The intertwining of our clothes and our Constitution raises fundamental questions of hierarchy, sexuality, and democracy. From our hairstyles to our shoes, constitutional considerations both constrain and confirm our daily choices. In turn, our attire and appearance provide multilayered perspectives on the United States Constitution and its interpretations. Our garments often raise First Amendment issues of expression or religion, but they also prompt questions of equality on the basis of gender, race, and sexuality. At work, in court, in schools, in prisons, and on the streets, our clothes and grooming provoke constitutional controversies. Additionally, the production, trade, and consumption of apparel implicate constitutional concerns including colonial sumptuary laws, slavery, wage and hour laws, and current notions of free trade. The regulation of what we wear – or don’t – is ubiquitous. Ruthann Robson, a noted constitutional scholar and commentator, examines the rights to expression and equality, as well as the restraints on government power, as they both limit and allow control of our most personal choices of attire and grooming.

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Dressing Constitutionally

HIERARCHY, SEXUALITY, AND DEMOCRACY
FROM OUR HAIRSTYLES TO OUR SHOES

Ruthann Robson
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