



OPINION | By, Colleen Considine | Oct 19 2018, 11:20am

# do you have to shave your head to be a feminist?

## Is shaving your head a female liberation or a passing fashion trend?

Figure 1. Emma Watson Elle magazine

SHARE  TWEET 

Matty Bovan’s candy coloured array of buzzcuts all over SS19 to Rose McGowan walking for Nicholas Kirkwood is a style to stay. To be part of the ‘group’ you most definitely have to shave your hair, at least that’s how I feel. Left, right and centre every young woman wants to be ‘rebellious’ with their ‘step out of my comfort zone’ attitude. It’s damn right annoying, going to a rally then finding out that you don’t fit the look because you decided to do your makeup. There’s a feeling of feminists confiding to ‘armpit hair’ stereotypes I ask, do you have to look a certain way to feel ‘liberated’? You don’t need to be told by anyone how you should look, not a man and most certainly not, by another woman.



Figure 2. Matty Bovan backstage SS19. Photography Charlotte O’Shea



Figure 3. Rose McGowan Nicholas Kirkwood SS19. IMAXTEE

Throughout history a woman's appearance has been repeatedly questioned, 'you are wearing too much makeup' 'you suit long hair' women. cannot. Win! Wearing Whistles, "This is what a feminist looks like" in bold on your white slogan tee does that suddenly make you a valid feminist? Or do pinstripe navy mannish trousers make you any less of a woman?

There's a pressure to act and 'look' a certain way within the activist society which is simply frustrating since we still live in a patriarchal system. As someone who fights for equality but continues to wear red lipstick, mascara and currently with long hair. All while enjoying a girly dress up (once in a while) there's the need to dress to show that I'm 'not letting the side down'.

However, the buzz cut isn't new or 'revolutionary', Ancient Egyptians went through a beeswax and tweezer full body hair removal treatment, and Ancient Greeks deemed hair uncivilized. There are religions, Christian women who hide their hair by wearing a veil or Muslim women who wear a hijab. Hinduism, boys and girls at the age of four have their hair shaved, teaching them humbleness and devotion.

It's 2018 for God's sake, women don't dress for men, we dress for ourselves, expression through fashion. Some may respond with, 'by wearing makeup, you don't want equal pay due to its sexist overtones'. Well, shut-up, sit down we are only talking about a bit of red lippy here. Like the 'freedom trash can' of 1968 where second-wave feminists burnt "instruments of female torture" shaving your hair opposes male ideals of beauty that oppresses women. Something I thoroughly agree with.

Do men have to dress in a certain way to be masculine? More than an army of women, men are feminists too but you won't hear judgement over their beard length or that they haven't many tattoos. Enough is enough! As Spare Rib magazine, (1983) (Wilson, 2003:236) said, "Is not the whole point of feminism to realise her right to control her own life and make decisions for herself?"

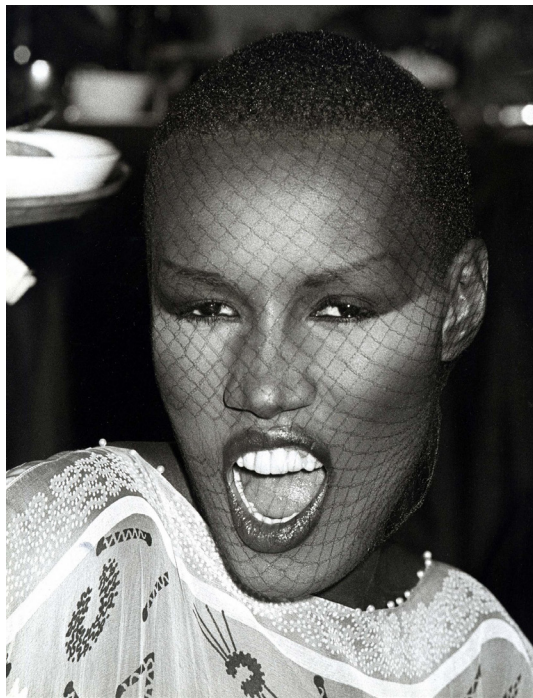


Figure 4. Grace Jones by Ron Galella

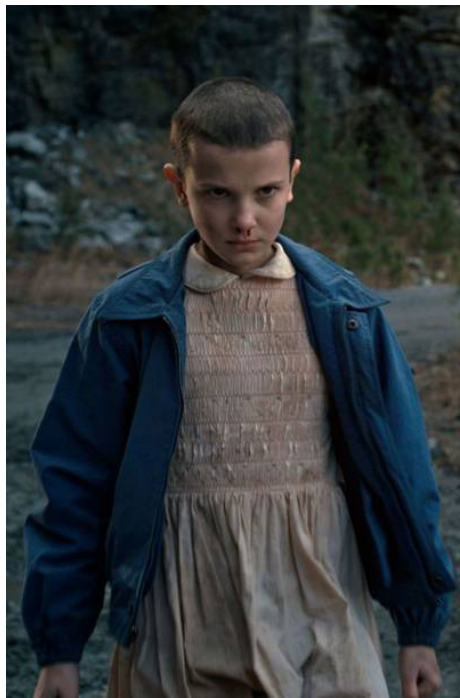


Figure 5. Millie Bobby Brown, Stranger Things, Netflix, Vogue



Figure 6. Liv Little The Guardian, Lennon Gregory

Although, as we have seen from Grace Jones in the 70s to Millie Bobby Brown in Stranger Things (2016) or Liv Little (founder of all woman publication Galdem) the buzzcut creates a movement which empowers young women to simply love themselves. However, with the 2017 Dove Global Girls Beauty Confidence report found that in the UK alone, only 39% of girls had high body esteem, while globally that number was 46%. Judging another for not looking the right way can have a dramatic effect on body image.

University lecturer at the UCA, Dr Julie Blanchard told me, "Police the ways men look at, objectify, ogle, possess women with their eyes and their actions, rather policing the women's bodies. Women should be free to express themselves anyway in which they wish, expose their bodies, or not, as they desire. The problem is the violence of men's gaze and their actions, not other women."

As there isn't a handy rulebook on 'How to make bread to be the perfect housewife' (fortunately) however, social media often feel like Judge Judy on body image. The 'feeling of liberation' from a buzzcut the same can be said for a pair of six-inch heels on a night out. As Esther Tognozzi, the owner of the salon where Britney Spears shaved her head in 2007 said, "it's only hair, it grows back". Dress however you please, but this doesn't stop people from telling you what you should and shouldn't look like on and off social media.

Feminism doesn't need to be another shit show of rules, build up independent women, don't make everyone feel the need to follow your style. Unlike high school, you don't have to 'fit in' so if you want to shave your hair, go for it and if you want to wear your metallic pink mini skirt and still be feminist then hop to it.

At the end of the day it's only a fucking haircut, get over it.



## Bibliography:

- Alam, S. (2006) 'The symbology (or meaning) of shaving head.' In: Technology of heart [online] At: <http://www.techofheart.co/2006/02/symbology-or-meaning-of-shaving-head.html> (accessed 17/10/2018)
- Benson, S. (2018) 'Can you be girly and still be a feminist?' In: Betty [online] At: <https://www.betty.me/life/can-you-be-girly-and-still-be-a-feminist/> (accessed 17/10/2018)
- D'Avignon, A. (2016) 'A Woman Shorn: The Disruptive History of the Female Shaved Head.' In: i-D [online] At: <https://www.vice.com/sv/article/wdax4x/a-woman-shorn-the-disruptive-history-of-the-female-shaved-head-345> (accessed 17/10/2018)
- Dalton, R. (2015) 'the empowering history of shaved heads in fashion.' In: i-D [online] At: [https://i-d.vice.com/en\\_au/article/59gd3z/the-empowering-history-of-shaved-heads-in-fashion](https://i-d.vice.com/en_au/article/59gd3z/the-empowering-history-of-shaved-heads-in-fashion) (accessed 17/10/2018)
- Fustich, K. (2018) 'Being a woman with a shaved head: some thoughts.' In: Medium [online] At: <https://medium.com/@katefustich/being-a-woman-with-a-shaved-head-some-thoughts-c259fd751714> (accessed 17/10/2018)
- i-D Staff. (2016) 'the radical resurgence of the female buzz cut' In: i-D [online] At: [https://i-d.vice.com/en\\_uk/article/9kyj8d/the-radical-resurgence-of-the-female-buzz-cut](https://i-d.vice.com/en_uk/article/9kyj8d/the-radical-resurgence-of-the-female-buzz-cut) (accessed 17/10/2018)
- Igneri, J. (2017) 'A Brief Look At The Empowering History Of The Female Buzz Cut' In: Nylon [online] At: <https://nylon.com/articles/significance-of-female-buzz-cuts> (accessed 17/10/2018)
- Jones, L. (2017) 'When a woman crops her hair it sends a powerful message.' In: The Guardian [online] At: <https://www.theguardian.com/fashion/2017/may/07/when-a-woman-crops-her-hair-it-can-send-a-powerful-message> (accessed 17/10/2018)
- Reetz, S. (2014) 'How do you dress like a feminist? On learning how to dress how I want.' In: Bustle [online] At: <https://www.bustle.com/articles/20686-how-do-you-dress-like-a-feminist-on-learning-to-dress-how-i-want> (accessed 17/10/2018)
- Siddique H. (2017) 'Poor body image makes girls less assertive and risks health, study finds.' In: The Guardian [online] At: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/oct/05/poor-body-image-makes-girls-less-assertive-and-risks-health-study-finds> (accessed 17/10/2018)
- Wilson, E. (2003) 'Feminism and Fashion' in *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity*, London: Virago.

Image reference:

Figure 1. Elle. (2017) '*This is what a feminist looks like*' [photograph] At: <http://www.justjared.com/photo-gallery/3230107/emma-watson-elle-uk-feminism-issue-01/> (accessed 17/10/2018)

Figure 2. O'Shea, C. (2018) '*Matty Bovan SS19*' [photograph] At: <http://www.dazeddigital.com/fashion/gallery/25617/18/matty-bovan-ss19> (accessed 17/10/2018)

Figure 3. IMAXTREE. (2018) 'Rose McGowan Models for Nicholas Kirkwood's Resistance-Themed Runway at London Fashion Week' [photograph] At: <http://thefashionspot.com.au/runway-news/804005-nicholas-kirkwood-spring-2019/> (accessed 17/10/2018)

Figure 4. Galella, R (1979) 'Grace Jones at the New York Hilton Hotel in New York City.' [photograph] At: [https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/grace-jones-everything-and-more\\_us\\_5605564be4b0768126fd26b1](https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/grace-jones-everything-and-more_us_5605564be4b0768126fd26b1) (accessed 17/10/2018)

Figure 5. Stranger Things (2016) [photograph still from Netflix found on Vogue] At: <https://www.vogue.co.uk/gallery/best-celebrity-buzz-cuts> (accessed 17/10/2018)

Figure 6. Gregory, L (2018) 'Liv Little, Curator and Founder of gal-dem' [photograph] At: <http://www.thefader.com/2016/11/30/shaved-hair-women-roundtable-laura-mvula-ruby-tandoh> (accessed 17/10/2018)

Editors copy: 820 words:

For: i-D online

do you have to shave your head to be a feminist?

is shaving your head a female liberation or a passing trend?

Matty Bovan's candy coloured array of buzzcuts all over SS19 to Rose McGowan walking for Nicholas

Kirkwood is a style to stay. To be part of the 'group' you most definitely have to shave your hair, at least

that's how I feel. Left, right and centre every young woman wants to be 'rebellious' with their 'step out of

my comfort zone' attitude. It's damn right annoying, going to a rally then finding out that you don't fit the

look because you decided to do your makeup. There's a feeling of feminists confiding to 'armpit hair' ste

reotypes I ask, do you have to look a certain way to feel 'liberated'? You don't need to be told by anyone

how you should look, not a man and most certainly not, by another woman.

Throughout history a woman's appearance has been repeatedly questioned, 'you are wearing too much

makeup' 'you suit long hair' women. cannot. Win! Wearing Whistles, "This is what a feminist looks like" in

bold on your white slogan tee does that suddenly make you a valid feminist? Or do pinstripe navy man

nish trousers make you any less of a woman?

There's a pressure to act and 'look' a certain way within the activist society which is simply frustrating

since we still live in a patriarchal system. As someone who fights for equality but continues to wear red

lipstick, mascara and currently with long hair. All while enjoying a girly dress up (once in a while) there's

the need to dress to show that I'm 'not letting the side down'.

However, the buzzcut isn't new or 'revolutionary', Ancient Egyptians went through a beeswax and tweezer full body hair removal treatment, and Ancient Greeks deemed hair uncivilized. There are religions, Christian women who hide their hair by wearing a veil or Muslim women who wear a hijab. Hinduism, boys and girls at the age of four have their hair shaved, teaching them humbleness and devotion.

It's 2018 for God's sake, women don't dress for men, we dress for ourselves, expression through fashion.

Some may respond with, 'by wearing makeup, you don't want equal pay due to its sexist overtones'. Well, shut-up, sit down we are only talking about a bit of red lip here. Like the 'freedom trash can' of 1968 where second-wave feminists burnt "instruments of female torture" shaving your hair opposes male ideals of beauty that oppresses women. Something I thoroughly agree with.

Do men have to dress in a certain way to be masculine? More than an army of women, men are feminists too but you won't hear judgement over their beard length or that they haven't many tattoos. Enough is enough! As Spare Rib magazine, (1983) (Wilson, 2003:236) said, "Is not the whole point of feminism to realise her right to control her own life and make decisions for herself?"

Although, as we have seen from Grace Jones in the 70s to Millie Bobby Brown in Stranger Things (2016) or Liv Little (founder of all woman publication Galdem) the buzzcut creates a movement which empowers young women to simply love themselves. However, with the 2017 Dove Global Girls Beauty Confidence report found that in the UK alone, only 39% of girls had high body esteem, while globally that number was 46%. Judging another for not looking the right way can have a dramatic effect on body image.

University lecturer at the UCA, Dr Julie Blanchard told me, "Police the ways men look at, objectify, ogle, possess women with their eyes and their actions, rather policing the women's bodies. Women should be free to express themselves any way in which they wish, expose their bodies, or not, as they desire. The problem is the violence of men's gaze and their actions, not other women."

As there isn't a handy rule book on 'How to make bread to be the perfect housewife' (fortunately) however, social media often feels like Judge Judy on body image. The 'feeling of liberation' from a buzzcut the same can be said for a pair of six-inch heels on a night out. As Esther Tognozzi, the owner of the salon where Britney Spears shaved her head in 2007 said, "it's only hair, it grows back". Dress however you please, but this doesn't stop people from telling you what you should and shouldn't look like on and off social media.

Feminism doesn't need to be another shit show of rules, build up independent women, don't make every one feel the need to follow your style. Unlike high school, you don't have to 'fit in' so if you want to shave your hair, go for it and if you want to wear your metallic pink mini skirt and still be feminist then hop to it.

At the end of the day it's only a fucking haircut, get over it.