

Chapter 7

My favorite vintage shop in Brooklyn is called Front General store. It's not the cheapest, but that's because they're pretty high end- its a lot of designer stuff. But my favorite part is in the back of the store, where they have all these stunning historic garments that feel like they should be in a museum- like authentic bomber jackets from WWII and cowboy shirts from the 1930s. But unlike a museum- you can just touch them! So I mostly visit the shop as though it's a petting zoo. And one time I was in the store just touchin' everything, I overheard a shop manager, lovingly stroking some unremarkable-looking old blue jeans. These, he said, were Big E Levis.

Hide: [00:03:48] Big E Levi's. The big difference is the Capital E red tab

On the tab on the pocket where it says Levis, the letter e is capitalized.

The difference is the denim. Is the difference. The way they dye, the quality, of course.

The shop manager, Hideya Sagawa, the one who I was overhearing that day, said that these jeans are extremely rare- Levis stopped making them in 1971.

Hide: [00:03:58] That's when start quality got cheaper and cheaper and cheaper. So even like the fifties jeans. That's like seventy years ago, everything is intact and still, it's a great indigo.

Hideya Sagawa is like an archivist of clothing. And his expertise is in

Hide: [00:31:30] American style- the the printed sweatshirt, denim jeans.

Hide himself also dresses in classic American style.

It's all about. Coordinating and putting stuff over something or Flannels and colors coordinated layers. Exactly. Layering. Layering. That's what the American people good at!

Or at least that's what we were supposed to be good at.

Hide [00:50:31] When I was living in Japan watching movies, an American thing. It's like I was always looking up to Americans like a they are cooler than us. But when I came here. Start seeing. They are... different from what I was expecting. [00:50:55][0.3]

Avery: [00:50:56] I mean, they, like Americans, weren't as cool as you thought

Hide: [00:51:01] right. ahahah. [00:51:01][0.0]

Hideya first came to the US in the 1990s. Americans were not doing well, fashion-wise. After spending the 20th century as the Ivy icons of the world, Americans suddenly found themselves totally at a loss for what to wear.

You could see our national sartorial confusion play out in shows like What Not To Wear and Queer Eye for the Straight Guy- both of which came out in 2003.

In the late 20th century, business casual had taken over, that rather than going to a place like Brooks Brothers to get fully suited and taken care of, Americans were just sort of free wheeling it, going to the mall to piece together outfits and shooting from the hip.

Hide: [00:53:02] *That was a little sad. Because to me America has to be something we can get inspired from. So that part is a little bit sad.* [00:53:23][20.8]

American had a culture of not caring about fashion, a culture of not *learning*. We expected our style to come easily and effortlessly and naturally. That was our whole thing! We were supposed to look cool because we didn't think about looking cool. But when the national dress codes got more casual, and clothing companies started skimping on quality and the mall became the de facto clothier, we didn't know where to look for help. Americans were lost.

Marx: [01:01:17] Everyone forgot how to dress.

W David Marx, author of *Ametora*, says that this, however, was not the case in Japan, where a lot of people were still very into finding and wearing high quality clothes.

Marx[01:10:39]-Japan had not gone through that big dress down and people still wear suits to work. And the Ivy League scene was still pretty big. Brooks Brothers was well established

A lot of Japanese consumers had, in their own lifetimes, needed to teach themselves how to dress. And this paid off in the development of a real culture around the *study* and cultivation of style.

Marx: And there was just much more interest in clothing. And there's all these magazines that kept the knowledge alive.

Japanese Magazines taught about how to shop, how to iron, how to mend- all in these really in depth nerdy ways.

Hide [00:05:32] That it's a magazine that is showing American Vintage.

Hideya learned how to thrift and hunt for vintage from a magazine. And not a niche one- this was a **mainstream** Japanese publication that SPECIALIZED in highlighting old American style.

Hide: [00:10:44] Boon magazine. B O O n-

Boon Magazine listed images of American garments and all of their different lines and capsule collections from different years. And if you find images of Boon Magazine- it really looks like a text book, with all these labels from different eras side by side- teaching readers how to identify

quality and what the prices should be based on year of manufacture. I mean this discourse on clothing is like rabbinical.

Hide: [00:06:05] they were showing the prices. And also that the tags that it tells you what era that all you know difference. And that's how people start learning.

And that's how Hide learned about stuff like the Big E levis. This information was out there in Japan. But while the knowledge wasn't hard to find. The clothes, however. Those had to be hunted down. So when Hide he came to the US for the first time- it was explicitly to shop. To go buy cool vintage American clothes.

And that's when I came to the States. And I drove even 7000 miles around the country looking for clothes. And that's in 1990.

Yeah, I drove 7000 miles for one month.

Avery: [00:06:40] you took that big trip just to go shopping?

Hide: [00:06:44] Yeah.

Avery: [00:06:45] by yourself?

Hide: [00:06:47] Three other guys. So four people total.

Avery: [00:06:50] And you. Were you going to bring it all back and sell it? or?

Hide: [00:06:53] Pretty much that time we are buying stuff for yourself because prices are cheaper

Basically Americans had no idea what they had. We didn't know about Big E Levis. Or quality workwear. We didn't learn about materials or manufacturers. The 90s were a time when, as David Marx writes, "Americans flocked to shiny new shopping malls, [while] Japanese buyers haunted the American heartland's most antiquated and least profitable retailers." And they made out like bandits.

[00:06:53] 1989, 1990s you get like four or five full bag of vintage stuff, including military sneakers, denims, for like \$0.60 to five bucks.

As David Marx writes in Ametora, "the consumer rush for vintage clothing caused the largest ever transfer of garments from the United States to Japan- far beyond the postwar charity drives and military shipments or even contemporary brands' regular orders of new clothing." The vintage rush was the largest ever transfer of garments from the US to Japan, how bananas is that?!

Hide: [00:09:00] Of course nobody knows what we were buying. And sometimes, like the Asian guy with the long hair with the engineer boots shows up in, like, Arkansas, Alabama. They'll be a little suspicious. Because maybe they've never seen Asian people. But the shopping wise was great.

Although, the vintage market couldn't stay great for long. After all, it was a finite supply. And most of these vintage clothes were floating around in old shops that didn't have computerized inventory systems. So this ravenous appetite for vintage in Japan naturally turned into just... making *new* clothes that were vintage-style. Japan started to manufacture high quality clothes domestically- a lot of them following the Kata of classic Ivy style.

Marx[00:57:02] And I think for a long time, these Japanese manufacturers would imitate things and try to make the perfect recreations of Ivy League style.

And it came to be that Japanese-made basics became even higher quality and more beautiful than the American styles they had initially studied. So much so that Americans fell in love with them too.

Teri: LOOOVE Uniqlo

Avery: [01:14:22] Really.

Teri: Oh, my God!

Veteran fashion journalist Teri Agins says that Japanese companies like uniqlo paid attention to subtleties of cut and qualities in a way American companies had stopped doing.

Teri:[01:18:00] *A lot of American brands, a lot of things are really boxy. And I think the one thing we all liked about Uniqlo is, is that the sweaters actually stopped at the waist.*

I remember in 2006 I took a pilgrimage to the Soho uniqlo when it was the first to open in new york city, and it was this real *scene*. Everyone was losing their minds over these simple affordable clothes. And I remember thinking that Uniqlo had looked so Japanese to me- it didn't dawn on me that this was an evolution and an iteration on a mid century American look.

And it wasn't only uniqlo holding the torch of ivy style in America- in the aughts, a number of new fashion blogs started to pop up

[01:02:30] Scans of japanese magazines started showing up on these blogs.

those Japanese magazines like Men's club, that were showing *how to dress in American clothes*.

Marx[01:13:18] *So Japan was just sitting on all this stuff. And I think once that fashion blog kinda movement started it really just seamlessly merged.*

And one fashion blog, A Continuous Lean, discovered the 1965 book Take Ivy. It had been a cult classic in Japan for a while now, but when A Continuous Lean published some scans of Take Ivy on their site, it blew up.

And people couldn't believe what they were seeing.

These images of handsome mid century Princeton students wearing their weird layers of shirts and sweaters and chinos, surrounded by all this Japanese writing

Marx[00:44:39] And then in 2010 Powerhouse Books in Brooklyn did the first English edition. It'd never been in English, and they did an English edition and that was a runaway best seller. And suddenly people around the world were obsessing over these Japanese images of American college students from 1965.

In America, it was time to go back to basics. And Basics, now meant some version of Kensuke Ishizu's vision of Ivy.

Marx[00:53:47] American traditional style is in some ways the most basic style for men in Japan. And that was what Kensuke Ishizu wanted to do in the first place. He just believed that young people did not have a basic, casual style to follow. Like he just wanted to make the basic basic clothing that Japan didn't have.

Kensuke Ishizu died on May 24th 2005 at the age of 93. At the time of his death, millions of Japanese students, executives, employees, and retirees were following his principles of Ivy style. He had taught a generation how to dress.

And before he died, he went to a Uniqlo and he was walking around the Uniqlo and he said, This is what I wanted to do.

[pause]

If you search for Van Jacket today, you'll find a Japanese company that got the rights to the brand name. So Van Jacket exists, but under different management that has nothing to do with the Ishizu family. And this version of Van jacket is making their versions of varsity jackets and chunky sweaters that you're supposed to wear in layers and boat totes. It's trying to do a modern take on Ivy. And I get it- I get the appeal. Ivy is like vanilla ice cream. In that you could really dress it up as much as you want and put anything on it. But I've never really liked vanilla. For all its subtlety and ubiquity, and versatility, there's a lot of contemporary baggage around preppy clothes. And there's personal baggage there too, especially if you went to middle school or high school in the aughts.

Doo dooo doooooo

Some version of Ivy has survived every way that trends have worked. Over time, as people followed trends to look rich, or look democratic, or look young, or to look cool, a oxford button down and loafers have remained viable options. Ivy is on standby as a put-together look you

can always wear to date night or a job interview. It is not a trend, it is just always there, just below the surface. And yet there are moments when the look becomes trendy. When it gets turned up really preppy preppy with multiple popped collars.

Lisa: [00:01:49] I can tell you that in 1980, when the preppy book came out, I was asked on tour every day, maybe eight times a day, depending on how many interviews I had to do. What is a preppy Lisa? Lisa, tell us what is a preppy?

Thirty years after the Preppy Handbook, Lisa Birnbach wrote a followup book called True Prep. And she took it on tour to 28 cities. And this time, in 2010 no one asked what a preppy was- But Lisa found that preppy clothes were still as relevant as ever.

Lisa: [00:02:30] And, you know, the the default of a sweater, a shirt and a pair of pants, worn casually, deliberately unaffected, or affected.

This look was no longer called Preppy at all.

That's how everybody dresses now. Everybody! Everywhere.

It's so relevant and ubiquitous that it doesn't need a name anymore. Preppy is a standard. An inoffensive, friendly, legible look. And this is the secret weapon that makes the style so easily weaponized.

Tal: [00:01:38] probably the most significant set of documents on this particular topic is the many, many, many leaked chats of the organizers of the Unite the Right rally,

The 2017 rally with the tiki torches in Charlottesville. I'm not going to play the clip of the white supremacists chanting jews will not replace us. Eventually all their organizing chats were leaked

And a great deal of what they were talking about was exactly how they would like to appear

Tal Lavin, the author of Culture Warlords: My Journey into the Dark Web of White Supremacy, says that the rally organizers were engaged in very rigorous debate about symbolism and messaging. What flags to carry, what symbols to use.

[00:02:03] Would they have a uniform? And they did settle on the uniform, and the uniform was khakis and white shirts. So this very consciously preppy image.

I mean you can tell they really considered fashion as a message because they're all dressed weirdly identically in their collared shirts.

Their aim was to say, we're no longer hiding in the shadows as the extreme right. We are a part of the political landscape. We're undeniable. And their way of expressing that- a big part of that- was to dress respectfully.

As opposed to dressing like brownshirts or militiamen or punks.

Tal: [00:03:01] And so the specific optics goal of the khaki shirts and all that was to sort of blur the lines between the far right and everybody else. and that line has been very consciously moved very often by extremists who are dressed to look ...Like young Republicans. Like, you know, good, reasonable neighbors.

And this has been a potent strategic move for a while now. When David Duke ran for Governor of Louisiana in 1991, he took off the klan hood and put on a blue blazer. I mean he didn't win but it helped him be taken seriously as a viable candidate.

Tal [00:44:03] given how utterly gormless and stupid the press is – putting on a polo works! There's often this like and he was so normal and made pasta he was just like you and me. But he just happened to have these quirky beliefs, like, all Jews should die and we never let in another immigrant. You know? But they have this uniform of plausible deniability. And like, it's very much not a coincidence that that armor is a preppy shirt.

For example Tucker Carlson is perhaps America's foremost preppy fashion plate. And Lisa always notices preppy clothes in the news-

Lisa: Like that horrible couple, the McCloskeys who lived in St Louis and had guns out in their front porch, but he was wearing a Brooks Brothers polo shirt.

Which made me wonder... how is Brooks Brothers doing these days?

Avery: [00:55:04] Did you shop at Brooks Brothers before? [00:55:05][1.5]

Ken: [00:55:06] No, I did not. Honestly, I did not. I was not a Brooks shopper. .

Avery: [00:04:13] And when did you become the CEO of Brooks Brothers?

Ken: [00:04:15] Uh, I can-I became CEO in September of 2020, right when we purchased the company.

In the thick of the pandemic, Brooks Brothers was bought for \$325 million- less than half of what Marks and Spencer paid for it. It was bought by SPARC Group, who owns a bunch of brands.

Ken: [00:44:11]Let's see there is Nautica Aeropostale Forever 21, Eddie Bauer, Reebok

Brooks was the old dog in the group.

[00:03:55] And so when I first started working on the brand, I was just thinking to myself, we have to make this brand work.

Ken Ohashi, the CEO of Brooks Brothers

Ken: [00:37:39] and obviously I'm the first minority ever, the Brooks Brothers. From a CEO perspective in America, it's obviously always been run by white men. And now you have a gay Asian CEO running it, which is, you know, interesting in a lot of ways.

And I have to say, the clothes Brooks has been making later, under the artistic direction of Michael Bastian, are really fun and bold. To me its very fun and cheeky 2010s vampire looking.

[00:04:50] and when we purchased the company, the company really, really got narrow in focus. it wasn't really a lifestyle brand. At the end of the day, it was a dress shirt and suiting brand, and that's what people really knew about Brooks Brothers. And historically, it wasn't always the case, right?

Right, basically this pioneer of sportswear is trying to get back into the game they created.

Ken Getting back to Brooks Brothers of eighty years ago, it was really about a full lifestyle collection and we're finally moving in that direction.

Avery [00:17:47] So what is the I mean, the question is like, what is the lifestyle? Is it how preppy is it?

Ken [00:17:53] No, I think it's a it's I think it's a modern, active, full lifestyle. You know, I don't want to label things. I'm not sure the word preppy is a word that is used as frequently anymore.

I mean, sure, call it whatever you want. But Brooks is playing with lot of oxford button downs and cable knits and blazers and madras.

[00:18:03] It feels a little antiquated to to say preppy, it feels a little exclusive. And we're certainly not that we want to make sure that we're inclusive.

Under Ken's leadership, Brooks now offers more women's clothes, and expanded the men's sizing

Ken [00:12:19] One of the first things I did when I joined the company is we graded all the product down to extra small because I wanted an entry point for everyone.

This kind of sizing is really helpful for trans men.

[00:12:02]I also think that there's something happening with unisex dressing, where things are more genderless, and I think Brooks like plays perfectly into that.

So this is the challenge. Trying to update while still not losing track of the old guard.

[00:09:17] in a big way we really care about our loyal customer because over two thirds of our transactions are actually done through a Brooks Brothers loyalty member, which is a huge, huge number

[00:09:37]But at the same time, we really have to be thinking about like - putting. Brooks Brothers through a modern lens? And a lot of that has to do with sportswear and thinking about sportswear and trends that are happening.

Avery: [00:09:47] Which is to say- sweat pants. [00:09:48][1.0]

Ken: [00:09:50] I think, listen. we do do sweat pants, but we do in our way. I mean, it's a very, very soft, luxe, double pique sweat pant... You can get it monogrammed. Right. And 25% of our sweats are actually monogrammed. The customer chooses to get their sweatpants monogrammed. So we know we have a - we have a special customer. So.

Ah, their special customer. This is Brooks Brothers' blessing and its curse. Because while it means they have this roster of long term die hard loyalty members... a legacy company like Brooks Brothers will always also be measured against the way they *used to be*

Teri: [02:56:14] The people who wore Brooks Brothers years and years and years ago, I don't want to hear from them

Veteran fashion journalist Teri Agins.

Teri: because they're just going complain because- they're going to complain. And also too what happens, the memory gets really weird because people start to think

Avery: [02:56:33] Thing were made so much better then. [02:56:34][0.8]

Teri: [02:56:34] Yeah, yeah. Everything was made so much better then.

Sure, in the past garments might have been more durable and better constructed. But not in a way that would feel good to most people now. Not in comparison to the soft stretchy clothes our modern bodies have gotten accustomed to.

Teri: [02:19:32] you don't really want the old clothes, old clothes, the way the fabrics were, the thing the things are stiff. People were not comfortable in a lot of those clothes. You know, people now, they need something with Stretch. They need something that's going to fit. So you want that, but you want a version that is. So in other words, you want it to look the part. You want it to have all the detail, but you don't want it...

Avery: [02:19:48] It's literal nostalgia. It's a better version of the past. [02:19:51][2.7]

Teri: [02:19:51] Exactly. Yeah. Is literal. That's a good- That's a good term. It's literal nostalgia. You don't want the real authentic thing because it's not functional.

What Brooks Brothers is trying to do- and what a lot of companies are trying to do- is revisit the past in a new way. That's the whole genius of Ralph Lauren was that the brand has been

constantly recycling and revisiting and reviving and revamping old styles - in new fabrics and colors. That's kept him afloat all these decades.

Dallas: [01:15:18] how has he been able to withstand the storm inside this space that seemingly no one else could get through?

Lo-head Dallas Penn.

Dallas: No one has been able to get this kind of run!

Avery[01:15:44] Do you think it's because he sort of hitched his wagon to preppy?

Dallas: [01:15:51] He hitched his wagon to nostalgia, and preppy is part of it, but he hitched his wagon solidly to nostalgia.

This is what preppy has been about. It's what it's always been about. And it's what fashion, as an industry has banked on. Nostalgia.. Originally, Ivy was about wearing college clothes to remember what a great time you had in college. 1950s ivy was about remembering how simple life was in the 30s. In the 1960s they romanticized the entirety of the past, including, according to Thomas Frank, the 1950s

Thomas Frank[00:55:24] Sha na na played at Woodstock.

Sha na na the doo wop revival band that, famously, would go on to do the soundtrack for Grease.

So the sixties weren't even over before. They were all people were already nostalgic for the 1950s, you know

And in the 70s movies romanticized the time before JFK and MLK were assassinated and in the 1980s Ivy was about remembering some hazy period when America was great. And that 80s boom was why, when Andre Benjamin was growing up in Atlanta, his schoolmates were quote "wearing two or three polo shirts at a time." And when Andre Benjamin became Andre 3000 and started wearing preppy clothes to reference his youth, and he became a part of the culture of Vampire Weekend and Gossip Girl and Kanye West in his College Dropout phase, which became the preppy look of *my* youth in the early aughts. It's like ivy is stuck in its own feedback loop, where every generation grows up with some version of it that turns into their own form of nostalgia.

Lorynn: [01:03:50] nostalgia has an incredibly powerful effect on fashion for a variety of ways.

Dr. Lorynn Divita of Baylor University.

Nostalgia is when. We look. Back at an era fondly. Glossing over. The bad parts. And. Remembering through rose colored glasses the good parts. And. Ignoring the. Unpleasantness associated with that era.

I see a lot of nostalgia for the early 2000s now- and sometimes I feel it too. Like ah, things were so much easier when we had flip phones and no social media. But the other day I was watching this beautifully excoriating speech against the war on terror that Arundhati Roy gave in 2002

11:53 “to fuel yet another war. This time against Iraq, by cynically manipulating people’s grief....is to cheapen and de-value grief

and I was like oh RIGHT. That was a really scary time. We were pouring money into this endless war and we didn’t know why and there was so much fear and paranoia and enforced patriotism everywhere. But I see clothes from that era for sale. I see the tracksuits and the low rise jeans and crop tops. And none of the fear or the guilt or the paranoia.

Lorynn: [01:16:52] It would be almost impossible to expect a line that highlighted the ugliness of a prior era to sell very well.

Fashion is a terrible way to reckon with complexity. There is really so little room for nuance. Like sure, maybe on a runway or a museum you can try to show something confusing or difficult or unpalatable. But by and large fashion is a commercial art. Which means it has to be appealing.

So that’s sort of the trade off with nostalgia. We accept that we’re highlighting the good and overlooking the bad of the era, because | we don’t want our fashion to make us feel bad. So you just have to accept that in the nostalgia effect, something is going to get left out of the story.

Case in point: when I tried to ask the CEO of Brooks Brothers, about the company’s history making livery, which was worn, in some cases, by enslaved people- their PR person, who was there in the room, immediately stopped me and didn’t want to talk about that on record. Fashion is revisionist. And Ivy - cheerful, legible Ivy, has *always* been a look that has masked some sort of loss or instability or injustice. And yet each time it has come back, it comes carrying a longing for another better time.

Lorynn: [01:14:34] These good memories of this simpler, happier time in their life are triggered, and the nostalgia effect actually makes consumers more. Willing to spend money. To. Enjoy this sense of shared community and nostalgia.

And this all makes sense in theory- But on an individual level, I don’t feel a lot of shared community and nostalgia in preppy clothes. As I have been saying over and over- I did not wear these clothes. I didn’t identify this way. But maybe I fuckin should. This is how I put it to Lisa Birnbach

Avery: [01:12:07] *I started my project from a place of curiosity. And I considered myself an outsider. I was like, Oh, I'm really curious about Ivy style and collegiate style and what it became. And then reading your book, I was like, Oh, am I a preppy?*

Lisa: [01:12:37] *It took you a long enough time to say it.*

I feel so embarrassed to say this like it's some revelation. But when I actually looked at all the criteria laid out in the preppy handbook, the aesthetics didn't matter so much as the raw reality. Which is that I went to a prep school. I, Avery Trufelman, am preppy.

-----BREAK-----

I'm so sorry. This really truly wasn't anything I was intending to hide. I mean I should have probably told you earlier but, really, as I said to Lisa, I stupidly thought it didn't matter. I didn't think going to prep school made me any sort of expert in Ivy, because I mostly tried not to engage with that whole culture.

Avery: I haven't been here in 13 years.

But Lisa Birnbach made me realize that I should be honest with you. Even though I know you're probably judging me. Because I definitely judged all the other kids when I first went to prep school in high school.

[00:12:19] So the vibe that -sort of you think of your time capsule, right? If you think about what the kids in 2005 to 2009 were wearing, cause that was your tenure. Your tenure here, right? You started in the fall of oh five, right? You were new in ninth grade.

Avery: [00:12:32] *Yes. Right. HOW DO YOU REMEMBER THIS!?*

[00:24:42] I have a good memory.

The principal of my high school- or as we would say- the head of the upper school- is still there.

Avery: [00:47:44] *I mean, do you find in the time that you've been here, some classes have been like preppier than others?*

[00:47:49] Absolutely.

Apparently 2004 was a real preppy peak.

[00:48:18] Lots of cable knits and sweaters and lots of like collar popping. And I joked about like the people who would wear like three polo shirts on top of each other. That was a thing! That was definitely a vibe in the 2000s

And I remember seeing all this collar popping when I arrived and I was like wow I don't know if I can handle this. But truly, there wasn't much room for self expression outside of preppiness, because my prep school had a really strict dress code. There were no jeans, no sneakers, no

shirts with writing on them. No short skirts. Shoulders had to be covered. Shirts had to be tucked in. Within these confines, preppy clothing was the path of least resistance. And so I resolved to take the path of most resistance.

[00:33:57] you were a button pusher though because you had a different style. The red beret. Avery's red beret was. That was a look, right?

I don't remember a red beret, but I trust my principal's memory better than mine, actually. I wouldn't be surprised. In those days I would try anything, *everything* to avoid wearing preppy clothes. I wore cowboy boots. I wore vintage flapper dresses, I wore long hippy beads. Often I wore all these things all at once. If my outfits were a sentence, it would say Colorless Green Ideas Sleep Furiously. My clothes were experimental, to put it nicely. But truly they were a little bit illegible.

This was definitely, first and foremost, some classic teenage rebellion. I didn't want to be like everyone else! I wanted to think I was different! But I also think, when I was seventeen, I was coming into a larger awareness. These were the years leading up to occupy wall street. I was reading about the gaping inequality in the world all around me. And here I was in private school. I was very aware of my position- I was ashamed of it- and preppy clothes, to me, were elitism and obliviousness incarnate. I hated them.

And so I was pretty surprised, when I went back to campus, that my prep school had gotten rid of the dress code almost entirely. There were a ton of kids walking around in athleisure. It was because of the pandemic .

[00:14:47] we very intentionally said, Just get back here. You're coming back to a mask, you're coming back to weekly testing, but it was challenging so we said let casual sort of prevail.

The school has since been working on reinstituting *some* kind of dress code. They're having a lot of talks to consider what would be comfortable and expressive and inclusive.

Andy: [01:04:29] But no I wouldn't expunge the preppy look if I were starting from scratch. because I think it's functional. I think it works. ...within reason. It's an accessible it's dress code, too, right? I mean, like, yes, you can go out and spend \$85 on an expensive polo shirt, but you can also get a three pack of them for ten bucks. So it's I think it's an accessible look, I think -and I think it's important because - belonging matters, right?

Before making this series, "belonging" was probably one of the very last words I would have ever chosen to associate with preppy clothes. I found the style as alienating and exclusive as the boardrooms and country clubs where I imagined these clothes were worn. But it wasn't until actually doing this research- seeing how many people have taken this look and made it their own, that I saw it has actually indeed meant belonging. To so many different people.

Marx[01:18:30] you know Ivy League style, again, has this image of being something very WASPy. And yet, you know, it's production and manufacture in the United States was mostly Jewish American. And the more interesting iterations of it often happened with black Americans. And then what has kind of preserved it over the years has been these Japanese brands and Japanese companies. So it's much more complicated than I think people think it is

W. David Marx's book, *Ametora: How Japan Saved American Style*, made me realize that the history of Ivy is so much richer and more complicated than the simple clothing itself could ever show.

Marx[01:07:50] The clothing- It's just dress down. It's not ostentatious. It has a. Really natural, modest sense to it. And so flashy comes and goes. But, you know, if you're going to do something modest, it has to be modest and rooted in tradition. And that's why I think we keep going back to Ivy League style.

In hindsight it's obvious why I had been drawn to researching ivy. I had to stare down the style I had spent my whole life avoiding. And in this confrontation, I actually realized how cool it is. It looks good, and it looks good to a lot of people in a lot of different contexts. Lo head Dallas Penn said it best- this is a look that has come to be about accessibility.

Dallas [02:33:40] I think that's that's what prep or prep look in genders right now. For me.

Avery: [02:33:47] Accessibility. [02:33:47][0.0]

Dallas: [02:33:48] Yeah. In terms of being accessible as a person, like my information, my knowledge, my- you know, my love for the earth, I'm giving it up.

And yes, hedge funds and eating clubs are still as exclusive and unattainable as ever, but my pet theory is that ivy clothes have become everything that the ivy institutions themselves are not. They're accessible. They're relatively affordable. And they're Friendly. If these clothes were making a sentence, they'd say hi. How are you.

I think if you're rocking prep now, that's where your mind is. That;s how its evolved. It maybe started in a place that was real exclusive and dealt with wealth, but now its inside a space where the vibe's different. We view it now from its current iteration, and that's accessibility of humanity.

I love this interpretation. And I think Dallas is right. The clothes have an incredible power to communicate a sense of openness – a power that the far right has taken and perverted. But a lot of people can use this power in a lot of ways. Including me. And it's only in the course of doing this research into Ivy that I've finally started wearing collared shirts and a tennis sweater I got at J. Press. But you know, I try to wear them in my own way. That's the whole reason Take Ivy was so popular, right? It wasn't about the clothes themselves. It's how you style them. But now that I know what it is. I like Ivy. I like it a lot.

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