WEAR A **COSTUME,**

**NOT A CULTURE**

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Descending leaves, apple cider, cool air and autumn festivities. Yep, it’s that time of year again. While some hate to see the leaves change and dread the thought of having to put on a sweater and jacket, others embrace the long, cool nights and spooky time of year. Whether fall is the best season or not is debatable, but one debate that needs to be ended right now is whether certain Halloween costumes are culturally offensive or not.

We’ve all seen it, the guy who thinks he’s funny for wearing a sombrero, poncho, fake mustache and holding a bottle of tequila, attempting to look Mexican. Not only is that disgustingly feeding into a stereotype, but it will most likely be offensive to people who are of Mexican descent. For anyone who doesn’t know, it’s also called cultural appropriation.

What is cultural appropriation you ask? It’s taking things (dress, practices, symbols, or expression) from a culture that is not your own without showing that you understand or respect the culture. Now I know that may be confusing because we use things from other cultures all the time—languages, art and even things like chopsticks. However, there’s a huge difference between using something from someone’s culture in an educational & respectful way, and disrespecting someone’s culture. Showing appreciation for a culture is acceptable, but appropriating a culture is not. For example, a woman wearing a sari while visiting India to be modest and respectful of the culture is OK, but a man showing up to a Halloween party in a white turban, wearing a fake bomb across his torso, trying to portray a Muslim IS NOT OK!

This blog is to educate people on ways to avoid looking ignorant, being offensive or feeling embarrassed. It’s best to not make someone’s culture a costume this season. Too many people work hard everyday to overcome racial stereotypes, so for a person to throw on an inappropriate costume and insult their efforts of breaking down those ignorant stereotypes and negative connotations, is a slap in the face. I know that ethnicity, race and culture can be confusing and touchy topics to discuss for some people, but for now just follow this rule: If you’re not sure if it would offend someone, don’t wear it. Simple as that.
**Blatantly Rude Costumes to Avoid**

**Native American** - Put the feather headdress, fur parkas and moccasins away.

**Mexican** - Your sombrero, poncho and glass of tequila are offensive and wrong.

**Asian** - Get rid of that bowl of rice, calculus textbooks and take off those fake glasses. Not all Asians are book worms, you’re just feeding a stereotype. Also, that rice hat isn’t a good idea either.

**Muslim** - Don’t disrespect another person’s faith by wearing religious garments, or showing up to a party as an extremist with a bomb tied to your chest. This is disrespectful, oppressive and culturally insensitive.

**Any kind of black face or brown face painting** - It’s fine to want to dress as your favorite character/movie actors for Halloween, but that does not mean you need to change your skin color. Just because you want to be Nicki Minaj for Halloween does not mean you need to paint your face black. (Trust me, Ellen DeGeneres found a way.) You also don’t need to paint your skin brown to be Moana for Halloween as this can offend Pacific Islanders/Asians.

The list goes on, but I think you get the point by now. If you’re still confused, check out the articles below (just click on the title) and do some research on your own. Remember friends, just because you can’t wear a culture does not mean that you can’t enjoy the Halloween season! There are far more non-offensive costumes than there are culturally insensitive costumes.

- "We’re a Culture, Not a Costume" Poster Campaign
- Halloween Cultural Appropriation Experience