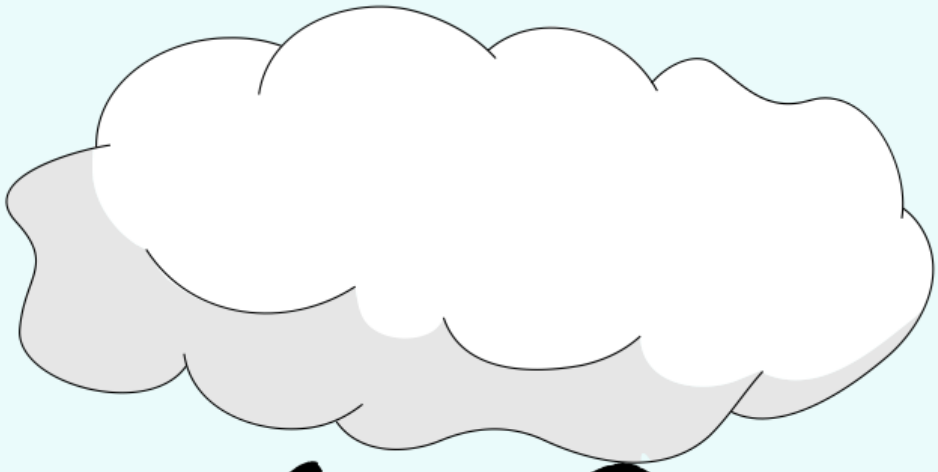
Deconstructing cultural appropriation



An Expression Not Meant for You

By Milan Ruth Bolash

Expressing ourselves is one the healthiest things people can do.

It connects you to something larger than yourself.

Even better, expressing your identity lets your peers know...

...how you are feeling, what you like, dislike, your hobbies, AND even where you are from!

Wait a minute...WHERE you are from? How do you express where you are from?

Well, great question , let's dive into what it means to express where we are from. Through our heritage, traditions, practices we exhibit our...

Culture!

We can show the world our culture through...

clothing,

physical features,

family traditions,

food,

music, and much more!

Well... that all seems great BUT...

What if I don't like where I am from? Can I switch cultures?

Well no, learning about your culture may elicit many feelings BUT your culture is unique and special to YOU!

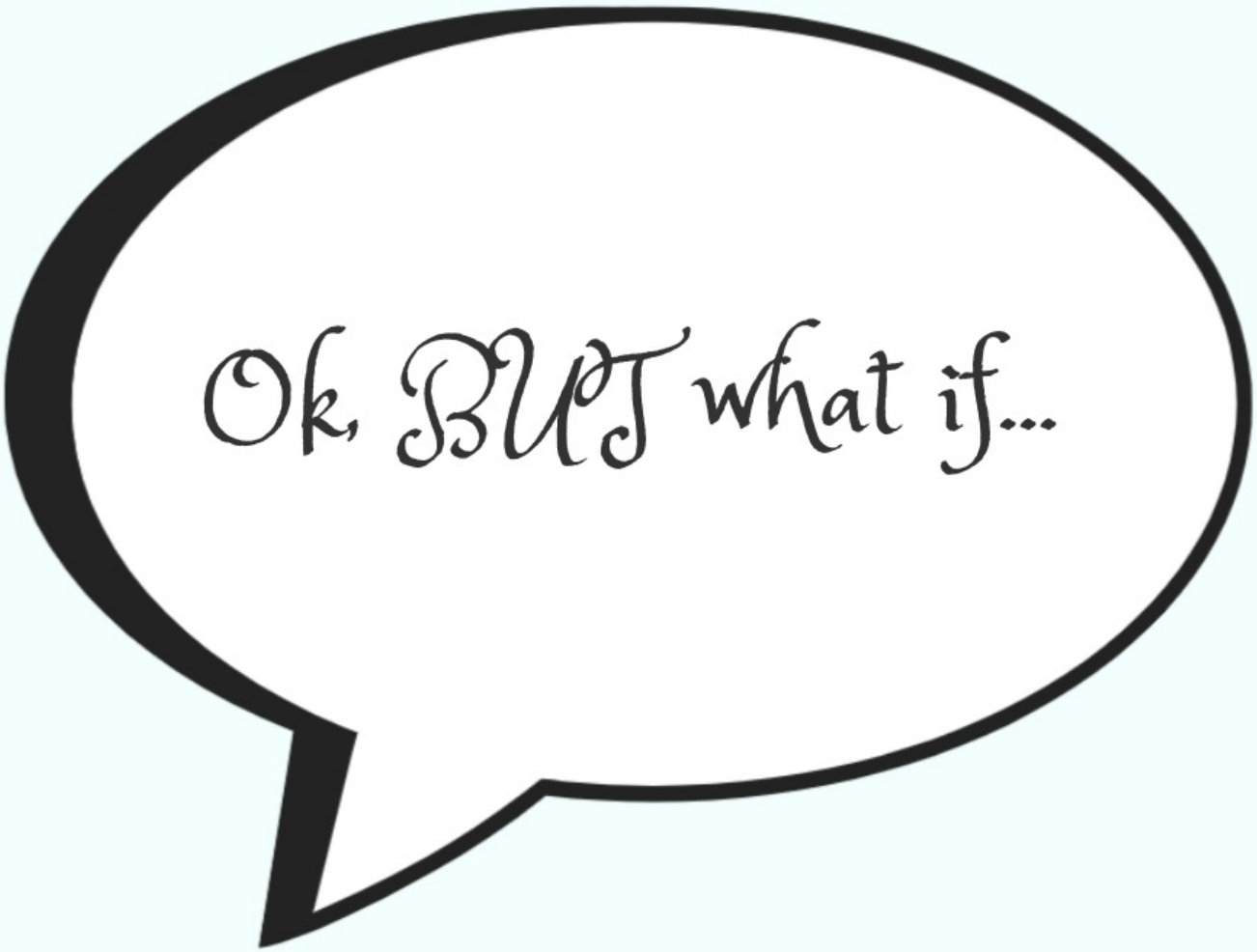
Ok, but what if I pretend I am from another culture for just one night?

It would be just like dressing up in a costume!

Not quite! Someone's personal heritage is not for you to interpret what you think it should look like...

Well fine! But what if I braid my hair like my friend from another culture because I think it looks amazing?

NO! Your friend is a Black woman and her box braids have a deep history and meaning unique to HER culture! Not yours!

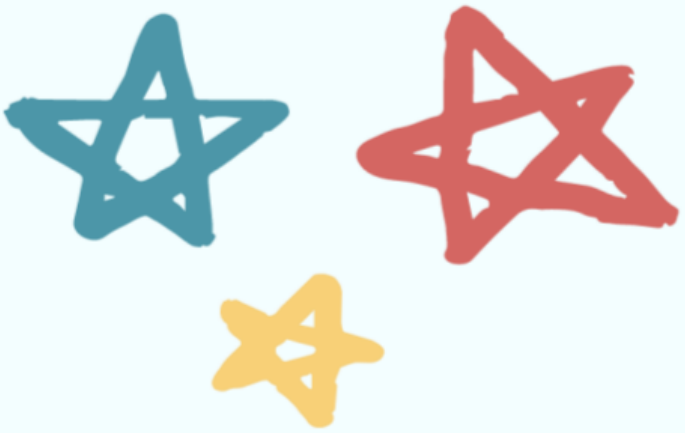

Ok, BUT what if...

STOP IT RIGHT THERE!

It looks like you've swerved out of your lane!

Don't worry, we will guide you back to the road.

PHEW...



It seems like before we can dive any further into exploring culture, we need to draw a strict line between...

Cultural Appropriation

&

Cultural Appreciation

Cultural appropriation is taking clothing, practices, ideas, or parts of someone else's identity specific to their heritage and calling it your own...

NOT OK!

This is a heritage that you are not apart of and will never know what it is like to be apart of!

Therefore, other people's cultures are not for you to interpret or attempt to perform.

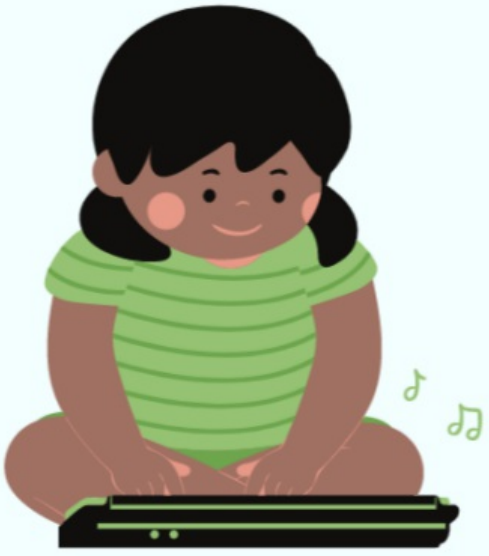
Also, cultural appropriation is typically done by dominant cultures who have a long history of stealing a non-dominant cultures' customs.

We have to put an end to it!

Gosh! I had no idea how much harm I was doing to non-dominant cultures...

So, how can we show admiration for cultures different than mine?

Thats a great question!



Let us now talk about ways to show...

Cultural Appreciation!

Cultural appreciation is showing respect and admiration for a heritage WITHOUT attempting to claim another culture as your own!

Some ways we can do this are...

Educating yourself on the history of other heritages. Understand why certain practices are in place!

Explore different types of cooking from different cultures!

Give proper credit if you ever find a practice that traditionally belongs to another culture. For example, a new beauty technique!