



REE PLUMLEY | DESIGNER

STAFF EDITORIAL

Other people's cultures should not be worn as costumes

HOW WE SEE IT

With Halloween coming up this weekend, it is important to remember appropriate behavior when it comes to dressing up.

For many students at Elon University, Halloween is an exciting and fun holiday when students can dress up in costumes with their friends and play pretend.

But too often, people across the world take this innocent holiday as an opportunity to use other people's cultures as costumes or be otherwise insensitive — even if they do not mean to. Some costumes may not even seem inappropriate at first, but when looked at critically, they clearly have racist, homophobic, transphobic or sexist implications.

Any costume that involves dressing as a stereotype is offensive. Any costume that appropriates a culture other than your own is racist. The person wearing these costumes may not intend to be racist or inappropriate, but that doesn't change the impact of their actions.

There are many examples of racially insensitive costumes, plenty of which have been seen on Elon's campus.

When a student wears a Native American headdress, a kimono, a sombrero or anything similar, they are wearing parts of other cultures,

often without paying attention to the significance of these items within that culture. There is a great difference between appreciating someone's culture — supporting businesses owned by minorities, learning about cultures, attending cultural events — and appropriating someone's culture.

Halloween costumes are not only at risk of being racist, but also insensitive to people of other beliefs, genders and sexualities. Dressing as trans people such as Caitlyn Jenner or Laverne Cox could be seen as transphobic. Dressing as Anne Frank, a Nazi or a gangster is simply insensitive and ultimately inexcusable.

There are so many different characters or concepts to dress up as for Halloween. There is no excuse to wear

costumes that are offensive. It goes beyond being politically correct or overly sensitive — this is a matter of respect for fellow students and community members. Your concept of what is funny or cool to dress as should not be more important than respecting your peers. If it is, a some personal reflection may be helpful.

If you see other students dressed in inappropriate costumes, start a conversation. It is not enough to simply change the way you dress. Engaging in challenging and uncomfortable conversations with your peers is the best way to create change throughout Elon's campus.

Elon students must come together to ensure that this holiday weekend will be full of joy and creativity, not racism and insensitivity.

In search of a sense of purpose, look to the stars



Jake Lenett
Columnist

Before arriving at college, I couldn't even entertain the thought of reading for pleasure. Throughout my years of schooling, reading was always assigned, and it felt like an absolute chore to learn about seemingly negligible topics — such as astrophysics, for example. To add to the agony, I was usually required to craft some variation of a templated, soulless essay about what I learned.

Lo and behold, I find myself writing — entirely on my own accord — in response to "Astrophysics for People In A Hurry" by Neil deGrasse Tyson. Before you put down the paper, no, this is not a piece meant to bore you with the facts and figures about the universe. In fact, to be completely honest, the most incredible lessons I drew from the book don't pertain to the technicalities of science whatsoever. What I did gain though, was a more deep-seated understanding of mankind's place within the context of the cosmos.

Needless to say, learning more about the world beyond Earth has profoundly impact-

ed my way of perceiving life on Earth itself. Take for instance the actuality that the universe, since its conception, has existed for almost 14 billion years. For reference, counting aloud to just 1 billion would require three entire lifetimes. Evidently, the constantly expanding universe has been around for quite some time now. More importantly however, it reminds us that our 80 or so years on Earth are relatively instantaneous in the greater framework of time.

Quick disclaimer: highlighting these realities aren't meant to send you into a nosedive of anxiety, or prompt you to urgently begin blueprinting life's journey. Rather, the message is quite the contrary. If indeed your life is veering onto an unfavorable course, be courageous, take control and defy the confines of your unhappiness. There simply isn't enough time to settle for anything less than what you deem to be fulfilling and worthwhile.

Studying the cosmos also reminds us that we are not the center of the universe, despite what we may believe. In fact,

only centuries ago, even the most enlightened scientists postulated that the sun orbited our Earth, before that somewhat conceived theory was debunked in the 16th century — which by relative terms, real-



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ly isn't that long ago.

Prior to that groundbreaking discovery, people's worldview was even narrower. Throughout the early stages of human history, our horizons were bound by colossal bodies of water, before the discovery of other continents. When

humans finally sailed all seven seas, they looked towards the sky, and discovered a host of other planets — they discovered our solar system.

Surely that's as big as it gets, right? Wrong. With the advancement of telescopic technology and space exploration, similar solar systems just like ours were exposed. Then began claims about our galaxy, the Milky Way. Scientific inquiry and discovery persevered, and soon hundreds of millions of subsequent galaxies were identified that make up the universe. Given this pattern of logic, wouldn't it be unnecessarily naive to assume that there is only one universe?

Without delving into multiverse theory, I'll cut straight to the chase. We are so small in the grand scheme of things. Our quarrels in the workplace or struggles with conformity are even more miniscule. Point being, in the greater context of the cosmos, we are not as important as we think we are; our entire planet is a metaphorical speck of dust in the room that is the universe.

Some may find this concept to be rather dark or lonesome,

but I actually find it to be quite humbling. Our understanding of universal scale should remind us to set aside the aspects of life that are insignificant, and focus on those that are truly meaningful.

At this point, it's safe to presume I'm no astrophysicist, but the reality is that you don't need to grasp the formalities of the science to extract valuable lessons from the cosmos. Our time and scale of existence in this world are decidedly limited, which begs the question, what do we do with our limited time on Earth?

Different perspectives warrant different answers, but what is perhaps the most reasonable, attainable and responsible goal is to leave the Earth in a better state than which we inherited it. In the meantime, how do we decide to live our inherently finite lives in an infinite universe? To my best knowledge, living with purpose, meaning and happiness, above all else, is what we owe to ourselves. In spite of how small we may be, our place in the universe is genuinely extraordinary, and should be cherished as so.