Explaining a Status Marker

Before you begin:
So far in this course, most of the material about “status markers” has been negative and most of it has focused on language. There are a lot of other status markers, however, and many of them are positive. An engagement ring changes the status of the wearer, usually in a very positive way. Often the status content depends on the viewer: To a loyal Nazi, the swastika armband implied patriotism, solidarity, and support for the Fatherland, but to a Jew it meant total disrespect for everything Jewish and a very immediate threat of death.

Your task:
Select one specific status marker and explain what it is (objectively) and what meaning it conveys (subjective impression).

Audience:
Your audience is a person or persons who do not understand the meaning behind the status marker. Your audience is not necessarily stupid—just unaware or uninformed. It’s possible, as with some of the language status markers, that the audience is the person who bears the mark. For example, many people who would say “Me and him was at the store” are unaware that their status-marked language disqualifies them from many sorts of employment.

Why I assigned this essay:
I want you to learn three things from writing this essay:

- Clear explanation that gets beyond “you know what I mean” (because the reason for explaining something is that your audience does not know what you mean).
- Audience awareness—so you have some idea what information to supply and what to assume.
- The power of connotation—as I pointed out in class, the literal meaning of ain’t is quite different from the emotional freight that it carries.

Mechanical requirements:

- The final product will be typed and double-spaced according to MLA format.
- The paper will be at least 4 pages long (That’s about 1400 words).

Due Dates:
1. Tuesday, September 18: Bring TWO printed copies of your rough draft for peer editing.
2. Thursday, September 20: Final copy of essay #2 is DUE!

This essay is worth 100 points.