**Mirror Musing**

**Halloween**

**Reflection questions for mirror:**

**Cultural Appropriation** is the outright co-opting of symbols and rituals by people not brought up in that cultural context. Culture is not a costume.

**Cultural Appreciation** simply means expressing a willingness to learn and admire another culture without comparing and contrasting. (Adapted from Passport.com)

*Our decisions, such as which Halloween costume to wear, can cause undue harm onto others, even if that is not our intention. As an MSU community, we all play an integral role in creating a living and learning environment that is built on respect and dignity, as well as acknowledges historic and contemporary injustices (*[*MSU definitions of DEI*](https://president.msu.edu/initiatives/dei-plan/dei-working-definitions.html)*, 2020). As you decide which costume to wear this year, we invite to consider the following questions:*

* What does your costume represent? Are you advertently or inadvertently conveying a message through your costume?
* Is your costume based on the culture of a racial or ethnic group?
  + If yes, do you belong to that group?
* If you do not belong to that particular group, what are your intentions for wearing that costume?
  + Are there tensions between your intentions and the potential impact? If so, how do you want to proceed?
* What harmful messages might your costume convey to people from different cultural backgrounds who see you in it?
* Outside of the context of Halloween, how have you utilized cultures you do are not a part of for your personal gain? What harm might have been caused by this?

Questions adapted from [Emi Ito (2020)](https://littlekotoscloset.wixsite.com/mysite/post/updated-no-cultural-appropriation-at-halloween-school-fliers)

**Programming -- Cultural Appreciation or Appropriation**

30 minutes

**Learning Objectives**

* Differentiate between cultural appropriation and appreciation
* Explore which category Halloween costumes and other clothes we wear may fall into

**Materials needed:**

* If online: Jamboard, Google documents, or other collaborative tool
* If in person: white board or big piece of blank paper

**Timeline:**

*00-00:15: Culture appropriation vs. cultural appreciation*

* Create a table with two columns. At the top of one column, write “cultural appropriation”. At the top of the other, write “cultural appreciation”.
* Ask the group “how do we differentiate between cultural appropriation and cultural appreciation?”. Engage the group in processing through the difference between the two.
* If questions come up that you are not able to work through as a group, place the questions at the bottom. Invite the group to do some research and reflection on the questions and, perhaps, come back together at a later time.

*00:15-00:30: Application to Halloween*

* What experiences do you have seeing costumes seeing costumes that aligned more so with cultural appropriation?
* What messages did those costumes communicate?
* What is the impact of someone wearing a Halloween costume that appropriates the culture of a racial or ethnic group?
* What role can we play in encouraging our peers to be mindful of their Halloween costume choice?

**Starting definitions (if needed):**

**Cultural *appropriation*:**

“I think of it, in the most rudimentary terms, as this very fluid exchange of culture that happens among human beings,” she went on. “But the way that we think about it, especially now, is that it refers to taking someone else’s culture ― intellectual property, artifacts, style, art form, etc. ― without permission.” -LeRhonda Manigault-Bryant, cited in [HuffPost](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/cultural-appropriation-vs-appreciation_n_5a78d13ee4b0164659c72fb3)

“*Appropriation* is simply taking one aspect of a culture that is not your own and using it for your own personal interest” ([Holmes, 2015](https://greenheart.org/blog/greenheart-international/cultural-appreciation-vs-cultural-appropriation-why-it-matters/#:~:text=Appreciation%20is%20when%20someone%20seeks,for%20your%20own%20personal%20interest.))

**Cultural *appreciation*:**

*“Appreciation* is when someone seeks to understand and learn about another culture in an effort to broaden their perspective and connect with others cross-culturally” ([Holmes, 2015](https://greenheart.org/blog/greenheart-international/cultural-appreciation-vs-cultural-appropriation-why-it-matters/#:~:text=Appreciation%20is%20when%20someone%20seeks,for%20your%20own%20personal%20interest.))

Additional resources:

* Culture Appropriation at Halloween: My Culture is Not a Costume ([Teen Vogue, 2017](https://www.teenvogue.com/story/cultural-appropriation-halloween-costume-video))