A zine on culture, respect, allyship, and racism
Special thanks to Dalya.

Further resources

Hipster Appropriations: www.hipsterappropriations.com

Native Appropriations: www.nativeappropriations.com

People-appropriation-hair-and-racism-struggle

Anti-Racist Struggle: Hipster Appropriation, and Answers for White People on Hair, Appropriation, and the-Fuck-out-of-me

press-on-native-culture-%E2%80%93-please-stop-annoying-
culture: hipsterappropriations.org/post/10-the-hipstership

Feminist Intersection: On Hipsters/Hippies and Native

Trendithub.com

My Culture Is Not A Trend: www.mycultures stu res

Blogspot.com

Native Appropriations: www.nativeappropriations.com
This was written in the spring of 2011 in occupied coast Salish territory, Olympia, Washington.

None of the ideas in this essay are original or new. Please copy and distribute at will. Take what you want, re-format it, add to it, I don't care.

If I’ve made glaring mistakes in this essay or you want to talk with me about cultural appropriation (or anti-oppression and anarchy in general), please get in touch: vegetablesforbreakfast@gmail.com.
commitment to Jah. When white people wear dreadlocks, we/they strip dreadlocks from their symbolism of resistance to racism and a commitment to Jah. But as a general rule of thumb, it’s not appropriation if it’s from your own culture.

So what about white people of Celtic heritage who wear dreadlocks? Dreadlocks are part of their culture, but someone walking down the street would not be able to tell that some random white person with dreadlocks is Celtic. I don’t have any quick and easy answers for this, but I think that context is really really important. I live in the United States, where dreadlocks are not widely recognized as a Celtic cultural marker. All white people have the ability to strip dreadlocks of their symbolism for People of Color, regardless of our ethnicity. Does this mean that white people with Celtic heritage living in the United States should never wear dreadlocks? I don’t know. I do think it means that the decision to wear dreadlocks must be approached very carefully, and with the knowledge that one must be prepared to engage in continual conversation about what dreadlocks mean for a variety of cultures.
What is cultural appropriation?

Cultural appropriation is the adoption or the use of icons, rituals, aesthetic standards, practices, and beliefs from one culture or subculture into another. It generally occurs when a minority culture or some other culture takes part in these activities without any real understanding of why the original culture took part in these activities. When this happens, the meanings behind these activities, or the meanings behind the practices, and beliefs of that culture, may be converted into meaningless pop-culture or given them a significance that is completely different from the significance they had originally. This is often because the culture from which the practices, and beliefs were taken is a minority culture or subculture or because the culture that appropriated these practices, and beliefs was a more dominant culture, or more subordinate in social, political, economic, or military status to the appropriate culture.

Cultural appropriation is the adoption or the use of icons, rituals, aesthetic standards, practices, and beliefs from one culture or subculture into another. It generally occurs when a minority culture or some other culture takes part in these activities without any real understanding of why the original culture took part in these activities. When this happens, the meanings behind these activities, or the meanings behind the practices, and beliefs of that culture, may be converted into meaningless pop-culture or given them a significance that is completely different from the significance they had originally.

What is cultural appropriation?
It's complicated.

Calling each other out for appropriating other cultures
(or even navigating less confrontational discussions around cultural appropriation) can be tricky. As always, it's really important not to assume anyone's identity. Just because someone has light skin doesn't mean they're White. Tread-carefully when discussing cultural practices, and always ask if someone is being appropriate, or if they need to talk about this stuff. It's really important to talk about this stuff. If you think someone is being appropriate, ask them about it.
Why does cultural appropriation happen?

Cultural appropriation is a by-product of imperialism, capitalism, oppression, and assimilation. Imperialism is the creation and maintenance of an unequal cultural, economic, and territorial relationship, usually between states and often in the form of an empire, based on domination and subordination. Imperialism functions by subordinating groups of people and territories and extracting everything of value from the colonized people and territories. In the case of cultural appropriation, culture is treated as a “natural resource” to extract from People of Color.

Cultural appropriation is profitable. Objects and traditions (but not the people) of marginalized cultures are seen by the dominant culture as exotic, edgy, and desirable, which translates to profits. Capitalism works best when people are not individual people with celebrated differences, but identical workers, cogs in the machine. Once diverse cultural identities are stripped away, the only culture left to identify with is capitalist culture.

This is one aspect of assimilation, in which marginalized communities lose their cultural markers and are folded into the dominant culture. The process of assimilation is sped up when culture markers are appropriated by the dominant culture. Once the dominant culture has access to the cultural markers of a marginalized culture, they are no longer markers of the marginalized culture, and the marginalized culture is gobbled up by the dominant culture.
anti-racist efforts should be directed by the needs identified by People of Color.
Why is cultural appropriation so harmful?

Cultural appropriation is so harmful because it is an ex-

The defense of cultural appropriation is based upon the

Because the colonization of this continent by white settlers,

Since the colonization of this continent by white settlers,

Legally permitted to practice their traditional spirituality.

Freedom Act that Native people in the United States were

Before the passage of the 1978 American Indian Religious

Harmful

Cultural appropriation is so harmful because it is an ex-

Since the colonization of this continent by white settlers,

Native people have faced monumental obstacles to the

Native people have faced monumental obstacles to the

Resources, and culture of a marginalized group amount to

In the United States, the theft of the lands,

needed to steal land and resources from People of Color, par-

This is the same rationale that has been (and still is) taking.

Cultural appropriation means all aspects of marginalized

It is the same rationale that has been (and still is) taking.

Cultural appropriation means all aspects of marginalized

Implosion of certainties of racism, genocide, and oppression.

Cultural appropriation means all aspects of marginalized
People of Color are the experts in racism, and therefore for an end to cultural appropriation, as targets of racism, we have to listen to People of Color when they identify and call people's responsibility to confront racism, it is still imperative. Spending their time combating even though it is white there are worse problems that People of Color should even if you don't understand why it is hurtful to see even if you can't possibly be oppressed. People of Color exist. Often, the justification used for cultural appropriation is something along the lines of "I just love the way these People of Color - including Native Americans - still know how to live and tell what it means to be a Part attack, dismissed, and marginalized. And if Color don't. All those stereotypes, they are often ridiculed, when People of Color demand People of Color take role, when People create a model that Cultural appropriation often perpetrates inaccuracies. When these inaccurate stereotypes of a monolithic culture involving Lee, they think they know about Native Americans often come from what most white people think of as People of Color. Cultural appropriation is insensitive and ignorant at best, and blatantly and knowingly racist at
forced relocation, endless broken treaties, “kill the Indian, save the man” policies, and forced assimilation. So it is particularly insensitive for white people to attempt to justify their/our use of Native spiritual practices when Native people themselves have often been brutally persecuted for the same.

Cultural appropriation is not an acceptable way to honor, respect, or appreciate People of Color. If you wish to honor, respect, or appreciate Black people or Black culture, then you should learn how to recognize, confront, and dismantle systematic racism instead of appropriating dreadlocks, a symbol of the wearer’s commitment to Jah Rastafari and Black resistance to racism. If you wish to honor, respect, or appreciate Native people or Native culture, learn how to listen to Native people when they identify very real problems (and how to confront them) faced by Native people today, such as astronomical suicide and alcoholism rates on reservations or the continued theft of Native lands by resource extraction companies.

Many well-intentioned and self-proclaimed anti-racists will engage in cultural appropriation in the name of “solidarity.” A prominent example of this is white pro-Palestinian activists wearing keffiyehs, Arab headscarves and symbols of Palestinian nationalism and resistance to occupation. But simply wearing a keffiyeh will not end Israel’s occupation of Palestine. There are many real, concrete steps one can take to support Palestinian liberation, such as the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement. In addition, one must also take into account the very real climate of Islamophobia and Arab-phobia in the United States – people who are perceived as Arab and/or Muslim are treated with hostility, suspicion, and violence, and assumed to be
terrorists. This is only aggravated when these people are seen wearing articles of clothing associated with Islam or Arab culture. For white people to wear keffiyehs is to wave around our/their white privilege – white people aren’t automatically assumed to be terrorists. White people wearing keffiyehs are seen as hip, fashion-forward, and worldly, whereas Arab- and Muslim-perceived people wearing keffiyehs are seen as dangerous, Others, and terrorists.

Many traditions that have been appropriated from Native people (such as sweat lodges and “medicine wheel ceremonies”) are performed by white people allegedly in the name of such lofty goals as world peace, spiritual mending, and mutual understanding. One of the things needed for world peace, spiritual mending, and mutual understanding to occur is an end to racism. But cultural appropriation is a form of racism, and as long as racism exists, there can be no world peace, spiritual mending, or mutual understanding. Many concrete steps to dismantle racism have been identified by many different people, including recognizing one’s role in perpetuating racism, confronting one’s own white privilege, and attacking the systems of oppression that give white people privilege in the first place. None of these steps require cultural appropriation. And it is unacceptable for white people’s healing to come at the expense of the cultural survival of People of Color.

Cultural appropriation of ceremonies and objects removes and distorts these traditions and things from their original contexts and into gross caricatures that are a slap in the face to the original practitioners of the ceremonies, with complete disregard for the history and present day reality of oppression (usually perpetrated by white people who feel similarly entitled to all aspects of these peoples’ lands,