

The White House flip flop flap

Has the country which considers personal comfort a part of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" discovered its limits?



WHEN YOU'RE GOING *to meet* with the president of the United States at the White House, what do you *wear* on your feet? If you said 'Prada' or 'Manolo Blahnik', or even 'Jimmy Choo', perhaps you're a little *behind the times*.

Four of the nine young women on the Northwestern University's national championship women's lacrosse team, invited to the White House in July to celebrate their championship season, wore *flip-flop* sandals along with their dresses and skirts. The *hullabaloo* that followed the publication of the Wildcats' team photo with President Bush was immediately *dubbed* "The Flip Flop Flap" by the Associated Press.

Moms aghast

"YOU WORE FLIP-FLOPS TO THE WHITE HOUSE?!" player Kate Darmody's older brother objected in an e-mail, after he saw the photo on the team's Web site. A front-page story in the Chicago Tribune followed. Reporters jumped on the story.

The lacrosse champions' choice of *footwear* made *headlines* in newspapers from coast to coast. Most of the players' moms, dads and *siblings*, pursued by reporters for interviews, agreed that flip-flop footwear, worn by women everywhere from the beach to the office across

the United States this summer, was too casual for a visit with the president.

"Look, nobody was wearing old beach flip-flops," said Aly Josephs, who added that she spent \$16 on the *rhinestone*-decorated pair she wore.

Where comfort is king

In a country where *jog suits* are worn to run to the *mall* more often than to run; where 'sweat suits' decorated with *sequins* and *pearls* are not designed for *sweat*; where *dress-down* Fridays at the office are beginning to disappear among Relaxed Mondays, Informal Tuesdays, Indifferent Wednesdays and *Sloppy* Thursdays; where clean, hole-less blue jeans are considered

'*dressy*' and where *sneakers* are routinely worn with suits by *commuting* executives, the collective *raised eyebrow* of the nation was almost as much of a story as the flip-flop episode itself.

Miami Herald Columnist Leonard Pitts mused, "We have *elevated* personal comfort to virtually the status of a constitutional *right*. But in the process, maybe we have lost the capacity for a sense of moment, a sense of occasion, a sense that there are things you respect. People keep telling me this is a more *laid-back* era. And that's all well and good. But I find myself *wondering*: how far back can you lay before you fall over completely?"

Cool under pressure

The athletes were pretty much *unfazed* by the attention. They are, after all, champions and no *strangers* to the spotlight. In fact they displayed some admirable grace.

In the *aftermath* of the controversy, Darmody and teammate Shelby Chlopak said players planned *to auction off* the flip-flops they wore to the White House, with the *proceeds* to go toward a fund for a 10-year-old girl with a brain tumor.

Look for your chance to buy the famous footwear on Ebay! They're guaranteed to go with anything, especially controversy. ■

Just for fun

American *flip-flop* = French *thong*
American *thong* = French *string*

<i>to meet</i>	rencontrer
<i>to wear</i>	porter
<i>to be behind the times</i>	ne plus être dans le coup
<i>flip-flops</i>	des tongs
<i>hullabaloo</i>	un raffut
<i>to dub</i>	qualifier de
<i>flap</i>	un remue-ménage
<i>footwear</i>	des articles chaussants
<i>headline</i>	un titre
<i>siblings</i>	les frères et sœurs
<i>rhinestone</i>	en strass
<i>jog suit</i>	un jogging
<i>mall</i>	une galerie marchande
<i>sweat suit</i>	un survêtement
<i>sequin</i>	une paillette
<i>pearl</i>	une perle

<i>sweat</i>	la sueur
<i>dress-down</i>	décontracté
<i>sloppy</i>	relâché
<i>dressy</i>	habillé
<i>sneakers</i>	des baskets
<i>to commute</i>	faire la navette
<i>to raise an eyebrow</i>	tiquer
<i>to elevate</i>	élever
<i>right</i>	un droit
<i>laid-back</i>	relax
<i>to wonder</i>	se demander
<i>unfazed</i>	imperturbable
<i>stranger</i>	un étranger
<i>aftermath</i>	les suites
<i>to auction off</i>	vendre aux enchères
<i>proceeds</i>	les recettes