

This week's question to consider:

How can I show cultural appreciation, while being sensitive to the cultures in question?

Pro tip: Ultimately, if a person whose culture is being represented would feel pride, be supported, or feel *appreciated*, you are most likely showing cultural appreciation.

The notion of cultural sensitivity, cultural appreciation, and cultural appropriation is so nuanced. The more we read and learn, the more comfortable we feel in showing that appreciation, without innocently causing harm.

So, let's do a lil quiz! Everyone likes pop quizzes.

cul·ture /'kəlCHər/

noun

1. the arts and other manifestations of human intellectual achievement regarded collectively.

2. the customs, arts, social institutions, and achievements of a particular nation, people, or other social group.

For each situation, which is it? Appreciation or appropriation?

QUIZ : Cultural appreciation or cultural appropriation?

1. After a trip to Egypt, I brought back a belly dancing costume that I bought in the market in Cairo. Now I want to learn to belly dance, and I would like to wear that costume when I am dancing! It's so pretty.
2. While on student-exchange in Brazil, the host family gifted their exchange student with a traditional experience of meals. When the student returned to Canada, they tried to replicate their favourite meal at home. It was... not quite the same, but it was edible. Almost!
3. A school display to celebrate the holidays in the month, and then assigning to all students the task of creating an artifact to represent one of the important dates.
4. An entrepreneurship fair where students have the autonomy to create their own product, and the student has chosen to make dream catchers to put on key chains.
5. Getting a tattoo of an eye of Horus, or an Egyptian ankh, or an Arabic phrase. But you're not Mediterranean, Egyptian, or otherwise have any direct connection to the culture, and you do not know how to read Arabic. Or perhaps change this to a word in Cantonese or Mandarin or another Chinese dialect, that you also cannot read. And now it's a tattoo and omg you are super duper worried about the answer to this question, oh no, and possibly are fast forwarding to the end to see the solution here because you're getting a little bit sweaty.

SOLUTION

1. Appreciation. Probably. Find a teacher who is Arabic if it is possible and think about who is profiting if money is exchanging hands. Is your dance studio filled with a variety of representations of kinds of dance? Are you opting to learn from someone who lives this culture, who is part of this culture? Are you going to a studio with a teacher who has removed the dance from cultural context?
2. Appreciation. You are at home. You are trying to bring back something from the culture that you enjoyed, that you appreciated. To take it a step further, researching Brazilian culture from Brazilian sources wherever possible is deep appreciation.
3. Appreciation, but be careful. It may be appreciation, but it may not be equitable. It would be essential to make every effort to include a calendar of important dates for every religion represented in the school, and for the artifacts that students make to be carefully guided.
4. Depends! Context is important. If it's an indigenous student making them, buying from that student is appreciation. If, however, you're talking about a non-indigenous student profiting on an important symbol in indigenous culture, it is likely appropriation and its best to tread lightly and opt out of that product development altogether.
5. It's not appropriation. It's a mild form of appreciation, though, since it often stops after the ink heals. I mean. You can't read Arabic, so maybe google translate that?

I hope you enjoyed this quiz. It is okay to make mistakes and re-evaluate the things you are doing to decide how you feel about doing things of this nature as you learn more.

Recommended Resource:

Healthline.com Article (Sept 2020) | [There's a Big Difference Between Cultural Appreciation and Appropriation — Here's Why It Matters](#)

Tune in next week for a tip on equity!

Culturally Curious,

Your friendly neighbourhood Anti-Racism & Equity Coach
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