

General Assembly 2016



Beyond Holidays: Learning and Worshipping without Appropriating



Presenters

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Opening Words



GOALS FOR THIS WORKSHOP

Participants will:

- Understand what cultural appropriation is
- Be able to explain why UU values call us to identify and avoid cultural appropriation
- Become aware that an action or practice can have a very different impact than what is intended
- Learn about practices and tools to help identify and avoid cultural appropriation, some very basic and others requiring deeper commitment



GOALS FOR THIS WORKSHOP

- Understand that tools and practices invite us on a journey of spiritual growth as we learn from others
- Acknowledge that making mistakes is part of the learning process; learn how to acknowledge mistakes gracefully and keep trying
- Understand that relational work necessary to avoid cultural appropriation takes time and intentionality
- Commit to learning more and to speaking up in their congregations and groups about cultural appropriation



What is Cultural Appropriation?

The Reverend Marjorie Bowens-Wheatley defines cultural appropriation as consciously or unconsciously seeking to emulate concepts, beliefs, or rituals that are foreign to a particular framework, individual, or collective. It is incorporating language, cultural expressions, forms, lifestyles, rituals, or practices about which there is little basis for direct knowledge, experience, or authenticity into one's being. It is also the superficial appreciation of a culture without regard to its deeper meaning.

<http://www.uua.org/multiculturalism/introduction/misappropriation/20451.shtml>



Stories







What does this bring up for you?

- Please use the microphone
- Give your name, congregation, location
- This is a time to lift up your stories, not a time to problem-solve.
- We will post responses to what comes up on uua.org after General Assembly is over.



Considerations for Cultural Borrowing

Motivation

- Why am I doing this? What is my motivation?

Goal

- What is the goal?
- Why do we want multiculturalism?
- Why this particular cultural material or event?

Context

- What is the context in which I will use the cultural material?
- What is the cultural context from which it is taken? The history?
- What are the controversies/sensitivities surrounding this material?
- What are the power relationships in this context? The privileges?



Considerations for Cultural Borrowing

Preparation

- What am I willing to do to prepare for this experience?
- Have I done my homework on this material?
- What sources/resources have I used?
- Have I asked people from the culture for feedback/critical review of my plans? The history?
- Have I asked people from the culture to create or co-create the material?
- Did I invite people from the culture to participate? To speak for themselves in this plan?



Considerations for Cultural Borrowing

Relationship

- Am I in relationship with people from this culture?
- Am I willing to be part of that community's struggle?
- What is my relationship with the source of the material?
- What can I give in return? What do I offer?
- With whom do I ally myself with this usage?
- Am I working alone?

Identity

- How does this work nurture self-identity and group identity?
- How does this strengthen UU identity?
- How does it help UUs be religious?
- What does this say about UU faith?
- How does it relate to UU spirituality or spiritual practice?
- What can UUs learn from other traditions?



Considerations for Cultural Borrowing

Adaptation

- With printed material, who holds the copyright?
- Have I received permission to use the material?
- Who has the right to adapt? Why?
- Who will be insulted/offended by this adaptation?
- With whom do I ally myself with this adaptation?
- What is the difference between symbolic and real ritual, and how am I using this ritual?
- If I am using a translation is it accurate, authentic, and current?

Language

- Am I using current, authentic language?



Resources

- Cultural (mis)Appropriation on UUA.org
<http://www.uua.org/multiculturalism/introduction/misappropriation>
- Cross Cultural Engagement - UU Musicians Network
<http://www.uumn.org/cross-cultural-engagement>
- For background on individual hymns and songs: the book [*Between the Lines*](#) provides information about *Singing the Living Tradition*, and the [*Singing the Journey website*](#) offers background for the songs in *Singing the Journey*.
- *Link to resource sheet on GA page*



Questions?

Contact: religiouseducation@uua.org



Closing Song – Go Now in Peace

#413 in Singing the Living Tradition

Go now in peace. Go now in peace.
May the love of God surround you
everywhere, everywhere you may go.

By Natalie Sleeth (1930-1992), United Methodist composer of choral music and sacred and inspirational verses.