

non-Black appropriation of Black vernacular english (BVE).

words and practices you might use
every day that can perpetuate anti-
Black racism.



adapted from: "Using Black Vernacular English (BVE) as
a Non-Black Person Isn't "Woke" if You Don't
Understand the History" - Anisha Phillips | Feminuity.

what is bve?

Black vernacular english, or BVE, refers to the language natively spoken by Black folks in the United States and Canada, primarily in working and middle-class families.



In her article on this topic, Feminuity's Anisha Phillips explains:

"These linguistic patterns are a part of a cultural legacy that continues on even after transatlantic slavery. Those who were enslaved invented their own separate version of English to speak to each other forming unity, identity and communication without interference from white enslavers. When BVE is used by non-Black people in verbal dialogue, and on social media, it erases this origin, while commodifying parts of Black culture."

When white and non-Black folks use BVE, it can cause substantial harm and erasure, yet it happens daily. Let's look at some common examples.

saying these words
appropriates Black culture:

"lit."
"woke."
"bae."
"ratchet."
"sis."
"slay."
"hella."
"basic."

what is digital Blackface?



We also need to challenge and interrupt the use of .gifs by non-Black people, in text conversations and on social media, featuring Black folks.

Most often, these images (often featuring BVE in their captions) are used in the context of an angry or sassy reaction to something online, and serve to perpetuate harmful stereotypes of Blackness. When non-Black folks use these images and .gifs in this way, it's referred to as "**digital Blackface.**"

Anisha explains the affects of using these images to convey anger, "sassyness", and/or extravagance:

"Representation matters, and the continual representation of Black people as an image to vocalize these expressions may reinforce stereotypes, while failing to see the terms as more than a "punch line."

our anti-racism needs to be reflected in how we communicate.

We are in the midst of an unprecedented commitment in our social circles to the real work of anti-racism. Though unlearning core tenets of your vocabulary takes time and effort, it is a vital part of doing the work.

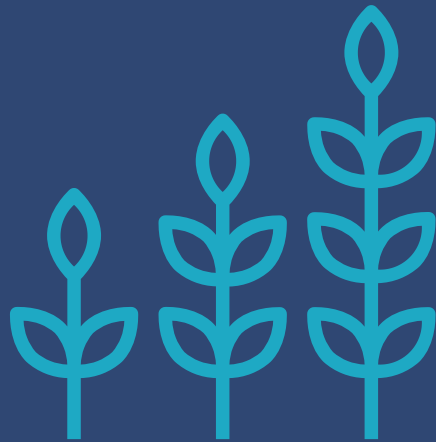
Anisha summarizes it perfectly:

"When non-Black people use BVE it can feed into a culture of appropriation; a culture that continues to take from Black people. Non-Black folks can use BVE or other methods of Black cultural expression like a costume, wearing it when it benefits them and taking it off before retreating back to privilege.

The end result is that Black people regularly have to self-police their use of BVE in order to survive, while non-Black people can toggle back and forth freely without having to worry about the social or economic consequences."

try and catch yourself. hold
your friends and family
accountable.

call them into this learning.



many thanks to anisha
phillips + feminuity for
producing an article on this
topic.

[access it here.](#)