

Scene: *New York City, corner café next to art gallery. Brie is sitting at a table with her laptop open. She is wearing a Native American tribal print sweater. Sanna Hamid walks in to get coffee and spots Brie. She gets her coffee and approaches Brie.*

Sanna: Hello, my name is Sanna Hamid, do you mind if I sit and ask you a few questions?

Brie: Um...sure, have a seat. My name is Brie... Capshaw (shuts laptop).

Sanna: (*sits across from Brie*) I am an art student from England showing my work at the gallery next door. Are you familiar with my work?

Brie: No, I'm not. I haven't been into that gallery.

Sanna: No matter. I came over to you because I noticed your interesting sweater.

Brie: Oh, thank you.

Sanna: I was wondering if I could photograph you in it and take a quote from you for my American continuation of my Cultural Appropriations collection.

Brie: What's a cultural appropriation?

Sanna: "Where to begin? Dreadlocks, traditional African prints, images of Hindu gods, Native American accessories, henna, Arabic scripture, tikka headpieces, the list is literally endless (Kuruvilla)." Do you understand?

Brie: Not really, sorry.

Sanna: Don't be sorry. It's ok. Well, the reason I came over to you is your sweater. It is a Native American print. Are you Native American?

Brie: No.

Sanna: Aw, so therefore you are appropriating the Native American culture into your fashion probably without realizing it. Those patterns could mean something to the Native Americans that is completely lost on any one outside their culture.

Brie: I didn't mean to offend anyone.

Sanna: No, no, no, no. "I never wanted to create a series of work to attack appropriators and shame them (Kuruvilla)." I want to bring about a conversation between those who have these cultural ties and those who simply want to make a fashion statement. I do not wish to scold you; I am "merely educating and creating awareness" for a long over looked issue (Hamid).

Brie: Ok. Well, my choice in sweater has a lot more to do with its warmth and price than for fashion. You are right though, I have no idea what any of these patterns mean. I could be wearing something that labels me as a murderer for all I know.

Sanna: Exactly.

Brie: So what you are saying is that all cultural appropriation is bad then?

Sanna: Not exactly. Do you know what a keffiyeh is?

Brie: Um...no.

Sanna(*looks around and spots a man*): See the man at the counter with the scarf?

Brie: Yes.

Sanna: That is a fashionable interpretation of a keffiyeh which was originally worn by Middle Eastern men. "If a Western person is accepted and applauded as 'quirky' and 'cool' for wearing a keffiyeh and a Middle Eastern is labeled a terrorist or 'towelhead' and dismissed as such, then no, that's absolutely not okay (Perez)."

Brie: Then what kind of cultural appropriation is ok?

Sanna: Coming back to your sweater. If you were to put forth the effort to find out what these patterns meant and in doing so were invited into the culture as a guest would you not feel better about wearing symbols from their culture?

Brie: So it's really more of a personal struggle? I need to decide for myself how I am going to react to fashion that is appropriated from other cultures. I personally feel horrible, now that my eyes have been opened. I was unaware and ignorant of the culture from which this sweater was inspired.

Sanna: Yes, but as more people become aware...

Brie: The more it becomes a global issue. Wow! You know, I am an aspiring clothing designer and I now feel the need to figure out a way to turn fashion towards a more respectful way of appropriation or no appropriation at all. Thank you. You have inspired me to look at things from different perspectives.

Sanna: Well, I'm glad. You should come over to the gallery to see my work. Perhaps, if you wouldn't mind, I could take your picture and add you to the collection.

Brie: I would love to. Let's go.

(They get up and walk out of the café to the gallery next door. The man at the counter with the scarf had overheard their conversation while waiting for his coffee. He sits down where the two young women had vacated, pulls out his laptop and types the word "keffiyeh" into his search engine.)

Works Cited

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