

Mold

By: Alyssa Garrity



Alyssa Jade Garrity, 17, born in Honolulu, Hawaii at Tripler Army Medical Center to her mom Christina Garrity and her U.S. Army dad, Robert Garrity. When Alyssa was three years old her family moved to Port Charlotte, Florida. At the age of five, Alyssa's sister, Ashlyn Garrity, was born. After fifth grade, Alyssa and her family moved to Jasper, Georgia for work. They lived there for two years before moving back to Port Charlotte, where she resides currently. Her open-minded, free thinking family formed the mold that has created the young woman she is today.



Since I can remember, my parents always told me to be myself and to “be a leader, not a follower.” Growing up, my parents always gave me the chance to: say what I thought and felt, form my own opinions, and have my own style (for the most part). They were always extremely open with me and others about their beliefs – whether people liked it or not. My dad led me to believe not to hate a specific person or race, but to instead hate everyone because “people suck,” which is now a motto I live by. When I was younger, I never believed any of the things my dad told me, such as his views on life and his “people suck” attitude, because I never had any reason to hate people or had any knowledge in his opinions. Now 17, I have come to realize that everyone really does suck and the things my dad believed in actually make a lot of sense. I am now closer to my dad than I was as a kid and we have a lot more things to talk about together. I never agreed with anything my parents said, especially about my friends, mainly because I didn't understand what they were saying or why they were saying it. I had not yet grown up or gained the knowledge they had and was not yet able to have the sociological perspective and put myself in my parent's shoes (*Sociology and You, Shepard Greene, page 6*).

I have always gone to public school: from daycare until now; I have always been surrounded by people of different shapes, sizes, colors, religions, and different opinions. Being exposed to Auguste Comte's major ideas of the social statics -the study of social stability and order- and social dynamics – the study of social change- (*Sociology and You, Shepard Greene, page 14*) from the day I was born, has helped me to become an open person, learn about people, and form my own opinions about people and life.

Currently, I don't necessarily follow stereotypes; I have to see something such as clothing or actions or I have to know you as a person before I judge you. I know seeing the way someone dresses and seeing an action they do from a distance doesn't necessarily prove they are a part of a specific stereotype, but as an instant reaction, I jump to the existing thoughts and assume. I believe stereotypes exist for a reason -social facts: the patterns of behavior that characterize a social group- (*Sociology A Down-To-Earth Approach, seventh edition, James M. Henslin, page 15*). When I see someone who seems to be following a stereotype, -such as a black person dressed in sagging pants with tons of jewelry- I believe they entirely follow that stereotype until they prove me wrong. For instance, if I see a black woman in a ghetto with several young children I automatically assume that they are her children and that she is a single mother. There is a very large stereotype says that black men who have children will leave the mother and the children on their own. I assume things and judge just like every other human in the world.

I have never actually had a moment in my life that has impacted me largely; I have never had an experience that has shaped my opinions other than what I have seen on a societal basis and in the media. I do see men and women arguing and fighting over dominance and who is stronger; I do see blacks and other minorities labeled as hoodlums and thugs; I do see Asians labeled as smart and bad drivers; and I do see whites labeled as fat, lazy, judgmental, and racist. I have learned, though, that what society and

the media decide is not true. Because of my parents, I form my own opinions based on my own experiences and I don't have many experiences. Because of this, I primarily do not form an opinion for or against someone unless they fit the stereotypes that I have seen in the media and society.

I am not biased towards any race and I think we are all equal. Everyone on the earth judges and everyone on the earth has issues, some more than others. I have seen stereotypes proven true and stereotypes proven false. I do not think that because of someone's race or gender they are incapable of doing something that someone else can. Everyone has the capability to do things and some people are just better. Some women are stronger than men and some men are stronger than women. Some blacks and Hispanics are hard workers who are dedicated and trustworthy while others aren't. A stereotype in this world does not limit you, but instead labels you.

If it were not for my parents teaching me as a child to form my own opinions and pay attention to what is best for me, I would probably follow all of society and conform unknowingly. But thankfully, I am not a conformist and I do not make permanent judgments based on stereotypes within society. I am an egalitarian; I give everyone a chance to change my mind that "people suck" (but have yet to come across anyone that can). I understand that there will be exceptions to everything, so I do not make permanent expectations. People follow the stereotypes society creates and they listen to the media. I have seen people judge women and say they are weak; I have seen people judge men and say they are strong; I have seen people judge boys and say they are sex crazed; I have seen people judge girls and say they are rude and self-centered; I have seen people say that blacks are thieves; and I have seen people say that Jews are greedy. I have seen these things in society, but none of them have impacted me or influenced my opinions, except for the fact that "people suck," everyone.

I am my own person and I guess I actually have seen a lot, but nothing big or large enough to impact me or influence me. Although nothing major has impacted my life, my family, friends and experiences have formed the mold that created who I am today.

References

Greene, Shepard. Sociology and You. New York City: Glencoe/McGraw-Hill, 2002.

Henslin, James M. Sociology A Down-To-Earth Approach. Vol. Seventh. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2005.