

## Can Fashion Be Political?

When we think of fashion, we often associate it with clothes and style. Similarly, when we think of politics, we consider the government and constitutions. Given this, it may seem strange to ask if fashion can be political. However, the answer is yes, as fashion has been used to convey political leanings and opinions throughout history.

Daphne Guinness, a fashion icon, said, "Fashion is not just about trends. It's about political history. You can trace it from the ancient Romans to probably until the '80s and you can see it defining moments that were due either to revolutions or changes in politics."

Here are ten examples of when fashion was used to make a political statement:

### 1. The Yellow Vest Movement

In 2018, French demonstrators demanded justice and a good standard of living in the democratic system by wearing yellow vests. The yellow safety vest was originally required for French motorists to wear at all times in case of an emergency and had become a symbol of distress.

### 2. The Time's Up Movement

The Time's Up movement was founded in response to sexual assault in Hollywood. Actresses wore black to promote awareness for the movement at the 2018 Golden Globe Awards.

### 3. Pink Pussy Hats

The Pink Pussy Hat movement began after former US President Donald Trump made derogatory comments about women. Women wore homemade pink hats with ears as part of the movement to promote their human rights in the country and around the world.

#### 4. Gaga's Meat Suit

At the 2010 MTV Video Music Awards, Lady Gaga made a political statement by wearing a dress made entirely of meat. Although it may seem like a mockery of animal rights, it was actually worn in protest of the United States "don't ask, don't tell" policy, which restricted the rights of openly LGBTQ+ persons in the military.

#### 5. Tassels

In 2001, King Mswati of Swaziland attempted to reinstate an old law that imposed a five-year sex prohibition on younger females to preserve their virginity and avoid HIV/AIDS. The girls were required to wear chastity bands and woolen tassels around their necks. However, many were disappointed that the king's daughters rarely wore tassels like other women, despite complying with the law. In protest against the law, women in Swaziland dropped their tassels in front of the king's palace.

#### 6. The Incroyables & The Merveilleuses

Fashion has been used to subvert societal standards since the 1790s, conveying political and sociological statements. For example, men and women used fashion to mock the dress rules of the French First Republic. The males were called the Incroyables, and the females were called the Merveilleuses. The Merveilleuses wore tight, revealing garments inspired by ancient Greek goddesses, while the Incroyables wore exaggerated attire, such as green jackets, large glasses, earrings, and caps with dog ears. The wearing of "immoral" and "scandalous" clothing was a means of using satire to make a statement.

#### 7. Jailbird Stripes

The trend of wearing stripes has its roots in the Middle Ages, when society was ruled by the church. God-fearing Christians, in atonement for Adam and Eve's sins, wore basic and modest clothing. Those who opposed the church's principles wore jailbird stripe-patterned clothing, identifying themselves as social misfits during the 12th century.

### 8. The Black Panthers

The Black Panthers, a revolutionary movement established in 1966, aimed to protect black Americans' rights and fight police brutality. They also wanted to ensure that black people in America had access to adequate housing. Members of the group wore black berets, similar to those worn by troops in the Vietnam War, to signify that they were fighting a war against the system.

### 9. The Miss America Protest of 1968

In 1968, 400 feminists protested in front of the Miss America contest headquarters in Atlantic City to draw attention to the way women were treated in the United States and the beauty standards imposed on them. The protesters threw items such as lipsticks, girdles, and bras into a trashcan, symbolizing the rejection of beauty standards that they believed were forced upon them.

### 10. The Hanky Code

In the 1970s, flagging was a technique used by people to indicate their sexual orientation without speaking out, as being gay or a member of the LGBTQ+ community was unacceptable under the law. Brightly colored bandanas and handkerchiefs were used to indicate sexual orientations, and they would be carried in the back pockets of gay and bisexual males, who would let them fly out for others to see. The LGBTQ+ flag, which symbolizes community acceptance, was designed in 1978.