupy Chicago during the 1968 Democratic National Convention for an “international festival of youth music and theater.”**

**Protesting the Vietnam War outside the Chicago convention center, the Yippies carried with them a pig named Pigasus as their presidential candidate. They later called police officers “pigs” when they seized the animal. Headlines announcing “Police Called Pigs,” further propelled the term in the public consciousness.**



**In 1966, Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale officially developed The Black Panther Party for Self-Defense in Oakland, California with the goal of serving oppressed communities and “defend[ing] them against their oppressors.” After 18-year-old Bobby Hutton was killed by police in April 1968, Seale delivered a memorial speech at the Kaleidoscope Theater in Los Angeles to roughly 600 people.**



**Seale’s speech serves as a powerful allegory, alluding to police as animalistic authoritative figures. “Politics starts with a pig crushing us across our skull and murdering our people.” More than sixty years later, police are still referred to as “pigs,” marking the same abuse and harm perpetrated by police. We see this personified in the killing of Tamir Rice (2014), Breonna Taylor (2020), George Floyd (2020), and countless others who have been wrongly killed by police.**

**Bobby Seale said it best. He told a story about a man wandering through the woods in search of a spring with clear, clean water, only to find that it has been made toxic because of pigs. "There's a hog in the spring, and a lot of those pigs are running around too in the spring [...] All we want is a little freedom, all we want is a clear drink of water, but there's a hog in the spring." The disrespectful, abusive, and inhumane actions that the police continue to bring to poor, queer, and BIPOC peoples is ruining the spring.**

**Excerpt of Speech from Bobby Seale:**

The memorial that we just left - or had - the other day in Oakland, California, in racist USA, was proceeded by a funeral that was held for brother Bobby Hutton. And at this funeral, one of the preachers there began to get himself uptight and began to check the situation out, doing his best not to do anymore Tomming, stated that there was a man, a little story he's told.

A man who was wandering in the hills and in the woods and he was looking for a spring that was supposed to have clear water where he could get a drink because he was thirsty, he was very very thirsty.

And he found a spring that was very very muddy and dirty and filthy, the water wasn't clear so he began to sit down and try to get in some clear clean water by trying to clear the spring out. He went through all kind of hassles and changes trying to clear the spring out, so he can get him a clear drink of water from the spring.

And another man came along and said, "What are you trying to do?" He said, "I am trying to get a clear drink of water here, I've been thirsty for a long long time and I can't seem to get the dirt and the filth and the mud and the dirt that's here in this spring cleared out to get me a clear drink of water."

The man said, "Well the reason you can't do that," he says "is because on top of the hill about a mile or two back where you haven't checked out yet," he says "there's a hog in the spring." He says "there's a hog in the spring, and a lot of those pigs are running around too in the spring." All we want is a little freedom, all we want is a clear drink of water, but there's a hog in the spring!

Look, how should we try and how should we work to get the hog out of the spring? Now the spring has been running dirty for a long long time for peoples in Vietnam, for peoples in Africa, our black brothers, for our black brothers and colored brothers and sisters in South America and Asia and the Caribbeans etc., throughout this world.

Where three-quarters of the world who are non-white who've been brutalized and beaten and exploited and colonialized etc., by this racist power structure here in America. The hog has got to be removed from the spring.