



High Fashion and “Class Appropriation”: How Much is Too Much?

GRANT KIEFABER
STAFF WRITER

While shopping in Boston over fall break, I stepped into The Frye Company and wandered around the high-end footwear store looking at various men’s boots. Stopping at a pair labeled “Prison Boot,” I could not help noticing the price. They were \$378.00. I put them back and continued browsing. The next pair I found was called “The Union Worker Boot”—priced at \$298.00. The irony was not lost on me. There is little chance that Frye sells these boots to their namesakes. It markets them to a wealthy clientele.

High fashion has recently come under criticism for “class appropriation.” High-end designers have added to their collections pieces that resemble firefighter’s jackets, nurse’s outfits, and even DHL shirts. It intuitively seems wrong that the wealthy are taking something that blue-collar workers wear every day and using it for their amusement. The ethics of such a practice are up for debate.

Take, for example, Timberland Boots. They were originally designed as work boots for blue-collar workers. Now, however, they are a fashion statement and a common sight on college campuses. While designers have taken a fancy toward them, blue-collar workers can still use them for their original purpose. In the time it took them to become popular, the price did not skyrocket to the detriment of lower-income consumers. It stayed the same, which allowed working-

class people to keep using the boot. I do not believe this is an example of class appropriation, since the price does not exclude the boot’s original demographic.

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actual union workers. I believe this is when companies go too far in class appropriation. When the demographic with which it is associating certain products can no longer afford the clothing or footwear, the industry needs to step back and reconsider what it’s doing.

The clothing and fashion industries have always pushed the boundaries of controversy and style. In the many cases of class appropriation, they can be seen as exercising their rights as capitalists. They saw a market and took advantage of it. But why does this market exist in the first place? What makes wealthy consumers want to dress like the working class and be willing to pay hundreds of dollars to do so? This is a curious topic to consider. While the fashion industry needs to make money and can do this by marketing a blue-collar style to affluent customers, it must be frustrating for workers to see their uniforms and clothing taken and used for a fashion statement by those who have never worked a twelve-hour shift in an emergency room, or spent a day doing construction, in their lives.

Disingenuous Political Agendas

MONTANA SPRAGUE
STAFF WRITER

As a woman, I am always heartened at the sight of seemingly heroic advocacy groups battling on behalf of women against injustice at the hands of unscrupulous men, whether in the world of business, Hollywood, or politics. Sadly, however, the reality that such valor has nothing to do with truth or standing up for women checks my initial optimism. Too often it is a cynical charade employed as a political tactic to promote one party and damage the other.

Before you dismiss me as a Republican and a Trump supporter: I am neither. I am a registered Independent who did not vote for Trump. My views vary issue-to-issue -- some are more conservative and some are liberal. But hypocrisy and exploitation are intolerable, regardless of the perpetrator.

In this era of Women’s Marches and #MeToo, women are rightly encouraged by the recent interest

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in changing a culture that for decades largely ignored assault, abuse, harassment, catcalling. Such empowerment is inspiring, until you realize that some of the advocates standing up for the victims are out there

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only conditionally. Such fair-weather activists only lead the parade against a man associated with the opposing party.

Kathleen Willey, who accused Bill Clinton of sexual assault, said that supposed activists such as liberals and feminists refused to believe her and other victims at the time. "They're hypocrites... They worship at the altar of all things Clinton. They're all over Roy Moore, but they had nothing to say about Bill Clinton when he was accused of doing what he was accused of doing." Paula Jones has a similar story of being shut down by the same people who label themselves as activists. "It's like me and Juanita and Kathleen have been screaming for years for someone to pay attention to us on the liberal side, and it's like no one would hear us... They made fun of me. They didn't believe me. They said

I was making it up." In the same vein, those who accuse Republicans are called "absurd" because assault attempts "never went anywhere." When their accusations are against someone who happens to be aligned with the faux advocate's political party, survivors of assault are constantly questioned and prodded by those who had feigned support.

The same people who now pretentiously wave the banner of women's issues or attend women's marches or donate to organizations that support women hope that no one will notice the decades many of them spent supporting those who violate the very principles they claim to support wholeheartedly. And it was not just the feigned ignorance in exchange for political donations, or the victim-shaming. It was the oleaginous snuggling some of these phonies engaged in at social events that was particularly

revolting, as documented by pictures readily available on the Internet.

Americans should be similarly concerned about the increasing number of professional protesters on the payroll of George Soros, whose bottomless supply of cash enables the pursuit of a clear agenda. These people claim to fight for female victims when ambushing people in elevators and at restaurants. This insincere activism actually ends up setting back the very cause they supposedly advocate and perpetuates victim blaming and rape culture.

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Why So Many Brazilians Support the Far-Right Candidate

TIFFANY LOPES
GUEST CONTRIBUTOR

I neither support nor condone many of Jair Bolsonaro's views, especially those related to homosexuals, people of color, minorities, and women. I believe that Brazil's ethnic diversity

and national pride in its rich cultural heritage define us as a nation. I also believe, however, that over the past few years it has become a completely different country. After moving to Rio de Janeiro in 2013, I witnessed first-hand the rapid decline in Brazil's economy. Facing the longest recession in the country's history, the

economy suffered eight consecutive quarters of shrinkage. The combination of economic decline, a fearful spike in crime -- with a record-high homicide count of 63,880 people in 2017 -- and corrupt politicians makes it safe to say that Brazil is in a crisis. For these reasons, Brazilian citizens are looking for a last resort, someone to change the country's course. Many, including myself, believe that right-wing populist candidate Jair Bolsonaro is our only hope.

On October 7, Brazilians voted for

the President, Vice President, and National Congress. The runoff election between Bolsonaro and Fernando Haddad will take place on October 28. (Voting is mandatory for those

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between ages 18 and 70, and citizens 16 and older are eligible.) Bolsonaro received 46.43 percent of the vote, less than 4 percent short of avoiding a runoff election; his opponent Haddad received 28.7 percent. Haddad, a member of the Workers' Party (PT), joined the race only one month ago after the party denied former president Luiz Inácio

Lula da Silva, serving a twelve-year prison sentence on corruption charges, a candidacy.

The Workers' Party (with a coalition) governed Brazil from January 2003 until then-President Dilma Rousseff's impeachment in August of 2016. Rousseff remains accused of taking unapproved loans from public banks and transferring those funds to the government treasury. Her impeachment came soon after two giant corruption scandals were uncovered by Operation Car Wash. The investigation,

involving state oil company Petrobras and construction giant Odebrecht, revealed about two billion dollars in bribes involving more than 80 politicians and members of the business elite.

Brazilians are outraged by the political and economic state their country is now in: the government enjoys a mere 8 percent approval rating, and only 26 percent believe that Brazil's politics will become more honest. This is how Jair Bolsonaro, the candidate of the Social Liberal Party (PSL), has found his political moment.

Bolsonaro is infamous for expressing racist, sexist, and homophobic beliefs, and he proposes controversial right-wing policies. He is calling for greater civilian access to guns, to allow more people to protect themselves from the constant crime; he also wants to give police officers more freedom to shoot on sight. Moreover, he plans to cut the cabinet to fifteen ministers in order to reduce government spending, since an estimated two-thirds of government revenue goes to current and former government workers' earnings and pensions.

In his first public remarks during the campaign, he also declared that he intended to either privatize or shut down several state companies. It is important to note, as well, that he is the only candidate who has not been implicated in or accused of corruption. He has chosen former army general Hamilton Mourão as his running mate.

With all the difficulties that some of Bolsonaro's views present, the country's current political climate has led many people to support the controversial candidate anyway. What Brazilians are most looking for in our next president is the quality of honesty, and Bolsonaro represents that characteristic, whether through his outspoken opinions or his clean financial track. Many believe this election will truly decide the outcome of Brazil's current crisis, and only time will tell whether it will be for better or worse.

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