

Therapy with Harry

"Not Asian Enough" Club

Let's Embrace Our Beautifully Complex Identity



Hey ,

Content Warning: Uninhibited venting about colonialism and knowledge theft.

In a current therapy book that I am reading, I came across the author talking about Asian traditions of mindfulness. In the book, they credited a white woman for a paradigm-shift in how we think about energies and healing.

I kind of rolled my eyes after I read that. When we talk about meditation, mindfulness, and "energy," it is really drawing from Asian traditions.

So, the crediting of a white woman on creating a paradigm-shift using traditional knowledge of Asian cultures really irritates me.

Meditation and mindfulness draws specifically from Buddhist tradition that originated in India.

And then we have acupuncture and yoga, where these practices are being stolen, and re-packaged to be sold to us as consumers. Or worst, Western institutions becoming the arbiters and regulators of these practitioners and the profession.

My issue isn't about cultures "borrowing" ideas from each other. Since the dawn of human civilization, every civilization has been infusing new ideas from various cultures and societies, to the point where we aren't always sure where certain ideas/practices even originated from.

What I take issue with, is who holds the power, and who benefits from these practices. Once Western institutions become the arbiters and regulators, they hold the power to decide who gets to use this knowledge. And they also make money off teaching us our own knowledge.

So why the heck am I writing this? Because this is personal for me.

My grandma is a doctor in Traditional Chinese Medicine. About a decade ago, Canada changed the laws around who is "certified" to practice TCM. The new law essentially excluded long-time Chinese practitioners. The true OG's of this practice. Excluded.

I still remember watching the Chinese news coverage of this...the Chinese TCM practitioners advocating for their case to white politicians...in "broken English" and in exasperation and anger. I remember my heart breaking while watching this. I recognized some of them, my grandma's colleagues and friends.

While this is personal for me, this also merits a longer conversation. Because I want to talk about the contradictions of multiple narratives.

On one hand, there's the narrative that Asian traditions are great for healing and mental health. But on the other hand, there seems to be a dominant narrative that Asian cultures stigmatizes mental health.

This will be the topic of my next blog, to discuss the fuckery of this entire thing.

So ,

Was there a time where you felt frustrated that your culture was being appropriated?

Respond this email and let me know what you think. I'm a real person on the other side, and I respond to all emails!



Take care, and keep being you!
Harry

"I help Asians go from feeling trapped to becoming self-liberated."

P.S. – Have you ever felt weird or annoyed that other people were appropriating your culture? Let me know by replying this email!

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