

# Ralph Lauren's native american ads

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Ralph Laurens Native American Ads What can we as fashion do to help educate the world on this subject?

Native Americans have been a greatly stereotyped race. When one thinks of a Native American, one imagines a person dressed in short brightly colored earthy dresses and feathers. What most people fail to realize is that these images are stereotyped and there is an entire legacy behind the dresses and traditions of these people. When Ralph Lauren or even Victoria Secret and Urban Outfitters try to imitate the Native American race, they are only copying the visual symbols and altogether ignoring the rich history and heritage of these people.

Most fashion students themselves are ignorant towards the culture of these Native Americans. Thus, in order to educate the world on this topic, the first step is to educate the fashion students. In art schools, most fashion students theoretical knowledge is limited to art history. They do not delve into the history of the world as a whole. The information they have of these people is the one they got during their High School years and most have already forgotten what they have read. They only retain information that confirms the general stereotype of these people. This is the main basis of the issue. When fashion students and people in the fashion industry do not understand the significance of these people, they cannot make common people understand them. Thus, the first step is education of the fashion designers. Fashion students would have to take the step themselves and research any symbol they plan on using.

Once the fashion designers understand the significance of using elements from the culture of other people, they would develop a sensitivity towards

these people. Perhaps they would even come to value and appreciate the importance of the Native American people and their culture. Appreciation of the Native American culture would also the fashion designers to use elements in a more credible manner. They would give credit to these people where it is due and use the elements in the right occasion.

Items such as the Navajo Hipster Panty are strongly racist. They not only show a disregard to the people but also reflect on the lack of knowledge of the designers. Urban Outfitters should have used the name in a more credible manner. They could have introduced a line of head dresses that paid tribute to these people. Also it is much more important to gain permission from the right authorities before using any kind of images.

Fashion students can also use the fashion medium to educate the public. The fashion world is purely visual in nature and it is often observed that most people learn and retain better information through visual cues rather than textual ones. In this case, fashion students, armed with the right information, could use their platform to pay tribute to these people and their legacy. For instance, in a fashion show, they could use background music as a source of information. Information could also be given through fashion magazines where visual would be accompanied by text .

Fashion students have a very powerful medium in the form of fashion. This medium can also be misused as is seen in the case of mishaps committed by Ralph Lauren, Victoria Secret and Urban Outfitters but on the other hand, this medium is also a source of great information if used correctly.