

Liberate Yourself

Dustin Jelks

Boys' Haircuts? Not for Me!

When I was growing up, my parents never let me do what I wanted to do with my hair. They thought a young boy's hair should be short and neat, and I always wanted long hair. I gave up on persuading them and started trying to find short hair styles that suited my personality. I never was content with my hair; it just didn't reflect how I felt. When my brother moved out for college, he started growing his hair and beard, and now they are both well past his shoulders. My family made their little com-



Dustin before he grew his hair out (left) and today (right).

Do what makes you feel your best; forget what anyone else has to say!

ments at first, but he never looked happier. He looked more like himself than I had ever seen him. My parents decided to pick their battles and left him alone.

This was my signal to do what I've always wanted to do. Years of school rules, forced haircuts, and "hoodlum" comments have all led to this: After about six months, my hair was past my ears. I started feeling a weight off my shoulders; it's hard to describe how good that made me feel. Months later, it had passed my jaw line. It felt so right and fitting, and I loved the way I started looking.

Free from Forced Haircuts

Now, over a year later, it's growing past my shoulders. I love my hair, and I feel liberated by it. The way I look on the outside represents my personality on the inside, and that's a very good feeling to have. People tell me how much they like my hair and my natural curls, and I take it as a huge com-

pliment. I love the way I can wave it around when I play guitar, the way it falls in my face when I'm looking down, and the way I can flick it back and forth when I'm dancing at concerts.

There are too many schools with rules about how young people should wear their hair. Listen when I say this, WE CAN NOT ALL BE THE SAME. You have to do what makes you feel your best; forget what anyone else has to say! Grow it long; shave it off; dye it purple; tie it in a knot; do whatever you want to do! Your hair is yours and only yours. This is about more than hair; it's about individuality and self-love. Forget the comments; forget what other people may think; forget everything but what *you* think. Liberate yourself.

Dustin Jelks is an 18-year-old former student of West Feliciana Adult Education Program in Norwood, LA. He spends most of his time writing music for his two musical projects, The Ineffective and Rocket Impossible. Dustin received his HiSET in 2017.

AFTER YOU READ: 1) How does longer hair make Dustin feel more liberated? 2) Look at and analyze how Dustin uses semi-colons. Explain why he chose them instead of periods. What are the rules for how to use them?

SEE THE NEXT PAGE for more activities.