

# Hemp sprouts up as fashion for the politically motivated

By Mark Baldrige  
Staff Reporter

In the world of "high" fashion, it's not what you wear so much as the socio-economic meaning of what you wear.

It's the politics of hip. Today's eco-conscious, sustainable-mania, counterculture pop needs hemp. Hemp is all the rage.

And everyone wants in on the act, Calvin Klein, Ralph Lauren, even Adidas—whose eponymously named sneaker "The Hemp" soon will be available in stores.

Hemp socks, pullovers, shirts, overalls and underoos are sprouting up all over.

But don't get paranoid, this hemp is a perfectly legal import from Hungary. Hungary and China are two of the largest producers of industrial grade hemp in the world. They even print their money on it.

Those tempted to roll up and smoke a couple thousand yuan (the unit of Chinese currency) should beware: This hemp is "non-medicinal."

According to Jennifer Edwards—owner and proprietor of Hemp Fields

at 1211 O St., "The grade of hemp they get fiber from contains such minute levels of THC (the chemical that gets you "stoned") that you couldn't get high smoking a whole field."

"It's the same genus as pot plants, different species," she said.

And if fashion evolution is the survival of what fits, cannabinaceae has strong "survival value."

Eight times stronger than cotton, hemp is also softer, more insulating and more absorbent than the King of the South.

In fact, hemp may be the oldest cash crop known to humankind. Primitive ape-like farmers might have been stylin' in hemp loincloths as early as 8,000 B.C.

And that trend continued well into the 20th century ... until the 1930s when strong campaigning by media mogul (and newspaper monopolist) William Randolph Hearst, in collusion with Du Pont Chemical, culminated in the criminalization of this most renewable of natural resources

*"Hemp fabric is really smokin' in fashion circles these days."*

(this according to the badly Xeroxed hemp propaganda available at any headshop or NORML meeting).

In fact, if the pro-hemp literature is to be believed, hemp just may save the world.

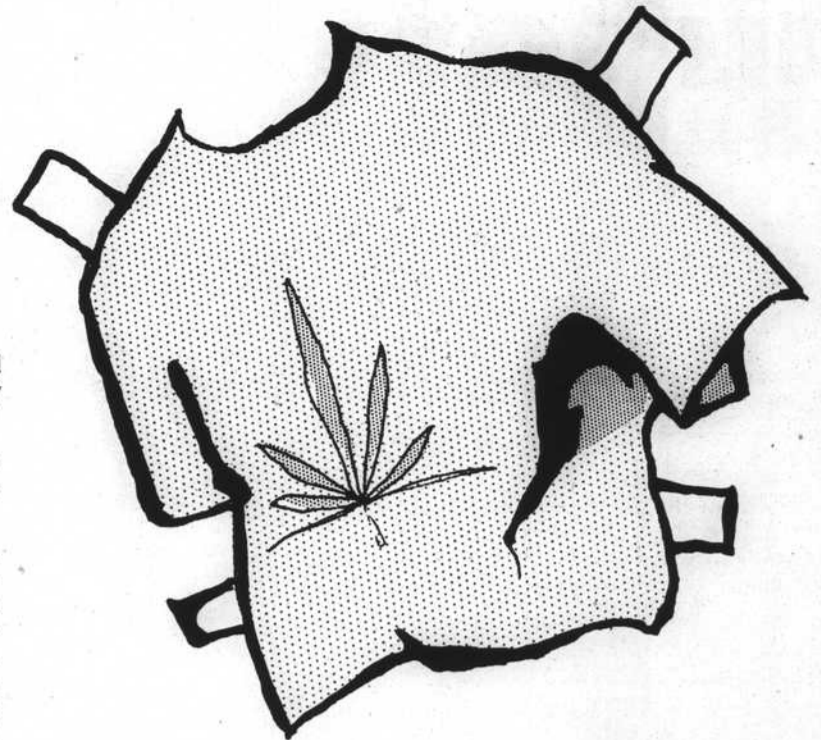
Comic book rhetoric aside, though, hemp fabric is really smokin' in fashion circles these days. And some American farmers want in on the biggest cash cow since, well, cash cows.

Sure hemp may have 50,000 commercial uses, including paper, bio-mass conversion to fuel, and, of course, rope.

But can you wear it to the prom? Could the questions of style reverse years of government regulation? Ask a few dead presidents.

Hemp fashion is a \$60-million-a-year industry and growing.

This may be mostly because of political motives on the part of consum-



ers—who, after all, wants a shirt that will last forever, and be out of fashion in six months?

"When people purchase hemp clothing, they are motivated by a political stance on ecological issues," Edwards said.

Hemp does not require environ-

mentally damaging dyes in the production of cloth or paper, is more easily recycled because of its longer fiber length and can be grown without the use of the insecticides and herbicides in the cotton industry.

A little hemp, in short, goes a long way.

## Fashion bind

The earliest recollection of fashion that I have is somewhat vague, as I suppose many childhood memories are. I was randomly picked to be in a fashion show. The directors dressed me up in a yellow sweater and skirt, cut my hair short, gave me a balloon and told me to smile.

The next day my picture was in the paper. My smile, yellow outfit, short hair and balloon all were included in the photo as well as a nervous, 4-year-old girl standing on her ankles.

Thus, my first experience with the newspaper and the fashion industry coincided. Funny how they meet again.

It seems now, at the ripe old age of 18, that I can look back on my life and observe how fashion has affected it.

As a child I ran around with springy, brown hair and VERY COOL Hee-Haw overall jeans, inherited from my older brother. I was a tomboy interested in one thing, no-nonsense clothing that let me play hard and get dirty.

But I evolved as many girls do. One morning I woke up to discover that



Kindra Molin

everything in my wardrobe was pink and had hearts on it. I remember playing dress-up in the basement with my friends and making beautiful gowns for my Barbie dolls from scraps in my mother's sewing bag.

And then there were those awkward years. Those horrible, undefinable, growth-spurt years that leave one stranded between childhood and adolescence. We still wanted to go trick-or-treating on Halloween but were too sophisticated to be ghouls, ghosts or

## College lessens wardrobe selection stress; NU clothing, windpants do for daily dress

*"As a child, I ran around with springy, brown hair and VERY COOL Hee-Haw overall jeans."*

Smurfs. We settled instead on being Punk Rockers.

Clothes just didn't seem to fit correctly during those years. Shoe sizes, arm lengths and heights changed so rapidly that a poor pre-teen was forced to wear the dreaded STRETCH PANTS! These were necessary because they would do exactly what they said—stretch with a young person's ever-changing body.

Remember getting ready for a middle school dance? Makeup had to be thickly applied, and bangs had to measure in inches.

In high school, I remember trying on at least three different shirts every morning to achieve that, "I'm not trying."

Picking a prom dress, now that's definitely a pinnacle in any woman's

fashion history.

What to do? One needs a dress that's classic yet risque, unique yet acceptable. And completely different than anything anyone else is wearing. Unfortunately, black only comes in one shade—black.

And finally in college, there is freedom from the pressures of being fashionably conscious.

Or is there?

One has many things to consider when getting dressed. If one has woken up too late to consider what to wear, windpants and a favorite sweatshirt will suffice. Windpants and a sweatshirt work when one wakes with enough time too.

It doesn't seem as though there are as many people to impress when no

one is trying to impress anyone.

Communal living, as in dorms, Greek houses, or off campus with a couple of friends, increases one's wardrobe immensely. Where else can a person share clothes with 40 or 50 other people the same age?

College students are still faced with dilemmas of true fashion, however. As students, we are choosing a life's course. Thus, we must endure the dreaded INTERVIEW, where we are supposed to dress nicely, act pleasantly and show off all of our intelligence and creativity in 30 minutes to an hour.

I don't think windpants are going to cut it at an interview.

Ultimately, if people can't find anything else to wear, they should make sure what they're wearing is red and says Nebraska.

Molin is a freshman advertising major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.



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