

Embrace Your Crown

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BACKGROUND

Hair discrimination is “negative stereotypes and attitudes manifested towards natural or black textured hair” (Lee & Nambudiri, 2021). The history of hair discrimination dates way back to the slave trade. In Western African culture, one’s hairstyle served as a way of communicating about various things, such as relationship status or class. Through the period of the slave trade, many enslaved Africans were stripped of their identity and ability to express themselves through their hairstyles by being forced to cover their hair or even shave it as punishment. Since the emancipation of enslaved people, there have been various movements and creations of hair care items such as the hot comb or chemical relaxers as an attempt to help blacks meet the American standards of beauty.

Bias against natural hair or protective hairstyles can significantly impact the perception of black people. In 2021, Dove conducted a CROWN Research Study for girls, followed by a CROWN Workplace Research Study in 2023 to bring awareness to hair discrimination among black people. The results of these studies highlighted that racial discrimination can start as early as the age of five and can persist well into adulthood and the workplace environment.

THE C.R.O.W.N. ACT

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 protects employees against discrimination based on race, color, national origin, sex, or religion. Although hairstyles are covered under this act, the protection is limited to only those with afro hairstyles. As a result, in 2019, California created and became the first state to pass the C.R.O.W.N. Act. The C.R.O.W.N. Act prohibits racial discrimination against black people in the workplace and schools based on certain hairstyles, such as braids, twists, locs, and afros. C.R.O.W.N. stands for Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair. As of today, twenty-four states across the country have decided to take a stand against racial discrimination and have responded by passing the C.R.O.W.N. Act. In addition, the C.R.O.W.N. Act safeguards black people from discriminatory firing or punishment based on how they express themselves through their hair.

Nevada Passage of the C.R.O.W.N. Act

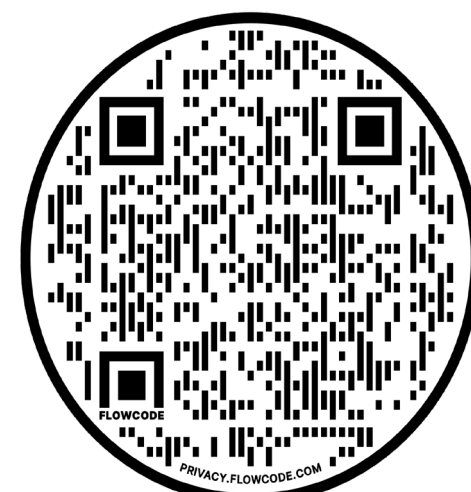
In September 2021, the C.R.O.W.N. Act was passed in Nevada, making it the 12th state to adopt this important legislation. This act, which enhances the Nevada Equal Rights Commission's jurisdiction to investigate acts of discrimination against natural or protective hairstyles, was made possible through the efforts of Senator Dina Neal. Her role in this significant development underscores the individual contributions that are instrumental in advancing civil rights and anti-discrimination laws.

CONCLUSIONS

Cultural awareness and promoting a positive body image have an impact on community health. Organizations can provide patient-centered care in a culturally competent way by creating an environment that supports textured hair.

REFERENCES

References available by scanning the QR Code



Statistics from the Crown Act:

- *Black Women's hair is 2.5x more likely to be perceived as unprofessional.*
- *2/3 of Black Women change their hair for a job interview. Among them, 41% change their hair from curly to straight.*
- *54% Black Women feel like they have to wear their hair straight to a job interview to be successful.*
- *Black Women with coily/textured hair are 2x as likely to experience micro-aggressions in the workplace than Black women with straight hair.*
- *Over 20% of Black women age 25-34 have been sent home from work because of their hair.*
- *Bias against natural hair and protective styles can impact how Black women navigate the hiring process.*
- *Nearly half (44%) of Black women under the age of 34 feel pressured to have a headshot with straight hair.*
- *25% of Black women believe they have been denied a job interview because of their hair.*

‘No one should feel they must change their hair to access employment opportunities or professional advancement’

Reference: Nevada Crown Act website



Application for Healthcare Providers

Preventing Microaggression about Textured Hair

- The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines microaggressions as "a comment or action that subtly and often unconsciously or unintentionally expresses a prejudiced attitude toward a member of a marginalized group." Healthcare providers must be aware of this and take measures to prevent microaggressions among those with textured hair. Examples of common microaggressions that may be said to a black person include:
 - Asking a black person if you can touch their hair.
 - Asking a patient if they are mixed based on the texture of their hair.
 - Asking a black person if they wash their hair.
 - Making a negative remark about a specific black hairstyle.

Embracing Textured Hair

- Hair and hairstyles are important for one's self-image. Hospitalized patients with textured hair may feel insecure or self-conscious because they are unable to properly care for or style their hair in the hospital. Healthcare providers can support these patients by encouraging their family or friends to bring in their hair care products and help them style their hair, which can improve their self-esteem.

Caring for Textured Hair

- It is important for healthcare providers to understand the specific hair care needs of individuals with textured hair. Products like gel, leave-in conditioner, and hair oil are often used by this group to enhance the texture and style of their hair.
- Tightly coiled hair is often more prone to breakage due to the decreased water content and the reduced tensile strength of the hair strands. Hair scarves, bonnets, durags, or silk pillowcases are often used at night to preserve a hairstyle and prevent hair breakage. It's important to raise awareness about these practices to help break the stigma around using hair coverings among the black population.
- Individuals with tightly coiled hair are prone to dryness and breakage from frequent washing. Consequently, they may opt to wash their hair only once every 1-2 weeks. This infrequency can result in oils from the hair or hair products transferring to the individual's sheets or pillows while lying down. Healthcare providers should be mindful of this possibility and avoid making assumptions that the individual's hair is unclean.
- It's important to recognize that some black people may opt for heat or chemical treatments to straighten their hair. Unfortunately, these products can cause significant harm to the hair or scalp, resulting in burns, scarring, and temporary and permanent hair loss. In some instances, patients may also experience atopic dermatitis, requiring a dermatologist's consultation if the symptoms persist. By understanding these dangers, healthcare providers can empower black patients with knowledge about the potential consequences of these treatments and guide them towards safer alternatives such as natural hair care methods or protective styling.

Patient Education

- Pediatric patients wearing braids are at a higher risk of developing an occipital pressure injury due to the lack of subcutaneous tissue in this area. In children under six years of age, the occipital area is often the primary site for pressure injury development. If a patient with braids is admitted and is at a higher risk for developing a pressure injury, specific pressure reduction measures such as repositioning and the use of specialized pillows should be implemented to relieve pressure.
- It's important to acknowledge the value of the patient's braids. Many patients often sit for several hours and pay over a hundred dollars for hair braiding services. When braids must be removed, healthcare providers should approach the situation with compassion and respect for the patient and their family, understanding the significance of the braids to them.

