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# Exploring Identity Via Hair at Seattle University

Genny Sheara, Staff Reporter

College is a time when many young adults get to explore their identity, some for the first time. Through quarantine, many people started expressing their personal style through cutting and dyeing their own hair at home when it wasn't possible to go to salons. Seattle U students continue to articulate their identity through their personal style.

Joy Golondrina, a first-year environmental studies major, cut her hair short for the first time during quarantine, which she had wanted to do for a long time. Since then and since entering college, she has felt more free to explore different styles and lengths.

"College is a time to explore who you are, and so many people around me are using their hair to express their identity. Now I feel free to do that as well. Quarantine was a great time to make rash decisions with your hair because so few people are going to see it. But in college, everybody understands and appreciates using hair to express yourself," Golondrina said.

Like many others since quarantine, Golondrina enjoys getting to care for her hair herself. While this includes cuts and styles, she also enjoys trying out different accessories.

Keila Santos, a first-year psychology major, learned to bleach and dye her own hair and has continued to do so throughout her time at Seattle U. Similar to Golondrina, she has seen a change in her relationship with her hair, particularly since quarantine.

"I dyed my hair for the first time ever, and since then, I've been doing my hair by myself. I know exactly what I want and I believe I've done enough research to achieve that in general. I have a good foundation of what bleach and dye does to hair," Santos said.

Santos also noted that she feels she has a good grasp on how to care for her hair and prefers to save money by not going to salons. Instead, she buys products—particularly semi-permanent hair dye—and figures out styles on her own.

Many students identified that their hair holds strong personal and emotional significance. For some, like Santos, this can be using hair color to express herself in a way that was not always permitted by her family.

"I was raised in such a way where I was not allowed to do a lot of things to express my identity, including any hair alterations. Once I decided not to subscribe to those ideals, dyeing my hair was one of the ways I found I enjoyed expressing myself. That's why I like to do fun colors to stand out and combine with whatever style I currently have. It's like I'm taking back what was taken from me when I was younger," Santos said.



Student worker's hair at Cherry Street Market. / Adeline Ong

For others, including Golondrina, their hair journey has allowed them to feel more connected to their family. Golondrina notes that she always admired her mother's curly hair as a child, and when her hair started getting curlier, it became a bonding opportunity for the two of them.

"It's been really fun to watch my hair develop over time, and it's been especially nice to see my mom's reaction to me looking like her as I've gotten older. It's helped me grow closer to my mom, since I can ask her questions about products and styling, and we've had a simultaneous journey of learning to care for it together," Golondrina said.

Hair offers not only a sense of growth, but a sense of change. Alexis Ungar, a first-year forensic psychology major, likes to style her hair differently to reflect where she's at in life.

"My hair holds a lot of personal value to me, as I change it every time I feel even a slight change. It makes me feel like I'm starting over and giving myself the chance to be someone else! I'm always switching it up," Ungar said.

Hair offers people the chance to explore their identity through its growth and changes, through both personal and shared identities. At Seattle U, students are finding new ways to express themselves, redefine their look and try new styles constantly.