**Respecting Cultures**

Discuss the following opinion-based questions. There are no “right” or “wrong” answers. The goal is to understand how others view our treatment of their cultures.

1. Do you think it’s appropriate to wear the traditional garments of a particular culture if you do not understand what those garments represent? Why or why not?
2. Many performers wear clothing similar to the traditional garments of certain cultures as costumes. For example, the “bindi” (the small dot often placed on the forehead of people from South and South East Asia) has been worn by many celebrities and performers. The bindi has religious significance in some cultures, but it carries multiple meanings.
   1. There has been controversy as to whether wearing the clothing or accessories of other cultures is appropriate if one does not understand their meaning. What do you think?
3. The burqa, a garment worn by some Islamic women to cover the entire body when in public, was recently worn by a celebrity on stage, except hers was shear. Some people found this offensive.
   1. Do you think the translation of a particular traditional garment into a modern sexualized version helps or hurts our ability to understand each other’s cultures? Explain.
   2. How do you think the culture whose clothes we have adopted view us?
4. Traditional wear is often adopted by other cultures. At one point, Rastafarian colors were popular. People of all different backgrounds wore them because they felt it represented the laid-back lifestyle often associated with stereotypes of the Jamaican people. According to some, the color red represents the blood lost, the yellow represent gold taken, and the green represents the land stolen. Many clothing companies marketed these colors to the general US public.
   1. Do you think wearing these colors if you do not have their historic background is appropriate? Why or why not? Are there any exceptions?
   2. Do you think clothing companies have a responsibility to spread awareness to the meaning behind traditional clothes they adapt? Why or why not?
5. Cultural appropriate is a term referring to the adoption of one cultures beliefs, symbols, garments, etc. by another culture. It is often considered “theft” of culture.
   1. Do you think adopting a portion of someone else’s culture is a form of stealing? Why or why not?
6. Some feel adopting some of the clothing, accessories, and symbols of other cultures serves to mock those cultures when they are not fully understood.
   1. Do you think the intention is to mock?
   2. Do you think the perception is the same as the intention?
7. Some feel adopting some of the clothing, accessories, and symbols of another culture serves to wash away the history behind it; others feel it’s a way to bring it the mainstream. What do you think?