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North Korea's Hottest Hairstyles Are Not Really Optional

By Elise Solé, Shine Staff | Fashion + Beauty – 1 hour 18 minutes ago



American women have always had plenty of hair inspiration—from Twiggy, Farah Fawcett, Sarah Jessica Parker, even Miley Cyrus, but the women in North Korea don't have many beauty icons to covet.

Nope, if you're a fashion-forward lady living in Pyongyang the capital and largest city in North Korea, you take your beauty cues from a government-mandated **hair menu** featuring 18 styles that are about as timely as "The Rachel."

The purpose of the authorized hairstyles (which were leaked online Thursday) is to prevent women from being seduced by Western beauty and fashion ideals. Photos must be hung in Korean salons and offer a range of choices depending on one's relationship status—married women are encouraged to sport a shorter coif and single girls are permitted to wear braids or

ribbons.

Approved looks range from Flowbee-like feathered updos to curly mullets to helmet-head pixies.

The origins of restricted hairstyles date back to 2005 when a television show with the very long title "Let us trim our hair in accordance with Socialist lifestyle" debuted. The premise: A team with hidden cameras set out to catch Pyongyang citizens sporting "untidy" foreign styles (long hair was also believed to decrease "brain energy"). The guilty parties had their full names, professions, and addresses exposed in the hopes of discouraging viewers to stray from orthodoxy.

But throughout the years North Koreans became lax about their hairstyles until 2009 when regulations were enforced. Kim Jong-II, the former leader of North Korea **allegedly** spotted a female sales clerk and said, "Is she really our own Korean woman? Why is she giving up our own traditional beauty and choosing to model bad foreign habits of the capitalist."

But don't assume men are off the hook when it comes to hairstyles—dudes were issued their own hair menu and advised to keep their tresses shorter than 5 centimeters and trimmed every two weeks (older men are allowed to grow their hair up to seven centimeters before getting it trimmed).

One exception: A slicked back, high-sided cut worn by **Kim Jong-un**, the current leader of North Korea. Much like how Kate Middleton's fashion and beauty choices are widely influential, Kim Jong-un's coif made waves in 2011 when it was dubbed the "youth" and "ambition" style and a

North Korean newspaper called the look "sobering and stylish." Indeed.



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