Cultural Appropriation or Appreciation?

By Amerique Phillips, a Sophomore and Black Student Union Social Justice Director, and Alexis Baker, a Senior and Black Student Union President

There have been many conversations regarding what cultural appropriation vs. cultural appreciation looks like, and to what extent we all participate in it. Cultural appropriation can be defined as the “cherry picking” or selecting of certain aspects of a culture, and ignoring their original significance for the purpose of belittling it as a trend. Appreciation is honoring and respecting another culture and its practices, as a way to gain knowledge and understanding. Within this article, we highlight examples of what both cultural appropriation and appreciation look like, and how we can practice the latter. In short, we aim to define, exemplify and practice what we preach.

In 2016, Rachel Dolezal was president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and a former African studies teacher. She had curly/kinky locs, tanned skin, that she used to gain the trust of African Americans, and bond over common struggles. She was a Black woman...or so most thought. When asked in an interview to identify her parents, who are white, she did so and it became known that she was a white woman performing Blackness. She self-identified with the struggles that Black people face, adopted a darker skin complexion and kinky hair, and ultimately took up space and opportunity within the Black community. Dolezal adopted these aspects that are intrinsic to African American culture for the greater purpose of being accepted into spaces she would not have otherwise had a seat at the table in. This belittles the significance of protective hairstyles uniting generations of Black people to pioneer new standards of beauty and social value. It ignores the resilience that has been forged through historical and systemic trauma. Dolezal reduced the culture to the seemingly easy aesthetic ability to pass in Black spaces, Black thought, and Black history. In this case, Dolezal appropriated black culture via exploiting the narratives/struggles, the traditional and physical attributes of Blackness, and gaining status in spaces meant for black people.

Kylie Jenner is another example of cultural appropriation as she attempts to physically embody black culture. She has adopted box braids—a traditionally African hairstyle meant to protect the hair, bigger lips and curves for the greater purpose of looking “good”. Physical features are an important aspect of black culture, because they are used to discriminate against black folk or justify oppression of Black folx American society. In short, black features and culture are preferred to be performed by non-Black folks, but Black folks who do not have the choice to not perform their culture (because it’s not a performance but an aspect of who they are) are demonized for being authentic or too Black.

On the other hand, appreciation is like an invitation from said cultural group to participate in one’s culture with the intention of learning more about the culture and respecting its members. Ways in which you appreciate a culture would be to attend a wedding or celebration and educate yourself on the significance of their traditions. For example, there is a huge difference between you and your friend having a luau themed party and actually attending a traditional luau. Of course, there is a fine line between appropriation and
Courage is contagious

When artist Damon Davis went to join the protests in Ferguson, Missouri, after police killed Michael Brown in 2014, he found not only anger but also a sense of love for self and community. His documentary "Whose Streets?" tells the story of the protests from the perspective of the activists who showed up to challenge those who use power to spread fear and hate.

What we're missing in the debate about immigration

Between 2008 and 2016, the United States deported more than three million people. What happens to those left behind? Journalist Duarte Geraldino picks up the story of deportation where the state leaves off. Learn more about the wider impact of forced removal as Geraldino explains how the sudden absence of a mother, a local business owner or a high school student ripples outward and wrecks havoc on the relationships that hold our communities together.

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appreciation.

As you get ready for Halloween here are some tips you can put into practice. Think to yourself: ‘Does the actual name on the costume packaging say “tribal”, or “traditional”? Does the costume include race related hair or accessories (dreads/locs, afros, cornrows, a headdress)? Does the costume play into racial stereotypes? Does this costume represent a culture that is not my own? If you answered yes to any of these questions, you should rethink the costume and try again.
In some ways, Hollywood portrayals of people with autism have come a long way since “Rain Man.” The new Netflix series “Atypical” and the forthcoming ABC show “The Good Doctor” showcase main characters who are on the autism spectrum and show them dealing with romantic and work-related plot lines, respectively.

But in other ways, depictions of autism on-screen have a ways to go. How can writers and producers tell honest, diverse autism narratives that will entertain audiences and challenge our ideas about a mental condition that affects more than 3.5 million Americans?

Missed social cues are awkward. But what happens when poor communication is a matter of life and death?

People with autism are significantly more likely to have an encounter with law enforcement over the course of their lives. Now, more police officers are being trained to better understand their interactions with men, women and children on the autism spectrum.

What should first responders know when a situation involves someone who is autistic? And how can people with autism and those who love them help authorities de-escalate events with the potential to be dangerous?
Upcoming Events

Oct 2 @ 9-11:45am
Inclusivity In The Classroom
Gould Auditorium [registration and more info]

Oct 2 @ 12-1pm
Pizza and Politics: Queer Futures
Hinckley Caucus Room [more info]

Oct 2 @ 1:30-3pm
Afternoon Dialogue Session
Gould Auditorium [more info]

Oct 2 @ 6-8:30pm
Community Zine Workshop
Utah Pride Center [more info]

Oct 3 @ 6-8pm
Diego’s Dream: Film Screening & Discussion
Okazaki Community Meeting [more info]

Oct 4 @ 11am-12pm
Women, Work, and the Will to Lead
350 SSB [more info]

Oct 4 @ 6-8pm
Reimagining Queer Resistance Through Art
Union Ballroom [more info]

Oct 5 @ 5-7pm
LGBTQIA Faculty, Staff and Students Pride Mix and Mingle, SW Okazaki Community Room [more info]

Oct 4 @ 11:30am-1:30pm
I am a Queer Artist of Color & I’m Still Alive
Union Pano East [more info]

Oct 4 @ 1:30-3:30pm
Free Film and Pizza— “The New Black”
Marriott Library Room 1150 [more info]

Oct 4 @ 11-11:30pm
Debrief and Pizza
Union Ballroom [more info]

Oct 5 @ 12-1pm
It Is My Duty To Spit: An Afternoon With J Mase III
Gould Auditorium [more info]

Oct 5 @ 4-6pm
Bystander Intervention Training
Center for Student Wellness [more info]

Oct 23 @ 1-4pm
Open Gender & Sexuality Workshop, Annex 151 [info]

Every Friday @ 3-5pm
Fabulous Fridays, LGBT Resource Center Room 409