

# BLACK HAIR



## Background

Hair is a source of pride for many Black people. **Systemic racism** (among other things) has led to poor representation and denied access to resources centering on how to take care of Black hair (e.g., multiculturally labeled hair products tend to cost more; hair salons quite often do not cater to Black hair and deny Black clients because of this, even today). So, in the early 2000's, with the boom of YouTube, the "Natural Hair" movement began.



## Natural Hair

For a long time, in order to be deemed "professional", Black people have had to use harsh chemicals known as "perms" and "relaxers" to make their hair straight in order to conform to Eurocentric norms. Harsh chemicals + racism has led to generations of people who are just now finally learning what it truly means to love and accept the hair that grows out of their head. Things like this fuel harmful stereotypes that Black people are "bald" or have "bad hair". The reality is, they have to make up for **hundreds** of years of lost time learning how to care of their hair. Give space to Black people to learn this.



# Natural Hair

Black natural hair tends to have a dry appearance due to a slightly lower water content compared to Caucasian hair. In addition, the scalp's natural oil (sebum) can take much longer to coat individual hair strands due to the natural kinks and twisting shape of coils and curls as opposed to straighter hair. And although some Black people do have naturally straight hair, drier hair can more easily tangle and develop knots which can make combing difficult. Furthermore, combing knotted hair can cause serious breakage and damage. Some people embrace their knots and tangles and prefer to leave their hair uncombed, avoiding breakage, while others use conditioners and moisturizers to make it easy to comb. People tend to perceive knotted, uncombed, and hair that's not washed on a "daily basis" as unkempt or dirty. Insinuating that a Black person's hair is "dirty" is racist.



# Natural Hair

Widespread access to YouTube where a lot of Black people have shared their "Natural Hair Journey's" and so many other hair care tips has revolutionized Black Hair. Despite this wonderful achievement, quite often Black people are harshly discriminated against for their hair and will be fired, denied access to jobs, expelled from school, etc. This is why it can be especially offensive seeing non-Black people wear Black hairstyles like braids or afros (e.g., New York Fashion Week debuted a White model adorning an afro around the same time a young Black girl was suspended from school for wearing an afro).

# Protective Styles

Protective styles have a long history for Black people, even going back to slavery.

They are **SO** much more than just a "hairstyle". Due to the nature of natural hair, quite often it grows best when just "left alone". This is where "protective styles" such as braids and twists come in. As the name suggests, they are meant to protect natural hair from the normal wear and tear of daily maintenance so it can grow. Due to it having an intended purpose + discrimination Black people face wearing them, it can sometimes be quite offensive seeing non-Black people wear braids and twists.



# Protective Styles

Protective styles are not just limited to braids, twists, and loc's, they can be considered any hairstyle that "tucks" away the ends of strands (e.g., corn rows, halo braid, mini twists, etc.) with or without the use of synthetic hair.



# What Can You Do?

## DO's

- Keep compliments simple and general (e.g., I love your hair)
- **Representation matters!** Advocate for Black people at work/school to be able to wear their hair however is most comfortable
- **Acknowledge** afros, braids, extensions, etc. as **professional** in the work place!!  
And **CALL OUT** anyone who says otherwise

## DON'Ts

- If a Black graduate student or employee changes their hair, **DO NOT** stare, **touch**, or gawk at it
- **DO NOT** ask if their hair is real or a weave (it's none of your business + extremely rude)
- **DO NOT** think that a Black graduate student owes you any explanation for their hair and/or changing it

## PEERS

- Advocate for your colleagues and DO NOT let an advisor or professor intimidate your peer into changing their hair. CALL OUT this behavior and stand up for them

# How Does this Affect Grads?

## FACULTY

- Work with students on requirements for personal protective equipment (hair coverings typically do not come in sizes large enough to fit braided or loc'ed hair)
- Don't EVER ask the student or force the student to take the hair out, down, or cut it. Or even imply that they can't work with it in or are outside of regulations because of it.

### Natural Hair in the Workplace

- <https://www.byrdie.com/natural-hair-in-corporate-america>

### Racial Stress in the Workplace

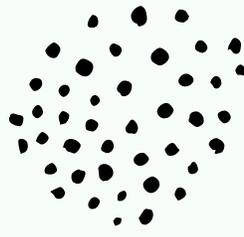
- <https://futureforum.com/2021/03/11/dismantling-the-office-moving-from-retrofit-to-redesign/>

### Swimming Caps for Afro Hair Barred From Olympics

- <https://metro.co.uk/2021/06/30/inclusive-swimming-hats-for-afro-hair-barred-from-the-olympics-14846410/>



# For Black Grads



## **Hair Braiding:**

### **Maria's Braiding**

1650 N College Ave,  
Suite C, Fort Collins CO  
80524  
info@mariasbraiding.com

## **CSU:**

### **Black/African American Cultural Center (B/AACC)**

(970) 491-5781  
335 Lory Student Center  
BAACC\_email@Mail.Colostate.edu  
<https://baacc.colostate.edu>

