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Halloween fun? Racism in a new disguise

Demetria Martinez | Oct. 29, 2009 NCR Today

As surely as leaves change color, autumn brings us renewed interest in all things Latino. As October is Hispanic heritage month, CNN ran a four-hour documentary about Latino life, and PBS brought us a program of Latino musicians, superstars all, performing at a black tie affair attended by none other than Barack and Michelle Obama.

But just as I was getting ready to uncork a bottle of wine and toast to my people's contributions to our great nation, I got an e-mail note from Redemptorist Fr. Ricardo Elford of Tucson. "This is maddening," he said. He then quoted a notice from United Farmworkers Workers:

> "An offensive 'illegal alien' costume is being sold at Toys R Us and Amazon.com as well as other stores. According to [their] websites, for just $39.99, you can now dress up as an 'illegal alien' for Halloween. These stores are selling the costume made up of an orange jumpsuit with the words 'illegal alien' written across the chest. The costume even comes with a mask of a space invader with big eyes, and a green card. The extra terrestrial creature perpetuates racism and discrimination in an already hostile environment and during a period of time when the debate on immigration reform is increasingly hateful and divisive."

So there you have it: Racism in a new disguise, for children no less, going trick-or-treating on the final day of a month devoted to Latino's gifts to this country.

Halloween fun? All of us should be really, really scared.

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