

The TikTok Trend That Lost Its Way

Rooted in Black shared cultural experiences, the “Things I’m Afraid to Admit as Black Person” trend quickly fell victim to the downsides of social media.

By Erianne Lewis

“Things I’m Afraid to Admit as Black Person: I don’t know the lyrics to ‘Dream and Nightmares.’” TikTok user @lyfeasdani was referencing Meek Mill’s 2012 hit—which emerged as a Black party/culture anthem—in a video that has over 2.2 million views. User @Allison.stew admitted “I can’t dougie” and the @blackgirlsunsreen social media team confessed “I’ve never seen ‘Friday.’” Both the dance and the [movie](#), respectively, are emblems of Black culture, created by Black people and speaking to Black cultural traditions and perspectives (having not seen “Friday” is *nearly* blasphemous).

I sent one of my favorite videos to my parents: “I don’t know how to play dominoes or spades.” My family and I have joked about this in the past as these games are seen as cultural staples within the Black community, especially in the South. The trend had now surpassed generational barriers; people of all ages were kiking about the things viewed as representative of different aspects of Black culture.

Dr. Racquel Gates, Associate Professor of Film at Columbia University, has researched Black identity and pop culture heavily and provided some insights on how pop culture trends like this one find themselves among larger discussions about race and identity.

“These types of trends are founded on two things: 1) the recognition of shared cultural identity, and 2) the moments where those shared experiences diverge,” Dr. Gates said. “The whole ‘who’s invited to the barbecue’ concept has clearly extended into broader cultural discussions, but not every social media trend does that. Even if they don’t, however, I do think that these trends can provide moments of pause for people to realize that they’re not alone in their experiences and understandings of their identity.”

The early examples presented the “moments of pause” that Dr. Gates mentioned—they were fairly harmless—the comment sections often were filled with people agreeing with the creator saying things like “same here girl!” or jokingly “let me teach you!” Though the trend itself was centered around the expectation that there are aspects of Black culture that you *must* understand and/or have participated in, it was innocent enough. These often pop culture references from movies, TV shows and music were supposed to unite a community. But in this case, it led to the quick division of one.

What does it say about the people that haven’t partaken in these *so-called* Black shared experiences? The escalation into classist and racist rhetoric, which took less than a week for the trend to become entirely about, may have been influenced by what was invisibly lingering in the background: the notion that to being Black means to have done or to know about X, and if you don’t, then are you really Black?

That couldn't be further from the truth.

Beyond the division based on cultural references, there then became a more blatant divide based on terminology. "I'm uncomfortable around hood people" and "I get anxious and irritated around ghetto Black people," were two videos that were posted that led to lots of backlash, negative comments and TikTok stitches from people within the Black community.

The creator of the latter post, @theanisahrahel, received over 2.8 million views on her video and many of the 14,400 comments *surprisingly* seemed to be agreeing with her on the surface. Much of the phrasing felt very classist and elitist. "Then they start picking apart your outfit or laughing at the way you talk" and "I feel like they gone jump me or something," were just a couple of the widely liked comments.

The behaviors people are describing in the comment section are not representative of just Black people though. They seem to be contriving a list of decorum issues and actions that are visible in people of all races.

This was obviously stemming from something deeper than what was on the surface. Regarding the creator that posted "I'm uncomfortable around hood people," this is where a lot of racial undertones were discussed in the videos that stitched it. For a long time, words like "ghetto" and "hood" have been linked to Black people. In movies and TV shows within the pop culture sphere there have been many [Black characters](#) that have been depicted stereotypically. The 2023 movie "American Fiction" [satirically](#) discusses Black stereotypes within the publishing world and contrasts them with the reality.

Despite the existence of films like this, that point out exactly how ridiculously insensitive these caricatures are, there still seems to be people who wish to remain knowingly ignorant.

"I think a lot of things start off pretty innocuous. And then it just takes a hard right turn into nonsense," Rebecca, aka @ratchetintellectual on TikTok said. She entered the conversation when the trend had already gone far left.

Having received a master's degree in sociology last year, with focal areas on intersectionality and critical race studies, she pointed out the racialized language ("ghetto" and "hood") that people were using and how it was classist as well.

"I was asking people what do you mean when you say ghetto? What do you mean? And they were like, 'oh, I mean, like a violent criminal ... terrible people.' Okay, so then why are you afraid to call out violent, terrible people because you're Black? Clearly there's a racial association that people are hinting at," Rebecca said.

People weren't watching her or others videos all the way through, which explains the quick rejection of their opinions. This isn't something that's new though. Social media is not meant to facilitate these types of conversations, a point that Dr. Gates agrees.

“At the most basic level, social media is designed for short, digestible, quippy statements—things that will grab the reader's attention immediately and generate an almost instantaneous response. But conversations and experiences of Blackness are nuanced and layered. Social media platforms aren't really optimized for that,” Dr. Gates said.

It's unfortunate that a trend centered around positive Black cultural experiences has become the latest victim of the drawbacks of social media.