

THE ROOT

Why the ‘Confuse the Enemy’ Challenge is the TikTok Dance White Folks Can’t Seem to Get

With jazzy beats, syncopated movements and serious swag, the ‘Confuse the Enemy’ challenge is one that the rhythmically challenged can’t seem to get.

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It looks like Black dancers finally have a trending [TikTok dance](#) that white folks can’t steal or replicate with the “Confuse the Enemy” challenge. Syncopated arm movements, dramatic running and Camden Bop choreography have caused the trend to go viral among Black audiences on TikTok – without the unwelcome interference from white content creators.

Choreographed by a TikToker named Sai, the [original video of him dancing with his little brother](#) has earned over 3 million views. Commenters were impressed by how well Sai’s younger sibling was able to remember the dance and hit each count.

Black TikTokers have dubbed the dance the “Confuse the Enemy” challenge because the beats of the jazz music make it difficult for the rhythmically challenged (read: white people) to copy. And while some non-Black people have tried, much to the [disappointment of Black TikTok](#), it’s often not as smooth or engaging as when Black dancers groove to the music – something those online say takes them to their happy place.

“When y’all dance to that song, I feel something,” Latasha Mercer, a Los Angeles screenwriter and filmmaker, said on [TikTok](#). “It feels old, like feel-good jazz. And watching y’all move y’all bodies ... it feels like interpretive Black dance. ... I love seeing y’all dance to this.”

People have likened the energy of the song and dance to popular [African American artwork](#), like “Blue Monday” by Annie Lee, and have said it reminds them of the Horton dance technique and Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater.

Then, late last week, Ailey dancers entered the discourse with their own dance cover. “Did someone call for us?” the [video](#) was captioned. Four performers — Corrin Rachelle Mitchell, Isabel Wallace-Green, Shawn Cusseaux and Ashley Kaylynn Green — joined the trend from backstage dressed in a mix of costumes and street clothes, as they were minutes away from the start of a performance of the iconic Ailey piece “Revelations.”

Tiara Nock, Ailey’s senior social media manager, told The Root that although she didn’t notice people tagging Ailey’s social media channels, she found the trend herself on her personal pages and knew she wanted the company to join in.

“Mr. Ailey, he created this company to give dance back to the people,” she said. “I see myself as that steward with social media. Social media is giving Ailey an opportunity to provide an experience of dance, an experience of Black culture beyond the walls of the theater. Even if it’s a 30-second trend, being able to put that dance back into the hands of the people who want to see it is really, really awesome.”

For centuries, white people and institutions have profited from appropriating works of art made by Black people, often without credit. Think of [stolen African art](#) in museum collections, the Toros stealing cheers from the Clovers in “Bring It On,” and a white woman fashion CEO stealing a design from an emerging Black designer in “I Love Boosters.” Online, the same co-opting happens with Black art and culture. We saw it with “Renegade,” a dance choreographed by [Jalaiah Harmon](#), a 14-year-old Black teen at the time who went largely uncredited when TikTokers like Charli D’Amelio grew their followings with the dance. Now, however, it seems there is one piece of the culture that we can keep to ourselves.

