

## Station 4: Fashion



Victoria's Secret "Angel" Karlie Kloss at the 2012 Victoria's Secret Fashion Show

### **Victoria's Secret's Racist Garbage Is Just Asking for a Boycott, Ruth Hopkins, Jezebel, November 12, 2012**

Why is this practice offensive to Natives? Let's peel away the layers of this tacky, racist onion. For one, Ms. Kloss has no business wearing a war bonnet at all. Not only is she not Native, she hasn't earned the honor. Among my people, the Oceti Sakowin (Sioux), war bonnets are exclusively worn by men, and each feather within a war bonnet is symbolic of a brave act of valor accomplished by that man. Not just any Tom, Dick or Harry had the privilege of wearing a war bonnet. Who wears a war bonnet? Tatanka Iyotanka, Sitting Bull... This brings me to my next point: the hypersexualization of Native women. Unfortunately, these days, if you search "war bonnet" or even "Native" on the Internet, you're likely to come across dozens of pictures of naked, or nearly naked, white women wearing headdresses. Given the epidemic levels of sexual violence Native women and girls are faced with in the United States, why can they not see how incredibly insensitive and inappropriate it is to equate Native womanhood as little more than a sexual fetish?

### **Jennifer Weston, Endangered Languages Program Manager at Cultural Survival (Hunkpapa Lakota, Standing Rock Sioux) in "A Much-Needed Primer on Cultural Appropriation," Jezebel, November 13, 2012**

Such misrepresentations sexualize, commodify, and pervert our traditions — and impart to children of all cultures and backgrounds that it's perfectly acceptable to "play dress up" as a Native person, without regard for our ceremonial practices that have persisted here for millennia despite historic violence, and recent legal acts that literally outlawed our religions until 1978!

### **In Defence of Cultural Appropriation, Yo Zushi, New Statesman, October 12, 2015**

The policing of appearance is nothing new. In the mid-1920s, the then Mexican president, Plutarco Elías Calles, forbade Catholic priests from wearing clerical collars outdoors; more recently, on 14 September 2010, the French Senate passed the Loi interdisant la dissimulation du visage dans l'espace public, better known in the English-speaking world as "the burqa ban". What is curious, however, is that the latest round of strictures on how individuals can present themselves comes not from repressive, dictatorial regimes or panicked politicians but from those who consider themselves progressives: liberals united against the menace of "cultural appropriation".

At a time of heightened racial tensions across the world, with police shootings of black men in the United States



and Islamophobia (and phobias of all kinds) seemingly on the rise, this rage against cultural appropriation is understandable: no right-minded liberal wants to cause unnecessary offence, least of all to minorities. Yet simply to point out instances of appropriation in the assumption that the process is by its nature corrosive seems to me a counterproductive, even reactionary pursuit; it serves no end but to essentialise race as the ultimate component of human identity.

Speaking to the website Jezebel, the law professor Susan Scafidi of Fordham University in New York explained that appropriation involves “taking intellectual property, traditional knowledge, cultural expressions or artefacts from someone else’s culture without permission”. Yet such a definition seems to assume the existence of mythical central organisations with absolute mandates to represent minority groups – a black HQ, an Asian bureau, a Jewish head office – from which permissions and authorisations can be sought. More troubling is that it herds culture and tradition into the pen of a moral ownership not dissimilar to copyright, which may suit a legalistic outlook but jars with our human impulse to like what we like and create new things out of it.