

I think I was 13 when I got my first pair of high waisted shorts. It was a sunny day, near the end of school year. Me and my mom were going clothes shopping and one of our stops was at Forman Mills. I was walking down the aisle and as soon as I saw them on the rack I knew I had to have them. After the first pair I ended picking about ten to thirty more pairs and dragged my mom to the fitting room to watch me try them all on. We ended up getting one pair and I was so hype. I remember wearing them down the shore, that summer, and thinking that I was *all* that.

Fast forward to a little over a month, maybe, my family and I are going out and it's a warm night so I decide to wear shorts. I walk down the stairs, into the living room, and as I pass my mom she stops me:

"Hold on," she says, "those look a little too short," a phrase had been hearing increasingly more often as was getting older.

"What mom?" I ask.

"Dre!" she yells to summon my father and get a second opinion. He comes in, looking reluctant to be a part of this conversation.

"Go ahead and show dad what you're wearing," she with a condescending tone in her voice. So I walk to the first landing of our stairs and stand there.

"It's fine," he says and I feel momentary relief, but then my mom says,

"Turn around and bend over," humiliated, I do as I'm told. At this my dad sees my mother's perspective.

"Oh yeah, you can't wear those anymore..." he said.

*You can't actually be serious* I thought to myself.

They, however, were and ended up confiscating my shorts and still haven't gotten them back.

It's always been that way. My parents have always told me no makeup, boys, or showy clothing until you're sixteen. When I'd ask, why she would always say "Girls only do that when they want to impress a boy." or "The boys are gonna think you're easy." I was young and naive so little did I know how wrong they were.

Make-up has always been something that's interested me so I've always been eager to experiment but I was never allowed to.

"Why are you in a such a rush to grow up?" she would say, but it wasn't that at all. In all honesty at this point by the time I *am* allowed to wear makeup I won't know where to start. It's also like part of growing, figuring out what works and such and when I do wear whatever little I am allowed to wear sometimes I feel really confident and good about myself.

I started to believe the things my mom said which lead my mindset to be very fixed so when I saw girls who looked like I would associate with the words "fresh" or "slutty" instead of "beautiful" and "confident". I think that there could be a direct correlation between girls who were taught that showing skin and wearing make up a certain way means that you're trying to impress a boy instead of "If it makes you comfortable and confident, do you". Not to say that there isn't a time and place for everything, but I think people tend to draw towards situation that allow them to be at their most comfortable.

At one point in time I became really self conscious when showing any skin or wearing anything tight and I would feel like I was doing something wrong. I think that this was because when I did do it, I did it for the wrong reasons because the only reason I thought girls do it was to get the attention of boys, not to feel good about themselves or anything of that nature. I, also, didn't know any other ways to get guys to notice you. How dare someone have the power to dictate how you dress and what you do and how you're seen for it?

Going to SLA has really taught me how to own me how to think about how to care *me* and what I'm doing to please *me*, not think of other people when I'm doing things that will directly affect me. I mean, of course I might get dolled for a cute boy, occasionally, as every girl tends to do from time to time. All in all I just wanna do things that make me happy without worrying about guys disrespecting me and then, to add insult to injury, have someone ask "How were you dressed?". Is that too much to ask?