

The Museum At FIT Essay: Fashion Resisting

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It is no secret that black people have been oppressed now for countless years throughout America's history. Whether it was through slavery, not having equal rights, or the unfair jailing/killing due to police brutality, African Americans have had it very hard living in the "Land of the Free". With that being said there have been many times where they've had to fight back and show some form of resistance so that they can get some type of fair treatment. Movements like Civil Rights movement from the 1940-60's and the protesting/looting caused all around America due to the death of George Floyd at the hands of a cop are some examples of ways where African American have had to fight for their rights.

While doing this, certain clothings were worn to show their symbol of resistance. The Museum at FIT gives us the online exhibition called "Power Mode: The Force of Fashion" by Emma McClendon. It depicts and investigates the job that style plays in establishing, strengthening, and testing power elements inside society. McClendon's exhibit shows fashion's powerful influence in a variety of settings like the courtroom, military, and protest/resistance. The OFF-WHITE (Virgil Abloh) "HOODIE" Sweatshirt really stood out to me being that it represented the unjust killing of Trayvon Martin (a black teenager shot to death in 2012 for looking "suspicious" in a "dark hoodie") at the hands of a white neighborhood watch guy named George Zimmerman.

Trayvon Martin was just a 17 year old high school student when he was fatally shot by George Zimmerman on the night of February 26, 2012 in sanford florida. Zimmerman found Martin "suspicious" because he was wearing a hoodie and followed him against police orders when he

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called them about Trayvon. He ended up shooting the young man claiming that it was for self-defense. In a widely reported trial he was charged for the murder, but then acquitted because of his claim. Nothing was done about the death of Trayvon, even though Zimmerman went against the police's authority and he was a free man. During 2012, "A simple hooded sweatshirt had become emblematic of certain assumptions in America. And desire by many to overturn those assumptions (weeks)." Thousands of people came together wearing black hoodies to represent Trayvon Martin and the stereotypes that come from being black and wearing a hooded sweatshirt. Wearing a black or grey hooded sweatshirt became a whole movement and protest around the country.

Virgil Abloh's OFF-WHITE "HOODIE" sweatshirt really stood out to me because of a time and movement that it represented. Me being a year younger than Trayvon at that time really put things into perspective for me in 2012. It showed me that I could literally lose my life because someone found me suspicious based on my skin complexion and clothes that I wear. The hoodie's meaning was so deep that "Lebron James of the Miami Heat tweeted a photo of the basketball team, wearing hoodies with heads bowed (Boyle)." The hoodie became a statement!

Virgil Abloh's OFF-White "HOODIE" is a big sign of fashion resisting. It shows the force of fashion and how clothing alone can make such a powerful statement. Emma McClendon did a very good job in adding this to her collection of Power Modes because this was a moment that shook the nation as a whole in 2012. Blue jeans, printed T-shirts, and black leather jackets are some of the other most common symbols of resistance in clothing and are very strong statements, especially when a lot of people are together and wearing it at once.

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Reference

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