

MANIFESTO FOR THAT UNFORTUNATE STAIN ON MY PANTS

1. The stain is not just a stain is not just a stain is not just a stain.

It is a strobing cherry-red CAUTION, a plaintive siren, a somnolent intercom voice, a subversively conservative Judd Apatow film, warning deli patrons, café flâneurs, and summertime strollers about the dangers of excess condiment, the unreliability of Those Damn Sippy Cup Tops, and the structural integrity issues of ice cream fleeing a wilting sun. This could be you next, infant child creature waving around that Rocket Pop like a baton, it says, if it could theoretically speak.

Some in the academy have argued, in the pages of *The Journal Of Foodstuff Deposit And Residue Studies (JFDRS)*, that stains are inherently amoral, the unfortunate splash of an indifferent universe, but this fails to acknowledge Alfred Demint's groundbreaking work on the Cognitive Self-Flagellating Flaccidity theory, which I feel has conclusively proved the link between stains and subconscious intent. Stains are always and everywhere a moral phenomenon.

2. The stain dangles visions of utopia.

In his celebrated opus *The Stain As Organizing Principle*, Edible Spectrologist and Marxist historian Anthony Jacques traces the history of the stain as fundamental to the socio-economic conflicts of historical materialism, the stain itself being sort of physical manifestation of the labor-capital divide, historically speaking. Thus, if I am reading this correctly, not until every shirt and skirt and khaki and capri are besmirched and festooned with the wrath of condiments can we forge the timeless temporal paradise, or something.

Point number two runs in direct opposition to point number one, but because I am exceedingly erudite I am incapable of detecting this. That is, unless the stain is at once reactionary and revolutionary in a sort of quantum dualism.

3. The stain must not misrepresent its community or origins.

The stain is fundamentally an expression of its muddled visage, be it neo-Marxist mustard or neo-liberal coffee.

The stain in question is an asymmetric sickly yellow splatter uncomfortably close to the crotch and all its prurient associations. A few tawny islands lie off its coastline in the otherwise murky ocean of burnt amber chinos. Consequently, my stain must not presume to speak authoritatively on the dainty dilettantism of crème fraîche.

4. Stains are not theorists.

Although the stain may bemoan the latent nihilism of a world in which poor hand-eye coordination carelessly dictates the fate of cloth—and may privately kvetch about its tragic luck with its insouciant, unvarnished neighbors—the stain should not introduce issues of agency or privilege into the conversation. The conversation is about pants.

5. Stains are not devices of upward mobility.

You do not chance upon a delectable dagger of Heinz splayed upon your thigh with dollar signs cartoonishly replacing your pupils. Stains are not a solution to long-term structural unemployment nor stagnating wages nor rising income inequality nor will they rejuvenate the American manufacturing sector. Clayton Christensen has not written a Harvard Business School case study analyzing stains through the prism of steel mills. Do not believe charlatans evangelizing to drop it all and slather your pants up in relish, as appetizing as that may sound.

6. Use less mustard next time.

