



Station 1 - Thoughts on Cultural Appropriation

Introduction to Cultural Appropriation (excerpt)

Nadra Kareem Nittle, Thoughtco.com, Oct. 11, 2017

People from hundreds of different ethnicities make up the U.S. population, so it's not surprising that cultural groups rub off on each other at times.

Americans who grow up in diverse communities may pick up the dialect, customs, and religious traditions of the cultural groups that surround them.

Cultural appropriation is an entirely different matter. It has little to do with one's exposure to and familiarity with different cultures. Instead, cultural appropriation typically involves members of a dominant group exploiting the culture of less privileged groups. Quite often, this is done along racial and ethnic lines with little understanding of the latter's history, experience, and traditions.

In Defense of Cultural Appropriation (excerpt)

Kenan Malik, New York Times, June 14, 2017

Campaigns against cultural appropriation reveal the changing meaning of what it is to challenge racism. Once, it was a demand for equal treatment for all. Now it calls for cultures to be walled off and boundaries to be policed.

But who does the policing? Every society has its gatekeepers [whose role is to] protect certain institutions, maintain the privileges of particular groups and cordon off some beliefs from challenge. Such gatekeepers protect not the marginalized but the powerful. Racism itself is a form of gatekeeping, a means of denying racialized groups equal rights, access and opportunities.

In minority communities, the gatekeepers are usually self-appointed guardians whose power rests on their ability to define what is acceptable and what is beyond the bounds. They appropriate for themselves the authority to license certain forms of cultural engagement, and in doing so, entrench their power.