

Sexy Halloween costumes: poor taste or just plain fun?

Scandalous outfits degrade women and are culturally insensitive



MEGAN
CLEAVELEY

point

Every year at Halloween, someone makes the astute observation that women often dress provocatively. Some even say that Halloween is just an excuse for ladies to dress up like the sluts they are, and with the available costume options out there, it's not a hard thing to do.

A perusal of women's costumes reveals costumes like sexy firefighter, sexy cop, sexy pirate, sexy French maid, sexy superhero, and even sexy Hermione Granger. While sexualizing everything in order to make it a costume for women is more than slightly disconcerting—especially those of children's characters—far more alarming are the costumes that depict racial stereotypes.

Geisha, Indian princess, señorita, Eskimo, and belly dancer are all costumes that demean the cultures they're supposed to represent, and the fact that it's normally Caucasian women wearing them makes it worse.

A woman wearing a faux suede bikini with a beaded fringe and feathers in her hair isn't an accurate representation of a Native American woman. Wearing nothing more than a bikini for Halloween is problematic for several reasons—after all, this is Alberta in October—but even more so when another culture is appropriated in the process.

Asian women often have to deal with the stereotype that in order to be attractive and properly feminine, they must be docile, passive, timid sex objects. Geisha costumes do nothing

but reinforce those ideas. Likewise with sexy señorita costumes, which play off the idea that Latina women are hyper-sexualized.

Dressing up in blackface or as a member of the KKK for Halloween is something that most recognize as inappropriate, but it seems that when it comes to insulting other cultures, we turn a blind eye. And it's usually white women who wear these costumes. The pictures on the front of the packages almost always show buxom blondes with blue eyes in the costume in question.

Sexualizing women in a vulgar way is something that we should all be insulted by, regardless of our gender or racial identity. But while sexy costumes seem to be here to stay, the least we can do is try to eradicate those that are offensive to other cultures, whether they're sexy or not.

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Furthermore, costumes that offer prepackaged sexiness are severely lacking in imagination and overpriced for what you actually get. I'd much rather wear a costume that I've put together myself from trips to the thrift store than a flimsy piece of nylon that barely covers me. Not only will I feel more comfortable, but I won't have to worry about offending anyone. And that way, everyone will have a great night.

'Boo'bies are part of the spectacle and aren't intended to offend



CONAL
PIERSE

counterpoint

Personally, I'm a big fan of the Halloween season, because I get to enjoy delicious candy while dressed as the Riddler without being judged. Any other time of the year, such behaviour would garner strange looks, but as October dies, you get diplomatic immunity from social suicide—though you still can't run down someone in your car and get away with it.

A scantily clad girl claiming to be a firefighter is no more inappropriate than someone dressed as an aborted fetus, a mime, or Bin Laden who's throwing sugar from a bag labeled "anthrax."

While the way we celebrate Halloween might lower us as a species, the fact remains that it's a farcical event that the majority of us partake in. Simply put, Halloween's a case where debauchery is acceptable, because everybody's doing it. It doesn't matter who's dressing as what, because by this age, it should be understood that said person is just playing make-believe. As a child, you wouldn't shout at the TV when Mr Dressup put on a bird costume and claim that he's not an animal, and the same rules should apply to everyone's choice of costume.

There's no difference between a skinny guy in a fat suit and a white girl dressed as Princess Jasmine.

A scantily clad girl claiming to be a geisha is no more inappropriate than someone dressed as an aborted fetus, a mime, or Bin Laden who's throwing sugar from a bag labeled "anthrax." Sure, if the majority of costumes that women wear on Halloween weren't sexy and provocative, I would agree that these costumes reinforce stereotypes, or that they're culturally insensitive. But this isn't a chicken-egg argument; sexy most definitely comes first, like a cheetah strapped to a jet engine. And while the general view that women's costumes should be as revealing as possible is disconcerting in itself, the default mode being sexy is also due to laziness on the individual's part.

If you compare Halloween costumes to other creative endeavours—such as illustrated junior high title pages—you'll see that they follow the same trends. There are those individuals who truly make an effort to generate a work of art that really says "we are learning about thermodynamics," those who take a very generic approach and hope that they'll get bonus points for large bubble lettering, and finally the people who just don't give a shit. Likewise with costumes, some people make an effort and have impressive results, while others simply rely on gimmicks—that being sultry costumes for women and generic, mildly offensive costumes like zombie Steve Irwin for men.

Sure, when taken out of context, many Halloween costumes could be construed as offensive. But a sexy Inuit doesn't stand out from the political correct crowd because it gets lost in the sea of skin. And if we start judging costumes and expecting this night to be politically correct, all we'll be left with is candy, and that's not as sweet as it sounds.

SELECTION COMMITTEE FOR DEAN OF THE FACULTY OF NURSING

An advisory Selection Committee has been established in accordance with University regulations to begin the search for a new Dean.

At this point in its deliberations, the Selection Committee needs your opinions on the leadership needs of the Faculty in the years ahead and any other key issues. Individuals are urged to contact members of the Committee, or write to me as Chair, to express your views on priorities of the Faculty, current issues, and the future direction of the Faculty. All feedback may be shared with the Selection Committee. In order to facilitate the committee's work, please submit your comments by November 9, 2007.

In addition, individuals who may wish to stand as a candidate are invited to apply. Individuals may also nominate others who they feel would be suitable candidates.

The selection of a Dean is vital to the success of the Faculty. I would therefore ask you all to take the time, even at this hectic point in the academic year, to give some thought to the future of your Faculty.

Your views are important to us and will be solicited again later in the process with an opportunity, at that time, to meet and question our final short-listed candidates at public forums. Thank you for your assistance.

Please forward your comments to the address below or to any member of the Dean Selection Committee (contact information below):

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- Mike Percy (Dean, School of Business)
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