
Cultural Appropriation Of Middle Eastern Culture And Black Culture

Today I'm here to explain and to make sure people understand a questionable topic that is constantly misunderstood in all communities. Cultural appropriation is something that many don't understand but many do. It may be intentional at times and other know that they are doing so, but just don't care enough to stop. First, I'm going to explain what this concept is. Cultural Appropriation is the adoption or use of practices of one culture by members of a different culture. For those who don't have a clue to what this is, i'm going to explain. Cultural Appropriation is the act of adopting components of an outside, often minority, culture and that includes knowledge, practices, and symbols without understanding its original history and context and in many ways it shows a lack of disrespect for the people that are part of that culture. But, says the EverydayFeminism website, that's not the whole story. Unlike cultural exchange, in which there is a mutual interchange, appropriation refers to a "dynamic in which members of a dominant culture take elements from a culture of people who have been systematically oppressed and try to make it that dominants group very own". Many don't believe in cultural appropriation being a real act but when I say there are so many examples of them there is no one that could prove this deed as untrue and an exaggeration by people of these cultures. This goes from the girls wearing quipaos, which is traditional wear for women, and chopsticks in their head with two ponytails thinking is going to be a cute outfit, to the non-people of color trying to appropriate black culture as if it was their own, to also the couples wearing sombreros and ponchos for Halloween to appear as a Mexican. These things may not be disrespectful and appropriating to you but to the people that you are doing it to, it is. There is counterarguments as to why this isn't a thing and they use "We are having fun" or "we should all be together as people" or "no culture created anything". I'm just here to prove and educate on this topic.

People have been appropriating other cultures from ages but it wasn't a topic that was talked about often. As people of color started to advertise against it and calling people out who did this act, it started to get more attention. According to the NMAAHC, The term first appeared in print in 1945 and it attributed to the late professor Arthur E. Christy and it's been a very heated debate ever since. As a term cultural appropriation has its roots in the 20th century, and it is said that "its highest usage coming after 1980" by the knowledge of the NMAAHC. Although the concept of stealing or misusing a culture was on our collective radar from the 19th century. Relating back to the time when it was deemed as acceptable, in the 1930s, an entertainment for white people that started was the Minstrels shows that took place in New York done by white performers with blackened faces and damaged or poor clothing, imitating enslaved Africans. These performances characterized blacks as lazy, ignorant, superstitious, hypersexual, and prone to stealing, weak-minded and timid. One of the many performers that broke through because of his black-faced "character" that people seemed to enjoy so much. Thomas D. Rice was the performer that developed the first popularly known blackface character, "Jim Crow" in 1830. He was known as the "Father of Minstrelsy". The popularity of these shows lead to an increase in the participation of blackface and a new source of entertainment.

Blackface and the stereotyping of blackness, that is the language, character and hairstyles, into an entertaining character is still as relevant in today's media. There has been a high amount of

“incidents” where there are uses of “black” Halloween costumes by college students across the country. Obviously, we continue to battle against blackface performances but now it is done in a modernized manner that those who are being defied about blackface claim that there was no wrongful intention and it was done in a matter of laughs and giggles. Now it is not something that its is only about the characterization of black people in an offensive manner but about the gentrification of our culture that we so hardly worked to have when we are constantly oppressed. Being constantly shamed for looking a certain way or acting it, so far as to our hair and fashion senses, to our traditional clothing and then making it your fashion statement is by far the best explanation as to why this is wrong.

Now this doesn't only happen in black culture. It also happens in minority-based cultures around the world. In Asian cultures, people often wear traditional dresses and chopsticks in their hair as a fashion statement when there is a more sentimental meaning behind it. To traditional attires are only worn during certain festivals, ceremonies or religious occasions. Something that belongs to a culture should stay within that culture and if someone outside of that copies it then it automatically makes it cultural appropriation. Kelly Luc, a Chinese writer, wrote an article called “ The appropriation of Chinese culture and the MET gala”, here she talks about how offensive and deceptive it was when the MET gala made their theme “China: Through the Looking Glass”. Luc watched how they depicted Chinese culture in a way where they narrowed down the culture into a few symbols and they made it clear how the culture is seen in the eyes of westerners. The theme was practically designed to create controversy. Matching the theme, evading all the evident stereotypes of Chinese culture, and recognizing all of the involuntary racist micro-aggressions are still at feet. I wouldn't know how to explain how offensive it is but to cite the words of a Chinese person themselves. Luc says

“How many times have I walked into a restaurant, and had someone undoubtedly greet me with a “Ni Hao?” No, kind waiter. I speak Cantonese, but hello to you, too. No, passing stranger. “Gung Hay Fat Choy” does not mean thank you, and yes, it's a different language altogether.” and to that she also states, “How many times have I walked into a restaurant, and had someone undoubtedly greet me with a “Ni Hao?” No, kind waiter. I speak Cantonese, but hello to you, too. No, passing stranger. “Gung Hay Fat Choy” does not mean thank you, and yes, it's a different language altogether.” She expresses how it makes her feel but just image how it makes other people feel. It just another branch to institutionalized racism.

Another culture that is constantly being appropriated is Middle Eastern culture. While the appropriation of black culture is perhaps the most widely discussed and criticized, there is also widespread appropriation of less vocal minority groups. Artists like Selena Gomez have been accused of appropriating South Asian cultures, while celebrities including Khloe Kardashian and Lady Gaga have misrepresented Islamic clothing. While these cultures do not have the same history of slavery, Jim Crow, and police brutality in the U.S. as African American culture has, they are nevertheless minority groups whose traditions cannot be stolen and corrupted. The use of the bindi, a forehead decoration worn throughout South Asia, simply for fashion purposes takes away from the holiness of the object to many women. Just as people appropriate South Asian cultures, the sexualization and use of Islamic clothing designed for feminine modesty contradicts its intent. There are many reasons that some Muslim women choose to wear the hijab, niqab, abaya, or all three.