

## Would The Real First Ammendment Please Stand Up?

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This past month our school district voted to adopt a uniform policy. It's not wonderfully thought out (look, I'm glad people want to pay tribute to the school colors but there isn't too much out there that's plain red), but my wife and I aren't fundamentally opposed to the idea. We live in a community with a wide disparity between the "haves" and the "have nots" in terms of material wealth are happen to be friends with people who, frankly are ruining their present and future because they feel the need to "keep up with the Joneses." Helping people cut some clothing costs isn't a bad idea (running financial seminars that force people to live under a budget is a better idea, but that's another blog entry). In the High School this takes on another aspect as girls clothing seems to be getting more and more sexualized and guys can't seem to find pants that don't cause them to inadvertently moon everyone in school (I have not idea why the "intentional boxer wedgie" look hasn't faded away around here, but it hasn't). So, no worries. The "uniform" is really a narrow dress-code with three or four options (which is part of the reason it's not well-designed but I didn't get to that meeting so shame on me), and it's just what's going to happen.

Not without a fight it isn't. Parent's are up in arms (so are the High School students, but that's just part of being a High School student and I'm perfectly happy with some teenage rebellion provided society stops allowing it to continue into people's 30's), and others my wife and I have talked to are equally as upset. What's the problem? This is taking away "people's individuality." Now, what's funny about this is that this is the response that I've gotten from people in the range from conservative Christians and liberal pagans (like, actual pagans) - a continuum of people upon which everyone wants people to have "individuality," so long as we can craft our environment to make sure that everyone's "individuality" molds them into our own image. Christians are happy with the individual call of salvation as long as people learn to "act Christian" even if they don't believe a word of the Gospel, my uneducated friends are perfectly happy with individuality as long as no one gets "uppity," my pagan acquaintances champion individuality as long as that individuality doesn't lead people to be "preppy" or "jocks," my well-financed friends are OK with individuality as long as people who aren't as "polished" as they are keep their distance from their own kids. Look, this is a continuum of humanity, I'm on the dang thing too - but at least I don't pretend to not be on the continuum.

Qohelet pointed out that the point of school is to take individuality and harness it to the responsibility of being part of a society. This is a good point and, as this is part of the point of education (Q would say point, I'm not sure I'll go that far), it would seem that fighting something that is meant to assist this process would be a bit counter-productive. I understand that people have visions of 1984 every time we start talking about moderating how we publicly present ourselves (dress-codes are double plus good) - but, really, I'm starting to think that folks who are in power love it when groups of people get involved in fights over things like school dress-codes. After all, if we're so worried about stuff like this then we won't have time to be bothered with the constitution-bashing Patriot Act, and the DMCA which are some of the real threats to our political freedoms.

Yet, people ignore things like that as "things we have no power over," and then raise a school dress-code to the level of First Amendment Rights. Are we serious here? I'm a great fan of the First Amendment (it's what gives me the political freedom to bash the Patriot Act, the DMCA, and enjoy a good dramatic reading of DeCSS after all) - but the First Amendment it meant to protect the rights of citizens to publicly criticize the government, not defend the rights of people to show their butt-cheeks to the world because their pants are too big. The irony is that the people who are whining about their First Amendment rights on this have the political awareness of a dead tick. This in-fighting over having to wear things in a range of clothing is the new opiate of the masses.

If the School Board declared that publicly criticizing the dress-code, I'd be first in line saying, "You know what, you can't do that." This isn't the case. What is the case is that everyone is upset because they are going to have to dress like "the other" for 7 hours a day, and oh by gosh by golly we can't have that can we. We can't have our children being forced to dress like them, those jocks/preps/Christians/pagans/goths/retros aren't our kind of people, they need to be distinct so we can still recognize who they are. Wrangling this into a First Amendment issue just makes Caesar laugh - the gladiators have us distracted.

Sigh.

Tags: Dress-Code, Stupidity, Politics

Read more at: <http://wezlo.blogspot.com/2007/05/would-real-first-ammdement-please.html>.