If Black English Isn't a Language, Then Tell Me, What Is?

By James Baldwin

ST. PABLO DE VENICE, France — The subject concerns the war, or the status, or the reality, of Black English in America and has absolutely nothing to do with the subject of Black Americans and their status in America. The issue is not one of race or color or national origin, nor is it a question of the language in itself, nor of the language in general, nor of the language in any particular country or region. The issue is one of power, of control, of struggle for identity and meaning.

In the United States, Black English is a language that has been systematically denied recognition and acceptance. It has been regarded as a manner of speaking, a dialect, a creole, or a form of pidgin, and it has been equated with ignorance, with laziness, with lack of education, with lack of discipline, with lack of ambition, with lack of respect for authority, and with lack of respect for tradition. It has been seen as a barrier to the integration of Black Americans into American society, as a threat to the unity of American culture, and as a source of division and conflict.

In France, Black English is a language that has been given official status and recognition. It is taught in schools, it is spoken in public, it is heard on the radio, it is broadcast on television, and it is written in books and articles. It is seen as an expression of Black French culture, and it is regarded as an integral part of the French language and culture.

The difference between the two approaches to Black English is a reflection of the different attitudes towards race and language in the United States and in France. In the United States, race is seen as a barrier to integration and as a source of division, and language is seen as a tool for power and control. In France, race is seen as a part of the French culture and as an integral part of the French language, and language is seen as a tool for expression and communication.

The issue of Black English is a complex one, and it involves many different factors. It is a question of power and control, of culture and identity, of education and language, and it is a question of the way that we see ourselves and the way that we see others.

White Americans would not sound the way they would if there had been no black words, and under these conditions, the language would have been lost and replaced by new words, and it is within these unprec- edented circumstances that Black English began to be formed. It was not, as in the European example, the adoption of a foreign language, but an extension of the native tongue. It was not, as in the case of a new language, the result of conscious and deliberate decision, but the result of unconscious and accidental evolution. It was not, as in the case of a new language, the result of conscious and deliberate decision, but the result of unconscious and accidental evolution.

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