

*Note: The website that featured this blog is no longer active, however you can read the content below.*

## Ask Not What Your Hairstyle Can Do For You...

**A winning manifesto is one thing. Powerful, vote-turning statements are another.** But what of a winning smile? A sharp suit? And the all-important haircut? What does your trim say about your ability to lead, to govern and to change lives? To address this matter, we took a closer look at some of the more notable hairstyles of world leaders past and present...

### The Dictators

Some of the most brutal, terrifying and evil men throughout world politics rose to power astride a culture of fear and propaganda. Think back to Russia during the dark days of the communist state and your head is immediately filled with visions of drab grey concrete structures. The only colour that comes to mind exists in the sinister posters and murals of Lenin and Stalin, gazing down upon the citizens or staring powerfully, defiantly upward to the sky.

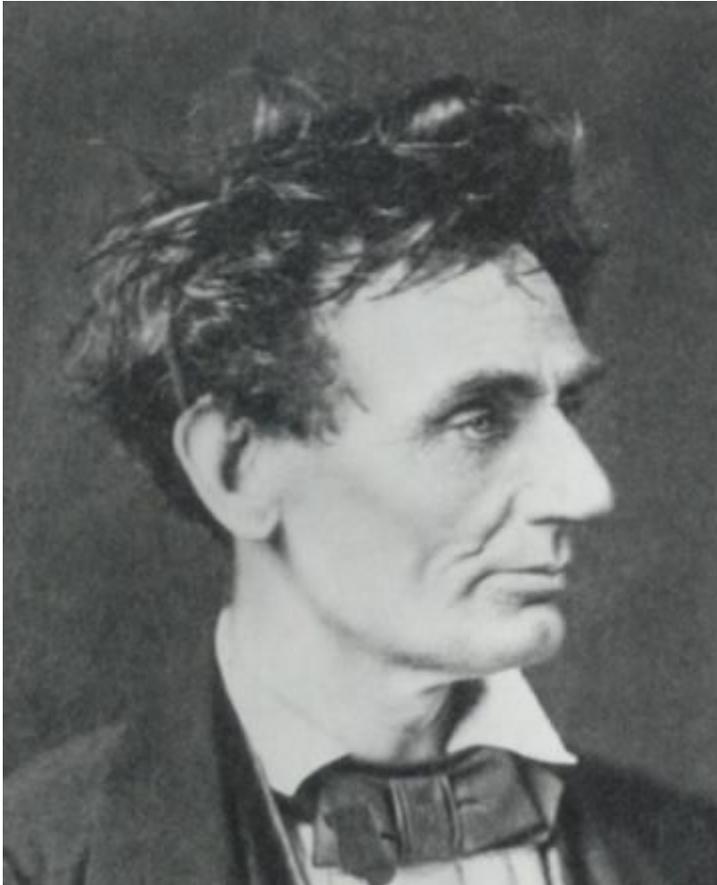
So what of Stalin? How did his image evolve? When he comes to mind we see a man with a moustache of epic proportions. Here is a dictator that would have struggled to get his way through a glass of kulak-produced milk without having an accident. We see the uniform – whichever way you look at it a symbol of control, brutality, power and order. And we see lush, thick black hair – swept back in a pompadour to expose a manly forehead. It's an image of a man in charge. And if you didn't agree, he had the ways and means to trim you away from the surface of the planet altogether.

Which brings us, with horrible neatness, to the Herr Cut. Imagine if Hitler had never been a politician. Never been the most reviled and evil man to ever exist. Imagine that he was simply this – a soldier in a uniform with an odd Chaplinesque moustache and... well... 'that' haircut. Of course, it's impossible to look at an image of Adolf Hitler without something in your soul scrunching up. But it's an unusual look. The reason it's so unusual (bearing in mind that it was far from being so back in 1930s Europe) is that the hairstyle has never seen the light of day again – give or take the odd (and I mean odd) 80's synth-pop band. But *that* comb-over combined with *that* moustache again? Never. To sport that axis of wrong in modern society would do you no favours whatsoever. Conspiracy theories aside – when Hitler perished alongside Eva Braun in his Berlin Führerbunker that particular hair and 'tache combo went with him. The phrase 'good riddance' doesn't seem strong enough.

### Shawn In The USA

Abraham Lincoln was someone who not only commanded the most progressive nation on the planet - he also commanded your attention too. And he didn't even have to breathe a word to do so. The 16<sup>th</sup> President of the United States was a striking fellow to behold. Towering at an impressive 6'4" (a tall chap now – a veritable giant in the 1860's) he further dominated local airspace with the addition of his trademark stovepipe hat. He was a lean gentleman, and later in his life gained the famous chin-strap beard. The hair is carefully coiffed, neatly combed back to once again reveal the large forehead suggestive of a great and noble thinker. But it's interesting to see Lincoln in his earlier days before he assumed the role of office. In 1857, looking not unlike a young Spike Milligan, he carries

off the 'just-out-of bed' look with Victorian aplomb with what was described at the time as 'Wild Republican Hair'.



Whizz forward a century and the charm offensive is well under way. The 1960s saw the arrival of the most powerful family in world politics – the Kennedys. And the coolest. They gave us a president so effortlessly iconic that he didn't even need a name – just three letters. JFK.

So what are you thinking of now? Carefree. Casual. Cool. Sunglasses. Open-top convertibles. Beaches. Yachts. Youth. Hope. Promise. The Ivy League. The Dream. USA. USA. USA. John Fitzgerald Kennedy had it all. He could do charm and negotiation in elegant smartly-cut suits one second, then effortlessly ease into family life and open-buttoned polo shirts the next. Always looking good. His carefully-groomed bouffant represented the longest hair on a presidential scalp since Washington, but it worked. Campaign-aide Dave Powers once remarked that "you put a hat on Kennedy, you lose three-quarters of the head and all the charisma". Well in advance of the release of *'Love Me Do'*, JFK had already realised the value of a good mop on top.

### **Your Hair Looks a State**

And so to the political families of today. Lately, the most notable world leader on our TV screens has been the sabre-rattling Kim Jong-Un of the Democratic People's Republic of North Korea. Defiantly standing up to the UN with nuclear-fuelled rhetoric, Un is the latest in an unusual and somewhat disturbing dynasty founded on an extreme cult of personality.

Take a look at his father, Kim Jong-il. The Supreme Leader's birth, foretold by a swallow, a double rainbow and the arrival of a new star in the heavens (I kid you not) heralded the arrival of a man who was to be feared and worshipped at home, lampooned abroad by such luminaries as Trey Parker and Matt Stone and would go on to own the largest collection of Elvis memorabilia in Communism. Again – we were treated to dictator hair. The high forehead. The pompadour of his beloved Presley. And spectacles to make Deidre Barlow weep with jealousy.

When the Supreme Leader passed away in 2011, the mantle of madness was assumed by his son Kim Jong-Un. This made him the world's youngest head of state at the ripe old age of 29. Or 30. As yet, an official record of Un's birth has yet to be released, although I'm holding out for something involving a message from sixteen singing yak and a giant hovering state-approved Digestive biscuit. But Kim Jong-il's heir has instead decided to follow the hairline of his grandfather, Kim il-Sung by having a 'fade' cut. With his recent antics, Kim Jong-un has set out his stall. He intends to rule by force, although as the rest of the world looks on with growing befuddlement there is every chance that he could end up isolated and, well, a little ronery.

Just be thankful for your freedom to express yourself via your own hairdo. Whether you choose to be a leader or a follower, it's much more difficult in North Korea. A TV show, with the incredibly catchy title "*Let Us Trim Our Hair in Accordance With Socialist Lifestyle*" was launched on state-controlled North Korean TV in 2005. Since then, short hair among the male populace of the country has been encouraged, because untidy 'foreign styles' and long hair 'rob the brain of energy'.

Seriously. You've never had it so good.

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