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# **Governor's mole stirs extreme reactions**

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*Reader comments: "She interviewed me!" Karen Dunnam, Grand Rapids.*

The governor's mole.

Everybody sees it. Lots of people comment on it, especially while watching the past three debates, when Jennifer Granholm is on camera longer than usual.

So, let's talk about it.

You wouldn't think one beautiful woman's facial irregularity would matter to anyone else. But, apparently, it does.

I was shocked last week to find on a Free Press Internet forum about the gubernatorial debates some nasty comments about the mole that graces Granholm's right cheek. (She has two smaller, less obvious, moles on the other side.)

One guy referred to her as GrandMole. Another called her "the Moleface." And someone signing in as "Grossed Out" wrote: "I cannot take seriously the candidacy of a woman who lets a festering mole grow unchecked on her own face."

I thought these folks were wackos until I mentioned the governor's mole to friends I respect. Several said, in effect, "It should go." One man called it a distraction from her beauty.

But not Karen Dunnam of Grand Rapids, a Granholm fan who comments in forums, too. "I'll confess," she told me, "that when I got to see her close up the mole stood out like, well, a sore thumb. But I expect she's had it evaluated and a doc told her, 'If it doesn't bother you, why mess with it?' Perhaps she considers it a trademark, like Marilyn Monroe's beauty mark."

Or Cindy Crawford's.

But there's a question: When did beauty marks so beloved by mothers and lovers become moles?

Centuries ago, women and men penciled them onto their faces to increase their allure.

And, hey, has anybody ever denied a role to DeNiro because of that mole on his right cheekbone?

At any rate, the governor's mole doesn't bother Dunnam, who likes that Granholm doesn't fuss about her looks, wearing little makeup and - get this! - leaving her toenails unpainted.

Dunnam, a 49-year-old city planner, takes inspiration from her: "I consider what we are supposed to do to ourselves in the name of beauty and fashion and just cringe. Who on earth came up with shoes with 3-inch heels? And why should I dress up in a skirt for a job interview? My governor wears pantsuits."

The governor's office responded to my call by saying, in effect, that Granholm has bigger things to worry about than her moles. Reports are, though, that she refused to let official photographers airbrush them out of early portraits.

### **Two women, two choices**

I am reminded of a long-ago friend, a high-spirited photographer whose mole lived uncontested, midway between the corner of her mouth and her nostril.

Then, a boyfriend pressured her to get rid of it.

Back then, most of us young women did anything for love. But Katy told this guy: "I remove it for you and who's to say my next boyfriend won't wish I had one?"

She stood firm. Or so I remembered, until I found her by e-mail and learned that no, in the end she gave in, slicing it off, she said, for all the wrong reasons. Not long after, they broke up.

The governor is not young, insecure or lovelorn. Her face is her face. Her mole is her choice. It isn't about education or jobs or health care, but it's about self-assurance and that, to me, is a big, beautiful plus.