

## ***Civic Minds***

**Date:** Friday, March 10, 2017

**Print Replica Date:** Tuesday, March 7, 2017

**Article Title:** Mandatory high heels: Have British dress codes gone too far?

**Section:** Main, A9

### **Learning Objectives**

- ✓ Students will examine modern-day sexual discrimination practices in the workplace.
- ✓ Students will learn that change occurs when brave people take a stand against unfair workplace policies and voice their concerns by creating petitions and speaking to the media.

### **CCSS Standards**

#### **Social Studies EALR 1: Civics**

The student understands and applies knowledge of government, law, politics, and the nation's fundamental documents to make decisions about local, national, and international issues and to demonstrate thoughtful, participatory citizenship.

#### **Social Studies EALR 3: Geography**

Understands the cultural universals of place, time, family life, economics, communication, arts, recreation, food, clothing, shelter, transportation, government, and education.

#### **Social Studies EALR 4: History**

- Analyzes the motives and interests behind an interpretation of a recent event.

#### **Social Studies EALR 5: Social Studies**

- Analyzes consequences of positions on an issue or event.
- Analyzes the short-term and long-term implications of decisions affecting the global community.

### **Vocabulary**

Look up the definitions for **sexist**. Please write the definition and create a new sentence, using your own words.

“She started an online petition, calling formal workplace dress codes “outdated and **sexist**.” It has gathered more than 150,000 signatures, making it eligible for a debate in Parliament.”

Sexist definition:

New Sentence:

**Civic Minds Activity:** *Take a moment to review today's print replica of The Seattle Times. Can you find a story that stands out to you regarding a global issue or someone that was inspired to help others?*

**Pre-Reading Questions**



- What city do you think this is?
- What do you see in this picture?
- What are the feelings/emotions in this photo?
- Why did the photographer choose a photo that was blurred?
- What do you think the article will be about?

**Comprehension Questions:**

1. In a debate that has gone from office corridors to Britain's Parliament, lawmakers put their foot down Monday and told employers to stop what?
2. Members of Parliament debated a ban on mandatory workplace high heels, in response to what?
3. Labour lawmaker Helen Jones, who helped lead a parliamentary investigation into dress codes, said she and her colleagues were shocked by what they found. What attitudes did she find among employers?
4. Monday's debate was triggered by the experience of Nicola Thorp. What happened?
5. How did Thorp take her workplace frustration and turn it into political action?
6. The British government says the law already forbids companies from discriminating against women, but a report from Parliament's Women and Equalities Committee found that "discriminatory dress codes" remain commonplace in sectors including what two industries?
7. The College of Podiatry told the committee that women who wear high heels for long periods are prone to what ailments?

8. Thorp's petition has already caused one change. Portico announced last year it was amending its policy to adopt what?

**Class Discussion Questions or Journal/Essay Prompts:**

- Were you surprised that this was happening in 2017? Why or why not?
- What is sexual discrimination?

***Thorp told the BBC after she launched the petition that “dress codes should reflect society.”***

- How can dress codes reflect society? What does Thorp mean?

***“Twenty years ago, women weren't allowed to wear trousers in the same role that I'm doing now,” she said. “And it's only because some women spoke up about that and said, ‘We feel like we have a right to wear trousers,’ that that's changed.”***

- Why is it important to take a stand when you feel you're not being treated fairly?
- Why do you think so many women in London stayed silent for so long?

***The committee said it had heard from hundreds of women “who told us about the pain and long-term damage caused by wearing high heels for long periods in the workplace, as well as from women who had been required to dye their hair blonde, to wear revealing outfits and to constantly reapply makeup.”***

***Jones said that “women told us that when they raised these concerns they were belittled.” One was told “she'd have plenty of time to rest her feet when she was unemployed.”***

- When women raised concerns, they were belittled. What does this mean?
- Are these workplace standards fair? Why or why not?
- Did these standards for women surprise you? Why or why not?

***Banker Dan Matthews said his company expected men to wear suits and ties “and I think that's a fair request.”***

***“So I suppose it's fairly contradictory in a way, because in one respect I'm saying that we men should be required to wear a suit and tie but women shouldn't wear high heels,” he said. “But I think that's just where the line happens to be at the moment.”***

- Matthews believes that the male dress code to wear suits and ties is a fair request and feels that women should wear high heels? Why is wearing high heels for women different than a suit and tie dress code standard for men?

**Civic Minds in The Seattle Times is posted to the Web on Friday. Please share the NIE program with other teachers. To sign-up for the print replica version of the newspaper please call 206/652-6290 or toll-free at 1-888/775-2655.**

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