Why We Should Support Florida's Sagging Pants Ban By: Morris W. O’Kelly

May 12, 2011

They say you can’t legislate morality, but you can surely legislate against stupidity.  Florida governor Rick Scott is poised to sign a bill which would ban sagging pants in the state’s public schools.  The measure, which **precludes** students from exposing any “body parts in an indecent or vulgar manner” has already been passed by both houses of the state legislature.  For some, it is a welcome attempt to bring back sense and sensibility to the public school system.  To others, it **reeks** of racially-tinged politics, ultimately to profile and harass Black men.

I would fall in the former group and nowhere near the latter.  What concerns me is that I may be in the minority, no pun intended.  Meaning, our community **eschews** common sense far too often, avoiding what is easily the right thing to do.  Opponents of this legislation I would argue fall into this second group.

The infractions and punishments are clear:

First infraction – Verbal warning and call to parent from principal’s office.
Second infraction –  Results in suspension from extracurricular activities for a period of up to five days. The parent must also meet with the principal.
Third infraction –  3-day suspension.

On the other hand, there’s always the alternative of having the child his/her damn pants up.

And if/when you do, this discussion (and law) are **moot**.  It takes serious and considerable **indifference** to get suspended from school under this law.  I would argue, it’s an indifference related to how we arrived at this point in the first place.

Suspending young Black males for wearing their pants below their butts with their underwear in plain view is not racist, it’s good sense.  We have had uniforms and dress codes in private schools and many public schools for generations.  We have dress codes in our places of employment, our restaurants and evening establishments.  Let’s embrace basic standards, common sense and stop making excuses for unacceptable behavior.  We could do far worse than expecting of our young people exactly what the world will expect of them when they become adults.

No shirt, no shoes…no service.  Pull up your pants or get suspended (on the third infraction no less).

Choose the path of least resistance and have your child pull his/her damn pants up.  When you do, this discussion (and law) are moot.

For far too long we’ve collectively **abrogated** our responsibilities as parents and stewards, allowing this behavior to run rampant.  It should have never come to this point.  The sagging pants are one of many visible reminders of a generation in jeopardy.  I don’t only hope for the success of the bill in Florida, I want it all across the nation.

The sagging fad is a direct **derivative** of the prison culture.  If we truly strive to break the cycle of Black males becoming caught up in the justice system, then it is **imperative** we no longer allow the prison culture to dictate the fashion and social mores of our young people.

I have grown tired of seeing our young men dress slovenly, with profanity-laden banter serving as their “normal” and “customary” mode of interaction.  It is time to actively expect more of our young people.  The moment we do, such Florida legislation becomes moot.  In the meantime, I say bring it on.

**Glossary**

**Poised - *Getting ready to do something***

**Reeks – *Something that smells***

**Precludes – *Something that happened before/prior***

**Eschews - *Avoids***

**Moot – *Not relevant***

**Indifference – *To not care***

**Abrogated – *To ignore/give away responsibility***

**Derivative – *Something based (derived) from something else***

**Imperative - *Important***

**Slovenly - *Sloppy***