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Does My Hair Bother You? Part 2

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Does My Hair Bother You? Part 2

Abstract

I stopped shaving my legs in May. The decision to quit shaving was part social experiment, but a lot of it had to do with NOT HAVING TO SHAVE MY LEGS ANYMORE.

Honestly I didn't make the decision to stop shaving my leg hair as some sort of [feminist statement](#). I really just found it stupid how society pressures women to have smooth "sexy" legs. How did this pressure begin? Historically women [didn't shave their legs](#) or underarms in the United States; however, hair removal was a [common cultural practice](#) in many other parts of the world such as in Ancient Egypt, Greece, and some Native American tribes for centuries. In some societies, the practice was purely religious. In ancient Greece and Rome, the presence of hair on the body indicated poverty and filth. [*excerpt*]

Keywords

Surge, Surge Gettysburg, Gettysburg College, Center for Public Service, sexuality, gender, social norms, shaving, hair removal, female body

Disciplines

Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies | Gender and Sexuality | Sociology | Sociology of Culture | Women's Studies

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Surge is a student blog at [Gettysburg College](#) where systemic issues of justice matter. Posts are originally published at [surgegettysburg.wordpress.com](#) Through stories and reflection, these blog entries relate personal experiences to larger issues of equity, demonstrating that -isms are structural problems, not actions defined by individual prejudice. We intend to popularize justice, helping each other to recognize our biases and unlearn the untruths.

SURGE

[VERB] : to move suddenly or powerfully forward or upward

DOES MY HAIR BOTHER YOU?: PART 2

July 17, 2013

I stopped shaving my legs in May. The decision to quit shaving was part social experiment, but a lot of it had to do with NOT HAVING TO SHAVE MY LEGS ANYMORE.

Honestly I didn't make the decision to stop shaving my leg hair as some sort of [feminist statement](#). I really just found it stupid how society pressures women to have smooth "sexy" legs. How did this pressure begin? Historically women [didn't shave their legs](#) or underarms in the United States; however, hair removal was a [common cultural practice](#) in many other parts of the world such as in Ancient Egypt, Greece, and some Native American tribes for centuries. In some societies, the practice was purely religious. In ancient Greece and Rome, the presence of hair on the body indicated poverty and filth.



The custom made its way to the United States in the early-1900s, through the pressure of advertisers. According to them, women needed to shave their legs for "hygienic" reasons. Clearly, they had women's health, not profit, in mind (in case you can't tell, I'm being facetious). As shaving underarm and leg hair became more common, the justification turned from hygiene to beauty. Eventually, as celebrities (like Betty Grable) popularized the look, it became strange and even gross for women to not shave their legs.

My experiment continued into June, and as my leg hair grew longer, I started thinking more about the way society views hair. If you Google "hair removal", you are bombarded by ads from Nair, Veet, Sally Hansen and crazy \$300 laser-gun-like contraptions called "Silk'n Flash & Go", "NoNo Hair", and "Me Smooth". There are products from Walmart, Walgreens, Amazon and more, all basically saying that having flawlessly smooth legs, underarms and bikini areas is the [only way to seem beautiful and feminine](#). And now, shaving your legs and underarms has been ingrained as the norm into the minds of American women from an early age.

Additionally, in more recent years, the [pornographic standard](#) that women should shave their pubic hair has emerged. Our media and culture has put strange pressures on maintaining the hair "down there." While it should absolutely be the individual's decision to have as much or little hair as they want, no one should feel like they're

going to be judged or become embarrassed with a partner if they don't keep their hedges manicured like it's a form of art. Some of my favorite [Vagina Monologues](#) are about pubic hair, partly because it's such a taboo topic. Ultimately, in my opinion, that hair is there for an important reason (to keep you clean!), so I vote to say "screw 'em" to societies' obsession with hairless vaginas.

Let's not forget about men here. Men are also pressured to manage their pubic hair (though not as much as women). But men have to deal with facial hair and are [often considered less professional](#) if they have any. The way I see it, there is an evolutionary reason that men grow hair on their faces and that both sexes grow hair on their legs, their armpits, and groins. So why are we constantly messing with science?

Our culture's unhealthy obsession with beauty causes masses of people to imitate an imaginary stereotype. In reality, we are different sizes and shapes, with different colored hair and eyes, with different accents and hair thicknesses. That's what makes humans so unique, so why are we constantly trying to look the same?

So now I have a confession. Despite physically being comfortable having hair on my legs, I'm still telling people that I've stopped shaving my leg hair before they get a chance to notice and assume strange or untrue things about me. Some people think a woman [looks like a lesbian](#) or a hippie if she doesn't shave her legs. And although I don't care if people assume these things about me, I am just irritated that people associate certain stereotypes with the presence of leg hair on women. I still feel beautiful with leg hair, but I'm embarrassed to admit that I also feel self-conscious about it. I hope to get to the point where I can honestly not care what people see on my legs and just accept me for who I am. And on a larger scale, I hope our society gets to the point where women don't feel pressured to shave their legs, their arms, and their crotches (and men their faces; I actually love beards!). Having leg hair says nothing about the kind of person that you are; it is a decision that you and only you can make for yourself. What hair you have and where it is happens to be is your business and you can do whatever you want with it.

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Read [Does My Leg Hair Bother You? Part 1](#) by Nadejiah Towns

<http://surgegettyburg.wordpress.com/2013/07/17/does-my-hair-bother-you-part-2/>