

Bombshell

Blue eyed, blond haired, athletic, female. With just those words you already have a picture in your mind of who I am, or who you think I am. The “dumb blond” persona is an excruciatingly common stereotype, but one that is often overlooked. Everyone knows of it, yet no one considers it to be a legitimate offence. Compared to others, it appears to be trivial; merely a lighthearted joke. However the consistent repetition and application of this stereotype, on both personal and general levels, has transformed the label into something with much more substance and impact than many can see.

In an era of political correctness and common decency, it is important to acknowledge that this stereotype in no way is any comparison to those applied with strong racial, religious, or truly hateful undertones. I understand that I am privileged in numerous ways and want to make clear that I would never compare my experiences to the endless number of minorities who face racism and discrimination daily, any member of the LGBT+ community who experience violence or negativity for being who they are, or any other individual who has to live through the hardships of prejudice and hate. Though all examples, including my own, are instances of assumption and judgement based on physicality, the stereotype that I am labeled with is at a lower degree than the others, and that should be made clear.

Despite this, being classified as the common dumb blonde is a hurtful label that I have faced my entire life. People repeatedly making assumptions about who I am from the way I look impedes my mindset and the way I view myself. However, it is not only the direct labelling I experience that makes an impact. The media presence of this stereotype is outstanding and has its own consequences. Actresses like Marilyn Monroe have been characterized as naive and materialistic, acting as merely symbols of attraction when they have significantly more

Tori Holoubek-Sebok
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substance. Monroe was classified as a “blonde bombshell” and was virtually only casted for parts which represented that. The color of her hair was enough to form her identity and her true self was hidden by the layering of the same character over and over. People began to perceive her as the characters she played because of the constant repetition of the same persona. No matter how far her personality strayed from that of a dumb blonde, it did not matter. People saw this stereotype, and transformed it into who Marilyn was. The overwhelming presence of stereotypes in the media also has effects on its consumers; people can second guess themselves and be overly critical when they are constantly surrounded by these personas.

No matter the stereotype, seeing its representation can prompt insecurities and doubts within oneself. I have often been unsure of my intellect because of these reasons. I see the negativity inflicted on women as soon as I open Instagram; anonymous accounts criticizing models or people of influence, saying that their words should not be taken seriously because they are blonde and therefore incompetent. Often times in my classes I can be confident in an answer, but hesitate sharing it aloud, too afraid of what my classmates or teacher will think of it. The dumb blonde stereotype has created paranoia in my brain, leaving me to wonder if I do embody the characteristics of this persona. Whether it be in school, at home, or by myself, I am never free from the labels I am assigned. From the people all around me to even myself, my integrity and intelligence are consistently in question.

In most cases, a family is made up of the people that know you the most, the people who will always support you. Never did I think that those same people would make such a bold assumption of my character. I have always been athletic and have played a variety of sports, but exercise has never been an interest of mine nor something I had thought about until one

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Christmas day when my grandparents gave my siblings identical coding kits and gave me exercise equipment instead. I had never given my grandparents any reason to think that I would want a core exercise ball and a set of weights over the coding sets my siblings received, and yet, that is what I got. Blondes have been commonly classified as vain and shallow, notorious for only caring about the way they look. My blonde hair represented a stereotype, so I was assumed to be this stereotype and appearance was taken as my main priority. Meanwhile, I would have much preferred experimenting with coding just like my siblings. This particular occasion prompted a spiral of increasing self awareness in the way that I look and the way others perceive me. I have since found myself constantly needing to prove my integrity to those around me.

In my experience, the application of the dumb blond stereotype is rarely intentional. Though there are instances of real hostility communicated through stereotypes, I believe that labeling in this manner is most often a subconscious ordeal. Because of this, reasoning is not the necessary method to eliminate the beliefs in stereotypes. Raising awareness of the presence of the stereotypes is. Spreading consciousness is the best way to begin the decrease of unfair judgments because ensuring that people know that these stereotypes exist will prompt them to be conscious of the way they may regard others. Change can seem like an ambitious request, but all we need is a few people. These people can initiate the process and share it amongst the people in their lives and from there it can take off; going from towns, to states, to countries, the recognition of stereotypes will spread like wildfire. If globally, and as a community, we can expand our wealth of knowledge and share insights with our peers, everyone will gain a greater understanding of their impact on those who surround them.

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