

Woman with facial hair triumphs over bullying 'Embrace your everything'

MARLENE AUGUSTINE

EVERYTHING about British-born Harnaam Kaur screams class. This is a tough young woman who has battled and triumphed over bullying, which at one point drove her towards suicide. Kaur who travels the globe mentoring to men and women as a motivational speaker, sports a full beard on her face.

It is a feature she has grown to embrace as an aspect of her womanhood. The journey to this acceptance has not been easy. And it is this message: embrace yourself... flaws and all; embrace your everything, she brought to a conference yesterday at the Arthur Lok Jack School of Business in Mt Hope.

She said that people must love themselves no matter what society thinks of them. Rather than shaving or waxing, Kaur decided to let her facial hair grow for the past nine years.

She even gave her facial hair a persona because she felt that by calling her beard "that" or "it", would be a disrespect to a part of her body and her being. "If I change my hair (by shaving or waxing) I would change who I am. This is me! My life is all about em-

bracing different characteristics of my body.

"I am all about embracing my so called flaws, to embrace my scars, to embrace my stretch marks to embrace the fact that I am a little bit chubby. That is what my life is about...to love myself and love others for what they are, flaws and all," Kaur said at the International Women's Resource Network's (IWRN) conference titled, "The power within: Love your body, love you."

Kaur, a British-born Sikh, has Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS) symptoms of which include an over abundance of facial hair, reduced fertility, weight gain and acne. According to the National Health Service one in every five women in the United Kingdom lives with PCOS.

Kaur told her audience that after enduring years of bullying, during her adolescent phase, she decided that there were two choices available to her. Be body shamed, depressed, angry and even suicidal. Or, be body confident, free, happy and strong. "If you understand that God is side by side with you and you have the power of love and strength, you will never feel fear," she said.

"I am not afraid to talk about what people say are my 'flaws' as it is these very flaws that give me my strength. A strength to say who I am and that I am happy and proud of who I am. Anything that anyone says is not going to affect me because I am liberated...I love myself," she continued.

Kaur explained that once you accept yourself it would be easier to embrace and accept others. She said there is a need to peel away the superficialities of this modern world and connect with one's inner being. "We need to focus on who we are and how we portray ourselves to the rest of the world. We must embrace each other," she said.

"I can't understand why people body shame each other, I don't understand why we discriminate. My skin is brown, your skin is white or black, but when we strip away everything, our clothes, the scars and these flaws, don't we all have the same beating heart? Don't we all have red blood? Because our bodies are different, we tend to discriminate, be rude, be racist, can you imagine how many wars or how much bullying or discrimination can end if we simple love and accept each other," she asked.



CONFIDENT: British-born Harnaam Kaur speaks yesterday at the Arthur Lok Jack School of Business in Mt Hope.

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