

Chapter Ten

#DontTrendOnMe

Addressing Appropriation of Native Americanness in Millennial Social Media

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An image by Muksin (2018) circulating on Instagram, a popular social media platform, depicts a peculiar but all too apropos remixed representation of Native Americanness. Disney's Pocahontas' and Snow White's faces are edited onto two music festival-goers' bodies, who are coyly interacting with one another. Wearing a tight, short, lace dress and Native-inspired jewelry, "Pocahontas" is consistently reproduced in popular culture as a symbol or problematic stand-in for Native women—beautiful, sexualized, close-to-earth, and sacrificially available to white people (see Greene, 1975; Morigeau et al., 2018). She is now recast as the *festival princess*. Attendees of the Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival (CVMAF), or those viewing social media images of it, witness an abundance of participants, particularly white women, wearing outfits constructed out of disjointed signifiers based on various mis-representations of Native Americanness.

CVMAF is an annual (since 1999) event at which many millennial attendees (defined roughly as those born between 1981 and 1996 (Dimock, 2018)), enact race as a performance, seemingly apart from an awareness of the problematic nature of cultural appropriation. The festival qualifies as a media and popular culture spectacle, defined as "those phenomena of media culture that embody contemporary society's basic values, serve to initiate individuals into its way of life, and dramatize its controversies and struggles, as well as its modes of conflict resolution" (Kellner, 2003, p. 2). Music festivals in general, and CVMAF in particular, fall squarely within the logics of media spectacle and have become peripheral expressions of the given zeitgeist.

This chapter explores re-presentations of woman Native Americanness at the 2018 CVMAF. We consider politics of representation and cultural appropriation, as well as the lived and felt experiences of Native American people about these displays. The “Coachella look” (hypersexualized outfits paired with bricolage of headdresses, feathers, beads, and other markers of Native Americanness) is widely appropriated by millennials at CVMAF. At the same time, a new wave of Indigenous and ally millennials speaks back to these racial and cultural “rip offs” that are experienced as “felt” attacks on indigenous cultures and identities. Examples of the latter include a slew of memes, hashtags, and culture jams on social media platforms that aim to re-articulate and revise the problem. These social media strategies function as corrective responses and can be categorized as digital resistance to acts of cultural appropriation on social media. Furthermore, we examine how some millennials, often self-proclaimed as part of the awakened or “woke” generation in terms of cognizance of social justice issues, simultaneously have a blind spot when it comes to cultural appropriation. There was hope that millennials would have more racial awareness and distaste for racism, sexism, and ableism, as demonstrated in their overwhelming disapproval of Donald Trump in the 2016 election period (McCaskill, 2016). Yet their sensibilities about race and gender as it pertains to representation does not seem to prevent them from culturally appropriating.

Representation, which regards the selective, mediated presentation of another culture, and appropriation, which regards taking elements of the other culture, while different, are also intertwined as the introductory Pocahontas anecdote describes. Hall’s (1997) concept of representation (which he also describes as *re-presentation*, a term we will use in this essay) is used theoretically to predict that fashion-as-performance is in fact a re-presentation informed by dominant cultural ideology. Coachella attendees are not simply appropriating and copying exact styles of Native American culture, but more commonly taking and drawing from Native Americans re-presented in media and mixing and matching them with other hybridized cultural items. This can be typified as disrespectful enactments of continued colonialist fantasies in “playing Indian,” or performing Native Americanness (Deloria, 1998).

The findings of this study are important to indigenous people in general, and Native women in particular; they are at least two times more likely to suffer sexual violence than members of the non-Native population (Deer, 2015). Sexualizing appropriations of Native Americanness does nothing to help eliminate the disproportionate pervasiveness of sexual violence towards Native American women. Million’s (2008) *felt theory* predicts that cultural appropriation impacts those whose likeness, lifeways, and artifacts are appropriated by outsider cultures.

This study examines 1) how woman Native Americanness is re-presented in millennial music festivals such as Coachella; 2) the markers of woman

Native Americanness in fashion and form at the 2018 CVMAF; and the social media activity created by indigenous millennials (and their allies) that addresses, resists, and/or revises stereotypical or appropriative re-presentations. The following sections discuss media and other popular culture re-presentations of woman Native American-ness and briefly discuss cultural appropriation. This is followed by a discussion of CVMAF, the psychology of the millennial generation, a textual analysis of examples of cultural appropriation at the festival, and social media responses.

NATIVENESS AND REPRESENTATION

Torgovnick’s *Primitive Passions* (1997) discusses how Native Americans are often viewed in terms of their perceived connection to what she calls the trope of the primitive. While the primitive is typically framed as feminine, rooted in collectivity and the ecstatic, civilization is coded as masculine and individualist. Native American people are often problematically re-presented in media as noble savages, which regards an axis of values (used to position cultural outsiders within an axis of distance) that predicts whether Native Americans are readily included in mainstream culture or, instead, used as an opposition to mainstream culture to justify neocolonial relations (Deloria, 1998). This helps to explain how Native Americans can be both valorized *and* disrespected—condemned for negative stereotypes, while also widely appreciated or envied for their aesthetic preferences and perceived ties to nature, romanticism, and tradition. Gender then maps onto Native Americanness, typically creating binary gendered stereotypes. Re-presentations of Native American women in particular tend to focus on exoticism, materialism, nobility, and beauty, but can also be more negative, based on the binary of the princess and the squaw (Merskin, 2010). White imagination of Native American women, for example, is linked to a representation of the “noble Princess tied to ‘America’ and to sacrificial zeal, she has power as a symbol” (Greene, 1997, p. 713). In this vein, Native American femininity is typically re-presented as exotic, but conquerable. On the other hand, specific racist terms and stereotypes, including “squaw,” “frame a version of female-ness consistent with the historical colonial construct of Native Americans as animalistic, savage, and sub-human” (Merskin, 2010, p. 346). This problematizes the way Native women are seen as “real” in comparison to these powerful media re-presentations (Marubbio, 2006).

Public displays of Nativeness have ranged from the early Wild West shows to contemporary music festivals. Typically, the display is created through the lens of colonizer culture. While purporting to sell the idea of a commodified, egalitarian ecstatic, music festivals are primarily commercially driven events designed to generate revenue for promoters. Thus, self-selected

attendees re-present themselves in ways that are read as consistent with the spectacle's aesthetic. This is true at the annual CVMAF.

COACHELLA AS SPECTACLE

Ask any millennial what Coachella is and they will most likely tell you it is a trendy music festival. It is also a place where indigenous people, including some bands of the Cahuilla Indians, call their ancestral homelands. The city of Coachella is located in the Coachella Valley of Southern California in what was once a sandy wasteland in the Colorado River basin. Populated primarily with greasewood and mesquite, this area became inhabited by whites in the late 1800s when Jason L. Rector and his brother, Lon B. Rector, tapped into underground artesian well water ("History," 2018). Originally named Concilla (Spanish for little shells), a printing error produced the name Coachella ("History," 2018).

In this wide-open desert setting with a rich history now often forgotten, the CVMAF premiered in 1999. CVMAF was launched by the entertainment company Goldenvoice, a subsidiary of Anschutz Entertainment Group, and masterminded by promoter Paul Tollett (Pettas, 2016). Originally an inexpensive spring event with single-day tickets over a single weekend, it featured performers such as Rage Against the Machine and Beck as well as up-and-coming indie groups. Since then, some of the biggest names in the industry have performed here including Beyoncé, Radio Head, Kendrick Lamar, Kanye West, Daftpunk, Tiesto, Paul McCartney, Prince, Red Hot Chili Peppers, as well as more niche acts. It is now a two-weekend event, no single-day passes are technically available, with a three-day pass costing \$429 for general admission, and a VIP pass costing \$899 (Battan, 2016; Leonhardt, 2018). Coachella is attended by more than 200,000 people per year (Mitchell, 2018), but for fans unable or unwilling to pay the steep ticket prices, the festival is accessible through a live stream on their YouTube channel, significantly expanding its reach.

CVMAF has also become the to-be-seen scene of the rich and famous. The Urban Dictionary (2017) defines Coachella as a place where people "'independently come completely together' while being from every single opposite corner of every grooming/fashion style and music genre that exists, while strictly conforming to trends that do not conform." The festival is described as a "star studded," "celebrity hot spot" (O'Leary, 2019), as well as "a fully formed aesthetic, a lightning rod of aspiration, a way of being" (Battan, 2016, para. 1). CVMAF is comprised of art exhibits, five or more stages, and centers on music genres including hip-hop, electronic, indie, and rock.

What exactly does Coachella stand for? Battan (2016) asks this question, reflecting on other big music festivals such as Woodstock, which has the vibe of "peace and free love" in the context of hippiedom; "fire and rage" in 1999; Lilith Fair, which was based on "touchy-feely inclusivity and feminist solidarity;" and Burning Man, which stands for "radical self-reliance" and "techno-utopianism." Coachella is "aestheticized striving for desert hippiedom, divorced from any ideology." The CVMAF is not a space that Schmidt (2015) typifies as a boutique festival, which is smaller in scale and a site of subcultural identity-making and interpersonal connection, but rather is a "unifying mass [spectacle] of large events—crystalized in, say, the throngs of people cramming together to view a headliner" (p. 37). CVMAF is a mass, commercialized spectacle. It is marked, as is society, by the confluence of electronic and digital media, capitalism, and various forms of connectivity and surveillance (particularly via social media), in a constant state of spectatorship.

Debord (1967) explained how spectacles unify society and culture by pacifying the masses and engaging them in the commodification of life and leisure. Media in particular, he argues, is among the most glaring examples of spectacle reaching and creating mass culture. Kellner (2003) notes this influence by focusing on celebritydom, witnessed in a powerful mechanism that constantly begs for our attention. The "logic of the spectacle" is evidenced in the interlocking components of an event, such that it "reverberates through radio, television, CDs and DVDs, computer networks, and extravagant concerts. Media culture provides fashion and style models for emulation and promotes a celebrity culture that provides idols and role models" (p. vii). Instead of CDs and DVDs, Coachella reverberates mainly through the social media sphere and by the liking, re-posting, and re-tweeting of content by millennial, also nicknamed the "selfie-generation," obsessed with self-image and sharing.

Millennials readily consume the culture and brands that capitalize on their market potential. From HP to AMEX to Victoria's Secret taking advantage of publicity at the event, Coachella is defiantly commercialized. But it is also a consumer-oriented fashion moment in its own right

a place to see live music, but it is also a place to witness a ritualized parade of beautiful people embracing their inner bohemians for a few days. From a distance, it looks less like a haven of free-spiritedness than a catwalk of people who have decided that free-spiritedness looks good on them. (Battan, 2016)

This is particularly the case for women, prompting retailers such as H & M to create the Coachella collection of flowy skirts, fringed vests, and flower crowns reminiscent of the '60s and '70s signature style. Yet something more is happening at the festival where more than 50 percent of attendees are

millennials and more than 85 percent are white people (Khawaja, 2017). Given the staggering percentage of white millennial attendees, it is bizarre yet predictable and unoriginal that while enjoying the desert environs, music and celebritydom, many also participate in a racialized fashion phenomenon, that of cultural appropriation.

PRIVILEGE AND CULTURAL APPROPRIATION

Appropriation is defined in different ways, depending on interests and what is at stake. For example, in art, to appropriate is to use existing images or objects with little to no transformation of them. In business, the term means a setting aside, as in funds, and in law appropriation is the use of a "plaintiff's name, likeness, or image without his or her permission for commercial purposes" ("Legal Information Institute," 2018). A more general definition is taking "something for one's own use, typically without the owner's permission" ("Appropriate," n.d.) and includes a cultural aspect, that of a belonging or right to whatever the material is to someone.

Cultural appropriation expands the definition to include less the concept of ownership and more the ethical idea of inherent belonging to, as in life-ways and practices. According to Coombe (1998), cultural appropriation is "shorthand for cultural agency and subaltern struggle within media-saturated consumer societies" (p. 207). This definition identifies that hegemonic power exists and is served by mainstream institutions such as the mass media and popular culture. What media choose to represent, or, according to Hall (1973), re-present, is thereby consistent with dominant ideology that is created from and intended for a primarily white audience. Thus, taking of markers of a minority group (such as language, regalia, art or fashion) by majority culture is an example of cultural appropriation.

A form of colonialism, use of these elements without regard to history, context, appropriateness, or using them in ways that distort or lose the original significance and context are disrespectful and offensive to the culture of origin, regardless of legal definitions. Thus, exoticizing clothing or artifacts, or use of symbols, hairstyles, regalia, body modifications or "dressing up as" in Halloween costumes, for example, are racist acts, regardless of the intention of the person doing so. "Playing Indian," for example, such as a "sexy squaw" or "ruthless savage" not only makes mockery of present and past peoples, but also contributes to long-standing racist stereotypes that reduce a people to a type. It also conceals the very real daily humiliations, discrimination, and violence experienced by the people being represented, such as the sexual violence Native women experience at a much higher ratio than that of any other racial group (Deer, 2015).

Cultural appropriation falls within the view of representation ethics that describes "who has the right to represent others and under what circumstances" (Johnston, 2000, p. 73). This right falls within Article 31 of the United Nations *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* which states:

Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions, as well as the manifestations of their sciences, technologies and cultures, including human and genetic resources, seeds, medicines, knowledge of the properties of fauna and flora, oral traditions, literatures, designs, sports and traditional games and visual and performing arts. They also have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their intellectual property over such cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and traditional cultural expressions. (UNESCO, n.d.)

Those in a position of privilege are able to take on (and take off) the trappings of another's identity. While to do so may not be illegal (unlike unlawful use of the image of a person or logo or moniker), there are significant cultural implications. These "struggles over signification" (Coombe, 1998, p. 9) have significant psychological, emotional, and physical implications for those who are being mimicked, imitated, and parodied, even if through a lens believed as "honoring" or "appreciating." While appreciation can seem, to those doing so, to be benign, it is in fact not an altruistic endeavor. To appropriate can seem sympathetic while also remaining categorically racist. As Coombe observes, "Romantic celebrations of insurrectionary alterity, long popular in cultural studies, cannot capture the dangerous nuances of cultural appropriation in circumstances where the very resources with which people express difference are the properties of others" (p. 10). The significance of cultural appropriation as a phenomenon is that it is felt by those whose cultures are stolen and undermined from.

IDENTITY AND FELT THEORY

Million's (2008) "felt theory" is a useful way to predict and understand the effects of colonial practices. She argues that narratives, witnessing and affect of Indigenous women should be valued in academia, law contexts, and beyond. Indigenous women's views are often undervalued because they are perceived to present history as largely emotive or affective. Million (2008) subverts this understanding by claiming that there is profound "truth in the emotional content of this felt knowledge: colonialism as it is felt by those whose experience it" (p. 272). While Million uses felt theory as it pertains to sexual and emotional abuse of Indigenous women, it is important to recog-

nize that images of cultural appropriation, in which sexualization and primitivization of Natives (including but not limited to) women, have the capacity to conjure up very real emotions for Native viewers.

To ignore the past and long-standing history of genocide—sexual, physical and emotional abuse, racisms, and cultural erasures—is a goal of colonization. Settler colonialism is imposed upon Natives, thus their/our experiences around the phenomena should be considered paramount (Million, 2008). Felt theory contributes to theoretical understandings of cultural appropriation as it makes apparent the inadequacies in contemporary critical frameworks that frame these discussions.

From these theories or theoretical entry points we understand that cultural appropriation plays on historically created and perpetuated stereotypes in a globalized, hybridized society. But conspicuously missing is a meaningful consideration of how Natives feel about the appropriations, how Natives resist and speak back to them, and how cultural appropriation is a racist iteration of settler colonialism that is common in many terrains, including cyberspace and, more specifically, social media. Social media is a space in which Native people and allies inject their feelings, lived experiences, and emotional knowledge into their practices. Here they are able speak back to cultural appropriation as a “felt” attack on their cultures and identity.

IMAGING COACHELLA

This study uses textual analysis as a framework and method of interpretation in order to unpack “the ways in which members of various cultures and subcultures make sense of who they are, and of how they fit into the world in which they live” (McKee, 2003, p. 1). What textual analysis offers is a lens through which scholars not only speculate on the intended, preferred, meaning (encoding) by creators of texts, but also likely interpretations (decoding) of those forms of communication. Five images of millennial attendees at the 2018 CVMAF are analyzed as illustrations of the articulation of settler colonialism to answer these research questions:

1. Is woman Native Americanness re-presented in millennial music festivals such as Coachella?
2. What are the markers of woman Native Americanness in fashion and form at the 2018 CVMAF? (And, to that end, what cultural histories are undermined in the process of wearing them?)
3. Does social media activity created by indigenous millennials (and their allies) address, resist, and/or revise stereotypical or appropriative re-presentations?

Digital responses to cultural appropriations to the “Coachella look” are also discussed in terms of resistant memes, specific hashtags, and blogs.

CONSTRUCTED MARKERS OF NATIVE AMERICAN APPROPRIATION

Headdresses are amongst the most blatant, and most immediately recognizable, constructed markers of Native American appropriation. Although this appropriation has been researched (White, 2017; Deloria, 1998; Keene, 2016), this “trend” has been recycled and rearticulated time and time again, especially by music festival subcultures (Cordes, 2018). That these cultural rip-offs with profound meaning to a small percentage of tribes are so prevalent at Coachella makes headdress appropriation deserving of continued attention. The CVMAF context affords a unique opportunity to look into how the millennial generation appropriates the headdress.

Headdresses

Headdresses displayed in the Instagram images have different shapes and embellishments, but a common quality is the arrangement of hundreds of feathers. The first image (which can be viewed at @soulandrhapsody, 2018; the authors encourage readers to follow the links provided on the reference page to the images described in this chapter) shows a headpiece resembling a headdress made of yellow feathers of a medium height, secured by a thin band made from a generically ethnic patterned material. On top of the band is a strand of goldish beads and on both sides yellow, green, and blue pompoms are placed. Long strands of a blue shade dangle from each side of the headpiece, wrapped with gold embellishments and more feathers which are fastened to the ends.

The image’s accompanying text includes a description of the materials used: “In case you’re curious, this set is made and hand embellished by me using vintage parts from Afghan Kuchi belts, bronze beading, tassels, poms, and feathers!” Some of the hashtags include #festivaltribe and #gypsysoul. This headdress is composed of various materials demonstrating sensibilities of *mélange* or cultural hybridity, and it is also an appropriation that can be described as transculturation, making it difficult to identify only one cultural origin point (Rogers, 2006). Using Afghani pieces, likely bulk-bought feathers, vague traces of Russian headpieces, and other seemingly craft-oriented materials to compose a tribal-inspired headdress draws on more than a few cultures. The hashtag, #festivaltribe, frames the appropriation as a marker of belonging into some iteration of festival culture, something of an illusion to neo-tribalism within a capitalist space. It also seems somehow appropriate to the Instagram poster to equate this with Native tribal cultures.

Another image (see deAnda, 2018) shows a couple facing one another, seemingly about to kiss with a loving gaze. The woman on the left is wearing a headdress that is more elaborate and markedly larger than those pictured in the other Instagram images. It features turquoise and white feathers fastened by thick sections of wound material. Dusty orange and black and white fabrics in a generic tribal print of geometric shapes decorate the band at the front of the headdress. The rest of her outfit is made from various shades of beige, giving this look an earthier, neutral and natural feel. It is vaguely reminiscent of buckskin material which harken to the Native American representations shown in Western films or images of ecologically stereotyped Native Americans.

At least one company's social media posts, rather than including Coachella-goers as models, focused on the headpieces themselves on Instagram to reach and sell to the millennial demographic drawn to these appropriations. Similar to the crafted, do it yourself (DIY) feel of the headpiece in the first described photo, @Thatthing.co (2018) posted an image with eight crafted headpieces of feathers, ribbons, fabric trimming, and flowers that are also sold on their website. Items like these, which are problematic to intellectual and artistic property rights, are sold on the medium that millennials use to share images, consume images, and buy the products needed to construct the "Coachella look."

The widespread commodification of headdresses has blurred the various significances they hold to a small percentage of tribal nations. In some Native American cultures, and at contemporary pow-wows, the shedding or dropping of even a single feather requires a blessing to proceed with the ceremony. At CVMAF, feathers litter the grounds, swept without regard by hired maintenance professionals before the festival resumes at around 11 a.m. the next morning. The headdresses themselves and the feathers that drop from them are not considered in any meaningful way in this spectacle setting.

Hair

Less discussed in conversations about cultural appropriation are the ways in which the women attendees of CVMAF wear their hair. Hair, for women of color, is a particularly political site of struggle (Patton, 2006). In the Instagram images (Muñoz, 2017; @vogue_boho, 2018), we noticed a distinctive hairstyle. The double-bun hairstyle, or what is sometimes referred to as the cinnamon bun, butterfly or squashed-bun hairstyle, is very often worn by CVMAF-goers. The first image is a close-up of a woman with her head tilted, donning the hairstyle, with flowers comprising the backdrop of the image. She is sticking out her tongue and gazing into the camera, giving both a suggestive and infantilized feel to the image. In the second image, two women are featured with the woman on the left wearing the distinctive hair-

style. Colored dreadlocks, hair pieces or extensions, and braids are also tied in to her hair to add a more artificial, sub-culturally tinged look to the stylization. The look, for some, became famous in popular culture with the release of the first *Star Wars* (1977) movie. Princess Leia donned the hairstyle intended to be fitting for outer space (read: more alien, less mainstream fashion). In a *Time* article devoted to the iconic look, director George Lucas is quoted as saying,

In the 1977 film, I was working very hard to create something different that wasn't fashion, so I went with a kind of Southwestern Pancho Villa woman revolutionary look, which is what that is. The buns are basically from turn-of-the-century Mexico. Then it took such hits and became such a thing. In the new trilogy, the same thing applies, to try and do something timeless. I'm just basically having a good time. (Cagle, 2002, para. 15)

The article also asserts that Lucas had dreams of being an anthropologist as opposed to an illustrator, making this appropriation more particular. While he believed he was drawing inspiration from the Mexican Revolution (1910–1920), this hairstyle can be traced much further back and has deeper roots. In particular, Native women, from the Hopi and Tewa tribes for example, have historically worn their hair in this way. The style was highlighted in images from Edward Curtis' fraught photographic collection titled *The North American Indian* (1907–1930), specifically the images titled, "Hopi Maiden, 1922" or "A Tewa Girl, 1921." Some reference to these ties were featured in a Denver Museum of Art exhibit, "Star Wars and the Power of Costumes" as well as a number of online magazines (Cagle, 2002).

Leia's buns have covered and made invisible, or markedly less visible, how this is appropriative of more than a few Native cultures. Today's women Coachella festival-goers are appropriating a meaningful Native hairstyle in mass numbers, often decorated with glitter and colored hair extensions. The hairstyle has become part and parcel to subscribing to the "Coachella look." This appropriation is occurring knowingly or unknowingly by CVMAF-goers, whether they claim to be inspired by Princess Leia, or even other people, groups, and characters that have appropriated it since: Scary Spice of the Spice Girls, rave subcultures of the 1990s, cartoon characters in *Flash Gordon*, and other reference points which are actually merely simulacra.

War Paint

Another common marker of Native Americanness is war paint or facial adornment. While some Coachella festival-goers shown in images use makeup in patterns around their eyes and on their foreheads or essentially bedazzle their face with gems, the patterns with which they arrange them appear to be based on re-presentations of Native American war paint. War paint, some-

times worn in tribal contexts by warriors, chiefs, and medicine men, among others, were tied to spiritual beliefs, camouflage and daily aesthetics that are also widely appropriated in Hollywood contexts (Rosenthal, 2005). The facial war paint “look” harks to Native American re-presentation but also resembles South Asian bindis and other ornamentations with cultural and religious significance. For those Coachella-goers that draw from Native American cultures, they are rearticulating and feminizing a signifier of a warrior, which is framed as masculine in many Hollywood Western films, but is now appropriated in higher numbers by women at CVMAF.

The war paint appropriation at CVMAF is most evident in images (Muñoz, 2017; @vogue_boho, 2018). In the first image dotted lines arch over one woman’s eyebrows in a metallic color. This look is also paired with the double-bun hairstyle. Moving down the image, she accessorizes with a choker-style necklace made of metals and fabric that draw similarities to Native jewelry. Her bra, which she wears as a top, is made with transparent material, white straps and daisies patches, which evoke a sense of the flower child. This combination of signifiers refers back to the free-spirited Native American stereotype associated with appropriations made by hippies of the 1960s. When hippies became disenchanted with various aspects of capitalism, war and work-a-day lifestyles, they turned to a romanticized escape by appropriating selected or perceived signifiers of Native American culture (think long hair, headbands, ecological tendencies) (Torgovnick, 1997). In the context of CVMAF, this appropriation is particularly ironic because of how commodified and consumerist the scene has become. This is antithetical to the stereotype tied to the anti-capitalism from which they are attempting to draw inspiration.

The second example includes a woman with patterns drawn in white and black around her eyes, on her cheeks and down her nose. Again, dots trace over her eyebrows, but additional V-shapes, horizontal lines, and squiggles are included. Gems of a pink shade decorate the areas directly under her eyes and are covered by her 1960s- and 1970s-inspired horizontal oval sunglasses. In addition to the facial painting appropriation, the poster of the image is again aware of the illusions to hippie subcultural style. This is evident in the encoding of the message attached to the image. Hashtags such as “#hippie-soul, #gypsyinspo and #hippylife” explicitly link the hippie subculture, which is now also an entrenched millennial trend, with Native American culture. The hashtag gypsy seems to be interpreted by these millennials as free-spirited, travelling people, which conflates ethnic and cultural groups from other continents, particularly Europe, with the mis-represented stylization of Native Americans.

The preceding descriptions suggest that millennials attending CVMAF appropriate Native Americanness, and in doing so fall into various trapping of Native American appropriations of past subcultures as well as cultural

hybrids. While these looks saturate the fashion landscape at CVMAF and become hypervisible through their posting, re-posting and viewing on Instagram, they are not simply accepted without opposition. The following section describes social media responses to these types of cultural appropriations.

#DONTTRENDonME: SOCIAL MEDIA RESPONDS TO COACHELLA

While the previous analysis has described some of the cultural appropriations that are found at Coachella, we also observed how social media proves to be a useful space in which more culturally informed members of this generation confront and challenge appropriation. They are able to speak back to felt racist attacks on their cultures that tend to erase, or at least not meaningfully consider, the histories of where those cultural markers are derived.

One way in which cultural appropriation is addressed is through the deployment of specific hashtags. Hashtags are used in social media for two main reasons: (1) to describe any such content in the image, and (2) to allow that image to be visible in the search areas that use the same hashtag; a virtual encyclopedia or myriad of possible like-images (Sinha, 2005). #DontTrendOnMe, #NativeAppropriation, and #Nochella or #Nochilla were used on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to protest Coachella and cultural appropriation around the time of the festival. #DontTrendOnMe and #NativeAppropriation were most explicitly directed at appropriation and frequently used to call out those who were perpetuating the trend. #DontTrendOnMe suggests that fashion trends should not disrespect Native American nations, that culture is not a craze that can come in and out of style, and that it is taken personally. #Nochella and #Nochilla are hashtag responses that are more general to Coachella. These encourage or express disenchantment with one or more aspects: ticket prices, venue, music, rules, consumerism, and widespread appropriation.

Another example of Native and ally social media activism or resistance is the wide dissemination of resistant memes. Gil (2018) defines memes as cultural symbols or ideas that are spread virtually, especially through social media platforms by 20-something millennials. These memes tend to be humorous, contain myths, and typically include image and text. Memes that include rhetoric of cultural appropriation are hereafter described.

One meme, for example, is a clear parody and depicts a class photo-style picture featuring a highly offensive mascot with widespread arms complete with fringes, feathers and symbols, and at the bottom the words: “WHITE GIRLS AT COACHELLA” (“White Girls at Coachella,” n.d.). This mocks the perpetrators and calls out how silly as well as offensive it is viewed as by Native Americans and allies. It is intended to shame appropriators through

humor. Another popular meme (“No, it’s cool,” n.d.) shows two white women dressed in hipster fashion, complete with headdresses, holding red solo cups. The words, “No, it’s cool. It’s not like your ancestors killed them or anything” accompany the image. This sarcastic message ties cultural genocide, actual genocide, and cultural appropriation into one cohesive message. Both of the memes served to call out or embarrass the most common perpetrators of the trend, white women, while explicitly tying settler colonialism to genocide in both cultural and literal senses.

As Debord (1967) might have argued, the mass spreading of these representations, corrective or otherwise, serves to pacify the masses. It is a labor performed by the broad base of social media users. Memes, however, are far more capable of resistance than they may seem on the surface (denotative) level. One just needs to replay the power of social media in shaping the 2016 American presidential elections to consider this (Ross & Rivers, 2017). In the case of memes speaking back to cultural appropriation, they tend to carry myths, defined in the sense of great truths, through a medium consumed regularly by millennial audiences. They connect people with the same view and disrupt those with opposing views in the repeating, re-posting and engagement with messages. Through felt theory, we can also frame them as emotive, politically charged acts rather than vacuous, useless ones.

Lastly, blogs are social spaces intended to encourage the spread of ideas and dialogue and are often written in an accessible style (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). While memes or hashtags are useful and powerful, more in-depth and emotionally charged reactions to appropriation on social media use the blog form. Here Native American feminists in particular disrupt re-presentations of Native American women as romanticized and sexualized, educate readers on the plurality of tribes and cultural nuances, and underscore implicitly and explicitly the felt experiences of having one’s culture time and time again disrespected and appropriated.

For example, Adrienne Keene, Cherokee, Native scholar and EdD, created the *Native Appropriations* blog in 2010 and has maintained it since to call out flaws in dominant cultural logic surrounding costuming in subcultural practice and to discuss (mis)representations of Native peoples. The blog focuses on stereotypes, cultural appropriations and activism, including a petition against the Washington Redskins football team name and mascot. Keene tackles a range of topics from descriptions of *Pocahontas* on Netflix to an Apache pizza joint in Ireland to headdress art decorating Valentino shoe boxes. In sum, she makes a case that “representations matter” in an accessible writing style that calls out and calls for these insidious appropriations to be addressed.

Jessica Metcalfe, Turtle Mountain Chippewa, Native scholar and PhD, created another blog, *Beyond Buckskin* (2009), to address similar issues. Her blog, however, focuses on empowerment and celebrates Native artists and

designers by providing a list of Native-owned business online for others to support. This encourages financially backing Native American cultural producers as opposed to mainstream companies that see culture as simply trends to profit off. She also provides resources to report businesses that falsely suggest that their items are authentic. This is illegal and can be reported to the Indian Arts and Crafts Board (“Should I report,” n.d.).

After being continuously asked by blog visitors about the politics of cultural appropriations, Metcalfe created an area that aggregated the most helpful online articles about the topic. These blogs have also led to the author being asked to write for a wider audience in feminist media outlets including *Jezebel*, *Bitch Magazine*, and *Ms. Magazine*, thereby spreading viewpoints and messages about Native American cultural appropriation as it is felt by herself and others. This blog and website is more geared toward authenticity and genuine appreciation of support for Native arts and demonstrates how there are ways to purchase and wear products in culturally appropriate settings. By doing so, we can recognize and honor the Native American designers of high fashion as opposed to those who steal artistic property. In one post, “RETROSPECTRUM!: A Style Mixer,” she engages a sense of futurity by asking, “What would fashion history look like if Native American designers were consistently represented in mainstream style magazines, department stores and fashion shows?” Perhaps this would help remedy cultural misunderstanding that leads to the types of appropriation we see at the CVMAF.

RECLAIMING “DIGITAL” TERRAINS TO RESIST APPROPRIATION

While those who appropriate claim that adhering rhinestones on their faces in a certain pattern or hot glue-gunning feathers into a faux war bonnet is a benign act that simply allows them to look the part or fit into the scene, appropriation actually sheds light on significant racial conditions. The main markers or signifiers of Native Americanness at CVMAF include headdresses, war paint, general tribal prints, jewelry and tribally specific hairstyles. The work that these appropriations perform is to empty these signifiers or markers and to refill them with millennial ideations of coolness capital, divorced from their cultural significance. At CVMAF we see sacred headdresses rearticulated into a seemingly meaningless mess of colors, feathers, tassels, and war paint into a mere facial bling. The histories and meanings of these are not recognized by the appropriators who are coming at the “costumes” from a place of privilege.

When cultural items are appropriated, they serve as exclusionary rhetoric for the culture being undermined. The festival is attended by more than 80 percent white people, who, via privilege, assume authority to re-present oth-

ers rather than participate in creating a space welcoming for people of all races. By creating a false spectacle of cultural aesthetic diversity, white people thereby get to play and party while other racial groups are mocked, excluded and further colonized. These appropriations serve to remind many Native Americans and allies of the ways Native American culture is undermined, reproduced and commodified. Debord (1967) explains how spectacles commodify leisure as well as the ingredients that make a scene a signature staple of culture. In particular, millennials are “trying on” Native Americanness as a trend in order to fit into something less meaningfully subcultural but more spectacle-ized, backed by big brands, big money, and celebrity culture.

Our final research question asked this: Does social media activity created by Indigenous millennials (and their allies) address, resist, and/or revise stereotypical re-presentations? We argue that social media is a useful terrain for decolonial views to speak to and against racist performances of Native American identity in the digital age. These responses tend to (1) call out settler colonialism as the underlying problem, (2) hone in on most egregious and widespread appropriations like headdresses, (3) match medium to medium tactics (e.g. creating an Instagram meme to address racist Instagram image, and (4) inject principles of felt theory in addressing issues and perpetrators. Identifying and pushing back to disparage white settlers “playing Indian” (Deloria, 1998) is important in the larger scope of decolonization because it refuses to allow settlers to feel comfortable in their racist performances (Tuck & Yang, 2012). Given that repatriation of Native land is often at the core of Native and ally projects, it is doubly symbolic that some are taking to, reclaiming, and creating the “digital” terrains of cyberspace to resist appropriation.

We suggest that non-Native American festival attendees have an ethical responsibility to educate themselves about cultural appropriation in a multi-pronged way by engaging in an educational process. They should visit blogs such as those detailed in this chapter, interact with Native American peoples attuned to their perspectives as opposed to those constructed by cultural outsiders, and support Native art and fashion instead of mainstream retailers. Millennials should also challenge appropriation by setting new culturally appropriate trends and finding something meaningful from their own cultures to draw upon. Resistance demonstrated through social media is just one piece of a larger method of addressing these racist performances.

Textual analysis is but one method to analyze communication. McKee (2003, p. 72) states that scholars using textual analysis ask, “What is the likely interpretation: context, context, context.” This requires analysis that is informed not only with knowledge of what the preferred meaning might be but also what negotiated and resistant ones would yield. This varies, depending on the audience, as Hall observes (1973). Furthermore, as McKee writes,

“What makes us ‘educated,’ in our ‘educated guesses at the likely interpretations of a text,’ is our knowledge of relevant intertexts” (2003, p. 73). There are many other ways to read photographs as cultural texts. Future research could present these images to a number of subjects and either qualitatively or quantitatively gather responses.

While popular culture online magazines as well as fashion websites discuss cultural appropriation, a glaring problem is that after almost two decades of Coachella’s existence, as well as a longer period of music festivals beginning around the 1960s, the trend is still so prominent that millennials believe it is not even problematic anymore. There are shortcomings to these articles that recast the same arguments and do not adequately consider the “felt” emotionally charged responses and feelings that these trends and images conjure up for Native American women in particular. While appropriators see it as a benign practice, appropriation undermines the historical truths that Native Americans were, and still are, facing cultural assimilation and genocide; it erases histories and meanings while tainting them with new meanings—that a headdress equates to coolness or being the it-girl, brings Instagram likes and social media adoration, or is a staple symbol of partying. Festival-goers and hipsters should not have free reign to wear headdresses and other cultural items while Native Americans endure the ramifications of centuries of forced erasure of their items of cultural significance. In this vein, felt theory contributes an understanding that these are profound truths or myths that speak deeply to colonial legacies of “playing Indian.”

We suggest that future research and popular press on the topic consider felt theory, take steps to include the standpoints and opinions of those that are offended, and evaluate the specific harms that flow from them. Additionally, since these types of cultural appropriations have been common at many festivals, including Woodstock, Burning Man, Lightning in a Bottle, Sasquatch and more, and may continue in generations beyond millennials, we suggest that they continue to be analyzed. This will allow for continued attention, provide a view into how the trend is evolving and insights into how appropriations speak to our cultural realities. By sentimentalizing their performances with various moves-to-innocence (e.g., that they are appreciating cultures or promoting multiculturalism) these millennials are perpetrating similar injustices of past generations.

What strikes us as different and overlooked is that Native American tribes, in addition to being considered a racial category, are also members of sovereign nations. This is an important distinction because appropriations and re-presentations ignore Native American nations’ own national laws on artistic and intellectual property and their perspectives. They self-grant the authority to try on identities of nations they know little to nothing about. It is a matter of international communication and must be framed as such. In the process of appropriation, we lose even more cultural truths when nationhood

is considered. Images of the homogenized, festivalized, bohemian Native American tend to make others believe that the 573 federally recognized tribes, and numerous unrecognized tribes, also are not worthy of recognition and respect. Rather than accept the sovereignty of nations and federally recognized or unrecognized tribes, popular culture celebrates knock-offs of a played-out version of the festivalized Native American as a truth as opposed to the truths of living citizens of tribal nations confined within the borders of their colonizers.

While research has shown that Native American women tend to be represented as the binary of princess or the squaw, or an overlapping of the two, at CVMAF they are especially represented as hypersexualized. This is evident by the pairing and overlapping of appropriations with skintight dresses, crop tops, nipple-coverings, and mini-skirts. These Coachella-goers make stylistic choices which hark only to the sexualized, available princess frame.

The common close-to-nature stereotype is invoked through beige and brown clothing, feathers, and desert backgrounds, which draws some similarity to hippie styles. But there is also something new happening; there is simultaneously a closeness to the artificial, synthetic, and oddly futuristic. As most of the Instagram images we analyzed showed, neon colors, gemstones, double-bun hairstyles, and plastic beads, tied tightly to rave and hippie subcultures and futuristic psychedelia, are now intermixing and overlapping with markers of Native Americanness. In this regard, it seems that millennials are rearticulating the Native American in their imagination—as groovy, exotic, and aesthetically superior—and taking it upon themselves to imagine Indigenous futurity and the future of Native American representation. They created a distinct look that can perhaps be typified as disjointed Native American *costumes* on acid.

Indigenous futurism, however, is based on the ability of sovereign nations to project *their* ideas of a future-state, often something markedly less colonial; it can be fantasy, it can be imaginative, it can be radical (Dillon, 2012). But when CVMAF millennial attendees and other subcultures create versions of what Native Americanness is in the present and future they limit or at least undermine the possibilities of how we as Native American people will survive, resist, represent and self-identity. Though we, as well as those that have taken to social media terrains to resist cultural appropriation at CVMAF, are deeply disappointed that these appropriations have continued and been morphed by millennials, we also find here an opportunity for intervention. Millennials and future generations, conceptualized as awakened, may actually finally wake up to the racial harms they enact with more education and attention to the felt experiences of others.

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