

Flipping Phones

In the span of a few years, I have become illiterate. I can no longer communicate with the outside world. This outside world attempts to communicate with me, but I am a nonreader of its messages. I have become ignorant, unschooled, and untrained in the language of the Internet and cell phones, otherwise known as *text*.

Every day, I receive voice messages or emails stating my dialogue with whomever will be completed by my receiving a text message on my cell phone. I do not want a text message! I want to complete my transaction with this whomever during my voice phone call or an email exchange.

But it does not happen: “A text has been sent to you” resonates during my phone call or an email so many times each day that I have finally admitted to myself, “Black, you have become a modern-day illiterate.”

Add to my profile that I am also modern-day luddite, defined in Webster’s as a person opposed to new technology.

Why am I an admitted illiterate luddite? Because I do not own a smartphone. That’s it!

The smartphone revolution has relegated me to the unwashed masses of dumbphone users. I hasten to add that I am the author of two of the first books published on cell phone technology. Sorry, but I had to get in that ego-lifting sentence in this time of my social media humiliation.

Even worse, I own a dumb flip-phone. It does not do text willingly, and I refuse to watch my phone slowly display the words in a text...scrolling the text almost a word at a time...across my tiny screen.

The first and only time I solicited a text message on my phone, I watched the text creep across the screen as if the words were creeping through the cell phone network. I thought of that saying, “Walkers outdistance runners.” Yes, but walkers may not reach their destination, as evidenced by the text message on my screen. The text was not walking, it was creeping. I longed to encounter a sentence-ending period.

Anyway, it was not the cell phone network that was doing the walking, it was my dumb flip-phone.

The past few weeks have served as a wake-up call for this illiterate luddite. I have been unable to communicate with scores of people with whom I must communicate on some business matters.

“I’m sending a text to your cell phone, Uyless.”

“Sorry, I don’t do text. Can we just finish up our business now?”

A pregnant pause ensues from the other end, “...Eh, you don’t do text?” As in, “How do you get along in the world?”

Enough! I’ve seen the light and I’m a born-again smartphone evangelist. This week, I am shopping for a smartphone.

I am shedding my illiterate luddite soul. I am flipping phones.