

From [Taylor Mali](#) on "Russell Simmons Presents Def Poetry" in 2002:

In case you hadn't noticed,
it has somehow become uncool
to sound like you know what you're talking about?
Or believe strongly in what you're, like, saying?
Invisible question marks and parenthetical (you know?)'s
have been attaching themselves to the ends of our sentences?
Even when those sentences aren't, like, questions? You know?

Declarative sentences—so-called
because they used to, like, DECLARE things to be true, okay,
as opposed to other things are, like, totally, you know, not?
They've been infected by this tragically cool and totally hip
interrogative tone? As if I'm saying,
Don't think I'm a nerd just because I've noticed this;
this is just like the word on the street, you know?
It's like what I've heard?
I have nothing personally invested in my own opinions, okay?
I'm just like inviting you to join me on the bandwagon of my own uncertainty?

What has happened to our conviction?
Where are the limbs out on which we once walked?
Have they been, like, chopped down
with the rest of the rain forest? You know?
Or do we have, like, nothing to say?
Has society become so, like, totally . . .
I mean absolutely . . . You know?
That we've just gotten to the point where it's just, like . . .
whatever!

And so actually our disarticulation . . . ness
is just a clever sort of . . . thing
to disguise the fact that we've become
the most aggressively inarticulate generation
to come along since . . .
you know, a long, long time ago!

I entreat you, I implore you, I exhort you,
I challenge you: To speak with conviction.

To say what you believe in a manner that bespeaks
the determination with which you believe it.
Because contrary to the wisdom of the bumper sticker,
it is not enough these days to simply QUESTION AUTHORITY.
You have to speak with it, too.