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Is Cultural Appropriation Wrong?

White female celebrities have ended up getting themselves at the wrong place when they post pictures of them setting their hair in cornrows, and Megan Barton Hanson was at one time a victim. The issue of people from superior cultures copying some cultural aspects of inferior cultures has turned out to be a critical subject of discussion. The cultural interaction that was facilitated by previous historical events such as colonialism and immigration ended up spreading the culture of different communities to places far than their origins. This leads to the puzzle of if indeed cultural appropriation is wrong. Cultural appropriation is very wrong because it undermines the culture of minority communities, it is never allowed its rightful copyright aspects and worst of it all, it is a continuation of the oppression the superior communities subjected the minor communities to.

The majorities that have been accused of practicing the appropriation of culture have always viewed it as a means through which they appreciate the culture of minority communities. Young (p. 139) argued that the cultural exchange between the minority and the superior community was an important role in the promotion of mutual interaction and appreciation of each other's culture. It is indeed true that people with different cultures but existing in a common community need to exchange their cultures for a mutual existence, but the exchange needs to have mutual reasons. This is because those from superior cultures use it for recognition and those from minor cultures use it as a way of trying to fit in. Riley and Carpenter (p. 861) have gone ahead claiming that the practice has not always been offensive

especially when used for fashion since people (celebrities) would need to change their fashion once in a while. It is important that people try out new things, but this is never a justification for misusing something that one does not understand its meaning for the sake of fashion. Fashion is meant for the presentation of a person while cultural appropriation used in that fashion is offensive to many people. There is a need for cultural exchange and fashion exploration but not at the expense of the minority community's culture.

Cultural appropriation against the minority communities violates the terms of the right to patent and acknowledgment related to their culture. Minority communities claim that superior cultures are keen at getting property rights and the case is not the same as the inferior communities. Riley and Carpenter were keen to make this observation, "Multinational companies secure patents on genetically modified "Indian wild rice," while Indians cannot protect their varieties from cross-contamination" (p. 863). This observation displays the misuse of patents to promote cultural misappropriation. Superior nations are good at protecting what is there and do less to acknowledge the culture of the minority because they want to misuse them. Riley and Carpenter when further brought a better understanding of the issue that, this habit is "the taking—from a culture that is not one's own — of intellectual property," (p. 863). By this, therefore, people from the powerful culture do not win any of the minority culture elements. They need therefore to acknowledge it. It is clear therefore that minority culture is the property of the minority communities and therefore its usage should come after the approval of its owners.

Minority community's culture has had a very deep meaning that cultural appropriation undervalues and hence undermining the culture. The misunderstanding of the copied culture has best been defined by Young where "Labor, which depicts bare-breasted Indian women participating in the construction of Fort Victoria," (p. 137). This image on the parliamentary walls in British Columbia shows how wrong the drawing was. It is offensive

because the bare-breasted woman would mean fertility or nursing. Additionally, justice has been represented by a man escorted to a colonial judge (Young, p. 138). This is very offensive because the colonial judges remind the Indians of the colonial oppression they faced. Such misplaced statements have been the source of bad blood in the society between the people of these two cultures. The lack of knowledge of these copied cultures reminds the people about oppressed.

Cultural appropriation is extremely wrong, and it should not be tolerated because it is a continuation of the oppression that minority communities were subjected to during colonialism and migration times. The borrowed culture is misrepresented and has always put the minor cultures at fault and Riley, and Carpenter brings the idea of Indian savages, “Americans relished the idea of the Indian as an emblem of “freedom... behavioral mores from Indian “savagery” (p. 863). The culture was for the minor, but the superior communities have ended up being the presenter of the culture, and that is where they take the opportunity of continuing to oppress the minority by painting the culture to antagonize minority communities. The people owning the culture are denied the chance of owning their culture physically through object appropriation which is “a tangible object is transferred from members of the culture that produced it to the possession of outsiders” (Young, p. 136). This displays the power the superior culture still have over minority culture. There is nothing that the minor cultures can do. It is therefore evident that modern-day oppression of minority communities is still practiced through cultural misappropriation.

The subject of cultural appropriation needs to be revisited with the intention of getting a permanent solution to this problem. It is an act that undermines the values of the minority communities and also reminds them of the colonial oppression that they experienced. It is a wrong aspect of social life that needs to be stopped with immediate effect.

Work Cited

Riley, Angela R., and Kristen A. Carpenter. "Owning red: a theory of Indian (cultural) appropriation." *Tex. L. Rev.* 94 (2015): 859.

Young, James O. "Profound offense and cultural appropriation." *The Journal of aesthetics and art criticism* 63.2 (2005): 135-146.

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