

Don't Mess Up When You Dress Up

On Halloween Costumes and Cultural Appropriation

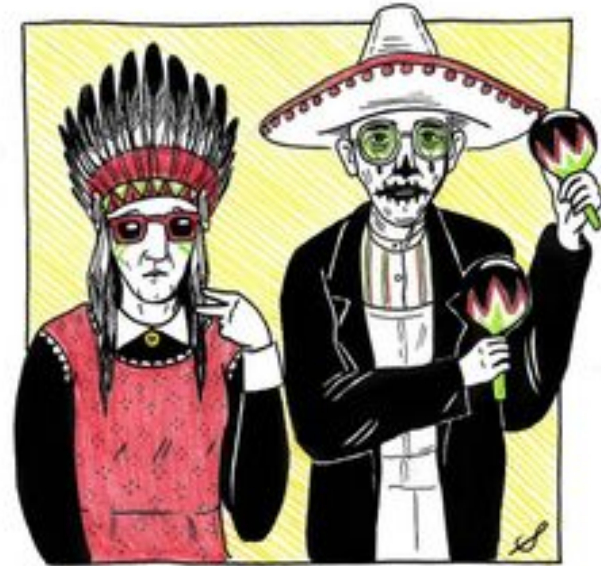


MY GRANDPA WAS 1/16th
CHEROKEE



SO DON'T YOU DARE TELL
ME THAT MY REPLICA LAKOTA
SIOUX HEADDRESS THAT I
WEAR TO PARTIES WHERE I
GET FALLING-DOWN DRUNK
IS DISRESPECTFUL!

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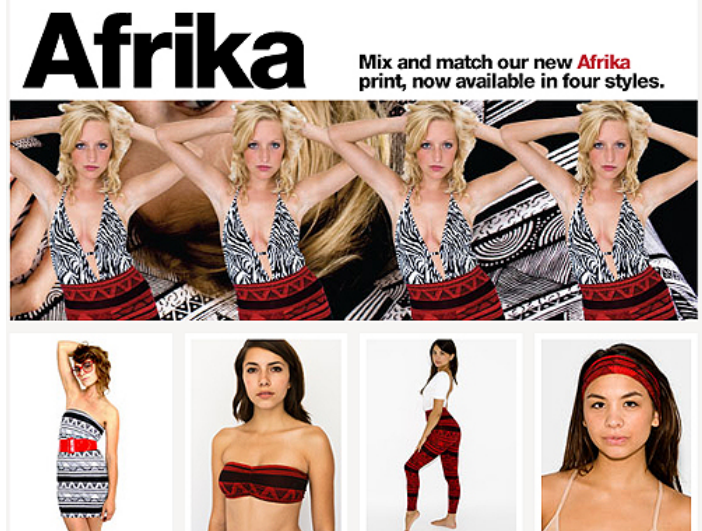


WOMEN'S
CENTER
at UMBC

What is **cultural appropriation**?

“Cultural Appropriation typically involves members of a dominant group **exploiting the culture** of less privileged groups— **often with little understanding of the latter’s history, experience and traditions.** Accordingly, socially aware people tend to frown upon this phenomenon.”

– racerelations.about.com



But it's just for one night! What's the big deal?



Even when done unintentionally, wearing costumes that mimic certain cultures **reinforce harmful stereotypes** about those cultures. These costumes allow wearers to “pretend” to have an identity without experiencing any of the discrimination faced by members of the dominant group. Lastly, these costumes continue the western history of **oppressing minority groups** and appropriating their cultures for humor or fashion. So even when it's unintentional, it still has a big impact.



“There isn’t just one Native American culture. There are hundreds. And there are millions of Native people. And we’re being ignored. We’re being told that we don’t have rights over how we are represented in mainstream America. We are being told that we should ‘get over it’ – but the people who are saying this don’t even know what the issues are. When people know of us only as a ‘costume,’ or something you dress up as for Halloween or for a music video, then you stop thinking of us as people, and this is incredibly dangerous because everyday we fight for the basic human right to live our own lives without outsiders determining our fate or defining our identities.”

– *Metcalfe (Turtle Mountain Chippewa from North Dakota)*

WE'RE A CULTURE, NOT A COSTUME

THIS IS NOT WHO I AM, AND THIS IS NOT OKAY.

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OHIO STARS

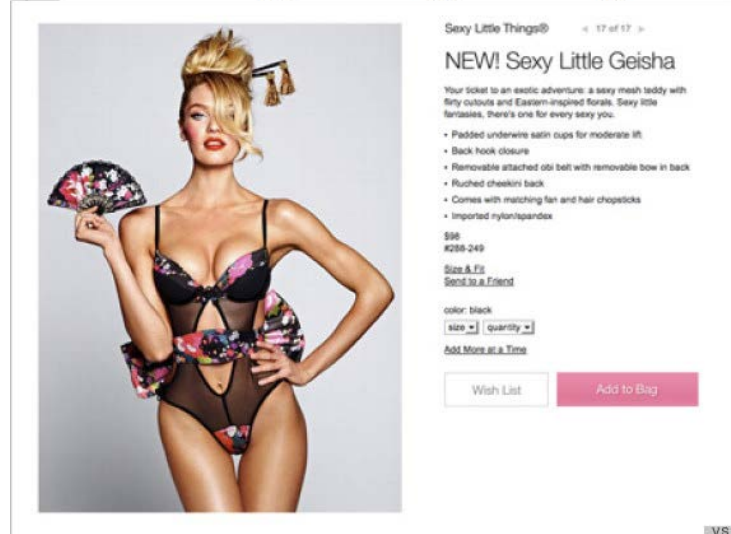
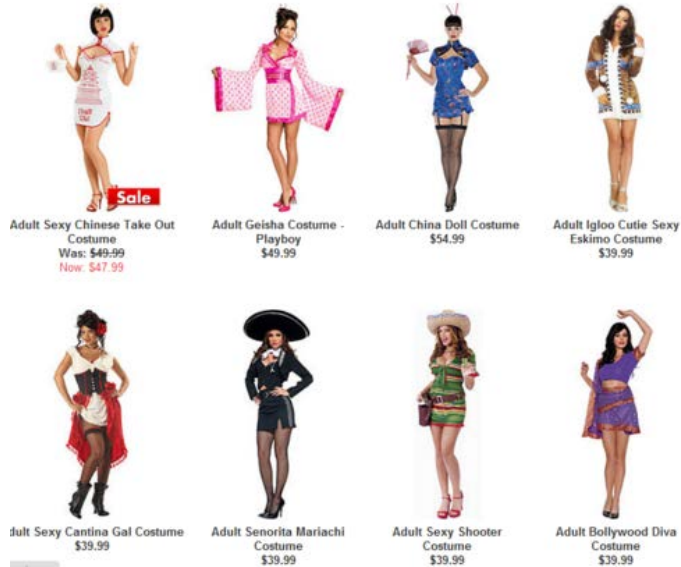
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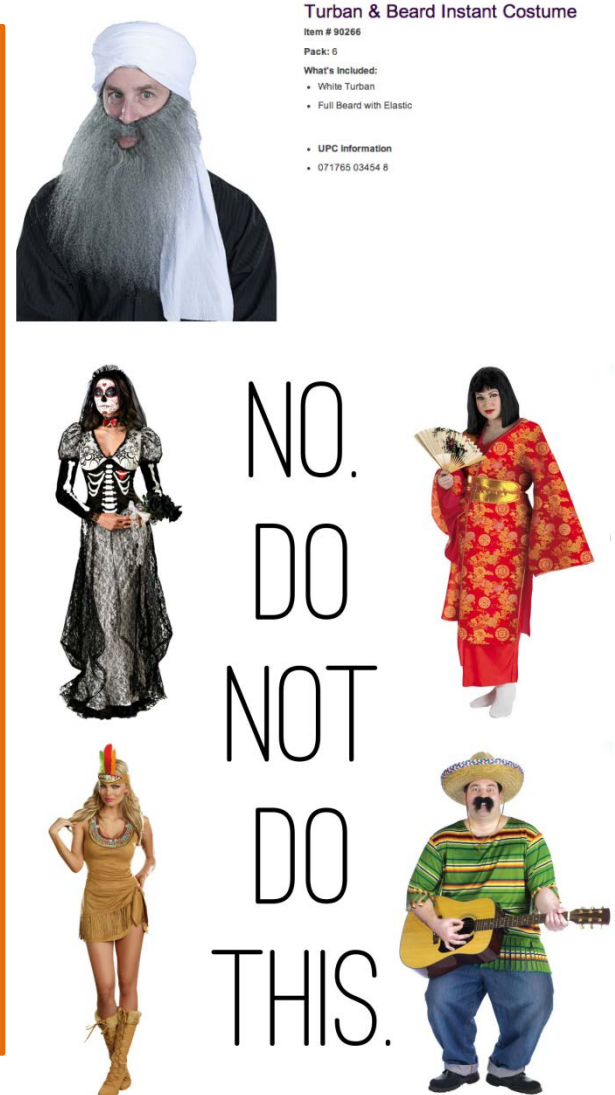
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Don't know how to spot an inappropriate costume?



These are some examples of costumes that mimic, ridicule, oppress, and over-sexualize other cultures. This Halloween, don't let your costume reinforce harmful stereotypes. Dress respectfully!



HAMPSHIRE HALLOWEEN CHECKLIST:

IS YOUR COSTUME RACIST?

Would I be embarrassed
or ashamed if someone
from the group I'm
portraying saw me
wearing this?

Check yourself and your friends – your costume
can have unintended negative effects!

- Is my costume supposed to be funny? Is the humor based on making fun of real people, human traits, or cultures?
- Does my costume represent a culture that is not my own?
- Does my costume reduce cultural differences to jokes or stereotypes?
- Does my costume packaging include the words "traditional", "ethnic", "colonial", "cultural", "authentic", or "tribal"?
- Does my costume perpetuate stereotypes, misinformation, or historical and cultural inaccuracies?

Based on similar initiatives from Northwestern University (tinyurl.com/NUList) and Amanda Hess of Washington City Paper (tinyurl.com/WCP-HW). For more information, contact cau@hampshire.edu.

HAVE QUESTIONS OR NEED MORE INFORMATION?
CONTACT HAMPSHIRE'S COMMUNITY ADVOCACY UNION AT CAU@HAMPSHIRE.EDU OR
COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES AT COCA@HAMPSHIRE.EDU