

HUMAN RIGHTS AND DIVERSITY

Cultural Appropriation and Acceptance

The Student Counselling Unit
Mental Health Awareness Series



What is Cultural Appropriation?

- Cultural appropriation is the practice of using or taking something from another culture without giving proper recognition or respect to that culture.
- The culture which is being appropriated is usually one which has been marginalised.
- Cultural appropriation can include for example, appropriating customs, attire, makeup, ideas, art, and language or symbols.
- In SA black people are sometimes told their natural hair is unprofessional and reprimanded for sporting an afro or dreadlocks, but styles like dreadlocks are seen as "quirky" and "cool" when worn by other races. This is an example of how the culture of previously marginalised individuals is appropriated while members of that culture are reprimanded.
- Large fashion brands sometimes use cultural symbols or attire and sell it as "trendy" fashion statements. These large brands profit from exploiting different cultures. This is considered a form of cultural appropriation.
- One can appreciate cultures rather than appropriating by learning about the cultural significance and supporting local businesses where cultural attire is sold rather than supporting large exploitative brands.

The Psychological Impact of Cultural Appropriation

- Cultural appropriation has involved displacement of cultural practices over generations which results in poor mental, physical and spiritual health of members of that culture.
- Cultural appropriation can contribute to disrespect and oppression by reinforcing stereotypes that certain cultures are less valuable and stripping cultures of their dignity.

What You Can Do

- Consider your actions and the reasons for them. Think about the effects it might have on people that belong to that culture.
- Do not use cultural attire as a fancy dress costume.
- Educate those who belong to a different culture than yours about cultural appropriation.
- Research and understand specific cultures prior to using elements of that culture.
- A person's name can hold deep personal, cultural, familial and historical or religious meaning or significance. Take time to learn how to pronounce people's names. Ask if you are unsure.



Acceptance

- Acceptance is assenting and embracing someone or something that you do not like, without protesting and without trying to change them.
- Acceptance indicates a greater sense of reception and freedom for others to be themselves.
- Social acceptance is accepting the differences and diversity in others in society.
- Feeling accepted and included is paramount to one's well-being, mental health and self-esteem. Feeling accepted in a group promotes a sense of belonging, unity and safety.



Department of
Student Affairs

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- For more info or self-help resources, check the Student Counselling Unit's website <https://www.up.ac.za/student-counselling>
- For 24 hr support, call the UP Careline 0800 747 747
- For academic support consult with your Faculty Student Advisor: <https://www.up.ac.za/teaching-and-learning/article/2494904/faculty-student-advisors-fsas>
- For therapy/counselling, email: studentcounselling@up.ac.za

References

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