

Kendra Evans

Jason Greco

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### **Appreciation or Appropriation**

Everyone has their morning routine. Some people have a quick shower, others go for a morning run, and some just lie in bed scrolling through Instagram before finally finding the energy to get out of bed. One thing that's in everyone's morning routine, however, is getting dressed. Picking out the clothes for the day can be anything from throwing on whatever looks and smells clean, to meticulously finding the perfect pair of earrings and shoes to go with a new dress.

What you wear every day is just another aspect that defines who you are, whether it be Burberry or Target, suit or jeans, satin or cotton. As Andy Bennett, author of the book Culture and Everyday Life states,

“Fashion provides individuals with a key means through which to manage their identities in the context of everyday life. ... Although individuals are aware of both the ritualistic and often highly deceptive qualities of the dressed body, this ‘does not stop us from attempting to control how we look and to calculate our appearance’” (2000: 113). Clearly, fashionable clothing is not the only way through which individuals attempt to construct themselves at a visual level; equally important in this respect are other visual attributes, such as hairstyle (Zdatny, 1997) and makeup, together with items of jewellery”

(Bennett). Fashion is how we present ourselves, who we are, where we are from, and where we are going.

Additionally, Our style and fashion can be influenced by the cultures around us and how we grew up. For example, today's pop culture is influenced by many cultures and ethnicities from around the world. We would not have rap, pop, or rock and roll music if it weren't for black musicians. Pictures of dream catchers that appear on many shirts for teenagers were made originally by Native Americans.

America is known for having a "melting pot" of cultures, ethnicities, and religions. Sometimes however, people use different aspects from different cultures for inspiration without learning the symbolic significance or importance of it. This is called cultural appropriation. According to google, cultural appropriation is, " the adoption or use of elements of one culture by members of a different culture". Cultural appropriation is often seen as being insensitive and even insulting to the culture a person is adopting, and should be avoided so that different cultures can be preserved. However, cultural appropriation can be done in a tasteful, educated way, and it is an inevitable part of our everyday lives, however finding the line between what can be insulting and what can be elegant is difficult.

Learning about different cultures and incorporating them into art and fashion can be an enriching learning experience. As Jenni Avins, author of "The Dos and Don'ts of Cultural Appropriation," states, "In the 21st century, cultural appropriation—like globalization—isn't just inevitable; it's potentially positive. We have to stop guarding cultures and subcultures in efforts to preserve them. It's naïve, paternalistic, and counterproductive. Plus, it's just not how culture or creativity work" (Avins). We are surrounded by so many cultures and histories these days that

you can't ignore them. Learning about these cultures can deepen your understanding of the world, which can help resolve and prevent international conflicts. As the website, *Live Rich Live Well*, says, "Many of the problems we have in this world are due to misunderstandings. When you learn about another culture, and see why others do the things they do, it's easier to understand them. You can develop sympathy with others. It's harder to justify things like hatred and war when you understand where another person is coming from". If more people didn't just learn about the United States' conflicts with other countries from the news, but also from the opposing cultures themselves, they could gain a deeper understanding for the causes of a conflict and learn that not every opposing side is wrong, just how the side you are might not always be completely good. It also helps you see different cultures as more than just a stereotype, but more on that later.

Learning about different cultures also helps you adapt to an increasingly global and openly diverse world. We are so immersed in different cultures that they have become part of our everyday lives. As Avins says,

"At my house, getting dressed is a daily act of cultural appropriation, and I'm not the least bit sorry about it. I step out of the shower in the morning and pull on a vintage cotton kimono. After moisturizing my face, I smear Lucas Papaw ointment—a tip from an Australian makeup artist—onto my lips before I make coffee with a Bialetti stovetop espresso maker a girlfriend brought back from Italy. Depending on the weather, I may pull on an embroidered floral blouse I bought at a roadside shop in Mexico or a stripey marinière-style shirt—originally inspired by the French, but mine from the surplus store was a standard-issue Russian telnyashka—or my favorite purple pajama pants, a souvenir

from a friend's trip to India. I may wear Spanish straw-soled espadrilles (though I'm not from Spain) or Bahian leather sandals (I'm not Brazilian either) and top it off with a favorite piece of jewelry, perhaps a Navajo turquoise ring (also not my heritage)," (Avins). Avins, like many of us, uses many different products that are from different parts of the world. We eat food from all over the world, we watch movies and listen to music that comes from different places, and our clothing can be traced back to different time periods and different places. Since we can't avoid being influenced by other cultures, we should embrace and appreciate them. We should use the different cultures that inspire us in our fashion, but only in a tasteful way.

One such designer found a way to use a culture as inspiration that was beautiful and respectful to the people of that culture. His name is Oskar Metsavaht, and his spring 2016 fashion collection was inspired by the Asháninka tribe in the Brazilian and Peruvian rainforests. The Huffington Post writes about his experiences with the tribe, "In return for permission to adapt their tattoos and traditional fabrics, Osklen paid the tribe. With that money, the Asháninka have been able to make various improvements, including building a school. Metsavaht is also working to publicize the Asháninka's fight against illegal loggers and environmental degradation of their native forest" (Varagur). Not only is Metsavaht using their culture for inspiration with their permission, but he is also contributing to their society and helping improve their everyday lives. His designs are also artistic and done in a way that respectfully embodies the livelihood of the tribe.

While some artists like Mersavaht appropriate culture ethically, others exploit culture solely for profit. As Time Magazine says, "In general, when blacks create something that is later

adopted by white culture, white people tend to make a lot more money from it. Certainly, one can see why that's both annoying and disheartening. Through everything from access to loans to education, systemic racism has created a smoother path to economic success for whites who exploit what blacks have created," (Time). Most cultural appropriation does come from white people adopting other cultures. When they do this, they earn more profit than the original, black creator. This can be very insulting to the culture, because what took years of creativity and effort in one culture, can become popular and make profit easily once they are not the creators anymore. Their culture is almost taken away from them and tailored to sell to a bigger group of people, which is not how a person should use other cultures.

Another wrong way of incorporating different cultures into fashion is by hand picking out parts of the culture that are the "prettiest" or most aesthetically pleasing. Susan Scafidi, author of the book, Who Owns Culture? : Appropriation and Authenticity in American Law, explains,

"the movement of cultural products from subculture to public domain provokes both majority-minority struggles and fraternal conflict. Outsiders attracted by particular art forms are seldom content to limit themselves to recognition and appreciation of the source community or even to limited consumption at the invitation of the community. Instead, members of the public copy and transform cultural products to suit their own tastes, express their own creative individuality, or simply make a profit" (Scafidi).

People not in the culture take only the bits of the culture that they like and disregard the rest of the culture and history. This can come across as insulting to the civilization that those aspects belong to.

One such case of this is the 2012 Victoria's Secret fashion show. During the show there was a wild west themed segment, and one model, Karlie Kloss, walks out in leopard print lingerie, Navajo turquoise jewelry, and a Native American war bonnet. War bonnets are big feathered headdresses and were only allowed to be worn by the bravest of warriors and chiefs in the tribe. The Native Americans are also a group of people who were abused by white settlers and were forced to leave their original homes, so it is incredibly insulting when their culture is being used as sexy accessories by white people.

This can also lead to stereotyping different cultures. The article, "Scholar Shares Stories of Native Appropriation in Fashion, Media," says, "There are 567 federally recognized tribes in the U.S., each with its own language, culture and history. 'Stereotyping shrinks diversity of Native peoples down to a series of one-sided stereotypes'". Using only significant or pretty symbols of a civilization can make a society seem like they don't exist anymore or are nothing more than a stereotype. The truth, however, is that those societies are still very much alive and much more complex than just their stereotype.

Overall, letting other cultures inspire your artwork or style is not a bad thing. You learn about other cultures and lifestyles, which can deepen your understanding of the world, help avoid conflicts with other peoples, and can help you adapt to the increasing influences that other cultures have on our society. With all of this influence, it is important to find ways to be tasteful and respectful way to add them to your own style and aesthetic. The article, *Scholar Shares Stories of Native Appropriation in Fashion, Media*, states, "Cultural exchange in film and fashion can be beautiful when it's equal, but cultural appropriation is not, because it's the action of taking and using without permission" (GVNow). Many people only use other cultures

because they are considered “trendy” and will churn out the most money. They also disregard the entirety of the culture, and only pick out the parts they like the most. This can lead to societies only being seen as their stereotype, when in fact each society is so much more rich and complex.

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