

The Irony of the Hipster

BY MAILI LIM

I am not a hipster. ...but you'll never know for sure. To say "yes" would automatically banish me from hipsterdom forever. To say "no" would be the very denial that lies at the core of hipsterism, the consumer subculture rapidly sweeping our nation and devouring the lives of the weak in a single fell swoop.

So what is a "hipster" anyways? You've more than likely seen them around, those artsy-fartsy bohemians with the wack clothing that are not only too cool for you, but for America. Sporting iconic accessories such as keffiyehs, Ray-Bans, and fixed-gear bikes, hipsters strive to be the farthest away from the norm as humanly possible.

In their natural habitat they are commonly seen lazing about organic coffee shops with nothing better to do. Perhaps most notoriously, they are characterized by their ongoing romance with irony and utter opposition to the "mainstream".

Textbook hipsters take pride in their worthless knowledge of the obscure—underground indie and alternative music that hasn't made it big for good reason. And don't tell your hipster friend you enjoy listening to something like Panic! At the Disco—such music groups might be a little too successful for the

sophisticated taste of the hipster.

All these characteristics describe what today's generation knows all too well as the hipster, but they don't explain the general sentiment of hatred toward the subculture. There have been emos and skaters and various other subgroups in the past, but not a single one comes close to being as universally hated as the hipster. Even hipsters hate hipsters. In fact, hipsters hate hipsters most. So how does this work?

The hipster subculture,

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although in theory a mindset, is an outwards battle for identity, defined largely by consumerism. The stereotypical hipster shops at stores such as Urban Outfitters, American Apparel, and H&M, gorging on the leftovers of long-dead subcultures and a stash of "un-cool," deeming hipsters far more pretentious than any subculture due to its sheer meaninglessness.

Even the emo, whose favorite hobby is whining and complaining while writing crappy love poems, has a

clearly defined existence.

Unfortunately for hipsters,

very rarely pay money simply for an item at surface value.

hipsters are an image they only think is their own.

Hipsterism is tricky business—there's a fine line between the non-conformist and the conformist who vows to conform only to nonconformity. This is the reason why, as spectators, it is all too easy to weigh the "hipster" down with labels and "lolzy" youtube videos. If every hipster were his own person, would there be a means for defining such outstanding individuality? I think not.

But by acknowledging his identification with the hipster subculture, the hipster loses the very meaning of his existence—his own personal hipster identity, hence the characteristic denial upon being classified as "hipster".

Believe me when I say that you don't hate hipster culture, but the narcissistic and obnoxious contradiction that is the American hipster which you so despise. We loathe the dead-end that it has brought society to, the regurgitation of all things rejected and expired, and the lack of creativity in such blatant in-authenticity. When will hipsterdom cease? Will we continue to let faceless masses devalue and deface true "cool"?

So to all you hipsters out there: get over yourselves. You're no more unique than the next shallow yuppie playing homeless-themed dress-up.

Oh, the irony.

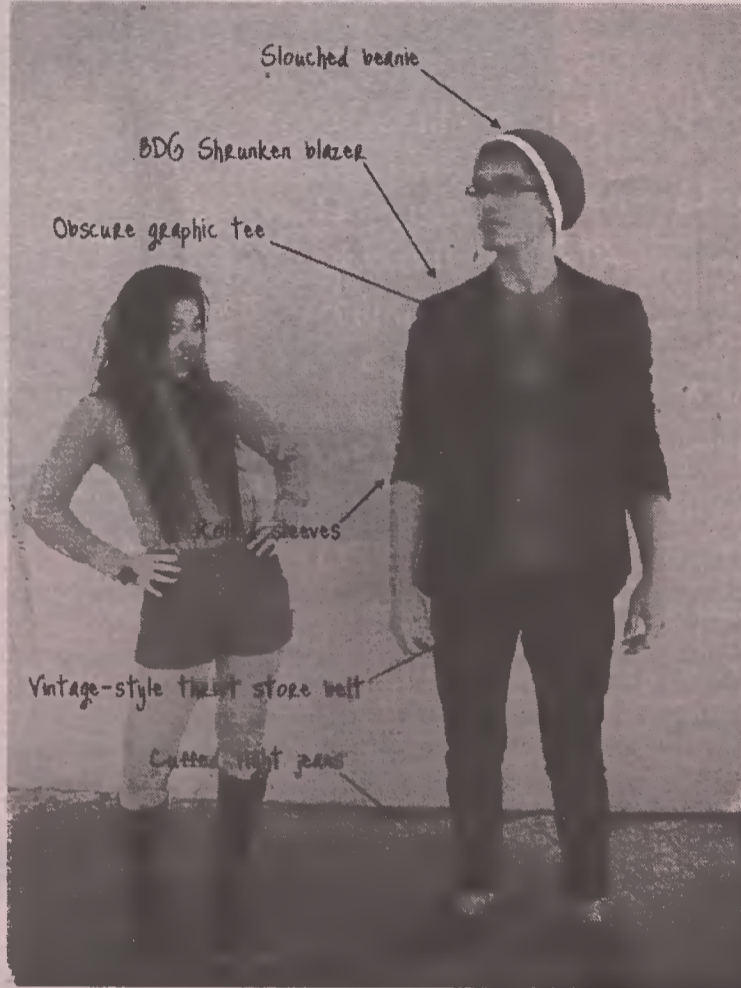


Photo by Jaehee Yoo

Maili Lim expresses disgust at Tyler Hayes's hipster attire.

the manufactured image that they so worship as the essence of their individuality also serves as a superb marketing tactic.

The psychology of consumers goes as follows: we

Rather, we pay money for a specific image the item buys us. Hipsters epitomize this very psychology. Such reliance on material things fosters a false sense of identity, empowering marketers to feed so-called

Math department steps backwards

BY DAVIS GOODNIGHT

To seniors in math or science classes, the TI-89 calculator serves as a tool that we cannot imagine living without. We flash back and forth between doing complex calculations in our head and even more complex computations using our calculators. This year, though, the math department changed the required calculator for incoming juniors from the TI-89 to the TI-84, a far less advanced device missing many of the basic functions of the TI-89.

The TI-89 has several functions that make the math department weary to allow its use on quizzes and tests. Along with the "solve" function which will easily solve any equation in terms of one variable, the calculator has tools which will readily differentiate and integrate functions, rendering it unusable on most Calculus in-class assignments.

These reasons initially provide a very reasonable explanation for why the department chose to move the calculator requirement down. Math teachers can now give calculator-active tests without the worry of students using their calculators for every basic

problem.

The problems arise when we consider the policy change's actual effect in the math department, its effects on other departments, and what it says

about the school itself.

The TI-84 calculator still has the ability to graph functions well, meaning that it has the same problem as the TI-89 when it comes to

creating precalculus tests which test the student's ability to interpret functions in graph form (which is a huge part of the precalculus course here). The trigonometric capabilities of the calculator render the rest of precalculus tests calculator inactive.

By switching to the TI-84, the math department has not even solved the problem it set out to solve, as creating calculator-active tests in many classes will be just as difficult as before.

Chemistry, physics, and engineering all make heavy use of calculators in class. In these classes, the goal of using a calculator is to make it as simple as possible to reach the conclusion of the problem. That is to say, unlike math, science classes use calculators to their full potential, because students in those classes are not expected to learn what the calculator does to get an answer, only how to use that answer in terms of the problem and class.

In chemistry, the "solve" function is used extensively for

everything from calculating molarities to equilibrium coefficients. By taking away this valuable resource, chemistry teachers will be forced to resort to techniques for solving these that are not only outdated and more

convoluted, but less accurate. To any true student of science, the prospect of accepting less accurate results for the sake of simplicity for teachers should be frightening.

What this policy change says about the school, in essence, is that we do not want to be at the forefront of science and technology. It says that we are in fact willing to move backwards if it means a minor convenience for our math teachers. The math department has decided that progress should not be the goal, but rather that we should strive for simplicity. Is this what we want from the North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics, where we are told constantly to Accept the Greater Challenge?

"The math department has decided that progress should not be the goal, but rather that we should strive for simplicity."



Photo by Jaehee Yoo

Jeremiah Collins and Marlee Sloan pose with their calculators.