



THE ONE WHERE WE SHUT IT DOWN

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It's the revival of the nineties. Kids wear what millennials wore. It's cropped shirts and low-waist baggy pants, belly-buttons out, even when the temperatures drop and those buttons now produce tiny navel-shaped ice cubes. It's skirts over pants and the influence of streetstyle skate-punk silhouettes infiltrating the catwalks in Milan and New York. There's one big difference, though. Back then only skinny girls were granted the societal permission to rock the look. But this generation? They've called upon all body types and genders to wear whatever they damn well please.

Coming of age in the nineties meant being body-shamed – and not just by school bullies. It was mainstream. From *Friends* to *Clueless* and the iconic *Mean Girls*, not having the 'perfect' skin or figure made you an easy target for mockery. Nobody really raised an eyebrow when Monica, one of *Friends*' main characters, was shoved into a 'fat suit' to illustrate how stupid and clumsy she used to be ... as a fat girl.

We've made some substantial progress since then. Thanks to revolutionary 'influencers' and social movements like the Body Positivity Movement, which actively lobby to free the human body from its – let's call it what it is – patriarchal chains, women can now wear whatever makes them feel comfortable, and young boys who play football can confidently wear bright pink sweatbands. They're empowered by the sense of having an entire (online) community behind them, even when backward 'I-shoot-my-own-deer'-fathers offer unsolicited feedback from the sidelines.

But we're not out of the woods yet. The horrific overturning of *Roe v Wade*, the constitutional right to abortion in the U.S., is a clear reminder that the patriarchy is still very much alive and kicking. Recently, Belgian airline Brussels Airlines held a press conference to introduce its new uniforms, announcing that male cabin crew members would now be allowed to wear skirts and make-up – all very demure, but still. The. Online. Backlash. In the comment sections, every conservative man and





woman north of the equator tripped over their ALL CAPS insults and excessive use of exclamation marks.

This generation – Gen Z, the last letter in the alphabet – has an exhausting battle to fight. It's 2024, and yet some people still believe they have the right to dictate what others should wear and what they do with their bodies, how they should identify, or whom they should love. No. End of discussion.

