

What's wrong with cultural appropriation

Sociology



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Cultural appropriation, a term that makes people uncomfortable and qualmish when mentioned. We hear about it and see it, on the internet , outside , and even on the headlines of our big newspapers. The definition of “ cultural appropriation” is ‘ the adoption or use of elements of one culture by members of a different culture.” There is also a term called ” cultural appreciation”, which can be defined as having an authentic interest and respect for a culture; learning about the history and exploring the roots as well as building a relationship with members of the culture. There is a fine line between the two and, but if one were to appreciate a culture it would be difficult to appropriate it because they are able to identify which actions are disrespectful or embraced by the people of the culture. We all have different morals, beliefs, and experiences but the hardest part is being able to walk on the thin line between appropriation and appreciation. There are situations that happen daily where an appropriator does not know what they are doing wrong, which leads to culture is being used ignorantly. In fact, most people who “ borrow” from a culture, often end up exploiting a culture. Examples of cultural appropriation, could vary from a caucasian with dreads, Native American halloween costumes, or something as simple as a tribal tattoo. Cultural appropriation is a problem in society because sometimes the appropriator receives praise for the adoption of another culture, all while the members of the culture are criticized or shunned for representing their culture.

To start, Native Americans, were the first civilizations in the Americas, and should be respected as such. All throughout history, they have been antagonized and disrespected by the Fashion industry, Hollywood, our school

system, and government. The typical “ American” imagines a native person, the picture George Caitlins painting of the black foot chief, which depicts a brown skinned man in a feathered headdress. Some may argue that they are borrowing, but when surfing the fine line between Appropriation and appreciation it is easy to get lost. The biggest misuse of the Native American culture surfaces every year, when halloween costumes are brought out. The most common Indian halloween costume boast a flashy and large headdress. A headdress, in most native tribes was worn by respected older men of a tribe, but are worn by any random halloween party or festival goer in today’s society.

Sometimes artifacts can counterbalance the offense felt by the culture because of its social value. Compare this blasphemy to someone who wears a United States military uniform, to get discounts, or any type of recognition, even though they have never served in the military. Therefore society is wrong for making mascots for cultures, who should be respected, but have been oppressed and alienated by the government.

Today the African American community suffers through many different injustices and members of the community are not appreciated for who they are. Throughout history, African Americans were belittled by the white community for their image. For instance, people have associated black hairstyles, with the word ghetto, unprofessional, different, or sometimes even ugly. The problem with this is that people of the caucasian decent are not understanding the meaning or the history behind hairstyles like dreadlocks, or corn rows. For example, Kylie Jenner used her fame to call attention to cornrows, which mimics black culture, but wont ever weigh in on <https://assignbuster.com/whats-wrong-with-cultural-appropriation/>

the racist violence taking black lives. The world today is at an imbalance, with who can do what. Therefore until the imbalanced is fixed Kylie Jenner and other white women, who have dreads, box braids, or cornrows, are participating in the culture that says black people are not valuable, but their hair is. It would be more appreciative if members who follow that toxic norm would help eradicate the prejudices and inequality between white and black people. Some would argue that it would be wrong for black women to straighten their hair, but since white women are treated as more valuable, it makes it a part of survival for black women to straighten their hair. A white woman who has dreadlocks is acting on her privilege to do so, and will most likely get praise for it. A white woman will never know the struggles of a black woman in America, these struggles include obtaining a job, fitting in with friends and fighting horrible stigmas. In the meanwhile a black woman gets treated differently because she has a different image and persona than a white person. This problem does not limit freedom, it just calls for more respect for the culture that is getting borrowed from. In some cases, white people make a mockery of the way black people dress, walk, and how they talk. At a San Francisco high school, there was a “wigger (white nigger)” party thrown as a joke. People that attend were wearing, gold chains, afros, big jerseys, African dashikis, and were also throwing the word “nigga” out freely. The purpose of the party was to emulate the stereotypes of African American clothing and mannerisms. We have yet to see someone from the black culture go and depreciate the white culture, but white people have been mocking the black culture for almost 200 years. From 1840-1890, history shows that white people were starring in shows in blackface. Blackface characters even made an appearance on Broadway, including in “Birth of a Nation”.

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Nation” in 1915. People need to see the dark side of what they are doing because people have died for looking the way they do.

Food is maybe the most celebrated in most cultures, right next to religion. At its core, food is political. However in n our damaged social system, appropriation of food is plaguing our markets and our streets. For example, two white women from Portland, took a trip to Puerto Nuevo, Mexico, where they discovered a lobster burrito wrapped in a special tortilla. They liked these tortillas so much that they decided to make there own burrito storefront that sold these tortilla’s, without asking or paying respects to the the originator of the special tortilla. In result of this, an protest was started, which forced the two women to close up shop. Some may argue that cultural appropriation has given us the best food in the world. For example, pizza which is an Italian dish but when served in Italy, it is served differently and it also taste different. In most cases today, the more powerful race will take an ingredient or dish and will make it more, bland or “ fancy”. Restaurants like Chipotle, will often advertise that they are the healthiest choice of Mexican food, but the owner is a caucasian male. Food is a touchy subject, but more respect needs to be instilled when sharing and borrowing takes place. In a perfect world, we would b able to share and borrow without question, but we don’t live perfect world. Racism still exist and the dominant race is still learning to be respectful to the oppressed. A vast of people of color have a different life than a white person. While some people go out a show there respects to a culture when they borrow certain things, most people do not. Culture appropriation is a result of white privilege, and white people will not suffer from these types of things because of there privilege. Brown and Black

people will continue to face inequality until there's a stronger trend of appreciation towards their own cultures. It is shameful to appropriate without going the extra step to appreciate because, not too long ago, white people made sure that colored people were ashamed of walking, dressing, and talking the way they do. People of color have never been accepted by the white community, so when people of the white community borrow, it is hurtful because they will never understand the ups and downs that colored people have to deal with.

It is important, that ALL communities, especially the white community, start learning boundaries and rules to one's culture. Borrowing from a culture and making something yours, without appreciation is impertinent. This is a topic that everyone needs to be aware of because anybody can borrow or steal, but what needs to be taught and remembered is that people need to show some effort in giving back to the culture if they are going to borrow or attempt to steal. Hopefully we can work towards a world where we can share and show respect to one another without violence.