How school dress codes use and abuse their power

Throughout life, people are told to express themselves. Mostly in school, where teachers are meant to try to bring out each student's individual personality. If this is so, then the clothing that students wear to express themselves should be accepted by teachers and administrators. However, this isn't the case. School dress codes across the nation are restricting students, especially girls, from expressing themselves through what they put on their bodies, making it hard to abide by these dress code rules, as well as allowing ideals such as sexism to be put into place.

Girl's clothing has many different varieties and styles. Yet, sizes are a big issue in the fashion industry. This doesn't make finding " appropriate clothing" easy for many young girls who are already self conscious of their body image. One of the rules in the South Orange Maplewood School District dress code states " Shorts or skirts are to be an appropriate length. To be appropriate, they must reach to the fingertips of the extended arm". For taller kids, it's a hassle to find shorts that abide to the rule that also look appealing, since their arms tend to be longer, making it so that it shorts must stop farther down the leg.

In addition, dress codes seem to be lenient on what boys wear, since most guys don't wear shorts shorter than where their fingertips touch anyways. Dress codes bring in an idea that the clothes dubbed " inappropriate" are ' Too distracting for boys' is giving us the impression we should be guilty for what guys do." (Huffington Post). Additionally, administrators think that " By treating tank tops like a crime, it dangerously sends the message to these girls' male peers that if a girl is wearing such " revealing" clothing, she's

asking to be sexualized and it is therefore okay to do so." This stereotype, amongst others, is allowing outdated ideals to shine through in school.

Namely, at Strawberry Crest High School in Dover, Florida a gay junior dressed up as a 1950's housewife for his school's " Throwback Thursday". The school's problem wasn't even because of infractions to the dresscode, his shoulders and chest were covered, and the dress reached the appropriate length. A school official stopped him due to the fact that he was a boy, wearing women's clothes. The official's argument was " Why are you dressed like that?" and " You shouldn't do that. You're a boy—dress like it.

What if little kids saw you?" There are many more cases of incidents like this one happening to LGBTQ students across the country. A survey from GLSEN shows that 19% ofLGBTQ weren't allowed to wear clothes that school officials thought were for another gender, and nearly 32% transgender students have been prevented from wearing clothing not of their " original" sex. Schools should be more sensitive to the fact that old outdated ideas, especially ones that showcase homophobia, aren't going to fly well with students; especially since more kids are trying to express themselves freely. Moreover, in a place where students are encouraged to be themselves, they are limited in clothing, something that can be used to show off a student's unique personality. Rules such as " not being allowed to wear hats unless its for a religious or medical reason", Just aren't fair.

Something as simple as hats shouldn't be verboten, the student most likely wore the hat not to be disrespectful or whatever school officials are afraid of. The student put it on because they thought they looked good in the hat, so

they could express themselves even further with their outfit choice. Small little things seem to be more noticeable on girls than on guys. Many outfits require straps worn underneath to be shown, such as over the shoulder tops in which bra straps are most likely going to be noticed. This breaks the " No attire should expose undergarments or anatomy." rule.

It isn't fair that an extraneous fashion choice can get you in trouble in school. To conclude, school dress codes indubitably abuse their power by not only oppressing a student's creativity and self expression, but also putting impressions of homophobia and sexism into student's minds. The items you put on your body should be up to you, not by a list of rules used to dictate you. Students should join together to liberate their right to wear what they want, without being bombarded with some overzealous rules. If students fall under these rules, then they are essentially giving up on what their young advocative minds believe in.