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"A Different Light"

A Different Light - 23rd October 2021 – “Dressing up for Halloween, a matter of taste isn’t it? ”

We don’t really do Halloween in New Zealand. Well, maybe the odd kid being escorted by their parents around the less creepy neighbours, or perhaps been chauffeured to tolerant friends and family but generally there is something of an anti Halloween view in New Zealand. We feel it’s American. And you have to admit they ‘go all out’. Personally I get jealous of their fantastical US Halloween fancy dress parties. Ironic themes seem increasingly to be the flavour of the beast. We’ve all seen the jarring images of Yanks dressing up as Donald Trump or OJ Simpson over the years. More recently public enemies, such as Harvey Wienstien, have turned up as shocker costumes.

If we were to embrace this annual ritual of parodying the shocking and notorious in New Zealand, what would one come as? I have a few suggestions. Brian Tamaki, springs immediately to mind. Slicked –back dyed hair, gold watch, leather jacket, some car salesman shoes and a loud hailer would meet the brief. Judith Collins would be an alternative – blonde(or to be right up to date brunette) blow wave meets boutique overpriced scarf, meets stubbornly persistent back to the future shoulder pads, and perhaps a Dictionary of NZ slang under her arm (see ‘Big fat ...liar/hypocrite’) . On the theme of the National Party one could go as Simon Bridges with a smarmy naughtily just below the collar seventies brown wig, reminiscent of those guys from sometime top of the pops US band ‘Bread’ . If you want to go for an inanimate object you could dress as a bottle of hand sanitiser- with a dispenser head and a plastic pouch of jello. How about as a villain –Covid virus –generally depicted in the media as spiky, orange and spherical – a beach balloon with some craft work might make the grade.

Like the edgy costumes of the past – the likes of Rolf Harris with paint brush digeridoo and in handcuffs - all the good ones that to me are teetering on the edge of bad taste. I guess that the themes of Halloween are the only time of the year that you can get away with things that are normally taboo or maybe this remains ‘ just in America’. In New Zealand it seems we still

have a clearer sense of right and wrong. Of what's acceptable and what isn't, although opinions can vary massively in Godzone - as we are currently only too aware. This won't stop me checking out the extremes that are flaunted in the USA – I see speculation already rife about how to do a Kim Kardashian in an all in one face and body suit, a la the Metro Gala . Squidgame outfits are also quite de jour this year- don't know how flattering either will be.

I may stick to my realistically spooky latex Unicorn head again this year- but whatever you pull together and however this odd celebrations evolves this year –let's keeping enjoying these festivities however we can – in whatever level we might be living. It's a signpost that we are on that rollercoaster to the end of the year –Christmas, summer and hopefully a communal celebration –however weird that might look this year. Stay safe, stay spooky.

Jonny Wilkinson is the CEO of Tiaho Trust - Disability A Matter of Perception, a Whangarei based disability advocacy organisation.