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Valuing Diversity and Equal Opportunity

“All is Made Beautiful” or Sometimes A Rose by Any Other Name Does *Not* Smell as Sweet – a DVD Review

Behold, the Archive Arriveth!

The Affirmative Action Resource Library contemplates adding another DVD to its stock. It is entitled “All is Made Beautiful” and has a subtitle “Native American Traditions with Warrior Woman Oh Shinnah Fast Wolf.”

An archive of all the AffirmativeAction Here & Now’s, including the Success Stories and the article about the On-Site Review process, is on line!

About this DVD: first, I had my expectations – I expected a scholarly, anthropological examination of authentic cultural practices. I definitely had many such expectations. They were all challenged. It brought up all sorts of questions for me, too, of what exactly is “culture” – how is an ancient culture truly preserved in this modern world? Can a “preserved” culture be allowed to evolve? If it evolves, is it “lost?” But what, exactly, then, is lost?

You can find it at

http://ucanr.edu/sites/anrstaff/Diversity/Affirmative_Action/Archives/

Rather than anthropological, “All is Made Beautiful” is a self-help DVD. It claims to offer a path of transformation for the modern non-native person and there’s plenty of customer reviews on Amazon.com that report that it delivers on this claim. For those without a “church home” or who feel adrift amid the pressures and stresses of our urban world, the sincere adoption of a set of ritual and ceremony can anchor one, can provide a context around or through which the swirling circumstances of daily life can be newly perceived and dealt with in fresh ways. That doesn’t mean, though, that you have to dress them up as “Native American” in order to legitimize them. We call that “window dressing.”

So, what’s plain is that “All is Made Beautiful” presents a series of rituals and ceremonies to be done at home by non-native people. If you adopt these rituals will you be participating in a genuine Native American cultural practice? No.

“Native belief systems are COMMUNAL, not focused on the individual's faith like Christianity, and are TRIBE-SPECIFIC. There is NO "generic Indian" form of spirituality.”
(<http://www.newagefraud.org/index.html>)

“All is Made Beautiful” is anything but tribe-specific. Suppose you devise a little private ritual for yourself where you take a little bit



of a Catholic Mass, a few things from a Lutheran service, and add in some Southern Baptist elements . . . could you claim to be practicing a Christian ceremony? Well, this is what, in essence, “All is Made Beautiful” is doing with indigenous people’s religious beliefs. This is not to say there would be no value in your mix-and-match “Christian ceremonies” or in performing the rituals presented in “All is Made Beautiful” – what you do in the privacy of your own home, etc., etc. Just be clear that if you practice the rituals and ceremonies of “All is Made Beautiful” you’ll be, perhaps, formally acknowledging, for yourself, your gratitude to Mother Earth, for instance. However, if you are a non-native, you will not be making yourself into the last of the Mohicans; you will not be participating in something authentic to the First Nations people. Again, that’s not to say there would be no value in it . . . for you. Individually.

If there is no "generic Indian" form of spirituality as “All is Made Beautiful” could be construed as suggesting, is there any generalities that can be drawn from indigenous peoples various belief systems which could aid non-native people? While its expression will differ from tribe to tribe, one generality that would help broaden the world-perspective of non-native people would be the indigenous nations’ respect for the earth.

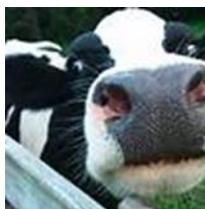
Here, we should be careful not to adopt too romantic a notion of Native Americans and the various components of the green movement -- although “All is Made Beautiful” is not shy about doing this, either -- nevertheless, environmentally, we’d all be better off with a much deeper respect for the planet. What might this look like? Modern corporate America and each of us, as well, would need to realign our thinking, our priorities and values, and understand that if we are to truly respect the earth we must first truly respect each other and ourselves. Are we (slowly) poisoning ourselves through imprudent food and beverage choices? If we cannot take proper care of ourselves, what can the earth expect from us? Are we similarly (though not so slowly) poisoning the earth through short-sighted processes and wholesale, blind pursuits of profit? The blinders must be removed and profits pursued in ways that benefit the earth, that benefit ourselves, that benefit future generations. This could be called restraint.

We can pursue this restraint individually and collectively now or it will be imposed upon us later. And this really does not require any window dressing.

While “All is Made Beautiful” is best viewed as a self-help video and NOT as an examination of authentic Native American practice, the Affirmative Action Resource Library does, nevertheless, have an excellent DVD on indigenous peoples. It’s entitled “Trail of Tears.” Go to http://ucanr.edu/sites/anrstaff/Diversity/Affirmative_Action/Resources/

Fill in and send the Resource Library Loan Form to me at the address on the form or email it to me: dewwhite@ucanr.edu

Other sites that may be of interest:
<http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/>
<http://www.newagefraud.org/index.html>



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