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February 24, 2024

Analysis of Balenciaga's Trompe-L'Oeil Sweatpants

Balenciaga's most recent sweatpants, the trompe-l'oeil, have caused controversy. i24NEWS English explores this controversy through a discourse analysis of a Facebook news video. This study undertakes an in-depth investigation of the visuals linked with the Balenciaga trompe-l'oeil sweatpants and looks at a series of Twitter comments made by Black American men and women that are allegedly addressed to the brand. The purpose of this study is to provide light on the phenomena of non-Black designers making money off of Black people, maybe through appropriation and undermining the legitimacy of Black culture. Expensive fashion labels have frequently faced criticism for taking inspiration from many cultures and interpreting it in their own ways. As a result, the purpose of this essay is to investigate the ownership issue in Black fashion. In how the Spanish fashion company Balenciaga has benefited from the contentious sagging trend that has resulted in people being criminalized in the US by taking cues from the Black American community. The conversation will also cover the subtle distinctions in awareness between Black and White designers, highlighting the significance of honoring rather than appropriating culture in the fashion industry.

Although Black designers and artists play a major role in influencing fashion trends, there is still a problem with Black culture's aspects being commercialized without due credit or recognition. Fashion has a history of taking over iconic elements without appreciating their cultural value, including hairstyles, outfits, and accessories. Unquestionably, black culture has had a significant impact on the development and direction of the fashion industry. African American culture has always been at the forefront of fashion trends and style growth, from dance and music to language and art. The impact is seen in the fashion industry's vivid patterns, striking hues, and avant-garde designs. In addition to forging their own unique looks, black designers, stylists, and influencers have made significant contributions by rewriting the stories around mainstream fashion. Streetwear and other key trends, together with iconic characters like Dapper Dan, have cleared the path for a more inclusive portrayal of Black culture in fashion. The embrace of natural hair, a range of body shapes, and the blending of traditional African components with modern trends all highlight the significant impact of Black culture on fashion, breaking down barriers and enhancing the field with a rich tapestry of originality and authenticity. Concerns regarding exploitation arise when Black aesthetics are used as trends without true comprehension or representation. In order to ensure that Black culture is not only acknowledged but also embraced with integrity, giving due recognition to its origins and promoting an inclusive and respectful environment, the fashion industry must go beyond token efforts.

A complex interaction occurs in the fashion industry when Black and White designers work in different ways to incorporate Black culture into their designs. Black designers frequently add elements that resonate with their cultural history to their work, giving it an authentic and deeply embedded perspective. They are inspired by Afrocentric fashion and

traditional African patterns, while also honoring the diversity of the Black diaspora. Conversely, white designers must strike a careful balance while working with Black culture. Some people sincerely interact with and honor Black aesthetics, while others may purposefully or inadvertently appropriate parts, sparking debates about cultural appropriation. The secret is to promote cooperation, communication, and comprehension. Acknowledging the roots, working with Black creatives, and encouraging diversity in the field are all important components of respectful assimilation. This is shown in a Black American designer Telfar that has incorporated everything Black and problematic in the US. He has done it in a way that showcases his anger and frustration at what happens to Black men and women unlike Demna's culture appropriating designs for Balenciaga.

The Trompe-L'oeil

In the world of modern fashion, Balenciaga's Trompe-L'oeil sweatpants are a unique and thought-provoking item. The name alone perfectly sums up these sweatpants—it means "deceive the eye" in French. Known for its avant-garde style, Balenciaga has created a visually arresting trompe-l'oeil illusion out of a traditional wardrobe staple. By producing the optical appearance of a second pair, boxers knotted around the waist, these sweatpants subvert conventional notions of clothing size and shape.

The way that Balenciaga approached representation in its Trompe-L'oeil sweatpants advertising campaign has spurred conversations about cultural sensitivity and inclusivity. Although the brand's website prominently displays a Black model wearing the Trompe-L'oeil sweatpants, the runway and other media campaigns primarily depict White people wearing the same item. The brand's dedication to genuine diversity has come under scrutiny due to this discrepancy, as well as possible abuse of Black aesthetics for narrow market appeal. The

choice to use a Black model in some advertising materials indicates a recognition of the importance of inclusivity, but the disparate decisions made in other contexts underscore the industry's continued challenge to really embrace diversity. It emphasizes how crucial it is to have consistent representation and how fashion businesses have an obligation to go above and beyond token gestures of diversity in order to tell a more respectful and authentic story.

Though most of these decisions are not made without the support and direction of Demna. Designer Demna Gvasalia, the brains of Balenciaga, is renowned for pushing the boundaries of fashion and igniting debates inside the business. His method frequently questions accepted wisdom and reinterprets luxury aesthetics. Prior to taking the reins at Balenciaga in 2015, Gvasalia's work with Vetements garnered prominent notice. The fashion brand has seen a metamorphosis under his supervision, characterized by voguish silhouettes, unique designs, and a synthesis of high fashion and streetwear. Gvasalia has encountered some controversy, nevertheless. Critics have questioned the thin line that separates invention from exploitation, citing his usage of topics such as normcore and the appropriation of commonplace objects into high-end pieces. For instance, Gvasalia's Trompe-L'oeil sweatpants sparked discussions about cultural sensitivity and appropriation, demonstrating her propensity to push boundaries even when doing so requires navigating the tricky terrain of controversy within the fashion industry.

Though the sweatpants have become a very noticeable take for Balenciaga this is not the only item that has been deemed cultural appropriation. The criticism surrounding these products emphasizes how important it is for the fashion industry to adopt ethical design standards and raise awareness in order to prevent damaging stereotypes from being perpetuated and the cultural integrity of oppressed populations from being undermined.

Balenciaga's response to cultural appropriation incidents and how it resolves them will be critical in determining the brand's trajectory and helping to create a more diverse fashion industry.

The brand's inventiveness and eagerness to challenge preconceived notions about fashion are evident in the design. In addition to being visually appealing, the Trompe-L'oeil sweatpants have generated discussions about cultural appropriation because of its link to sagging, which has led to a more thorough examination of the relationship between high fashion and cultural appropriation.

i24NEWS English Segment

The i24NEWS film delves into a fascinating topic about designer trousers, sparking controversy and questions about cultural appropriation. The program explores the wider ramifications of cultural sensitivity in the fashion industry by examining the controversy raised by these pants. The conversation that i24NEWS presents highlights a range of viewpoints and societal issues, especially those voiced by the Black community. The film explores all the facets of this complex issue and highlights the fashion industry's responsibility to honor and appropriate different cultures' components.

With the launch of Balenciaga's trompe-l'oeil sweatpants, it sparked an outrage across the world, specifically in the United States. Within the video Amalia Roy a i24NEWS producer as well as a black woman addresses what the situation at hand is and why the black community is upset. "What we are seeing is a massive luxury brand that is using a part of Black culture that leads to a lot of pain and arrest specifically on black males for profit", Amalia makes her stance very clear as a black woman she is wanting the voices of the black community to be heard.

The arrival of Evita Duffy, co-founder of the Chicago Thinker, offers an alternative viewpoint to that of Amalia, who represents the concerns of the black community. Duffy, a white lady, seems to minimize the concerns expressed by Black people about Balenciaga's clothing. Her comment, "People in the woke left try to say that a pair of pants and hoop earrings are cultural appropriation when, in reality, they are appreciation," shows a lack of understanding for the feelings that members of the black community may have. Throughout the interview, Amalia shows signs of discomfort and reacts to Duffy, stating that the suffering connected to the historical background of black men's sagging is what really needs to be addressed rather than the appreciation of black culture, "It is not the appreciation for black culture that is the issue but the pain and suffering see the death that has happened with black men sagging. But none of it is addressed by balenciaga as they are marketing and profiting from this pant when even such black men can not afford it". She draws attention to the contradiction that Balenciaga ignores the more serious problems that black men face—some of whom cannot even afford the pants—while marketing and making money off of the pants.

The examination of this interview highlights the two opposing viewpoints of the perception of the trompe l'oeil sweatpants. It does, however, bring up an important point: why does it turn into a dispute when black community members voice their worries about how the garment is hurting them? Rather than just exchanging viewpoints, there needs to be a genuine recognition of the pain and suffering that members of the black community go through. Rather than turning into a divisive argument, the emphasis should be on addressing these issues and encouraging a conversation that advances understanding. It demands a sincere attempt to close the gap between different points of view and a more sympathetic attitude to the subtleties of cultural sensitivity.

Twitter/Comments Discourse

Examining how the general public, and black men and women in particular, use Twitter as a venue for criticizing people or organizations highlights a potent and dynamic facet of online activism. Twitter is a democratic platform that allows underrepresented voices, including those from the black community, to criticize and critique instances of cultural appropriation, injustice, or unethical behavior due to its enormous reach and immediacy. Black individuals on Twitter frequently utilize this medium to share personal stories, raise awareness of issues that they find insulting or disrespectful, and hold others accountable for their actions. As a collective tool, hashtags, trending topics, and retweets can be used to mobilize public opinion and draw attention to situations that might otherwise go unnoticed. Twitter conversation is notable for its succinct and real-time structure, which facilitates the rapid sharing of information and fosters a sense of community and common purpose among advocates for social justice and cultural sensitivity.

Black men and women took to Twitter prior to the i24NEWS English interview to demand an answer from Balenciaga on the release of the controversial pants. A devoted Twitter user and supporter of social justice issues impacting Black people, Devan M. Vilfrard voiced his concerns in a potent tweet: "There are laws that essentially prohibit having sagging pants, but fashion designers are making money off of the same thing that Black people were criminalized for." vile." As a Black guy, he makes a statement that highlights the contrast between the terrible reality that African American men and women endure and the attitudes of Europeans, such those in Spain, where Balenciaga is headquartered. Vilfrard's tweet highlights the paradox of a fashion business making money off of a practice that has been criminalized and stigmatized within the Black community by drawing attention to the historical background

and serious consequences associated with the sagging trousers trend. The irony that Balenciaga is marketing a commercialized version of Black authenticity complicates the topic even further.

Like Devan, Black Girl Dating—a Twitter account that offers guidance and assistance to Black women in need of positive reinforcement—spoke out about the issue. She poignantly reminded us in a tweet, "Just a reminder that there has literally been legislation to criminalize Black people for sagging." Her participation in the conversation highlights the seriousness of the problem by demonstrating that even those who do not often write about social justice feel obliged to voice their opinions when it affects the community they are committed to upholding. This indicates the general awareness of the detrimental consequences of fashion decisions that uphold past injustices against the Black community and the common commitment to resolving them.

Even though these two Black individuals skillfully express the problems with the pants, it's clear that not everyone sees them as such. As she remarked under the interview, Lori Nakaguchi—likely a frequent watcher of i24NEWS English—said, "I see a lot of black women using extensions, hair dye, and hairpieces to get a look that is not natural to their hair texture." "Cultural appropriation" is that? Lori's remark highlights a lack of knowledge on the reasons behind the haircuts that Black women may choose, which may be impacted by a distorted racial perspective. Her criticism of Black women for wearing hairstyles that are both protective and supported by science betrays an entitlement complex. This emphasizes how important it is to have educated conversations in order to raise knowledge and debunk myths about Black community customs.

Black Designer Telfar against Demna Balenciaga

In order to broaden this analysis, looking at Black designer Telfar Clemens showcases how he has taken a stance in fashion. Sagging is a purposeful and powerful style decision that designer Telfar Clemens has expertly incorporated into his fashion designs, aligning with his ideal of accessibility and inclusivity. Telfar challenges social norms and celebrates uniqueness in its attitude to sagging. Conversely, when a white designer appropriates sagging without truly appreciating its cultural meaning, it can feed negative preconceptions and capitalize on a trend that originates with Black people's experiences. Telfar's usage of sagging encourages a sense of empowerment and self-expression by demonstrating a sophisticated grasp of and respect for its cultural setting. However, when appropriation happens, it frequently lacks this complexity and genuineness, running the risk of erasing the cultural subtleties connected to sagging and adding to a harmful narrative that ignores its social and historical ramifications.

“The sweatbands, sagging pants, tops, and baggy sweats give signals to homoeroticism, mixed with black sexuality iconography. The clothing and accessories offered allow consumers to play with the past. A past once lived, or a past one might have desired to exist in; a world of imagination. To be clear, a very black nostalgic past”, this highlights how powerful Telfar addressed sagging within his fashion house and why he chose to include sagging as a Black queer man. This comparison highlights the difference between a White European such as Demna and the ideals that he has established for Balenciaga and the culture that he has created for non Black individuals to have a sense of community to Black people.

Within the fashion industry, complicated and unsettling problems are brought up by white designers creating a false sense of black authenticity. Cultural appropriation is a worrying trend that occurs when white designers, such as Demna, try to commercialize and make money off of things that are thought to be uniquely black. In addition to feeding

negative preconceptions, this downplays the distinctive cultural contributions made by Black groups. White designers run the risk of reducing rich cultural expressions to trivial fads when they appropriate symbols, styles, or traditions without having a true understanding of their historical and social contexts. Because it frequently produces a distorted and marketed portrayal of blackness, this technique has the potential to perpetuate racial hierarchies. In design, authenticity is essential, and fabricating a false black authenticity serves to both diminish and commercialize Black people's identities and experiences while also disrespecting the sources of cultural aspects. It emphasizes how crucial it is to support sincere cooperation, cross-cultural comprehension, and respectful portrayal in the fashion business.

Final Thoughts

The fashion industry is being scrutinized once more because it appears to be avoiding responsibility for cultural appropriation. Some fashion firms still plagiarize and commercialize aspects of other cultures, even though this has caused public criticism on multiple occasions. The problem goes beyond monitoring, pointing to a structural issue where profit frequently trumps authenticity and cultural sensitivity. These businesses' capacity to handle controversy without suffering significant consequences feeds into an unsettling trend that keeps the industry's cycle of cultural appropriation going. It emphasizes how critical it is to raise awareness, educate the entire industry, and have fashion businesses take responsibility for their design decisions. The industry cannot go towards a future that is more inclusive and courteous unless it works together to address and resolve these problems.

This brand is communicating a message to the public that they might perceive as a non-issue within the fashion community. Balenciaga's recent clothing launch has been criticized for what is deemed racial appropriation, specifically in its interpretation of a street

style associated with Black African American men and women. iNews24 English underscores the importance of holding any entity accountable that profits from the Black community through their clothing creations. The impact is heightened as a Black woman articulates why this particular clothing item demands attention and action. Twitter discourse analysis further sheds light on the public's reactions, particularly from black men and women, emphasizing that this item goes beyond being merely a garment—it symbolizes cultural appropriation. This points to an unsettling pattern within high-end luxury brands, indicating a lack of change in their designs. However, the media and the public are taking it upon themselves to address and halt this perpetuation of cultural appropriation, exposing a continuous trend in clothing, advertisements, and runways involving basic items.

The debate between cultural appropriation and appreciation presents two opposing viewpoints that need to be carefully considered. Cultural appreciation, on the one hand, stresses an authentic and courteous recognition of the many customs, fashions, and symbols that come from different civilizations. It entails embracing these components, promoting intercultural understanding, and appreciating the advantages of cross-cultural interaction. On the other hand, cultural appropriation is the term used to describe the taking of aspects of another culture without appreciating or comprehending their worth; this frequently results in the commercialization and trivialization of holy or historically significant symbols. The secret is to walk the thin line between respect and appropriation, making sure that cross-cultural exchanges are characterized by awareness, knowledge, and a sincere desire to respect and learn from other cultures. Fostering a more inclusive and respectful attitude to cultural influences in all domains, including fashion and beyond, requires an awareness of and comprehension of these two sides.

Overall this analysis offers a crucial area of research in the intricate world of fashion is the disparity between Black and White designers' respectful integration of Black culture. In order to celebrate authenticity and diversity, black designers frequently incorporate a true and nuanced grasp of their cultural history into their works. In contrast, certain white designers—like Balenciaga, for example—have come under fire for allegedly stealing aspects of Black culture, as evidenced by the Trompe-L'oeil sweatpants issue. It is imperative that the industry recognize and resolve these inequalities. Respectful integration requires sincere cooperation, thoughtful inspiration, and cultural sensitivity. Balenciaga is a major participant in the fashion industry and needs to be held responsible for the designs it creates, particularly when using Black culture raises questions about appropriation or exploitation. In order to transcend racial boundaries and promote a more respectful and rich flow of influences, the fashion industry as a whole needs to work toward a more inclusive, representative, and ethical approach to design. Fashion firms must be held responsible for cultural appropriation through a multipronged strategy that includes openness, education, and industry-wide responsibility. First and foremost, customers are crucial to accountability because they actively participate in discussions on cultural sensitivity, abstain from purchasing products from companies that violate their rights, and use social media to spread the word. In response, brands must emphasize diversity in their design teams so that people with different experiences may contribute to the creative process.

It is critical to acknowledge and pay attention to members of marginalized communities who voice concerns about the commercial exploitation of their cultural identity. Even though the Black community is a well-known victim of this kind of abuse, it's important to acknowledge that other cultures have also dealt with comparable problems. Although they are

frequently the most exploited, the Black group is not the only one to engage in this pattern of cultural appropriation. Therefore, in order to solve the larger problem of cultural exploitation in the fashion industry and beyond, I believe it is crucial to promote knowledge and respect for cultural identities across all cultures.

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