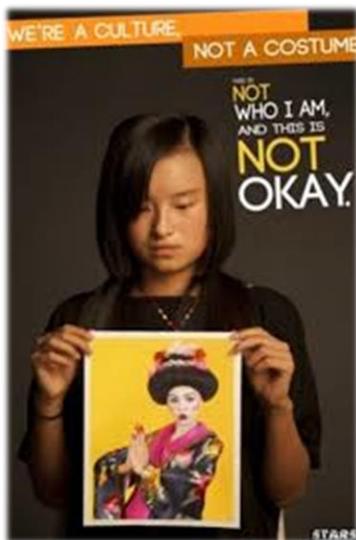


# We're a Culture, Not a Costume

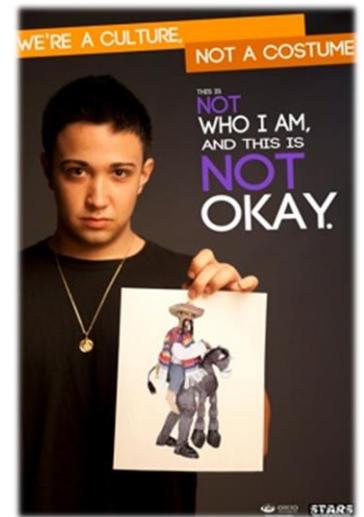
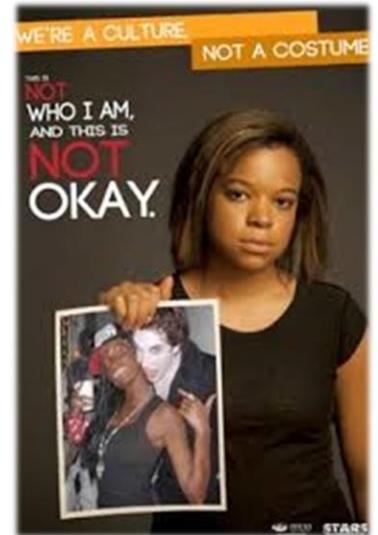
## Student Leader Toolkit



**PIOWEEN TOWN**  
HALLOWEEN 2017 CARNIVAL  
THURS, OCT 26 11AM - 3PM DRISCOLL GREEN

**Cultural Appropriation** n. ['kəlCH(ə)rəl ə-prə-prē-'ā-shən]

1. The taking— from a culture that is not one's own— of intellectual property, cultural expressions or artifacts, history and ways of knowledge (Ziff & Ross, 1997).
2. Any instance which means commonly associated with and/or perceived as belonging to another are used to further one's own ends (Shugart, 1997).



For more information, please visit [www.du.edu/housing](http://www.du.edu/housing)

## Overview

### **About *We're Culture, Not A Costume***

Created by DU Housing and Residential Education, this is the third year our department has hosted *We're a Culture, Not a Costume*. Our first year, we promoted the initiative through passive programming with original posters featuring our own Resident Assistants. Last year, we furthered our means of awareness by using posters designed by the University of Ohio, hosting workshops and dialogues for division and department staffs, and creating an active carnival in partnership with various offices on campus and student affinity groups. This year, efforts are being be echoed as we work to print more posters, host professional development sessions, design this toolkit for student leaders, and recreate our carnival – titled “Pioween Town” – next Thursday Oct 26.

### **Why are We Promoting his Campaign?**

Throughout our nation's history, the dominant culture has had the freedom and power to take objects or artifacts from other cultures benefiting through systems of trade. This process is known as *commodification*. The process of commodification is when objects or artifacts are brought into systems of capital exchange. Through this process, the relationship between these objects or artifacts and their intrinsic value are lost; they become equivalent to all other commodities.

Commodification is a manifestation of cultural appropriation. *We're a Culture, Not a Costume* is aimed to eliminate the usage of costumes, clothing, and artifacts as a simple commodity. By continuing to treat cultural costumes as just another piece of clothing found in a store, we are continuing to perpetuate the existing systemic power dynamic between the dominate culture and the cultures of marginalized identities.

Commodification is not the same as assimilation, when marginalized people adopt elements of a dominant culture in order to survive conditions that make life more of a struggle if they don't.

Some say, for instance, that non-Western people who wear jeans and Indigenous people who speak English are taking from dominant cultures, too. But, marginalized groups don't have the power to decide if they'd prefer to stick with their customs or try on the dominant culture's traditions just for fun.

In other words, context matters.

Which means it's not about saying that you, as an individual, are a bad person if you appropriate someone else's culture. It's a complicated issue that includes our histories, our current state of affairs, and our future, as we act to eliminate oppression, instead of perpetuating it.





When cultural artifacts or symbols are reproduced or used as substitutes for existing culture it can be detrimental to those who belong to that culture.

### Questions to Ask Throughout

- What is cultural appropriation/appreciation/exploitation and how does it manifest on campus and within our communities?
- How can we support DU community members who are offended/harmed by cultural appropriation?
- How can we shut down harm and encourage dialogue with both victims and perpetrators of cultural appropriation?
- How can we educate our community and provide knowledge-based resources beyond the season?

## Definitions

**Culture:** Culture refers to the cumulative deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions of time, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving.

**Cultural Appreciation:** Understanding histories of oppression and marginalization surrounding the particular object/practice/tradition and gauging the appropriateness of your actions in relation to this history

### Cultural Appropriation:

- Acts of appropriation and their implications are not determined by the intent or awareness of those engaged in such acts but are instead shaped by, and in turn shape, the social, economic, and political contexts in which they occurs
- Involves the use of one culture's elements by a group or individual who does not belong to that culture. The adoption of these elements from another culture typically occur without the consent of the people who belong to that culture and who have been seen as "lesser" from the dominant population.

**Cultural Exploitation:** Aspects of marginalized/colonized cultures that are taken and used by a dominant/colonizing culture in such a way as to serve the interests of the dominant (examples include but are not limited to monetary means, enforcing stereotypes, and/or failing to give credit to and recognize the original culture, history, and experience)

### Institutional Power

- The ability or official authority to decide what is best for others. The ability to decide who will have access to resources. The capacity to exercise control over others.





- There is an inherent responsibility by those who have power to acknowledge their privilege when participating in a culture or stepping into an identity that they do not hold.

**Intersectionality:** The interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.

**Privilege:** Operates on personal, interpersonal, cultural, and institutional levels and gives advantages, favors, and benefits to members of dominant groups at the expense of members of target groups

## Articles Resources

34 Ridiculous Chinese Character Tattoos

Translated: <http://www.buzzfeed.com/ellievhall/ridiculous-chinese-character-tattoos-translated#.lgKN03nza6>

The Body is Not an Apology: <https://thebodyisnotanapology.com/magazine/you-dont-have-an-excuse-cultural-appropriation-power-dynamics-and-historical-context/>

Cultural Appropriation: A brief discussion and overview:

<https://anthropologyrocks.wordpress.com/2014/02/25/cultural-appropriation-a-brief-discussion-and-overview/>

Digital Blackface: <https://www.teenvogue.com/story/digital-blackface-reaction-gifs>

Essay on Cultural Appropriation: <http://www.aihfs.org/pdf/8-1-16%20Cultural%20Appropriation.pdf>

A Much Needed Primer on Cultural Appropriation: <http://jezebel.com/5959698/a-much-needed-primer-on-cultural-appropriation>

NPR Cultural Appropriation is in fact indefensible:

<http://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2017/06/28/533818685/cultural-appropriation-is-in-fact-indefensible>

NY Times In Defense of Cultural Appropriation:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/14/opinion/in-defense-of-cultural-appropriation.html>

What's Wrong with Cultural Appropriation: <https://everydayfeminism.com/2015/06/cultural-appropriation-wrong/>

Urban Outfitters Sells Tapestry 'Eerily Reminiscent' of Holocaust

garb: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2015/02/10/urban-outfitters-sells-tapestry-eerily-reminiscent-of-holocaust-garb/>





## Podcast Resources

*In Theory* – Cultural Appropriation: <http://www.intheory.us/episodes/2015/6/24/episode-3-cultural-appropriation-ugh-1>

What Not to Wear on Halloween: <https://www.stuffmomnevertoldyou.com/podcasts/what-not-to-wear-on-halloween.htm>

## Video Resources

7 Myths about Cultural Appropriation DEBUNKED: <https://youtu.be/KXeJdHrGOuI>

Don't Cash Crop On My Cornrows: [https://youtu.be/O1KJRRSB\\_XA](https://youtu.be/O1KJRRSB_XA)

Neil deGrasse Tyson's nephew drops the mic on cultural appropriation: <https://youtu.be/y3q-rwflbfo>

White People Whitesplain Whitesplaining: <https://youtu.be/N-p8dOqf3P4>

What's Wrong with Cultural Appropriation: <https://youtu.be/HuO8Z12Ri1U> -

White Party - A Lesson in Cultural Appropriation: <https://youtu.be/lpx3fKn4G3U>

## How Can YOU Address Cultural Appropriation?

### 1. *Self-work*

- If you don't know what cultural appropriation is, look it up. Read some articles and watch some videos on different views and experiences surrounding cultural appropriation. We have provided a few resources below to help springboard this self-work.
- Be open-minded. If this is new for you, try to listen for understanding.

### 2. *Engage in dialogue*

- Bring up subjects like cultural appropriation with your friends, classmates, and the RAs in your building after you do some self-work. See what their views are and share your own knowledge and experiences.
- Dialogue is collaborative and about people working together to find a common understanding. IT is about exploring, listening, and re-examining your positions, values, and assumptions.

### 3. *Examine your own practices*

- *Are you wearing a costume during Halloween?* Ask yourself some critical questions about your costume. *Is your costume based on someone's race, ethnicity, or*



*culture? Does my costume use stereotypes to make a joke or to be sexy? Is your costume exploiting another culture?*

#### 4. **Be an advocate**

- We aren't saying to be the costume police, but if you see a costume that doesn't sit right with you, start a conversation with that person. Make sure you are keeping yourself safe in these conversations. Be mindful of the environment and who is in the room.

## Processing Questions

- How can we as practitioners continue to educate ourselves and our students on the nuances of cultural appropriation, appreciation, and self-identity?
- How do we as professionals support and encourage the education in students that are themselves perpetrators of cultural appropriation?
- The podcast discusses cultural appropriation outside of the context of race and clothing. What are some other areas you have witnessed cultural appropriation outside of Halloween costumes? How can we continue these conversations outside of this time of year?
- With DU emphasizing study abroad in combination with DU's specific student population, what unique opportunities do we have to celebrate cultures and provide students the space to truly appreciate cultures that they do not personally identify with?
- To what degree does the concept of intersectionality impact our understanding/implementation of cultural appropriation?
- The podcast notes that individuals may use culturally appropriating symbols for "shock value." How do we as educators and professionals confront students who acknowledge the history and trauma of their appropriation but have no interest in understanding the harm?
- Culture is constantly developing and changing. Do you think it is possible for cultures to evolve without appropriating, or is it necessary? How does cultural appreciation and exchange contribute to this?
- Can you think of a time you may have culturally appropriated another culture without intending to? What was your relationship to the culture you were taking from? What do you now understand about the power disparities in place that allowed for this appropriation to occur?
- Who gets to be a "cultural gatekeeper"? Is there power and privilege in this?