

The Wall Street Journal

Oct. 14, 2016

By Daniel Akst

“Good evening, I’m Ernie Ernesto! Tonight in this special report, Bystander News goes undercover to lift the lid off a steaming cultural-appropriation scandal. Here’s our chief investigative reporter, Rebecca Sharp, with more.”

(Cut to Rebecca outside a dining hall at State U.)

“Thanks, Ernie! With cultural appropriation on the menu at many college campuses, we decided to go undercover to find out if this kind of thing is going on right in our own backyard. Our conclusion? Boy, is it ever!”

(Cut to steam tables, where workers in white outfits dole out food to sleepy students.)

“We started at breakfast, where the first thing we saw were giant vats of coffee, available to all and sundry with no cultural context whatsoever! I mean, look at this, students guzzling the stuff with no recognition that the first coffee plants were taken from Ethiopia and cultivated without permission in southern Arabia, spreading from there throughout the world to any place the climate would tolerate them.”

(Footage of male student, ball cap on backward, and female student in sunglasses, hands shaking, woozily filling cups.)

“Students who don’t want coffee often end up drinking tea, which is just as bad in terms of the colonial legacy that brought *Camellia sinensis* to the West. Bags of the stuff are just left lying around for anyone to use with no contemplation of the suffering buried in the shadows behind their presence.

“Not content to have students start their day with these fruits of oppression, State U. unapologetically offers sugar, orange juice, bananas and other products that have no place in a part of the New World characterized by such temperature extremes.”

(Cut to bread station, where student peering into toaster is hit by toasted rye forcefully ejected at just that moment.)

“It gets worse. Over here, as you can see, they’re serving all kinds of foods made of wheat flour, which hails from the Levant, yet there’s no mention of the Lebanese heritage of this important grain. Dining hall staff members, forced to work under these harrowing circumstances, seemed numb to these abuses. Federal regulators, meanwhile, have yet to get back to us on whether we’re looking at some truly egregious Title IX violations. And then—this.”

(Close up of bagels. A plaintive violin is heard off camera.)

“As you can see, State U. dining halls routinely serve bagels, a Jewish staple torn from the blood-soaked tapestry of its people’s rich traditions. After ascertaining that he speaks English, we asked campus Rabbi Mark Gordon for comment.”

(Cut to rabbi, peering over her shoulder.)

Rabbi: “Do they have any left? I could use a little nosh, although my wife has me doing the low-carb thing . . .”

Rebecca (looking grave): “Tomorrow, in part two of our series . . .”

(Cut to interior of the university library, looking down an endless aisle of books.)
“. . . we dig into the mother lode of cultural appropriation on campus—the university library, which is filled with more than a million works in more than 40 languages. Many of the English-language volumes, we are sorry to report, are printed using the Roman alphabet. We’ll have reaction from the mayor of Rome. Ernie? Ernie?!”

(Cut to Ernie, at the news desk, furtively slurping sesame noodles from a white takeout container. . .)

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Appeared in the Oct. 15, 2016, print edition.