

# The Problem with the Moana Costume Isn't Cultural Appropriation

In an utterly unsurprising development, social justice warriors are now not only dictating to American adults what they can wear on Halloween, but children as well. Social convention was once to abstain from culturally insensitive garb like “black face,” but thanks to politically correct scolds, the social expectation of what is acceptable and what is not is expanding rapidly. [Cosmo](#), the magazine known for giving sex tips under the guise of women’s empowerment, would like you to tell your preschool-aged daughter she cannot dress up like the Disney star Moana this Halloween unless she’s of Pacific Island descent.

Can you imagine how that conversation would go with a child? Joking on Twitter, my husband Seth imagined it going like this: “you’re the wrong skin tone. We do this now in America: separate but equal. My hands are tied.”

It’s not just the scolds at *Cosmo* telling parents they have to prevent their kids from dressing up as Moana, however. *USA Today* has a whole [piece](#) explaining cultural appropriation and the holiday, with a handy checklist to consider before dressing up. I’m going to be honest: I couldn’t get through it. But apparently we’re supposed to consider our family Halloween costumes with as much care as a PhD student chooses his or her thesis.

It’s all, of course, absolute rubbish. On [Twitter](#) my *Federalist* colleague David Marcus remarked, “The best way to reinforce white cultural dominance is to make white culture the only one we can all share. Stop doing that.” We should be able to come together and dress up like a Disney princess,

appreciate other cultures and the messages of the movie, without thrusting upon our kids politically correct nonsense.

After remarking on Twitter that I was considering dressing my daughter as Moana just to prove a point, another woman [responded](#), "If your daughter wants to be Moana, that's great. If you buy her a Moana costume for the purpose of offending people, that's not great." Naturally, I started investigating Moana costumes, and quickly realized a far less buzz-worthy reason why my daughter wouldn't be dressing up like the Disney star.

At some point in my teens, Halloween changed. We went from trick-or-treating as superheroes in primary school, to witches and ghosts in our early teens in an attempt to still score some candy loot from our neighbors. But then, around age sixteen, we stopped trick-or-treating, but still went to Halloween parties, and the costumes went from silly to sexy. My friends, who only two years prior had been dressing up like nurses, were now sexy nurses, decked out in high heels and short skirts. It was around then, when Halloween went from getting candy and being silly, to dressing like an exotic dancer at a bachelor party, that I bowed out of participating in dressing up in costume.

One of the best parts about becoming a parent is reliving the best parts of childhood, Halloween silliness and trick-or-treating loot included. One of the benefits of the Moana costume, I thought, was that I could combine my love of making people outraged for no good reason with my daughter's favorite movie. The plan was scuttled after seeing what the costume looks like, unfortunately.

I didn't consider myself particularly prudish—until I had a daughter. Suddenly, the fact that it's impossible to find shorts in summer time that leave the bottom half of my anatomy to the imagination went from frustrating to infuriating. It turned out that the same struggle I face as an adult woman

(finding clothes that are somewhat modest) is now also one I face when shopping in the children's department for my daughter. It's not just my imagination, either. Several years ago a mommy-blogger [wrote](#) about the frustration she faced in the girl's department at Target. The shorts are too short even for kindergarten-aged girls; and that's not just a Target problem.

And now the trend has been embraced by makers of children's Halloween costumes. The Moana [costume](#), made by Disney, is marketed to girls ages three and older. The top of the dress is strapless, and the bottom, a straw skirt, comes to the knee with a slit up the front that goes all the way past mid-thigh. I wouldn't wear it to a business meeting; so why would I allow my preschooler to wear it trick or treating?

Parents always bemoan that kids "grow up so fast." I'm sure my mother felt that way as she watched my social circle turn Halloween from a fun holiday into a burlesque show. Our job as parents is to try to slow down our culture's push to make them grow up too fast. And so, unfortunately for my daughter, that means saying no to dressing up like Moana this year, and every year I have a say over her costume.

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