



LAKESHIA MYERS

Wisconsin State Representative • 12th Assembly District

HERE TO SERVE YOU!

Testimony in Support of AB 141: Relating to: prohibiting discrimination based on traits historically associated with race, including hair texture and protective hairstyles

Assembly Committee on Constitution and Ethics

April 20, 2021

Chairman Wichgers and esteemed colleagues of the Assembly Committee on Constitution and ethics, I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony in support of AB 141.

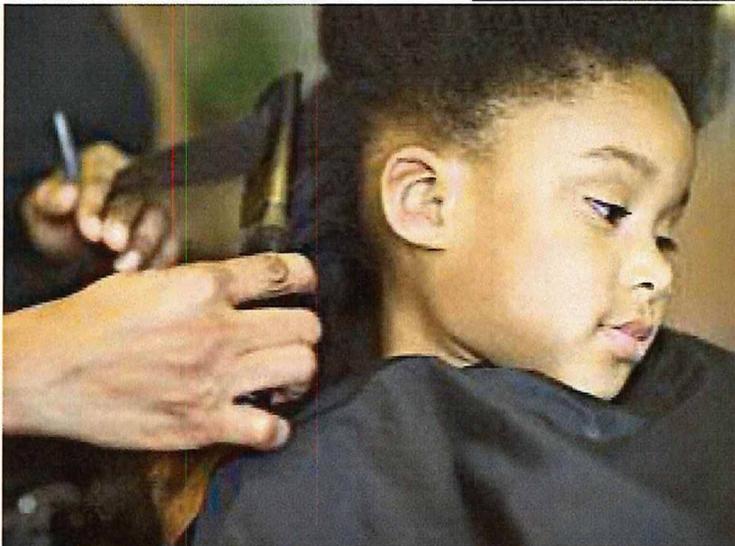
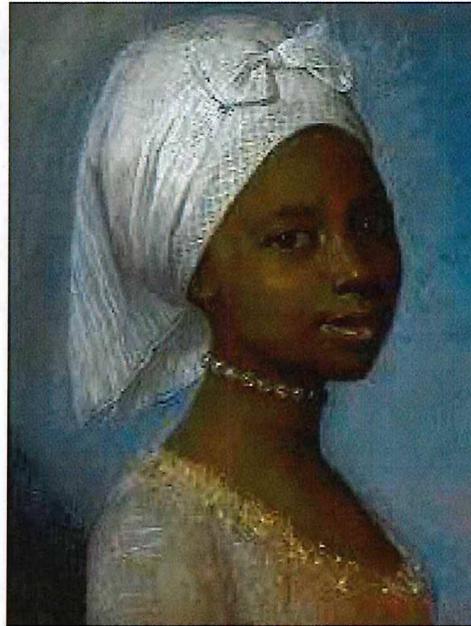
AB 141's purpose is to prohibit discrimination based on a person's hair texture and style. Within this definition, we intend to extend the classification of hair associated with race. As you are aware, people of color, especially African Americans and Latino populations have varying hair textures. Textures that are often more tightly coiled and curlier than those with historic European traits. In workplaces throughout the nation, including our state, grooming standards and policies that were thought to be race-neutral often inadvertently discriminate against people of color because these policies seek to deter ethnic hair from being worn in its natural state.

This is not a new issue; historically, the hair of people of African descent has been something that has been viewed as a tool of seduction, an expression of revolution, a source of discomfort, and a trait of control. In French and Spanish Louisiana, prior to its absorption into the United States, tignon laws mandated that free women of color cover their hair. This was instituted because it was thought that the hair of mulatto women was too seductive to be viewed by white men who would enter into placage (common law marriage) arrangements of the day. In the 1960s, the afro was seen as a sign of resistance. While the style was heavily associated with the Black Panther Party, it was widely worn by African Americans. Even receiving federal protection in the 1970s.

What began in the 1970s and continues today are so-called race-neutral policies that are used to mandate how people of color wear their hair. Policies that prohibit dreadlocks, braids, afros, etc. are discriminatory. This is what this bill aims to correct and protect. Today, you will hear and read testimony from individuals who have dealt with the backlash of wearing their hair as it grows from their scalp. You will also hear expert testimony from clinicians who can attest to how manipulation of ethnic hair can cause irreparable damage to both the mental and physical person. You will also hear how changes in these policies can help businesses from a human resource perspective and not hinder them.

I am thankful to Senator Taylor for her willingness to serve as the senate lead on this bill, as well as the support of members across the aisle. I believe you will understand that this is a good bill, as it will help us move forward and update our state statutes to be more inclusive.

TIGNON-decorative head wraps imposed by law in French and Spanish Louisiana.



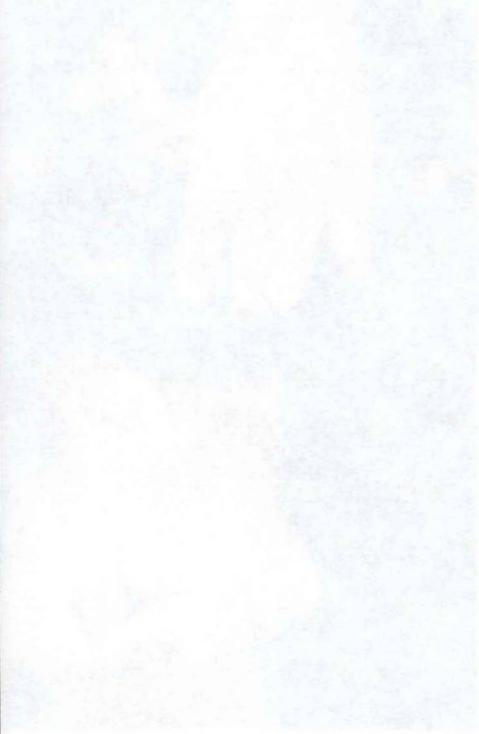
Pressing of the hair-a method of temporarily straightening tightly coiled hair. Done with use of a straightening comb that is heated on a stove.



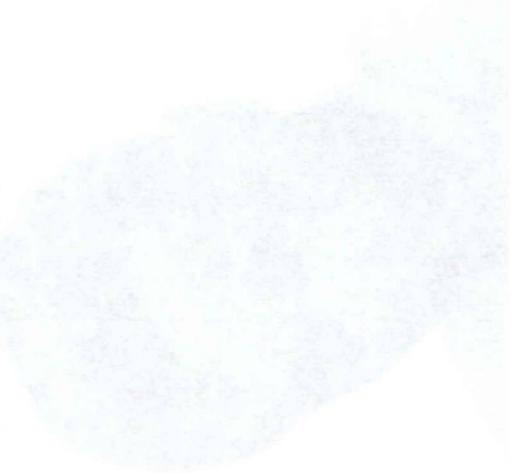
Conk-derived from congolene, a hair straightener gel for men made from lye. Mixing lye, eggs, and potatoes, this mixture was used to straighten hair that would then be combed back and gel applied.



A man's hair is styled with
 a thick, curly beard. The hair
 is styled on a stand.

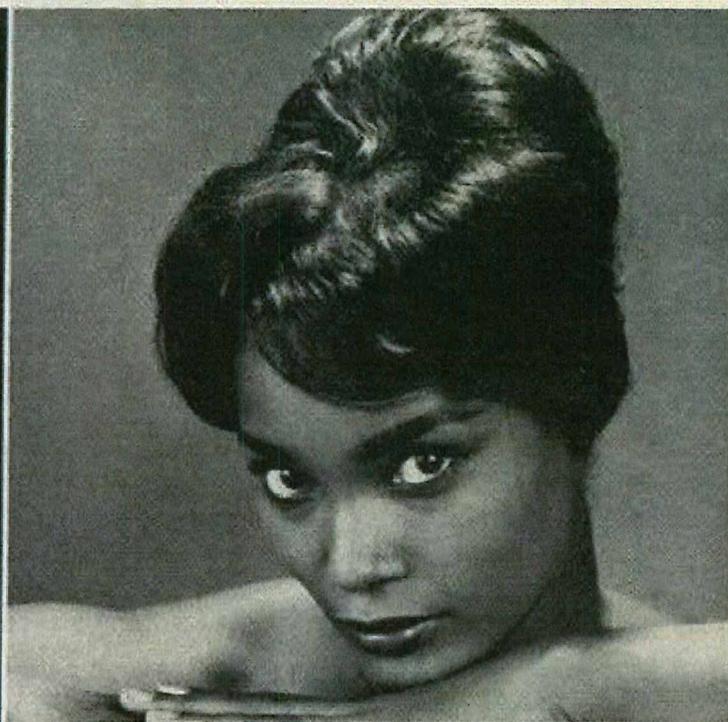


A hairbrush with a wooden
 handle and a dense, dark
 bristle head. The brush is
 used for styling hair.



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hair...

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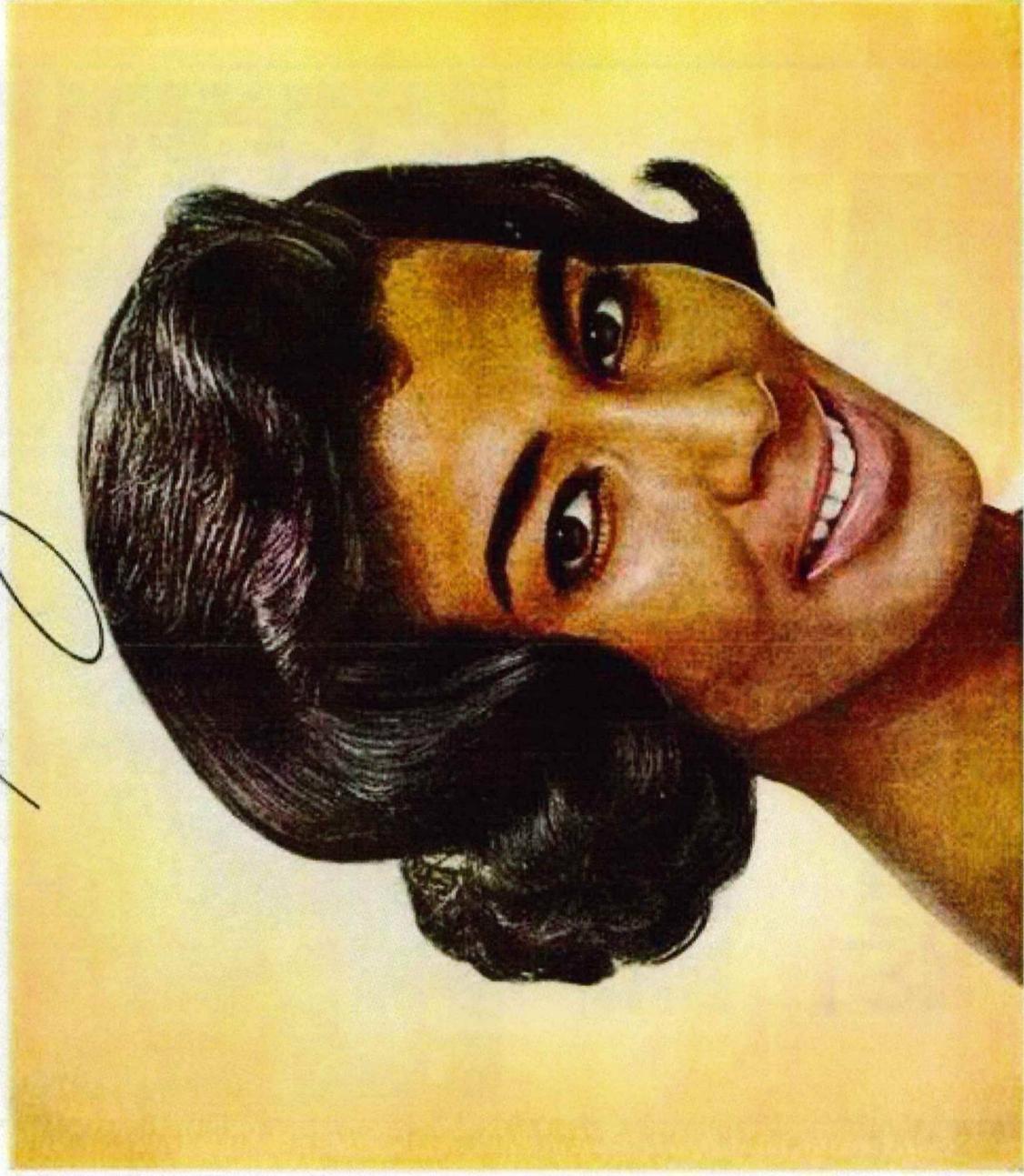
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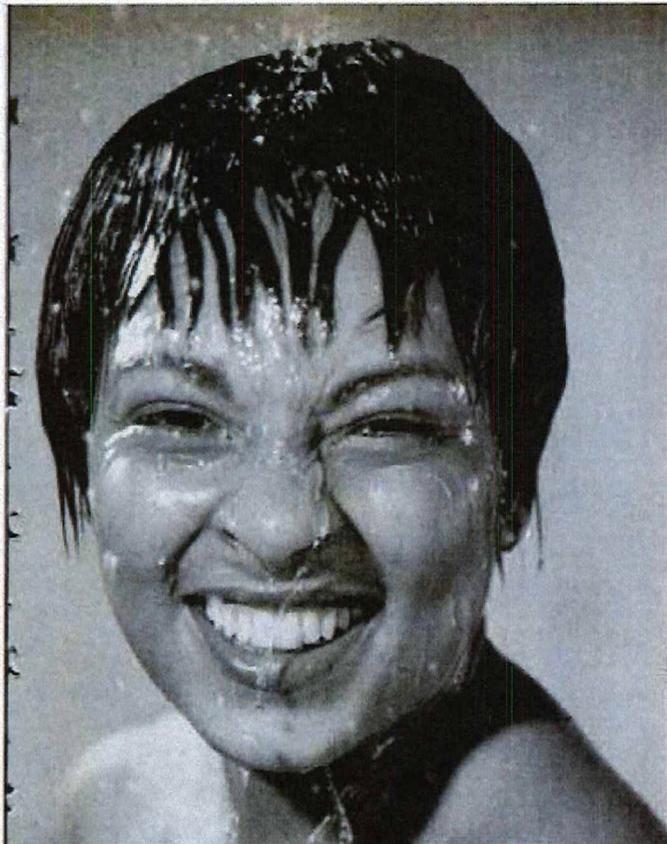
Press thrilling softness, shining highlights into your hair. You'll like light, delicate Ultra Sheen far more than heavy, greasy old-fashioned pressing products! And what a difference it makes! Leaves hair marvellously lustrous... soft... exciting to the touch. Works fast... requires less heating with pressing comb... so you don't bake away beauty of hair! Contains rich conditioning oils that pamper hair, add body, wake up sleepy highlights. Even tired and dyed hair takes on new beauty, and grey or white hair absolutely glows! The more you use Ultra Sheen, the

more thoroughly hair becomes conditioned. So after a few applications, you need relax only hairline edges and new growth with pressing comb. You then can go right ahead and finish with just a curling iron. You use so little it is really economical—especially since you do not have to use any curling cream or wax with it. One single application is all you need to press, curl and style your hair. See for yourself how easy it is to have beautiful hair fashioned any way your heart desires, with Ultra Sheen.



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Will hair break, harden or split? NO	Hot irons or hot combs? NO	Clogs pores with heat and grease? NO	Scorches hair, skin or scalp? NO	Cooks out natural oils? NO
Another 3-hour process? NO	Takes only a few minutes? YES	Messy re-rinsing-out of neutralizer? NO	Mixing in jars, cups, pans, basins or bowls? NO	FIRST and ONLY product to do so much? YES
Are others trying to copy Hair-Strate? YES	Have they failed to find secret Hair-Strate formula? YES	Can Pro-Con condition damaged hair for a Hair-Strate? YES	Pro-Con conditions broken, split, limp, fine or weak hair? YES	So Pro-Con treatments make Hair-Strate possible for ANYone? YES
Is HairStrate best for men and children, too? YES	Call YOUR beautician for an appointment soon? YES	 Vice-Pres. Henri Childrey —inventor, chief chemist, director.	 Vice-Pres. S. Henry Bundles —directs manufacture and distribution.	©1960 by SUMMIT LABORATORIES 521 Board of Trade Bldg. Indianapolis, Ind. From government cable: SUMMIT

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 **MARCELIA NICHOLSON**
MILWAUKEE COUNTY BOARD CHAIRWOMAN • 5TH DISTRICT SUPERVISOR

DATE: April 20, 2021
TO: The Assembly Committee on Constitution & Ethics
FROM: Chairwoman Marcelia Nicholson
RE: Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors
Testimony on 2021 Assembly Bill 141

Thank you to the members of the Committee on Constitution and Ethics for this opportunity to provide testimony on Assembly Bill 141 – otherwise known as the Creating a Respectful and Open Workplace for Natural hair (CROWN) Act.

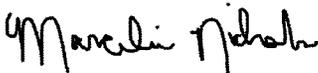
This Act is part of a nation-wide movement that seeks to fill in gaps left by existing anti-discrimination laws by specifically banning race-based hair discrimination. No person should be forced to adopt narrow and exclusionary dress or grooming policies, particularly if those policies deny one's right to freely express their cultural and racial identity.

As an Afro-Latina woman, my hair is my crown and I take pride in the many forms it upholds. It is voluminous and curly; and often times has a mind of its own, but above all else it is professional. Whether I choose to wear my hair in a large curly afro or in box braids, there should never be cause for an employer or colleague to discriminate against me. My hair does not define my work ethic.

I want to commend and thank Representative Myers for her leadership in introducing this bill. As state and local leaders, I believe it is incumbent upon us all to continue to build more equitable environments for the citizens we serve.

I urge the committee to pass the CROWN Act and put an end to discrimination against women and men of color who wear their hair naturally or in protective styles.

Sincerely,



Marcelia Nicholson, Chairwoman
Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors

Milwaukee County Courthouse

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April 20, 2021

AB 141 Research

According to the research conducted by Wendy Greene, a professor of law at Drexel University, grooming policies enforced against African Americans that prohibit natural hairstyles require women and girls of African descent to wear their hair straightened. This hairstyle is achieved through toxic chemicals, extreme heat styling, wigs and weaves which are expensive and time consuming to maintain. Long term use of these items often causes temporary or permanent damage to African descent women and girls' hair and scalp. Commonly, African descent women and girls experience chemical burns while chemical relaxers are being applied to their hair and scalp, which are extremely painful and severely damaging. African descent women and girls can endure temporary hair breakage, temporary and permanent hair balding, as well as scalp disorders like traction alopecia due to chemical relaxers, wigs, weaves, and extreme heat being applied. As a result, balding, hair loss, and scalp damage create emotional and psychological harms including stress, depression, low confidence and a negative body image in conjunction with financial investments to repair the harm.

Angela Onwuachi-Willig, a professor of law at Boston University, has stated that employer grooming codes require black people, in particular black women, to change the texture and structure of their hair. To achieve this hairstyle, black women straighten their hair using a lye-based chemical process or to damage their hair through an overuse of extreme heat. Lye is often used to strip paint which automatically qualifies it as dangerous to put near anyone's hair or scalp. Black women and girls artificially straighten their hair with chemical relaxer or a hot comb that is a comb heated on an actual stove then used to comb through a person's hair to temporarily straighten it. Both methods present great risk of physical injury through the burning of scalp.

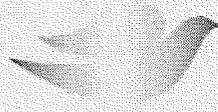
Traction Alopecia





The **CROWN** Research Study

Creating a **R**espectful and **O**pen **W**orkplace for **N**atural Hair



My hair is professional.



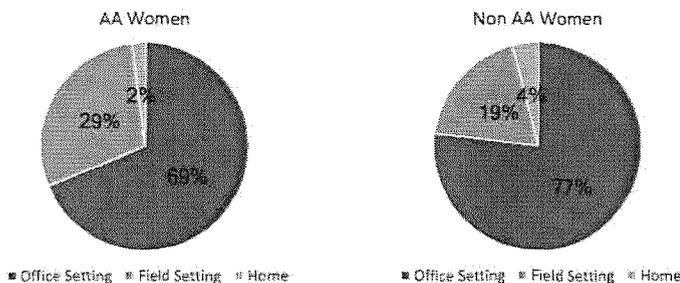
Across the country, Black people are disproportionately burdened by policies and practices in public places, including the workplace, that target, profile, or single them out for natural hair styles - referring to the texture of hair that is not permed, dyed, relaxed, or chemically altered. Today, many Black women are choosing to wear their natural hair in its coiled, kinky or tight curly state in the professional workforce.

The CROWN research study was carried out in 2019 to identify the magnitude of racial discrimination experienced by women in the workplace based on their natural hairstyles. A survey of 1,017 Black women and 1,050 non African-American women ages 25-64 was conducted. In order to qualify for the survey, women must have been employed full-time and currently working in an office or sales setting, or worked in a corporate office in the past 6 months. The non-Black sample of women was predominantly White (92%).

When looking at work environments, researchers found that currently, more Black women (29%) work in a field (sales) environment compared to non-Black women (19%). Furthermore, fewer Black women (69%) work in a corporate setting compared to non-Black women (77%). In all settings and for both Black and non-Black women, the most important career touchpoints for hair appearance are ranked, respectively, as the interview, company meeting/presentation, and the first day of work.

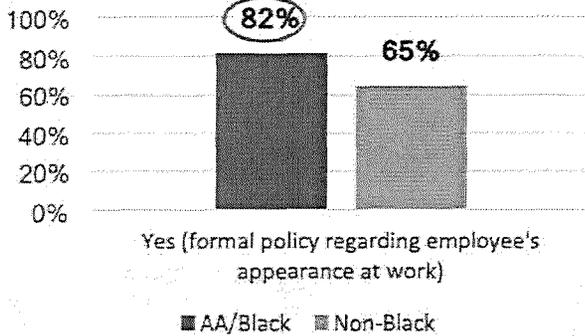
Black women are made to be more aware of corporate grooming policies than White women

As a key influencer into Black women's perceptions of herself, her performance, and her prospective career trajectory, the survey focused on corporate grooming policies. The survey found that overall, Black women are made to be more aware of corporate grooming policies than White women. The application process, the presence of hair/appearance policies are given to Black women at significantly higher rates (22%) than non-Black women (17%). During orientation, researchers found that another significantly higher proportion of Black women (35%) compared to non-Black women (23%) received company grooming policies. Conversely, 32% of non-Black women stated they never actually received the corporate grooming policy compared to 18% of Black women.

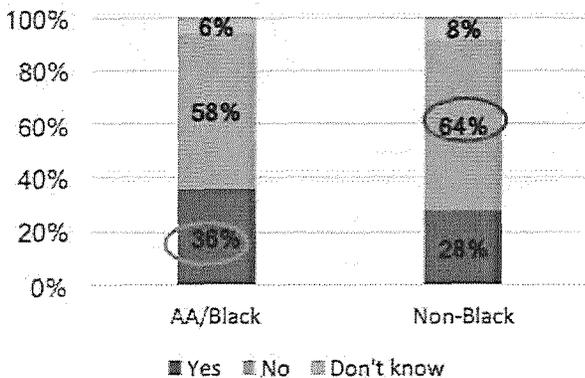


More Black women work in a field (sales) environment compared to non-Black women.

Formal Policy Regarding Appearance



Formal Policy Regarding Hair



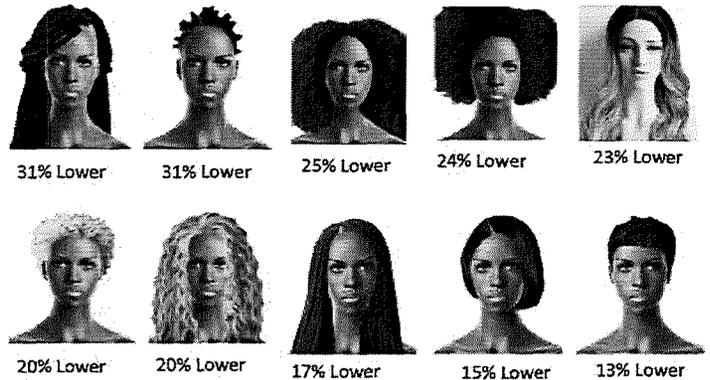
Dove



Hair is judged differently on Black women.

Same hairstyles on Black women were rated lower for job readiness* than on White women.

In addition to revealing the additional emphasis placed on corporate grooming policies for Black women, the survey reveals the implications of natural hair-based discrimination on perceived job performance and outlook. When looking at images of Black women hair styles, white women deemed all but 2 hair styles "less ready" for performance



The data supports the claim that Black women's hair is more policed in the workplace, thereby contributing to a climate of group control in the company culture and perceived professional barriers. Black women are more likely to have received formal grooming policies in the workplace, and to believe that there is a dissonance from her hair and other race's hair.

*Job readiness is calculated by a combination of three attributes at equal weights: Appropriate for Management, Appropriate for non-Management and Qualified for My Position (T2B)



This groundbreaking study confirms **workplace bias** against hairstyles impacts Black women's ability to **celebrate their natural beauty**, and how workplace bias and corporate grooming policies unfairly impact Black women.



30%

Black women are 30% more likely to be made aware of a formal workplace appearance policy

Black women fear **scrutiny and discrimination** when expressing their natural beauty **in the workplace**

80%

"I have to change my hair from its natural state to fit in at the office"

Black women are 80% more likely to agree with this statement



BLACK WOMEN ARE:

1.5x

More likely to be sent home from the workplace because of their hair

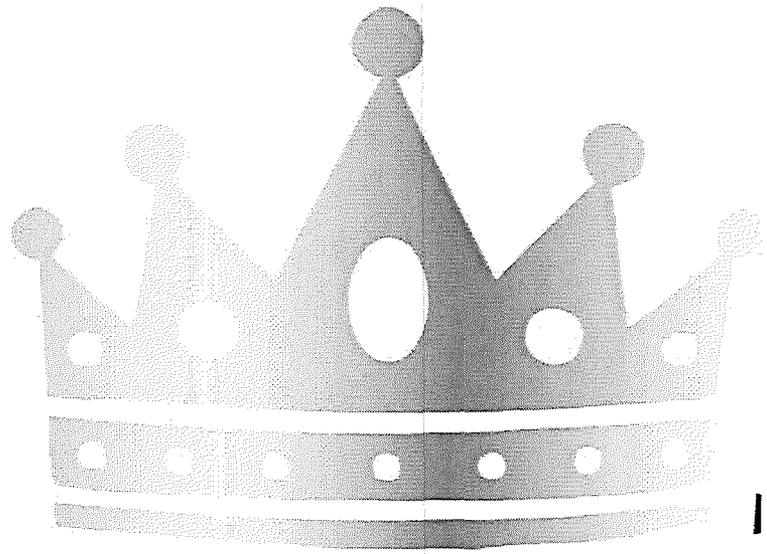
83%

More likely to report being judged more harshly on her looks than other women

Dove



Hair discrimination
has real,
measurable social
and economic **impact**
on **Black women**



3.4x

Black women's hair is 3.4x
more likely to be perceived
as unprofessional

Expressing
her **individuality**
is challenged by her
fear of judgement

Key
Findings

Black
Women

Are more policed
in the workplace

Feel their hair is
targeted

Are consistently
rated as less ready for job
performance

We Surveyed.

2000 Women
(1000 Black and 1000 non-Black women)
Ages 25-64 throughout the United States
Employed full-time
Currently working in an office or field (sales) setting
OR worked in a corporate office in the past 6 months



TheCROWNAct.com

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For more information, please contact Marcy@joycollective.com

How Natural Black Hair at Work Became a Civil Rights Issue

On the 55th anniversary of the Civil Rights Act, U.S. courts are still divided about African Americans' right to wear their natural hair in the workplace.



By: Chanté Griffin

July 3, 2019

In 2010, Chastity Jones eagerly accepted a job offer from Catastrophe Management Solutions as a customer service representative. The offer, however, came with one caveat—she had to cut off her locs. Jones refused, and the company rescinded its job offer. The company's hiring manager reportedly told Jones, "They tend to get messy." The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) **filed a suit on Jones's behalf in 2013 and lost**. In 2016, the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the district court's ruling and dismissed the case.

Jones' case is not unique. Cases filed by black workers alleging discrimination against their natural hair in the workplace have filled courthouses for more than forty years, yielding mixed results. These judicial rulings, intertwined with changing social and

cultural mores, have created a contentious and uncertain legal situation, with courts and other governmental entities ruling on both sides of the debate.

How Did We Get Here?

Anti-black hair sentiment on U.S. soil has existed for centuries. In the 1700s, enslaved women who worked in the fields usually covered their hair in head-rags due to the harsh demands of their work. Enslaved Africans who worked in the “big house,” however, sometimes mimicked the hairstyles of their enslavers, either by wearing wigs that had become popular during that era or shaping their kinky hair to emulate them. In cities like New Orleans, however, where free Creole women of color donned elaborate hairstyles that displayed their kinks and coils with an air of regality, the city implemented laws—the Tignon Laws—that required these women to wear a tignon (scarf or handkerchief) over their hair to signify that they were members of the slave class, regardless of whether they were free or enslaved.

The end of the 19th century saw the invention of the hair-straightening comb, which would be used to “tame” black hair. Madam C.J. Walker, a black woman, popularized the comb, and “by the mid-1920s, straight hair had become the preferred texture to signal middle class status.” As a result, Walker became the first female African American millionaire. Although some historians have lauded Walker’s business acumen, others have chided her for perpetuating the idea that straight hair leads to social and economic advancement. For better or worse, she offered black women an avenue for increased societal acceptance in an era when minstrel songs mocked the hair texture of African Americans, “comparing it to wool and often describing it as nappy.”

**“Don’t remove the kinks from
your hair! Remove them from
your brain!”**

Marcus Garvey

The first wave of the natural hair movement emerged during the tumultuous 1960s. The “Black Is Beautiful” movement assured black women and men that their skin, facial features, and natural hair were admirable—as is. The activist Marcus Garvey

encouraged black women to embrace their natural kinks, arguing that copying white eurocentric standards of beauty denigrated the beauty of black women: **“Don’t remove the kinks from your hair! Remove them from your brain!”**

The activist Angela Davis **sported an afro as a sign of black power and rebellion against white American beauty standards.** Wearing an afro became a weapon in the fight for racial equality, as well as a public declaration of self-love and solidarity within the black community. A 1972 study of black teens living in St. Louis revealed that **90 percent of young men and 40 percent of young women in the city sported their natural kinks,** an uptick from the 50s and 60s. Although small in scope, this study captured the larger national trend.

Whether rocking afros or pressed hair, black protesters demanded the signing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which **“ended segregation in public places and banned employment discrimination.”** The Act also created the EEOC, which operates **“as the lead enforcement agency in the area of workplace discrimination.”** When the EEOC was founded fifty-five years ago, the federal government’s primary concern was that black people be granted equal access to public workplaces. It didn’t foresee that black hair would need equal access as well.

Meanwhile, public protests and pop culture pushed the Black Is Beautiful and civil rights movements forward. Released in 1968, James Brown’s “Say It Loud!” became a rallying anthem that encouraged black folks to embrace their blackness and fight against unequal treatment:

Say it loud! I’m black and I’m proud
Say it louder! I’m black and I’m proud
Some people say we got a lot of malice, some say it’s a lotta nerve
But I say we won’t quit movin’ until we get what we deserve

The first natural hair discrimination cases wouldn’t appear until the next decade. In the 1976 case of *Jenkins v. Blue Cross Mutual Hospital Insurance*, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit upheld a race discrimination lawsuit against an employer for bias against afros. The appeals court agreed that workers were entitled to wear afros under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act.

While afros were technically allowed in workplaces, the social pressure to emulate eurocentric hair permeated American society, impacting black women’s hair grooming decisions. In “Hey Girl, Am I More Than My Hair?,” the communications scholar Tracey Owens Patton wrote that “the progressive changes made during the Black Power movement eroded as assimilation became more dominant in the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s.”



The 1980s and 1990s ushered in more black women sporting pressed and permed hair, thanks to prevalent hair-care ads on TV and in magazines that encouraged black women to alter the texture of their hair. However, this time period also witnessed the popularization of styles like braids and cornrows. Images of black women celebrities showcasing braids—like Janet Jackson in *Poetic Justice*—encouraged black women to braid their tresses. Wearing these styles came with a price, as they created a legal firestorm. In 1981, a black woman took American Airlines to court because the company demanded she not wear her hair in braids. The court sided with the airline, stating that braids were not an immutable racial characteristic—unlike the afro. Less than a decade later, the Hyatt Regency used this ruling to make employee Cheryl Tatum resign after she refused to take out the cornrows she wore to work. The American Airlines ruling established the standing legal precedent.

Finally, the 2000s welcomed the second wave of the natural hair movement. Spurred by films and the advent of social media, the movement fueled a cultural shift that has caused legions of black women to abandon their perms and pressing combs. Director Regina Kimbell's *My Nappy Roots: A Journey Through Black Hair-itage* traced the history and politics around natural black hair in the U.S., thus raising consciousness in the African American community. This was one year before comedian Chris Rock would release *Good Hair*, a similarly themed documentary that focused on the economics of black women buying weaves and perming their hair. One of the most famous lines of

the film was delivered by comedian Paul Mooney, who said, **“If your hair is relaxed, they are relaxed. If your hair is nappy, they are not happy.”**

While both films raised social consciousness, prompting many black women to ditch their pressing combs, perms, and weaves, YouTube and other social media platforms empowered these women to act on their new awareness. YouTube and natural hair blogs allowed black women to discuss their hair-care journeys, share hair tutorials, and connect with other women—many of whom were learning to care for their natural hair for the first time. In **“YouTube Communities and the Promotion of Natural Hair Acceptance Among Black Women,”** Cameron Jackson wrote that the social media platform not only enabled newly minted naturalistas to “disseminate information about natural hair” but also caused “a shift in the cultural understanding of natural hair.”



Today, natural hair communities abound on YouTube and Instagram. With one million subscribers, **Natural85** is an acclaimed natural hair guru, while Instagram shows 21.8 million “natural hair” posts. These numbers suggest that natural hair is officially “in.” So “in” that **natural hair clip-ins are now available**, offering buyers an assortment of “natural” kinks and curls. Hair product sales stats reflect this trend. According to the global research firm Mintel, spending on perm relaxers **fell 30.8 percent between 2011 and 2016**. Estimates suggest that by 2020, relaxers will become the smallest segment of the market.

Preferring natural crowns isn't a passing fad, writes Kamina Wilkerson in "**The Natural Hair Movement**." "It signifies an attempt at a healthier lifestyle, a more authentic existence and a redefinition of the meaning of beauty." According to Wilkerson, it's also "revolutionary as a self-created, self-perpetuating female-led movement." The proliferation of natural hair **expos** and **festivals** exemplifies this reality. The leaders of *this* revolution are natural hair evangelists who preach the good news of organic hair products to their loyal followers and the newly converted—while flaunting fierce manes, the same hairstyles worn in countries in Africa in the seventeenth century.

As natural hair care practices have gained increased acceptance in mainstream society, many corporations—and the U.S. government—have welcomed natural styles, even as courts decided they didn't have to. Last year, for example, the U.S. Navy **changed its grooming policy to include braided styles and locs**, which follows **a similar decision by the Army in 2017**.

However, the debate about what's professional, presentable, and thus acceptable looms, affecting black children as well. In 2017, a preparatory academy in Montverde, Florida, asked a black teenage girl **to change her natural hair** because it violated the school's dress code; and in 2018, a middle-school student in Gretna, Louisiana was **removed from school** due to her braided extensions.

Undeterred, artists continue to propel the culture forward. In 2018, Netflix turned Trisha R. Thomas's *Nappily Ever After* book series into a film, while Gillian Scott-Ward's *Back to Natural* documentary (which hit the festival circuit in 2017) influenced the NYC Commission's release of its groundbreaking guidelines.

Where Are We at Now?

In 2006, the EEOC issued its **Compliance Manual on Race and Color Discrimination**, which details guidelines around what constitutes discrimination based on physical characteristics in the workplace. The manual protects against "employment discrimination based on a person's physical characteristics associated with race, such as a person's color, hair, facial features, height and weight." The manual states that employers can impose neatness and grooming standards, as long as racial differences are taken into account and the rules are applied equally across racial lines. Employers cannot discriminate against an employee wearing an afro, for example, because that is black hair in its natural state. While employers might be able to request that an afro be groomed, they cannot demand that it not be worn at all. Neither can they apply hairstyle rules more stringently to hairstyles worn by blacks.

At the center of the current debate around natural hairstyles like locs is whether the style is a racial characteristic protected by the law.

The EEOC's guidelines, however clear, still leave room for judicial interpretation, with the EEOC and federal courts disagreeing. At the center of the current debate around natural hairstyles like locs is whether the style is a racial characteristic protected by the law.

In Jones' case, the Eleventh Circuit held that the employer did not discriminate against Jones based on race because the locs hairstyle is a "mutable—or changeable—characteristic." The EEOC, however, maintained that race is a social construct that isn't strictly limited to immutable characteristics. The Commission insists that race can also include "cultural characteristics related to race or ethnicity," including grooming practices. The circuit court disagreed, ruling that although locs are traditionally associated with people of African descent, the employer did not engage in any race-based disparate treatment.

Although the EEOC opted not to take the case to the Supreme Court and the NAACP's subsequent request that the court hear the case was rejected, other government entities have drawn more stringent legal lines in the sand. In early 2019, the New York City Commission on Human Rights **declared its commitment** to protect residents' legal right to wear their hair in locs, afros, braids, and other culturally specific styles, granting the city's residents more protection than the federal government provides. The Commission argues that natural hair—and by extension any natural hairstyle—is inextricably tied to race and thus protected under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, which "prohibits employment discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex and national origin."

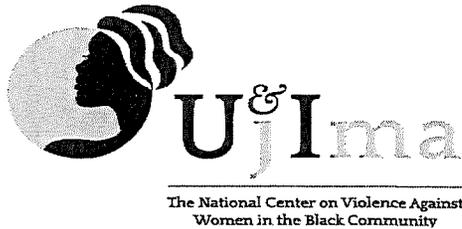
The Commission wrote: "Bans or restrictions on natural hair or hairstyles associated with black people are often rooted in white standards of appearance and perpetuate racist stereotypes that black hairstyles are unprofessional. Such policies exacerbate anti-black bias in employment, at school, while playing sports, and in other areas of

daily living.” The Commission’s statement mirrored the EEOC’s position and implemented on the local level what the EEOC hopes to implement on a federal level.

Two months after NYC released its guidelines, the California legislature **passed a bill** that would ban discrimination against natural black hairstyles in the workplace. The bill awaits the Governor’s signature. If it’s approved, California would become the first state to ban discrimination against all natural hairstyles in the workplace.

Where Do We Go from Here?

While NYC residents can don any natural hairstyle they want in public schools and in workplaces, and California residents may soon join them, many African Americans aren’t afforded that same legal protection. Black citizens like Chastity Jones are still being denied jobs. Unless the Supreme Court reverses the Eleventh Circuit’s ruling, this judicial and legislative free-for-all will continue. Caught in the crosshairs, many African Americans will be forced to choose between embracing their identities and economic advancement.



April 5, 2021

The Honorable LaKeshia Myers
Wisconsin State Representative
Room 3 North, State Capitol
Milwaukee, WI 53708

Dear Congresswoman Myers:

Ujima, Inc: The National Center on Violence Against Women in the Black Community (Ujima, Inc.), is a national Culturally Specific Services Issue Resource Center funded by the Administration of Children and Families, Family and Youth Services Bureau within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services by and through the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act. The name Ujima was derived from one of the Kwanzaa principles which means Collective Work and Responsibility. This principle is critical to addressing violence against Black women in the United States. Ujima Inc. through its education and outreach; training and technical assistance; resource development; research; and public policy efforts mobilizes the Black community and allies to strengthen our families, recognizing that the safety and viability of our families is connected to the health and well-being of our individual neighborhoods and communities at large.

We are writing to express our support for the passage of LRB 1080/1 – The CROWN Act (Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair), legislation to end hair discrimination. Ujima Inc. is an official supporter of the CROWN Coalition which supports The CROWN Act nationwide. We need your help to change the laws in Wisconsin by supporting LRB 1080/1 to help end the racial injustice of discrimination against Black women who are more likely than their white peers to experience workplace discrimination due to the texture of their hair in its natural state. Black women are 1.5 times more likely to be sent home or know of a Black woman sent home from the workplace because of her hair. Ujima Inc. recognizes the financial inequity that stems from workplace discrimination. The process of employment – including job searching, applications, scheduling interviews, and commuting – is an expensive endeavor to execute. The possibility of being denied a job due to the natural state of one's hair, Black women are disproportionately barred from financial growth. This type of harassment and discrimination reinforces negative stereotypes about Black hair, and also creates an oppressive environment that makes Black professionals feel unsafe, unvalued, and unprotected in their work environment. Furthermore, hair discrimination contributes to the wealth gap and normalizes pay inequity for Black women.

Please accept Ujima Inc.'s full support for LRB 1080/1 – the CROWN Act to end hair discrimination in the workplace.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Karma Cottman".

Karma Cottman
Executive Director



MalamaDoe
A Coworking Community for Women

Sheila Long, Founder
MalamaDoe - A Coworking Community for Women
4465 N. Oakland Ave
Shorewood, WI 53211

March 18, 2021

Senator LaKeisha Myeers
Room 3 North
State Capitol
P.O. Box 8953
Madison, WI 53708

To Representative Myer:

I am writing to thank you and express my support of the CROWN Act. My name is Sheila Long and I am the Founder of MalamaDoe - A Coworking Community for Women in Shorewood.

On April 1, 2017, I had the great privilege of opening and growing this business as a locale where where women could congregate and grow their business ideas while converting them into viable Milwaukee based businesses. In three years, our square footage nearly tripled from 1110 to 2950 square feet. We have had 72+ members with start-ups and 63 of them still had their business in operation as of February 2020. As of March 2021, we currently have 26 members.

MalamaDoe especially assists women who have had experienced a life event which caused them to cease climbing the career ladder. We have a "Sales Calendar and Road Map" where women can showcase their businesses at local events and operate as an incubator.

I have documented the incubator model in my soon to be published book in May of 2021, *Surrounded by Awesome Women: Unlocking a New Model of Women's Success in Business and Entrepreneurship for the Next Decade*. In my book, I discuss the hair discrimination of Nadiyah Johnson, the current owner of Jet Constellations and the Milky Way Tech Hub, faced as a college intern which caused her to feel as if she did not belong in her workplace. I also discuss how this legislation is under consideration of being passed.

For our society and state to continue to thrive, we cannot have these stories of women in Wisconsin be a part of our every day existence. We must stop having anyone navigate professional barriers such as this story as it is entirely unacceptable. Having any person feeling isolated, incomplete, and inadequate because of micro aggressions, institutional sexism and institutional betrayal is not how we want to be perceived as a state.

We know our state's values encompass those of belongingness and encouragement and I applaud you for recognizing this with this legislation. We need to have workplaces where everyone experiences professional resources or support free of discrimination.

Thank you taking the initiative to increase public awareness and strengthen cultural understanding. Please let me know how I can be of assistance to ensure workplace equity for all.

Sincerely,

Sheila Long

Sheila Long
MalamaDoe - A Coworking Community for Women
414-491-8238
Sheila@MalamaDoe.com



11 DUPONT CIRCLE NW
SUITE 800
WASHINGTON, DC 20036
202-588-5180
NWLC.ORG

March 18, 2021

Representative Chuck Wighers
Chair of the Assembly Committee on Constitution and Ethics
Wisconsin State Capitol, Room 306 North
Madison, WI 53703

RE: LRB 1080/1, The Creating a Respectful and Open Workplace for Natural hair (CROWN) Act – SUPPORT

Dear Representative Wighers:

The National Women's Law Center fights for gender justice—in the courts, in public policy, and in our society—working across the issues that are central to the lives of women and girls. We use the law in all its forms to change culture and drive solutions to the gender inequity that shapes our society and to break down the barriers that harm all of us—especially those who face multiple forms of discrimination, including women of color, LGBTQ people, and low-income women and families. For nearly 50 years, we have been on the leading edge of every major legal and policy victory for women. We are proud to support LRB 1080/1 and urge the legislature to amend the bill to expand protections in all spheres where Wisconsinites enjoy protection from discrimination.

LRB 1080/1, the Creating a Respectful and Open Workplace for Natural hair (CROWN) Act, corrects an inconsistency in existing interpretations of anti-discrimination laws by amending the Wisconsin Statutes to make clear that they protect against discrimination based on traits historically associated with race, such as hair texture and protective hairstyles.

Despite great strides made by citizens, legislators, and courts to reverse and resolve the long-lasting damaging effects of racism, hair remains a source of racial discrimination with serious economic and health consequences, especially for Black women. This sort of discrimination is fostered by purportedly “race neutral” grooming and dress code policies in the workplace that promote a Eurocentric image of professional hair. An image of professionalism that holds European features as the norm disparately affects individuals who do not naturally fall into that model. Black women, adhering to such grooming policies, often feel compelled to employ styling practices to alter the natural characteristics of their hair, including time-consuming heat straightening and chemical permanent relaxers and other things that can lead to hair damage and hair loss. Moreover, for many Black women, braids, locs, and twists, also known as “protective hairstyles,” are essential for healthy hair maintenance.

LRB 1080/1 will ensure protection against discrimination based on hairstyles by extending statutory protection to hair texture and protective styles in Wisconsin employment law. Explicitly including hair texture and protective hairstyles in the definition of “race” will prohibit an employer



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from withholding or terminating employment or promotion based on discrimination against the protected employee or applicant's hairstyle. These protections will help mitigate the unfair scrutiny and significant injustices Black women face in the workplace because of their hair.

We also know that the workplace is not the only place Black hair is scrutinized. Too often, Black students are pulled out of class, denied athletic opportunities, and otherwise discriminated against for choosing to wear their hair naturally or in protective styles. Such discrimination is not only unfair, but also linked to Black student disengagement. For example, according to the 2017 research study *Promoting Resilience Among African American Girls: Racial Identity as a Protective Factor*, Black girls who have positive feelings about their racial identity are likely to be more academically engaged and curious, while those with negative feelings about their racial identity perform lower in school and have more symptoms of depression. We applaud that LRB 1080/1 also applies to antidiscrimination protections in educational programs and other spheres in which Wisconsinites are protected from race- or sex-based discrimination, such as housing, jury service, adoption services, and public accommodations. For these reasons, we are proud to support LRB 1080/1 and respectfully request your vote in favor of this measure.

Thank you for your leadership on this important issue. For follow-up questions or concerns, please contact Sabrina Bernadel or Emily Martin at 202.588.5180.

Sincerely,

Sabrina Bernadel, Legal Fellow
National Women's Law Center

Cc: Representative Jeremy Thiesfeldt, Vice Chair
Committee Members, Assembly Committee on Constitution and Ethics



March 15, 2021

Representative LaKeisha Myers
Room 3 North, State Capitol
P.O. Box 8953
Madison, WI 53708

Re: AB 141 - The CROWN Act (Myers) – SUPPORT

Dear Representative Myers:

We are writing to urge you to pass The CROWN Act in the state of Wisconsin as we work to end hair discrimination in this country.

AB 141 (Myers), the Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural hair (CROWN) Act, corrects an inconsistency in existing anti-discrimination laws by amending the Wisconsin Government and Education Codes to protect against discrimination based on traits historically associated with race, such as hair texture and protective hairstyles, in workplaces and in schools.

Despite great strides made by people, legislators, and courts to reverse and resolve the long-lasting damaging effects of racism, hair remains a source of racial discrimination with serious economic and health consequences, especially for Black people. This sort of discrimination is fostered by purportedly “race neutral” grooming and dress code policies in the workplace and in schools that promote a Eurocentric image of professional hair. An image of professionalism that holds European features as the norm disparately affects individuals who do not naturally fall into that model. Black children and adults, adhering to such grooming policies, often feel compelled to employ styling practices to alter the natural characteristics of their hair, including time-consuming heat straightening and chemical permanent relaxers and other things which can lead to hair damage and hair loss. Moreover, for many Black people, braids, locs, and twists, also known as “protective hairstyles,” are essential for healthy hair maintenance.

Additionally, while anti-discrimination laws presently protect the choice to wear an afro, afros are not the only natural presentation of Black hair. AB 141 (Myers) will ensure protection against discrimination based on hairstyles by extending statutory protection to hair texture and protective styles in Wisconsin.

Including hair texture and protective hairstyles in the definition of “race” will prohibit an employer from withholding or terminating employment or promotion based on discrimination against the protected employee or applicant’s hairstyle. It will also prevent schools from disrupting a child’s education based on the way they wear their hair. These protections will help mitigate the unfair scrutiny and significant injustices Black people face because of their hair.

For this reason, we are proud to support AB 141 (Myers) to ensure an end to hair-based discrimination in state of Wisconsin and across the entire U.S.

Sincerely,

The Founding Members of The CROWN Coalition

Dove
National Urban League

Color Of Change
Western Center on Law & Poverty

LOCAL 1473

United Food & Commercial Workers Union
2001 N. Mayfair Road · Milwaukee WI 53226
website · ufcw1473.org email · info@ufcw1473.org



John R. Eiden • *President* • *International Vice President*

Jake Bailey • *Secretary-Treasurer*

March 9, 2021

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing today on behalf of the United Food and Commercial Workers Union Local 1473 to express our emphatic support of the CROWN Act, as introduced by Wisconsin State Representative LaKeshia Myers.

This bill provides that the definition of race-based discrimination be expanded to include discrimination based on traits historically associated with race, including hair texture and certain hairstyles such as braids, locs, and twists. This would ensure that employment, housing, education, and other services Wisconsinites depend on would be free from discrimination based on hairstyle, and that this type of discrimination would be defined and recognized under the law.

UFCW Local 1473 represents workers up and down the food supply chain, as well as in health care, cannabis, and other industries, totaling 12,000 members statewide. Discrimination has no place in Wisconsin's workplaces, communities, or institutions. It is a no-brainer to support legislation that will protect Wisconsinites of color from discrimination based on their natural hair texture or chosen protective hairstyle. In fact, seven U.S. states including California, New York, and Virginia have already passed similar laws. It is about time Wisconsin does the same.

As the state of Wisconsin's largest private sector union and voice for working Wisconsinites, UFCW 1473 proudly supports the CROWN Act.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jake Bailey', is written over a horizontal line.

Jake Bailey
President-elect
UFCW Local 1473

April 18, 2021

Dr. Afiya Mbilishaka
Clinical Psychologist
University of the District of Columbia
4200 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20008

Greetings to the Members of the Committee on Constitution and Ethics,

I write this letter of support for the CROWN Act to end hair discrimination in Wisconsin. Everyday across this country, Black people have to navigate institutions that meet their presence with policies that police their hair (Greene, 2011; Greene 2017). A Boston school gave 15-year-old twins, Deanna and Mya Scot, detention for wearing box braids. Promise Sayers, a 10-year-old from Nashville, went viral for wearing an Afro to school despite bullying from classmates. Marian Scott, an 8-year-old from Michigan was denied her school photo because of red extensions in her hair. New Jersey resident Andrew Johnson was publicly shamed for his locs during a school wrestling match, when referees butchered his hair in order to compete; a competition that he did win. Currently, in Texas, Deandre Arnold will be barred from graduation unless he cuts his locs. These recent trending examples of customary, discriminatory practices target Black people at school and work through their hair and demonstrate how policies manifest as active forms of oppression, surveillance, “othering”, and marginalization. Clearly, Black hair styles, textures, and lengths are sites of political struggle, positioning psycho-emotional demands on Black people to

anticipate, diagnose, critique, and hopefully dismiss attacks on their aesthetics (see Perez Huber & Solórzano, 2015).

To explain scientifically, Black people in America have a range of hair textures, from silky straight to tightly-coiled (Jablonski & Chaplin, 2014). Highly textured hair, emerging from elliptical shaped hair shafts, may have evolved as thermoregulatory adaptation to help keep the scalp and brain cool under conditions of high environmental heat (Jablonski & Chaplin, 2014). The curliness of the hair shaft is caused by retrocurvature of the hair bulb, which gives rise to an asymmetrical alphabet shaped hair follicles (Jablonski & Chaplin, 2014). When classifying hair types, type 4 hair is susceptible to shrinkage, dryness, and breakage due to the make-up and the abundance of curves in each hair strand (Walton & Carter, 2013). Shrinkage occurs when natural hair is washed; in reality, hair could be shoulder length, but after a wash, the shrinkage may draw up the coils short enough to remain at the ears with a “cottony” appearance (Davis-Sivasothy, 2011). This hair needs be cared for gently, with minimal manipulation and includes styles like braids and locs that can last from months to years.

Given the high degree of racial intermixture around the world, individuals with African ancestry may not readily appear to be "Black" based on the criteria of dark skin color or facial features. As consequence, hair texture has long been used as an indicator of racial background and a basis of racial classification (Caldwell, 2004). For millennia, cultural meaning has been ascribed to the variations in human hair texture due to systems of enslavement, colonization, and African cultural value retention (Johnson & Bankhead, 2014). In traditional African societies, hair represented a complex language system to communicate pride, health, wealth, and rites of passage (Byrd & Tharps, 2014). However, through acts of dehumanization to enslaved Africans, European slave masters desecrated the crowns of our African ancestors by labeling their hair as “fur” (Byrd

& Tharps, 2014). Several laws emerged in the United States about how people were permitted to wear their hair. From the Tignon Laws of 18th century Louisiana that forced Black women to cover their hair in public spaces to the military regulations of 2015 that stated that braids and locs were out of dress code, the government has been outlawing natural hair (Mbilishaka, 2018b).

Racial discrimination has been outlawed by the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and still hair discrimination is a legally sanctioned offshoot of racial discrimination that justifies unequal treatment of Black people in educational and work settings due to the appearance of their hair (Greene 2008, Greene 2011, Greene 2017, Powell, 2018). In 2019, three states (California, New York, and New Jersey) introduced legislation to protect Black people from hair-based racial discrimination through the CROWN Act. Still, courtrooms have upheld fictitious concepts that hair is not an immutable dimension of race and could be changed at will (Greene, 2008), but these legal proceedings ignore the amount of time, money, texture variation, exercise abstinence, and emotion shouldered by Black hair care (Versey, 2014; Mbilishaka, 2018; Winfield-Thomas & Whaley, 2019). Black hair care techniques are intricate and psychologically meaningful due to the culture and history of hair (Mbilishaka, 2018).

Hair discrimination creates emotional consequences. Psychological studies suggest that Black people with natural hair face prejudices within the media, education, and employment (Lewis, 1999; Lewis, 2014; Lewis, 2015; Lewis, 2016; Mbilishaka, 2018c; Smith, Mbilishaka & Kennedy, 2017; Neil & Mbilishaka, 2019; Davis, Mbilishaka & Templeton, 2019; Opie & Phillips, 2015). These aesthetic traumas fueled by memories of rejection and encoded with sadness and shame (Wilson, Mbilishaka & Lewis, 2018; Mbilishaka, Mitchell, & Conyers, 2019; Mbilishaka, Rall, Hall & Wilson, 2019), are reinforced by daily reminders of how wearing natural hair is non-conforming to mainstream ideals of beauty (Mbilishaka, 2018c). This results in hair stress

(Winfield-Thomas & Whaley, 2019, p. 162), the “harmful physical and psychological effects of hair styling methods used to transform the hair from its natural state to achieve and maintain an unnatural texture and appearance.” Chemically or thermally straightening Black hair can result in self-induced hair loss, hair damage, lowered self-esteem, social anxiety, and depression (Winfield-Thomas & Whaley, 2019). We need a cultural redefinition and protection of natural hair that is fortified by law.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Afiya Mbilishaka". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'A'.

Afiya Mangum Mbilishaka, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Psychology Program Coordinator
University of the District of Columbia



ORLENA NWOKAH BLANCHARD, President, JOY Collective

I am the President of JOY Collective, a cultural intelligence marketing and creative agency. We are a certified women-owned, minority-owned business and along with my business partner, Kelli Richardson Lawson, we have been working behind the scenes for over a year and a half leading the work to advance hair discrimination legislation across the country on behalf of the CROWN Coalition.

The CROWN Coalition is an alliance of organizations committed to inclusivity and racial equity. It was founded by National Urban League, Color Of Change, Western Center on Law & Poverty and the Dove brand (a Unilever company) and is now supported by over 80 organizations nationwide including National Council for Negro Women, Delta Sigma Theta and Alpha Kappa Alpha Sororities, Inc., The Links Inc., Jack & Jill of America and many more. We are proud to have facilitated the CROWN Coalition's support of the inaugural CROWN Act introduced in the state of California by Senator Holly Mitchell's and signed by Governor Gavin Newsom on July 3, 2019. We also proudly supported Assemblywoman Tremaine Wright in the state of New York for the bill that was enacted as law on July 12, 2019. The CROWN Act is now law in nine states, including New Jersey, Virginia, Colorado, Washington, Maryland, Connecticut, and Delaware.

This topic is not new. Many individuals and organizations have spent years fighting for racial equity and have long since identified hair as a racial characteristic that invokes bias and discriminatory behavior in our society. We are honored for our work to have provided a platform to unify the many voices raising awareness for this issue so action like this bill can be taken. Research we conducted on behalf of the Dove brand unpacked the real impact of hair discrimination against Black women that leads to the disparate impact we see manifested socially and economically.

As an African immigrant who came to this country as a middle schooler over 35 years ago, I have spent the better part of those years putting toxic chemicals and endless hours into manipulating my hair to appear in a way I believe was received as beautiful and thus acceptable by American standards. It's been a long and often painful journey. That is why, as a Black woman, and as the mother of three sons, I am encouraged that Wisconsin will allow a more respectful and open world for Black women, men and children to thrive. I am incredibly proud to stand with Representative LaKeshia Myers and fellow distinguished leaders of Wisconsin in support of this bill.





KELLI RICHARDSON LAWSON, CEO, JOY Collective

I am the founder and CEO of JOY Collective, a polycultural marketing and creative agency focused on purpose-driven work. We are a certified women-owned, minority-owned business and along with my business partner, Orlena Nwokah Blanchard, we have been working behind the scenes for over a year and half on behalf of Dove and the CROWN Coalition to advance hair discrimination legislation across the country.

This topic is not new.

Qualitative and quantitative research conducted by the Dove brand unpacked the real impact of hair discrimination against Black women that leads to the disparate impact we see manifested socially and economically – with 80% of Black women saying they feel the need to change their natural hair to fit in at the workplace.

The CROWN Coalition is an alliance of organizations committed to inclusivity and racial equity. The CROWN Coalition was founded by Dove (Unilever), the National Urban League, Color Of Change, Western Center on Law and Poverty and is now supported by over 80 organizations nationwide including Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., The National Council of Negro Women, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., The Links Inc., the NAACP, Jack & Jill of America and many more.

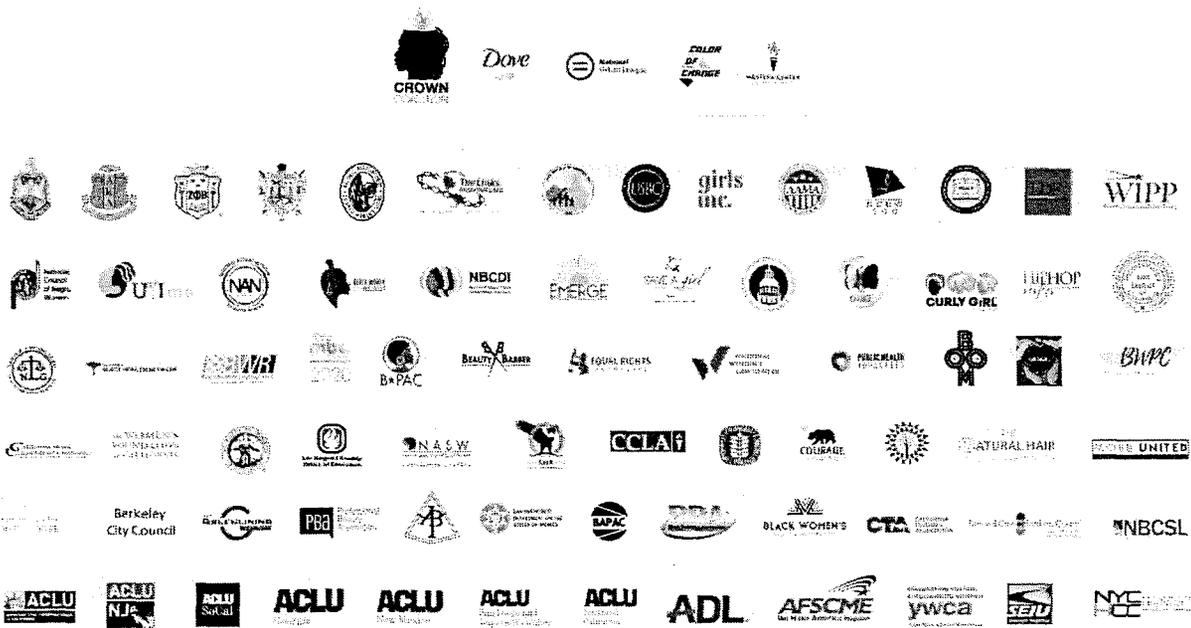
Dove and the CROWN Coalition facilitated and supported the inaugural CROWN Act in California led by Senator Holly Mitchell and signed by Governor Gavin Newsom on July 3, 2019. We also proudly supported Assemblywoman Tremaine Wright in the state of New York which was enacted as law on July 12, 2019, and then again in New Jersey which was signed into law on December 19, 2019 – the exact one-year anniversary of the assault on Andrew Johnson, the wrestler from New Jersey who was forced to cut his locs or forfeit his match. The CROWN Act is now law in nine states, including Virginia, Colorado, Washington, Maryland, Connecticut, and Delaware.

As a Black woman with parents born in the segregated South, I have spent the better part of my life using toxic chemicals and endless hours in the beauty shop trying to manipulate my hair to appear in a way that my Mom taught me was beautiful and thus acceptable by American standards. It's been a long and often painful journey.

That is why I personally, both as a Black woman and as the mother of two Black sons, am encouraged that the CROWN Act is being passed state by state to ensure a respectful and open world for my children to thrive.

JOY

I am incredibly proud to stand with Representative LaKeshia Myers and the fellow distinguished leaders of the Wisconsin legislature on behalf of Dove and The CROWN Coalition to see The CROWN Act passed in the state of Wisconsin. Thank you for your leadership on this issue.



Hello,

I am writing this email in support of the CROWN Act and to thank you for your efforts to get legislation passed in Wisconsin. This is an issue that I am very passionate about because it is so ridiculous that laws are necessary to try to keep people from being discriminated against due to their hair however, I know firsthand that this is a serious issue.

When I was in the corporate world my hair was a source of countless microaggressions. The worst incident happened after wearing my hair in twists for a while I came back to work with my hair straightened and my supervisor at the time said "I am glad the person I hired is back". His comment made it clear that my work experience, education, and skills wouldn't have mattered if my hair didn't happen to be straight when I interviewed. I asked him had my job performance changed with my hairstyle, he said of course not, but he couldn't explain why my hair was such a problem for him.

Whenever I hear yet another story of a child being sent home from school or not allowed to participate in school activities because of a hairstyle it makes my blood boil. Imagine if the only way you would be considered professional is if you have bright red curly hair and if your hair was actually any other color or texture you were told to change it.

I was the founding faculty advisor for a Campus Curlz Chapter at Marquette University. This national organization is a natural hair and service-based organization whose goals are to enhance, educate, and uplift those on college campuses and in the community. The students were so excited after I planned a Natural Hair Expo on campus they wanted to be able to continue having events to support each other.

The high attendance at Campus Curlz events demonstrated that hair discrimination is a very prevalent issue in Wisconsin. Please see the video below we created to show why so many students needed to unite around natural hair.

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/jozhxxeli6j0oaz/campuscurlz%20video%20for%20meeting.m4v?dl=0>

I will continue to follow your efforts closely and hope that state and federal legislation will soon happen!

Sincerely,

Sasha J. Parsons Waters
<https://www.linkedin.com/in/sashajevents>
678-984-5150