

# DAILY LOBO.COM

(<https://www.dailylobo.com/>)

## Column: Racist Halloween costumes are never okay

By Sol Traverso (<https://www.dailylobo.com/staff/sol-traverso>) Published 10/28/18 4:42pm



Photo courtesy of Yandy.com.

During her show, she went through a list of costumes that the “costume police” disapprove of due to political correctness.

“Obviously you can’t dress as a Native American, that apparently has been some rule for a long time,” Kelly said.

The controversy over the offensive nature of certain Halloween costumes has been revisited once again this year.

NBC canceled Megyn Kelly’s show for comments she made about blackface as a Halloween costume. On her show “Megyn Kelly Today,” Kelly posed the question to her show’s all-white panel on the topic of ‘blackface,’ and asked, “What is racist about that?” The next day she apologized for the comments.

“What is racist? You do get in trouble if you are a white person who puts on blackface for Halloween, or a black person who puts on whiteface for Halloween. Back when I was a kid, that was okay as long as you were dressing up as a character,” Kelly said.

Kelly went through a list of costumes "some find offensive," including anything "Mexican based," and continued with non-racial costumes such as a cowboy and a nun.

The lack of understanding of what is racist, what perpetuates racial stereotypes and the impact that racist Halloween costumes have, is a recurring discussion after Kelly's comments.

The online retailer, Yandy.com (<https://www.yandy.com/>), has a line of Native American Costumes that advertises the following: "Pay a homage to the beauty of tradition in these sexy Halloween costumes."

The costumes feature white models wearing headdresses and carrying spears and tomahawks. These can be found in the "characters" section of the website, which also features 'gypsy costumes' (gypsy is an offensive slur) and 'genie costumes.'

"We are not costumes," said Amanda Blackhorse, a Diné tribal member, social worker and activist based in Arizona. Blackhorse is leading a petition for Yandy.com to take down their Native American Halloween costumes.

"People say that there are more important issues affecting our communities, but we can multitask," Blackhorse said in reference to the importance of protesting racist Halloween costumes.

Blackhorse went to the headquarters of Yandy.com in the first week of October to deliver her petition of almost 14,000 signatures to Yandy's CEO, Jeffrey Watton.

"They didn't want to have a conversation with us, and said they were going to call the police," Blackhorse said. After a protest in Phoenix, Arizona on Oct. 24, the petition signatures grew to 23,000.

Yandy.com is not the only retailer selling 'redface.' The retailer stores Spirit Halloween and Party City also sell "Native American" costumes.

The costumes are abysmal generalizations of various traditional Native dress and regalia. The only basis for most of these costumes is Disney's "Pocahontas." Similar generalizations made by non-Natives are dreamcatchers, jewelry and art that is commodified and sold in various chain stores like Forever 21 and Hobby Lobby.

These costumes are also more than just cultural appropriation of Native culture — they have deeper implications. The 'sexy' costumes contribute to Native women being represented as fetishized and sexualized caricatures.

"Every semester here not only on Halloween, but around Cinco De Mayo, people, even students, wear ponchos and mustaches," said Jaen Emmanuel Ugalde Becerra, a UNM graduate student and member of the student program Project for New Mexico Graduates of Color.

"Seeing some misrepresent my culture, is a misunderstanding of my people," Becerra said.

The upcoming Mexican holiday, Dia de los Muertos, is also a time of rampant cultural appropriation. Becerra voiced his concerns of the commercialization of the holiday.

"My issue is it becoming commodified. A capitalistic parade. Something that would become sponsored by Coca Cola," Becerra said. "It's fine to include white community members, but when it comes to standing with the Mexican or black community, we don't see the same people when we ask to support our causes."

Blackhorse said there is a growing awareness that these costumes are offensive in nature, and they will soon be socially unacceptable to wear.

"The thing is that there is so many costumes out there," Blackhorse said. "I can't tackle these things alone."

*Sol Traverso is a freelance news reporter at the Daily Lobo. He can be contacted at [news@dailylobo.com](mailto:news@dailylobo.com) or on Twitter @SolTraversonic.*