

## WEAVING IT ALL TOGETHER: HAIR, HEALTH, LAW, AND POLICY

*Foreword by D. Wendy Greene\* & Elizabeth Kukura\*\**

In innumerable ways, hair matters. Hair is connected to our identity, to culture and heritage, and to self-perception and expression. Hair shapes educational access, professional prospects, and how we engage each other in public spaces. Our hair is also linked to physical, psychological, physiological, and economic well-being. Yet, despite the importance of hair in both public and private life, many overlook the legal and policy dimensions of hair, failing to grasp the critical connection between hair, health, law, and human flourishing. Drawing on our respective expertise in health law and policy and hair discrimination law and policy, we wanted to explore these intersections and encourage a broader set of conversations illuminating these realities. What began as an idea for an hour-long webinar blossomed into a two-day symposium hosted at the Drexel University Thomas R. Kline School of Law in September 2025 by the *Drexel Law Review*, the Drexel Health Law Program's Vital Signs initiative, and the Drexel Kline Center for Law, Policy and Social Action.

### I. A HISTORIC GATHERING

The convening, *Weaving it All Together: Hair, Health, Law, and Policy*, broke new ground by delivering a multi-dimensional exploration of hair, health, law, policy, and socio-political movements. We wanted to illustrate how hair and health serve as

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critical entry points for litigation, legislation, policy, and advocacy—both domestically and abroad. Accordingly, we knew it was essential not only to feature scholars whose work addresses the legal, social, and political implications of hair but also to highlight advocates who are promoting health justice through the lens of hair. We envisioned a gathering that would feature interdisciplinary approaches, explore the intersection of theory and practice, and ground future research and advocacy. The resulting symposium proved to be a transformative event that:

- (1) facilitated conversations among people from a range of disciplines, professional backgrounds, and lived experiences;
- (2) ensured different voices and forms of expertise were centered and valued; and
- (3) nurtured community, cross-disciplinary collaborations, and commitments to action.

When the final session closed with questions about when the next gathering would take place, it seemed clear that the symposium had not only created space for interdisciplinary learning but had also forged connections between scholars, advocates, and practitioners committed to advancing equity and justice related to hair and health.

#### A. *An Interdisciplinary Program*

One of the largest symposia in *Drexel Law Review* history, *Weaving it All Together* convened over 100 health care professionals, hair care and beauty industry professionals, practicing attorneys, academics, independent and student scholars, public and organizational policy makers, artists, and community advocates from across the United States and abroad to examine the significance of hair to health, law, policy, and advocacy. Not only was this historic symposium interdisciplinary and intersectional, but it was also intergenerational, including both natural hair care professionals who have been passionate advocates for their clients' well-being for decades and our youngest

attendee, who was just four years old. The call for papers and panels yielded fifteen dynamic sessions that captured the multidimensionality and magnitude of the symposium theme:

- Hair and Legal History;<sup>1</sup>
- Health Equity, Hair Justice, and the Regulation of Hair Products;<sup>2</sup>
- Children's Rights, What's Hair Got to Do With It?;<sup>3</sup>
- Hair and Health Matters: Proposals for Federal Law and Policy;<sup>4</sup>
- Workplace Discrimination, Health, & Well-Being;<sup>5</sup>
- Fireside Chat on Chemical Relaxer Litigation;<sup>6</sup>

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1. Panel included Dr. Wendy Woloson, Professor of History, Rutgers University (Camden); Thomas Joo, Martin Luther King Jr. Professor of Law, University of California (Davis) School of Law; Alex Pearl, Chickasaw Nation Endowed Chair in Native American Law & Professor of Law, University of Oklahoma College of Law; and Telia Mary Williams, Assistant Professor of Law, Northern Illinois College of Law.

2. Panel included Moriah Daniels, J.D., Lewis & Clark Law School; Jamille Fields Allsbrook, Assistant Professor of Law, Howard University School of Law; and Danielle McCarthy, Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Sociology, University of Massachusetts-Amherst.

3. Panel included Jeremiah Chin, Assistant Professor of Law, University of Washington School of Law; Bryan McKinley Jones Brayboy, Dean, Carlos Montezuma Professor of Education and Social Policy, Northwestern University; Diane Kemker, Clinical Assistant Professor of Law, Loyola University of Chicago School of Law; and Julia Steggerda-Corey, Visiting Assistant Professor of Lawyering and the Donald Gaines Murray Teaching Fellow, University of Maryland King Carey School of Law.

4. Panel included Tracy Pearl, William J. Alley Professor of Law, University of Oklahoma College of Law; Stacey Tovino, John B. Turner LLM Program Chair in Law, University of Oklahoma College of Law; Dale Cecka, Assistant Professor of Law and Director, Family Violence Litigation Clinic, Albany Law School; and Kayla Strauss, Associate Attorney, Mesidor PLLC and Adjunct Professor, Howard University School of Law.

5. Panel included Dr. Myriah Hampton, Ph.D. in Educational Leadership, World Afro Day Team Member and Hair Rights Advocate; Joseline Hardrick, Associate Professor of Law, Cooley School of Law; Margaret Zhang, Assistant Professor of Law, Widener University Delaware Law School; and Yaron Covo, Assistant Professor of Law, Case Western Reserve University School of Law.

6. Session included Tom Kline, Partner, Kline & Specter, P.C.; Sherrell L. Dandy, Associate Attorney, Kline & Specter, P.C.; Kevin McKie, Attorney, Environmental Litigation Group, P.C.; and Tobi Millrood, Partner, Kline & Specter, P.C.

- Policing Hair and Hair Coverings in the Workplace;<sup>7</sup>
- Status, Authority, & Autonomy;<sup>8</sup>
- #Free the Hair from Markets for Black Pain;<sup>9</sup>
- Reimagining Health and Safety in Natural Hair Care Through Education, Legislation, and Coalition Building;<sup>10</sup>
- Tackling Hair Bias at the Root—Law, Health, and Equity;<sup>11</sup>
- Action & Advocacy Through the Lens of Healthcare Professionals and Caregivers;<sup>12</sup>

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7. Panel included Tanner Fisher, J.D., University of Kentucky College of Law; Dr. Ingrid Banks, Associate Professor, Department of Black Studies, University of California (Santa Barbara); and Zeba Huq, Supervising Attorney & Lecturer in Law, Federal Litigation Program, Stanford Law School.

8. Panel included Angela Dixon, Associate Professor of Law, Mississippi College School of Law; Etienne Toussaint, Associate Professor of Law, Joseph F. Rice School of Law at University of South Carolina; Yvette Butler, Associate Professor of Law, Indiana University Maurer School of Law; and Nicholas Serafin, Assistant Professor of Law, Santa Clara University School of Law.

9. Joint Address delivered by D. Wendy Greene, Professor of Law & Director of the Center for Law, Policy and Social Action, Drexel University Kline School of Law, and Cary Martin Shelby, Ralph Brill Endowed Chair Professor of Law, Chicago Kent College of Law.

10. Panel included Natasha Gaspard, Founder of Mane Moves Media Inc. and Chief Empowerment Officer, Natural Hairstyle & Braid Coalition, Inc.; Diane Bailey, Co-Founder of Natural Hairstyle & Braid Coalition, Inc., Founder and CEO of Emerge: Natural Beauty Industry Alliance; Erin Maybin, Educator, Published Writer, Co-Founder of the Natural Hairstyle & Braid Coalition, Inc.; Diane DaCosta, Co-Founder, Natural Hairstyle & Braid Coalition, Inc.; Debra Hare-Bey, CEO of Oh My Heavenly Hair and Co-Founder, Natural Hairstyle & Braid Coalition, Inc.; and Kadidja Dosso, Founder of Dosso Beauty, Owner, The Dosso Beauty Experience in Philadelphia.

11. Panel included Thalia González, Professor of Law & James Edgar Hervey '50 Chair of Litigation, University of California San Francisco Law School; Paige Joki, Esq., Staff Attorney at Education Law Center-PA (ELC) and Leader of ELC's Black Girls Education Justice Initiative; Alana Burman, Director of Policy, Intergovernmental Relations & Mediation, Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission; and Amaiyah-Monet Parker, Undergraduate Research Scholar, George Mason University.

12. Panel included Dr. Tammy Jolivet, CEO and Founder of The Texture of Me; Tammy Ehimwenma, Meharry Medical College School of Medicine; Adeola Animasahun, Meharry Medical College School of Medicine; and Dr. Gillian Scott-Ward, Licensed Psychologist and Director of *Back to Natural: A Documentary Film*.

- The Power of Hair Stories;<sup>13</sup>
- Redefining the Crown: The Healing, Hair Loss, and Advocacy Journeys of Breast Cancer Survivors;<sup>14</sup> and
- Black Hair Beyond White Borders: Black Hair, Reproductive Health, and Policies in Africa.<sup>15</sup>

Symposium participants contributed a range of insights from historical research, critical legal theory, qualitative interviews, legal advocacy, policymaking and implementation, medical practice, community-based hair care, community-centered art education programs, and personal experience. We watched video clips of advertisements from the 1980s and 1990s for chemical hair relaxer products to observe the commodification of racialized beauty standards aimed at young women;<sup>16</sup> we learned about a nineteenth-century San Francisco hair-cutting ordinance that was selectively enforced against Chinese men who wore their hair in long single braids called a “queue” and its relationship to economic due process rights and the anti-immigration fervor of the time;<sup>17</sup> we heard about the involvement of various federal agencies—from the FDA and TSA to the

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13. Panel included Dr. Charlene Makita, Analytical Chemist, Founder of Natural Aura Hair Care Brand, World Afro Day Team Member, and Hair Rights Advocate; Erika George, Associate Dean for Equity, Justice & Engagement and Professor of Law, Boston University School of Law; Alyssa Dairsow, Founder and Executive Director of Curly Me! Non-Profit Organization; and Michaela Angela Davis, Producer of “Hair Tales” documentary, Author of *tenderheaded: A Memoir*, and C.R.O.W.N. Act Champion; and Guylaine Conquet, Natural Hair Activist, Hair Rights Advocate, and Founder of JustAfro.

14. Panel included Dr. Versha Pleasant, Clinical Assistant Professor, Director of Breast Health & Cancer Genetics Clinic at Von Voigtlander Women’s Hospital, Department of Obstetrics & Gynecology at University of Michigan; Tamara Myles, Breast cancer survivor, Activist, President of Sister’s Network Detroit; Veleria Banks, Breast cancer survivor, Activist, Member of Sister’s Network Detroit; and Odessa Norwood, Owner of Odessa’s Beauty Salon in Philadelphia.

15. Panel included Dr. Melvin Lee Rouse, Associate Professor of Psychology, University of Puget Sound, and Gertrude Goh, Independent Researcher, Ghana.

16. Thomas R. Kline, Sherrell L. Dandy, Kevin McKee & Tobi Millrood, Fireside Chat on Chemical Hair Relaxer Litigation at the Drexel Law Review Symposium (Sep. 26, 2025) (transcript available in Drexel University archives) [hereinafter, Fireside Chat].

17. Thomas W. Joo, The Law of the Queue (Sep. 26, 2025) (transcript available in Drexel University archives).

Department of Defense—in the regulation of hair products, grooming, and hair styling;<sup>18</sup> we learned about the rules imposed by boarding schools responsible for separating Native American children from their families and for stripping them of their cultural heritage, in part through hair cutting and other oppressive regulation of traditional hairstyles;<sup>19</sup> we watched excerpts of a documentary about Black women’s experiences navigating workplace discrimination related to their hair;<sup>20</sup> and we learned from a coalition of master hair stylists and beauty justice advocates in New York City, whose activism generated the first natural hair styling license, about their continued legislative advocacy to preserve the health, safety, and well-being of natural hair care practitioners and their clientele in the face of regressive deregulatory forces.<sup>21</sup> We also learned how personal hair journeys served as the catalysts for Black women around the world—from Guadelupe, Australia,<sup>22</sup> South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the United States—to become hair and health justice advocates.<sup>23</sup> Tom Kline, founding partner of the Philadelphia-based law firm Kline & Specter, moderated an interactive discussion with fellow lawyers involved in landmark consumer protection litigation addressing the serious health

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18. Jamille Fields Allsbrook, *Hair Politics, Culture, and Deregulation: A Reproductive Justice Concern* (Sep. 26, 2025) (transcript available in Drexel University archives); Tanner Fisher, *The Disparate Impact of Clean Shave Policies on Black Men in the Workplace* (Sep. 26, 2025) (transcript available in Drexel University archives); Kayla Strauss, *Don’t Touch My Hair: An Analysis on How TSA Technology Discriminates Against Women of Color* (Sep. 26, 2025) (transcript available in Drexel University archives); see also Symposium, *Weaving It All Together: Hair, Health, Law, and Policy*, 18 DREXEL L. REV. 849 (2026).

19. Elizabeth Kronk Warner, *Severing Sacred Strands: Federal and State Regulation of Native American Hair* (Sep. 26, 2025) (transcript available in Drexel University archives).

20. Joseline Hardrick, *Locs, Law, and Liberation* (Sep. 26, 2025) (transcript available in Drexel University archives).

21. Natural Hairstyle & Braid Coalition Panel, *Reimagining Health and Safety in Natural Hair Care Through Education, Legislation, and Coalition Building* (Sep. 27, 2025) (transcript available in Drexel University archives).

22. Through a video ontribution played throughout the symposium, attendees were able to hear the journey of Gloria Tabi, who resides in Australia and is the Founder of *Enable Women Africa: #InspiringHairFreedom*—a foundation dedicated to ending hair discrimination and celebrating identity. See ENABLE WOMEN AFRICA, <https://enablewomenafrica.org/> [https://perma.cc/95EB-L44J] (last visited May 11, 2026).

23. *The Power of Hair Stories* (Sep. 27, 2025) (transcript available in Drexel University archives).

harms stemming from the regular application of chemical relaxers that are primarily marketed to and used by African descended women and girls across the globe.<sup>24</sup> Breast cancer survivors detailed the emotional, spiritual, and physical dimensions of their healing and hair loss journeys, which inspired their health care advocacy.<sup>25</sup> Relatedly, Professors Tracy Pearl and Stacey Tovino presented their research on an under-examined yet serious gap in health insurance coverage in need of curing: despite the significant emotional, psychological, and economic costs associated with hair loss, health insurance providers often deny coverage for hair prosthetics, wigs, prescription drugs, other medical aids, and medical care to address hair loss because these interventions are mischaracterized as merely cosmetic rather than as medically necessary.<sup>26</sup> Though hair care is often viewed as a purely aesthetic ritual, storytelling throughout the symposium underscored that hair care *is* health care. Overall, scholarly engagement on hair, health, law, and policy was broad and diverse, and the ensuing discussions were deep and empowering.

Throughout the symposium, on display in the lobby of the law school for all attendees and community members to view, admire, and reflect upon were powerful paintings by Guylaine Conquet—a Guadeloupean activist who inspired the introduction of French anti-hair discrimination legislation—which depict the interconnectivity between hair, identity, law, politics, art, and activism.<sup>27</sup>

### B. Keynote Address: Ashlei Spivey

We invited Nebraska State Senator Ashlei Spivey to deliver the keynote address, knowing that her pioneering journey

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24. Fireside Chat, *supra* note 16.

25. Redefining the Crown: The Healing, Hair Loss, and Advocacy Journeys of Breast Cancer Survivors (Sep. 27, 2025) (transcript available in Drexel University archives).

26. Tracy Pearl & Stacey A. Tovino, *Excluded at the Root: Health Insurance Discrimination Against Hair Loss Conditions* 87 OHIO STATE L.J. (forthcoming 2026).

27. *About the Artist*, JUST-AFRO, <https://just-afro.com> [<https://perma.cc/GW5L-JA7M>] (last visited Apr. 2, 2026).

advancing legislation and policy at the intersection of health and hair exemplified the symposium theme.<sup>28</sup> Senator Spivey's participation in the symposium furthered the goal of fostering cross-disciplinary conversations aimed at cultivating collaborations, generating community, and promoting change.

In 2025, Spivey was sworn into the Nebraska State Legislature as the representative for District 13 and as the fourth Black woman ever to serve in the history of the legislature. Senator Spivey is also the Founder and Executive Director of I Be Black Girl based in the heart of Omaha, Nebraska. I Be Black Girl—Nebraska's first and only reproductive justice organization—supports Black women, femmes, and girls to “actualize their full potential to authentically be, through autonomy, abundance, and liberation.”<sup>29</sup> Under Spivey's visionary leadership, I Be Black Girl has championed myriad reproductive justice policies and initiatives related to maternal health equity, birth justice, and race-based hair discrimination in Nebraska's workplaces and schools. Prior to becoming an elected official, in her role as Founder and Executive Director of I Be Black Girl, Spivey spearheaded a cross-cultural grassroots movement to advance two pieces of civil rights legislation through Nebraska's unicameral legislature, as well as secure the signatures of Republican Governors Pete Ricketts and Jim Pillen.

After an unsuccessful attempt to enact a C.R.O.W.N. Act in 2020,<sup>30</sup> Spivey and I Be Black Girl successfully lobbied newly-elected Nebraska State Senator Terrell McKinney to introduce a more robust civil rights bill, LB 451<sup>31</sup> (locally deemed a

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28. See Ashlei Spivey, Keynote Address at the Drexel Law Review Symposium: Weaving It All Together: Hair, Health, Law, and Policy (Sep. 26, 2025) (transcript available in Drexel University archives).

29. I BE BLACK GIRL, <https://www.ibbg.org> [<https://perma.cc/T9BC-U8KY>] (last visited Mar. 30, 2026).

30. Amber M. Rogers, J. Drei Munar & Katherine Sandberg, *Hairstyle Discrimination: A Wave of New Laws*, 12 AWIJ. 1, 3 (2021), [https://www.hunton.com/media/publication/75140\\_hairstyle-discrimination-a-wave-of-new-laws.pdf](https://www.hunton.com/media/publication/75140_hairstyle-discrimination-a-wave-of-new-laws.pdf) [<https://perma.cc/FN4V-HU77>].

31. *Fighting Natural Hair Discrimination in Nebraska*, ACLU NEB. (Apr. 5, 2021), <https://www.aclunebraska.org/news/fighting-natural-hair-discrimination-nebraska> [<https://perma.cc/9M9D-6CZJ>]; S. 451, 107th Leg., 1st Sess. (Neb. 2021).

#FreeTheHair<sup>32</sup> bill), that strengthened workers' rights to be free from race-based hair discrimination and other forms of racial discrimination animated by characteristics associated with racial identity. In 2022, Nebraska became the tenth state to pass this type of civil rights legislation,<sup>33</sup> notably with bipartisan support and the backing of Governor Ricketts, who vetoed the first bill in 2020.<sup>34</sup> On the heels of this legislative victory, Spivey and McKinney committed to developing public policy and education that would also affirm students' human rights to express fundamental aspects of their racial, religious, and cultural identities via their hair texture, hairstyles, and hair coverings. In 2023, LB 630 was included in a broader education bill, LB 298,<sup>35</sup> which was passed and signed into law; this bill provided protections for Nebraska public school students to be free from discrimination based upon natural hair, protective hairstyle, tribal regalia, or headdress, and mandated that public school districts establish grooming policies that comply with these protections.<sup>36</sup> With Spivey at the helm, I Be Black Girl worked collaboratively and strategically to build a dynamic cross-cultural coalition<sup>37</sup> to ensure not only the passage of both bills but also

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32. Professor Wendy Greene, founder of the #FreetheHair movement, served as legal expert and advisor for both pieces of civil rights legislation passed in Nebraska to redress discrimination on the basis of hair and other characteristics associated with racial and ethnic identity in schools and workplaces.

33. Jasmine Payne-Patterson, *Half of U.S. States Have Passed the CROWN ACT to Ban Hair Discrimination*, ECON. POL'Y INST. (July 1, 2024, at 11:19 ET), <https://www.epi.org/blog/half-of-u-s-states-have-passed-the-crown-act-to-ban-hair-discrimination/> [https://perma.cc/ZL5D-SK58].

34. See Rogers et al., *supra* note 30, at 3.

35. Legis. B. 630, 108th Leg., 1st Sess. (Neb. 2023); Legis. B. 298, 108th Leg., 1st Sess. (Neb. 2023); LB298, NEB. LEG., [https://nebraskalegislature.gov/bills/view\\_bill.php?DocumentID=50239](https://nebraskalegislature.gov/bills/view_bill.php?DocumentID=50239) [https://perma.cc/T37E-WH7V] (last visited Apr. 1, 2026).

36. Neb. Legis. B. 630.

37. *Our Village*, I BE BLACK GIRL, <https://www.ibbg.org/our-village> [https://perma.cc/VZ69-HT7F] (last visited Apr. 6, 2026); *About Us*, I BE BLACK GIRL, <https://www.ibbg.org/about-us> [https://perma.cc/P79X-N5BF] (last visited Apr. 6, 2026).

Professor Greene contends that a "'multidimensional' analysis of the discrimination that [people] of color as a collective experience in the workplace—at the intersection of race, religion, and gender—is vital for a deeper understanding of the civil rights issues at stake, as well as for increased and sustained civil rights advocacy challenging the legality of such grooming codes." D. Wendy Greene, *A Multidimensional Analysis of What Not to Wear in the Workplace: Hijabs and Natural Hair*, 8 FIU L. REV. 333, 334 (2013). Professor Greene further advises "practitioners[] and

their implementation in workplaces and schools. I Be Black Girl collaborated with numerous partners, including the Women's Fund of Omaha, the ACLU of Nebraska, Professor Wendy Greene (as Founder of the #FreeTheHair movement and Director of the Drexel Kline Center for Law, Policy, and Social Action), Nebraska Indian Education Association, and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln College of Law Muslim Law Students Association.

Through the publication of an influential report, *Hair, Headdress, and Now: Creating a Culture of Belonging in Nebraska Schools*, I Be Black Girl, the ACLU of Nebraska, Nebraska Indian Education Association, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln College of Law Muslim Law Students, and #FreeTheHair modeled a kind of cross-cultural coalition building and advocacy we hoped the symposium would illuminate and inspire.<sup>38</sup> *Hair, Headdress, and Now* shed light on how Black, Indigenous, and other students of color are experiencing parallel forms of grooming codes discrimination on the basis of their racial, ethnic, and/or religious identity.

Like several of the symposium presentations, *Hair, Headdress, and Now* explained:

The United States has a long history of racial, national origin, and religious discrimination against Black, Indigenous, and other communities of color on the basis of physical, observable characteristics, like hair length, hair texture, hairstyle, clothing, or headdress. By enacting policies that compel students to conform to a uniform style of grooming and appearance shaped by racial,

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civil and workers' rights advocates to fully recognize the interconnectedness of . . . experience . . . [and] also engage in cross-cultural coalition discourse and advocacy efforts so that the multi-dimensional experiences of [intersectional discrimination is] meaningfully addressed." *Id.* at 366–67.

38. See Rose Godinez, Jasmine Conrad Moseley, Scout Richters, Ashlei Spivey, D. WENDY GREENE & MARIAN HOLSTEIN, *HAIR, HEADDRESS, AND NOW: CREATING A CULTURE OF BELONGING IN NEBRASKA SCHOOLS* (2023), [https://www.aclunebraska.org/app/uploads/drupal/sites/default/files/field\\_documents/aclu\\_nebraska\\_hair\\_headdress\\_and\\_now.pdf](https://www.aclunebraska.org/app/uploads/drupal/sites/default/files/field_documents/aclu_nebraska_hair_headdress_and_now.pdf) [<https://perma.cc/76ZS-7VEJ>].

ethnic, and religious bias, schools perpetuate harmful, discriminatory outcomes. These policies actively devalue students of color by preventing them from presenting as their full selves with natural and protective hairstyles like long hair, cornrows, locs, and braids or wearing a hijab, scarf, or other head covering. While some grooming policies may not be explicitly discriminatory on the basis of race, ethnicity or religion, these policies may be enforced in a discriminatory manner by disproportionately affecting students of color and students who are members of minority religious groups. Additionally, these policies may advance appearance standards that privilege Western, white, and/or dominant cultural norms.<sup>39</sup>

Alongside advocating for state-wide anti-discrimination legislation and other policy recommendations, the co-authors of *Hair, Headdress, and Now* called for a significant shift in the creation and enforcement of grooming policies: that they be revised to affirm and respect—rather than punish or suppress—the personhood and individuality of students of color. As a result of the steadfast advocacy of I Be Black Girl, Senators Spivey and McKinney, their organizational partners, and community supporters of LB 630, Nebraska public school administrators are now required by law to revamp or adopt grooming policies that are inclusive and protective of students' diverse identity expression.<sup>40</sup>

One might ask: why would Spivey and I Be Black Girl commit to leading a statewide legislative movement to combat discrimination on the basis of one's hairstyles, hair texture, and hair coverings in schools and workplaces? In her keynote, Senator Spivey made a compelling case that anti-discrimination legislation redressing these specific forms of grooming codes

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39. *Id.* at 3.

40. NEB. REV. STAT. ANN. § 79-2, 159 (West 2026).

discrimination<sup>41</sup> advances I Be Black Girl's principal mission of securing reproductive and maternal health equity on behalf of Black women, girls, and femmes, discussing the linkages between race-based hair discrimination in schools and workplaces and the reproductive and maternal health of Black women, girls, and femmes.

II. "IF YOU CARE ABOUT BLACK WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' HEALTH, YOU HAVE TO CARE ABOUT THEIR HAIR"<sup>42</sup>

The relationship between race-based hair discrimination and the health of Black women and girls is deeply rooted in history. From childhood to adulthood, many African descendants globally are barred or discouraged from wearing their hair in its naturally curly or coil hair texture. These pressures or mandates are often driven by longstanding stigmas associated with African descendants' curly, coily, or kinky hair texture. For centuries, African descendants' hair textures and styles have been denigrated as "extreme," "unruly," "unattractive," "unkempt," "unprofessional," and "bad," among other racialized stereotypes.<sup>43</sup> As a result, African descendants in the U.S. and abroad

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41. Spivey, *supra* note 27. Professor Greene coined the term "grooming codes discrimination." D. Wendy Greene, *Splitting Hairs: The Eleventh Circuit's Take on Workplace Bans Against Black Women's Natural Hair in EEOC v. Catastrophe Management Solutions*, 71 U. MIA. L. REV. 987, 990 n.12 (2017). She defines "grooming codes discrimination" as

the specific form of inequality and infringement upon one's personhood resulting from the enactment and enforcement of formal as well as informal appearance and grooming mandates, which bear no relationship to one's job qualifications and performance. However, such mandates implicate protected categories under anti-discrimination law like race, color, age, disability, sex, and/or religion.

*Id.*

42. Char Adams, *Chemical Hair Straighteners Linked to Higher Risk of Uterine Cancer for Black Women, Study Shows*, NBC NEWS (Oct. 17, 2022, at 17:41 ET), <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/nbcblk/chemical-hair-straighteners-linked-higher-risk-uterine-cancer-black-wo-rcna52576> [<https://perma.cc/R4XE-GZ5L>] (quoting Professor Wendy Greene's as stating "[i]f you care about Black women's health, you have to care about our hair"); see also Greene Speaks at the United Nations' First Session of the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent, DREXEL UNIV. THOMAS R. KLINE SCH. OF L. (Jan. 18, 2023), <https://drexel.edu/law/news/articles/overview/2023/January/wendy-greene-united-nations-permanent-forum/> [<https://perma.cc/5XX5-9QXZ>] (video).

43. In 2014, the United States Army reissued Regulation 670-1, "Wear and Appearance of Army Uniforms and Insignia," a grooming regulation that expressly barred servicewomen from

experience systemic race-based stigmatization and discrimination on the basis of their natural hair textures and hairstyles like afros, locs, braids, and twists.

Often touted as harmless preferences and prerogatives,<sup>44</sup> contemporary grooming policies or norms that either prohibit or discourage African descendants from wearing natural hairstyles are indeed harmful.<sup>45</sup> Such a directive or intimation effectively communicates to African descendants that their unstraightened natural hair growth or styling is “unpresentable,” “wrong,” or “problematic,” and the specific “remedy” is to either cut, cover, or straighten their hair. In many instances, Black women and girls donning natural hairstyles are explicitly instructed to cease doing so and to straighten their hair in order to access, participate in, or gain acceptance into numerous spheres.<sup>46</sup> The psychological and emotional impact of this

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donning two-strand twists and locks and severely regulated the width of braids, namely cornrows. Maya Rhodan, *U.S. Military Rolls Back Restrictions on Black Hairstyles*, TIME (Aug. 13, 2014, at 11:06 ET), <http://time.com/3107647/military-black-hairstyles/> [https://perma.cc/J54T-EXY8]. The Army’s grooming policy described the common ways Black service women wear their natural hair in derogatory terms—as “matted and unkempt.” *Id.* “In March 2015, a Black woman who worked as a restaurant hostess for a Canadian franchise reported that management publicly reprimanded her when she began wearing her hair in braids.” *See* Greene, *supra* note 41, at 1002 n.78. Management “called [the hostess’] hair ‘unacceptable,’ instruct[ing] her to go home, and subsequently den[ying] her shifts because they did not ‘want that kind of look . . . at the restaurant.’” *Id.* “The former hostess filed a race discrimination complaint against the restaurant with the Quebec Human Rights Commission, which was the first of its kind.” *Id.*

44. *See generally* Willingham v. Macon Tel. Pub. Co., 507 F.2d 1084, 1091 (5th Cir. 1975) (“Hair length is not immutable. If the employee objects to the grooming code he has the right to reject it by looking elsewhere for employment, or alternatively he may choose to subordinate his preference by accepting the code along with the job.”); *Rogers v. Am. Airlines, Inc.*, 527 F. Supp. 229, 232 (S.D.N.Y. 1981) (“An all-braided hair style is an ‘easily changed characteristic.’”); *EEOC v. Catastrophe Mgmt. Sols.*, 852 F.3d 1018, 1032–33 (11th Cir. 2016) (citing cases that “reject[] the argument that Title VII protects people who are discriminated against on the basis of hairstyles culturally associated with race”).

45. In her seminal work, Professor Paulette Caldwell explores how “[t]he writings of [B]lack women confirm the centrality of hair in the psychological abuse of black women.” Paulette M. Caldwell, *A Hair Piece: Perspectives on the Intersection of Race and Gender*, 1991 DUKE L.J. 365, 391 (1991) (citation omitted).

46. *See* Zlata Rodionova, *Black Woman Applying for Harrods Job Told She Had to “Chemically Straighten Her Hair to Get Job”*, THE INDEP. (Jan. 26, 2017, at 10:21 ET), <https://www.the-independent.com/news/business/news/sexist-workplace-dresscodes-high-heels-row-women-dye-hair-blonde-revealing-outfits-female-employees-offices-a7544736.html> [https://perma.cc/P9ZV-7QUW]. *See also* Kayla Lattimore, *When Black Hair Violates the Dress Code*, NPR (July 17, 2017, at 5:45 ET),

pervasive messaging that African descendants are exposed to since childhood cannot be overstated. Symposium participant Dr. Gillian Scott-Ward explains there is a psychological toll for Black children who are attempting to satisfy “grooming standards that do not take [African descendants’] unique history and unique needs based on hair texture into account.”<sup>47</sup> According to Dr. Scott-Ward, “[r]egardless of the intention of the institutions, these standards place undue burden and harm upon many African descendants and other racial and cultural minorities. Experiences of racism and microaggressions, which these grooming standards reflect, lead to mental harm, internalized racism, and self-hatred.”<sup>48</sup> Dr. Gillian Scott-Ward further explains

[s]ubtle or explicit experiences of racial discrimination are connected to self-esteem issues, depressive symptoms, sleep problems, anxiety other symptoms related to PTSD. In youth, experiences of discrimination have been connected to the lowered motivation to achieve in school and acting out behaviors. In fact, the research demonstrates that African American adolescents have to expend more cognitive energy than White students on processing and interpreting events related to racial discrimination. This is time and energy that could be spent on learning, growing, and developing into happy, healthy, and productive adults.<sup>49</sup>

African descended women and girls are navigating myriad professional, educational, social, personal, and economic pressures to conform to a “straight[] hair[] mandate or

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<https://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2017/07/17/534448313/when-black-hair-violates-the-dress-code> [<https://perma.cc/84K3-L96H>] (discussing school dress-code enforcement against natural Black hairstyles, including pressure on Black girls to alter or straighten their hair to remain in school and participate in school activities).

47. Gillian Scott-Ward, *Moving Past Racist Grooming Standards Terrorizing Our Children*, MEDIUM (Jan. 10, 2019), <https://medium.com/@gillianscottward/moving-past-racist-grooming-standards-terrorizing-our-children-40df73b9ecb3> [<https://perma.cc/Y3HE-7PE6>].

48. *Id.*

49. *Id.*

expectation<sup>50</sup> as a strategy to circumvent or reduce discrimination and its harms. Consequently, to maintain straightened hairstyles many African descended women and girls use toxic hair products like chemical relaxers. As chemical relaxers are applied to their hair and scalp, it is not uncommon for Black women to suffer chemical burns, which are excruciatingly painful and severely damaging.<sup>51</sup> Chemical relaxers can cause temporary or permanent damage to Black women's hair and scalp, such as hair breakage, hair shedding, and balding.<sup>52</sup> Indeed, during the symposium panel, *Reimagining Health and Safety in Natural Hair Care Through Education, Legislation, and Coalition Building*, the founders of the Natural Hairstyle & Braid Coalition (NHBC) explained that Black women and girls are disproportionately suffering hair loss at higher rates than other demographics. Furthermore, hair loss—largely attributed to unhealthy hair styling practices and hair products like chemical relaxers—is approaching an epidemic.<sup>53</sup> Alongside financial and temporal investments to repair the harm, it is no surprise that balding, hair loss, and scalp damage also engender emotional and psychological harms such as stress, depression, diminished self-confidence, and negative self-esteem.<sup>54</sup>

A growing, influential body of research indicates correlations between chemical relaxers marketed to and used by African descended women and girls and their increased chances of

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50. See Greene, *supra* note 41, at 1012–14.

51. Karen Feldscher, *Uncovering The Dangers of Hair Products Marketed to Black Women, Girls*, HARV. T.H. CHAN SCH. OF PUB. HEALTH (June 15, 2024), <https://hsph.harvard.edu/news/uncovering-the-dangers-of-hair-products-marketed-to-black-women-girls/> [https://perma.cc/K9VH-YQ5H].

52. Jammie Fields Allsbrook, *The Natural Hair Movement: Health, Politics and Regulations*, 18 DREXEL L. REV. 875, 906–07 (2026). See also Angela Onwuachi-Willig, *Another Hair Piece: Exploring New Strands of Analysis Under Title VII*, 98 GEO. L.J. 1079, 1112–20 (2010) (enumerating the myriad ways wearing one's naturally textured hair relieves Black women of significant financial and temporal burdens that accompany donning straight hair via the use of permanent relaxers, temporary straightening agents, hair extensions or wigs, which can result in irreparable hair and/or scalp damage).

53. See India Epsy-Jones, *NY Considers Bill to Cut Black Hair Education—Here's Why That's a Problem*, ESSENCE (Aug. 12, 2025), <https://www.essence.com/beauty/new-york-textured-hair-bill-s5438-black-hair-education/> [https://perma.cc/3YW6-HHRQ].

54. See Pamela Madu & Roopal V. Kundu, *Follicular and Scarring Disorders in Skin of Color: Presentation and Management*, 15 AM. J. CLINIC. DERMATOLOGY 307 (2014).

developing uterine fibroids,<sup>55</sup> hormone-related infertility, and more aggressive forms of breast and uterine cancer.<sup>56</sup> Studies even indicate a possible linkage between chemical relaxants and increased hormonal activity amongst African descended girls.<sup>57</sup> In 2022, a seminal research study reported that Black women's regular use of chemical relaxers makes them more likely to develop uterine fibroids as well as more aggressive forms of uterine and breast cancer.<sup>58</sup> During Friday's Fireside Chat, discussed above, the panelists discussed their representation of plaintiffs seeking to hold accountable manufacturers and sellers of chemical relaxers for these reproductive harms. In their presentation, *#FreeTheHair from Markets of Black Pain*, Professor Cary Martin Shelby and Professor Wendy Greene magnified the grim reality that chemical relaxer companies are profiting off of Black pain, and that contemporary law is incapable of fully redressing the commodification of Black pain and its consequential harms including fatality.<sup>59</sup> To that end, Professors Shelby and Greene proposed non-legal, action-oriented interventions that can ameliorate this state of affairs.

The paradigmatic pro-choice or pro-life binary advanced in reproductive rights discourse erases the experiences of countless African descended women; many are left without a choice to bear children because of the harms resulting from the use of

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55. See Lauren A. Wise, Julie R. Palmer, David Reich, Yvette C. Cozier & Lynn Rosenberg, *Hair Relaxer Use and Risk of Uterine Leiomyomata in African-American Women*, 175 AM. J. EPIDEMIOLOGY 432, 433–35 (2012).

56. See Carolyn E. Eberle, Dale P. Sandler, Kyla W. Taylor & Alexandra J. White, *Hair Dye and Chemical Straightener Use and Breast Cancer Risk in A Large US Population of Black and White Women*, 147 INT'L J. CANCER 383, 389 (2019); Safiya Charles, *'Under Protected:' Women Ingest Hair Products' Toxins Every Day. For Black Women, It's Worse*, MONTGOMERY ADVERTISER (Feb. 24, 2020, at 09:18 CT), <https://www.montgomeryadvertiser.com/story/news/2020/02/24/black-hair-care-products-toxic-dangerous-chemicals-black-women-breast-cancer-fibroids-edcs/4564877002/> [<https://perma.cc/C6M7-GTUZ>].

57. Charles, *supra* note 56.

58. Che-Jung Chang, Katie M. O'Brien, Alexander P. Keil, Symbielle A. Gaston, Chandra L. Jackson, Dale P. Sandler & Alexandra J. White, *Use of Straighteners and Other Hair Products and Incident Uterine Cancer*, 114 J. NAT'L CANCER INST. 1636 (2022). Linda Villarosa, *The Disturbing Truth About Hair Relaxers*, N.Y. TIMES MAG. (June 13, 2024), <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/06/13/magazine/hair-relaxers-cancer-risk.html> [<https://perma.cc/4YZT-5UKU>].

59. Cary Martin Shelby & D. Wendy Greene, *#FreeTheHair from Markets of Black Pain* (Sep. 26, 2025) (transcript available at Drexel University archives).

unregulated chemical relaxers often since childhood (and often involuntarily). Black women's capacities to bear children—healthily or at all—are either extinguished or severely diminished because of uterine fibroids and uterine cancer, and attendant medical procedures like full or partial hysterectomies.<sup>60</sup> These chronic health conditions negatively impact Black women and girls' quality of life and in many cases, result in their death. Therefore, how African descendants wear their hair is not an inconsequential aesthetic choice but rather a consequential matter affecting their quality of life, livelihoods, and life span.

As groundbreaking chemical relaxer litigation proceeds,<sup>61</sup> state and local legislatures across the United States are enacting C.R.O.W.N. Acts and parallel civil rights legislation to combat race-based hair discrimination, namely racial discrimination on the basis of African descendants' natural hairstyles. Indeed, as we were hosting *Weaving it All Together*, symposium contributors Pennsylvania Representatives Joanna McClinton and La'Tasha Mayes<sup>62</sup> were working diligently to secure the passage of the Pennsylvania C.R.O.W.N. Act. Approximately two months after the symposium, Pennsylvania became the twenty-eighth state to enact a C.R.O.W.N. Act, which went into effect

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60. James Causey, *The Health Divide: Black Women Face a Higher Risk of Fibroids, Yet Many Suffer in Silence*, CTR. FOR HEALTH JOURNALISM (Feb. 23, 2026), <https://centerforhealthjournalism.org/our-work/insights/health-divide-black-women-face-higher-risk-fibroids-yet-many-suffer-silence> [https://perma.cc/CL9H-CMGS]; see also Fields Allsbrook, *supra* note 52, at 906–07 (noting that “chemical relaxers have been associated with increased risk of uterine cancer, infertility, uterine fibroids, breast cancer, early onset puberty, asthma, and alopecia”).

61. See *Hair Relaxers Multidistrict Litigation to Move Forward*, DICELLO LEVITT (Sep. 30, 2024), <https://dicellolevitt.com/hair-relaxers-multidistrict-litigation-to-move-forward/> [https://perma.cc/GG4K-ZY2E]; see also Abraham Gutman, *Five Philly-Area Black Women Are Suing L’Oreal and Other Beauty Companies Over Hair-Straightening Products*, PHILA. INQUIRER (Oct. 4, 2024, at 05:57 ET), <https://www.inquirer.com/news/philadelphia/hair-straightening-black-women-uterine-cancer-loreal-20241004.html> [https://perma.cc/F932-SZ88] (reporting on hair relaxer litigation alleging that beauty companies knew or should have known their products exposed Black women to cancer).

62. Representative Mays provided a video recording that was played throughout the symposium and Representative McClinton provided a letter which was included in the symposium program and read during the opening remarks. The video is available at Drexel University archives.

on January 26, 2026.<sup>63</sup> A clear objective of the C.R.O.W.N. Act is to redress and prevent the tangible injuries resulting from loss of employment, educational opportunities, and access to spaces that are vital to one's fuller exercise of citizenship. However, anti-discrimination legislation like the C.R.O.W.N. Act aids in ameliorating the often unknown "invisible harms" of race-based hair discrimination: the harms to a person's psychological, physical, physiological health and well-being. For African descended women and girls, these "invisible harms" may also encompass chronic—and even deadly—reproductive health conditions. Therefore, movements to combat race-based hair discrimination and to redress reproductive health inequities are undeniably linked.

### III. WEAVING IT ALL TOGETHER: THE SYMPOSIUM ARTICLES

Hair is critically important to contemporary law, policy, and movements advancing our human right to thrive and be healthy. The four authors whose articles are published in this law review issue deliver a multi-dimensional examination of the symposium theme. As they reflect on different lived experiences, their pieces "weave it all together;" they illustrate the synergies and thus, the opportunities for alliances across different constituencies, which can produce more effective law, policy, advocacy, and social movements that substantively improve people's quality of life.

Professor Jamille Fields Allsbrook's article, *The Natural Hair Movement: Health, Politics and Regulations*,<sup>64</sup> contemplates whether the synergies between the twenty-first century Natural Hair Movement, the Make America Healthy Again ("MAHA")

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63. *Bill Information: House Bill 439*, PA. GEN. ASSEMBLY, <https://www.palegis.us/legislation/bills/2025/hb0439> [<https://perma.cc/AS5P-FAVG>] (last visited April 6, 2026); see Press Release, Rep. Watson Coleman, Senator Booker Reintroduce CROWN Act to Outlaw Race-Based Hair Discrimination (Feb 26, 2025), <https://watsoncoleman.house.gov/newsroom/press-releases/rep-watson-coleman-senator-booker-reintroduce-crown-act-to-outlaw-race-based-hair-discrimination#:~:text=Twenty%2Dseven%20states%20and%20dozens%20of%20cities%20nationwide,making%20the%20need%20for%20federal%20legislation%20clear> [<https://perma.cc/WT4E-KEMU>].

64. See also Fields Allsbrook, *supra* note 52.

campaign, and the Clean Beauty Movement could yield an alliance. Perceptively, Professor Allsbrook points out while neither the Clean Beauty Movement nor the MAHA movement have been inclusive of Black women's experiences, the time is ripe for both to address the health harms of unregulated hair care products that are disproportionately marketed to and used by African descended women and girls (i.e., chemical relaxers, synthetic braiding hair, locking gel, and hair oils).<sup>65</sup> Accordingly, federal and state legislation as well as FDA regulations governing the research, development, manufacturing, and marketing of these hair care products should be, or at least could be, a part of the Clean Beauty Movement and MAHA policy agendas, assuming *all* women's health is indeed a priority.

Relatedly, Professor Kayla Strauss' article, *Don't Touch My Hair: An Analysis on How Transportation Security Administration Technology Discriminates Against Women of Color*,<sup>66</sup> examines the systematic searches of Black women's bodies, namely their hair, by TSA agents at airport security checkpoints. When Black women don their curls, locs, braids, and twists among other natural styles, TSA agents search Black women's hair at disproportionately higher rates than women with straight hair, yet Black women are left with little to no recourse to address the racial discrimination—and attendant psychological, emotional, and dignitary harms—they have endured.<sup>67</sup> To prevent these

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65. *Id.* at 881–82.

66. Kayla Strauss, *Don't Touch My Hair: An Analysis on How TSA Technology Discriminates Against Women of Color*, 18 DREXEL L. REV. 961 (2026).

67. *Id.* at 962–67. Black women's natural hairstyles have been demeaned at airport security checkpoints as a potential threat to travelers' safety and thereby searched by TSA agents. In 2011, Laura Adiele, a Black female traveler, reported that a TSA agent at the Seattle, Washington airport searched her Afro which she wore in a bun on top of her head (also known as an "Afro puff"). Ms. Adiele expressed that as the TSA agent touched and scrutinized her hair, she felt that the invasions of her personal privacy and bodily integrity were animated by her race and gender. See Allen Shaufler, *US: TSA to Woman: 'We're Going to Have to Examine Your Hair'*, SOTT (July 6, 2011, at 04:36 UTC), <https://www.sott.net/article/231187-US-TSA-to-Woman-We-re-Going-to-Have-to-Examine-Your-Hair> [<https://perma.cc/F3XA-NL9Y>]. According to Ms. Adiele, TSA agents were not following a formal policy when they searched her Afro puff but noticeably, the agents did not use their discretion to search non-Black women who donned straight hair in buns or ponytails. *Id.* It is also important to note that there are clear parallels between the heightened scrutiny that Black women donning natural hairstyles and Muslim women experience at the hands of TSA agents at airport security checkpoints. For example, a

harms, Strauss details the need for experientially-informed screening technology as well as training for TSA agents.<sup>68</sup> Strauss also proposes amendments to the federal C.R.O.W.N. Act (passed three times by the United States House of Representatives but stalled in the United States Senate) to be considered when it is reintroduced in both chambers.<sup>69</sup>

Notably, Black women and Muslim women share similar experiences of hair and hair-related discrimination while traveling and working.<sup>70</sup> Through her exploration of religious discrimination that Muslim women face when donning hijabs, Professor Zeba A. Huq's *Hijab on the Job*<sup>71</sup> adds a different, though related, dimension to the symposium issue. Under Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, covered employers have a statutory obligation to reasonably accommodate an employee's religious observance unless doing so engenders an undue hardship on the employer.<sup>72</sup> In Title VII cases where Muslim women have challenged employers' refusal to accommodate their religious observance by barring them from wearing a hijab, Huq argues that federal courts have not protected Muslim women's statutory right to express their religious identity in

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Muslim female attorney wearing a hijab also recounted her feeling of being the victim of discrimination: she was subjected to extra security searches in airports—on both legs of her trip—and during one leg while standing in the security queue, a security guard pointed at her and yelled, “Scarf!” See Kristin Choo, *Walking the Tightrope Muslim Women Who Practice Law Are Asserting Themselves in Efforts to Reconcile Traditional Beliefs with Modern Secular Society*, ABA J., Feb. 2013, at 38, 44. Afterwards, she informed her husband that she rather drive 25 hours than fly to Yellowstone National Park for an upcoming family vacation because she simply was not prepared to “go through [the] emotional humiliation [she suffered] again.” *Id.* Similarly, another Muslim woman claimed that she felt “violated,” “upset,” “offended,” and “harassed” by incessant, intimidating demands by National Guard personnel that she remove her hijab during an airport security search—even after she explained she could not take off her hijab in public in accordance with her religious beliefs. *Kaukab v. Harris*, No. 02 C 0371, 2003 WL 21823752 (N.D. Ill. Aug. 6, 2003).

68. Strauss, *supra* note 65, at 965.

69. See generally *id.* at 997–1004.

70. See generally Greene, *supra* note 26 (providing an intersectional analysis of workplace grooming codes to highlight the discrimination experienced by both Black and Muslim women).

71. Zeba A. Huq, *Hijab on the Job*, 18 DREXEL L. REV. 1005 (2026).

72. See 42 U.S.C. § 2000e-2; see also *Groff v. DeJoy*, 600 U.S. 447, 472–73 (2023) (clarifying Title VII's undue-hardship standard for employers).

workplaces.<sup>73</sup> Rather, she argues, courts simply defer to employers' speculative and unsubstantiated arguments of undue hardship and their stated motivations for barring Muslim women's hijabs rather than holding employers to the heightened standard of evidentiary proof that Title VII requires.<sup>74</sup> However, in recent years the Supreme Court has consistently issued rulings that strengthen constitutional and statutory rights to religious freedom.<sup>75</sup> Huq's article, therefore, considers whether this shift, as reflected in the most recent Title VII religious accommodation case—*Groff v. DeJoy*—in tandem with the court's previous decision in *EEOC v. Abercrombie & Fitch*, will result in equal or at least stronger civil rights protection for Muslim women who don hijabs (and other minority faith adherents) to observe their religious beliefs in the contemporary workplace.<sup>76</sup>

Similarly, Attorney Tanner Fisher's article, *The Disparate Impact of Clean Shave Policies on Black Men*,<sup>77</sup> explores workers' rights to don hair, specifically the rights of Black men to wear facial hair in both private and public sector employment. Like grooming policies that bar Black women from wearing natural hairstyles, grooming policies that prohibit facial hair or require a close shave can animate or exacerbate medical conditions. Disproportionately, Black men suffer from a skin condition, pseudofolliculitis barbae (PFB), whereby after a close shave, the growth of curved hair follicles can produce what is commonly described as "shaving bumps" on their necks, chins, or even their cheeks.<sup>78</sup> This kind of hair growth can be not only damaging to one's skin but also physically painful and emotionally distressing. The definitive way for Black men with PFB to not experience this physiological, psychological and physical harm

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73. See Huq, *supra* note 70, at 1052–65.

74. See *id.* at 1052–68 (“[T]he Court unequivocally stated ‘bias or hostility to a religious practice or a religious accommodation’ cannot form the basis of an undue hardship defense.”).

75. Huq, *supra* note 70, at 1028–45.

76. See *id.* at 1051–69.

77. Tanner Fisher, *The Disparate Impact of Clean Shave Policies on Black Men*, 18 DREXEL L. REV. 1091 (2026).

78. See *id.* at 1094.

is to cease shaving altogether. However, many private and public employers refuse to provide exemptions or accommodations to their clean shave policies or policies that prohibit facial hair. Fisher's article delineates how Title VII of 1964 Civil Rights Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act are not the most effective tools for Black men to vindicate their rights to be free from race, gender, and disability discrimination—and to work free from compulsory pain.<sup>79</sup> Fisher's piece contemplates a similar bind Black servicemen in the United States Army will find themselves as a consequence of the newly enacted clean shave policy that rescinds medical exemptions. Either Black servicemen must comply with the clean shave policy and suffer physical, psychological, and physical harms as a condition of employment—without relief—or refuse compliance and be subject to heightened scrutiny, policing, discipline, and eventual termination of employment and associated short-term and long-term benefits—also without recourse.<sup>80</sup>

#### CONCLUSION

There was a remarkable kind of energy palpable at Drexel Kline School of Law during the 2025 *Drexel Law Review* symposium—the kind that flows from new connections, from expansive learning, and from profound moments of inspiration. For attendees who do not usually participate in academic convenings, there was the power that comes from inclusion and from having one's experiences recognized as central to knowledge production and to developing strategies for legal, policy, and social change. For example, Debra Hare Bey, CEO of Oh My Heavenly Hair, Co-Founder of the Natural Hair and Braiding Coalition (NHBC), Licensed Cosmetologist, Master Braider and Celebrity Natural Hair Stylist, reflected that she was “genuinely honored to participate and to witness such a powerful exchange of ideas and purpose” and that she left with “even greater

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79. *Id.* at 1110–27.

80. *Id.* at 1127–39.

inspiration as [she] continues [her] own journey to advance hair wellness, health, and advocacy for our community.”<sup>81</sup>

Many attendees expressed gratitude for the creation of a program dedicated expressly to the intersection of hair and health. Dr. Tammy Jolivette, CEO of The Texture of Me, remarked that the symposium provided “the opportunity to share my work on Post-Traumatic Hair Syndrome (PTHS) and expand the conversation around my upcoming research study on the emotional and psychological impact of hair trauma. A heartfelt thank you to the inspiring community at Drexel University for creating space to explore the intersections of hair, identity, and mental health. Conversations like these move us closer to healing, equity, and inclusion.”<sup>82</sup> Nickay Piper, Founder of Pomp Academy, a workforce-focused beauty education platform whose programs focus on product formulation, makeup artistry, and hair expressed:

I was so fortunate to attend the *Weaving it All Together* symposium . . . the information transfer was so meaningful that I have already put into place how Pomp Academy will work to support and enact legislation that supports how our students and their clients are treated in the beauty, health, and wellness industries. Even the women sitting next to me were at awe at the quality of the information being produced with one even crying at the realization that even [facial] hair bumps [from shaving] are political. Attending the symposium wasn't just about hair and policy, for many of us it represented finding our tribe and realizing that beauty and health are soul sisters.

Among the scholars in attendance who regularly participate in academic symposia and other conferences, there was

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81. Letter from Debra Hare Bey, to author D. Wendy Greene (Oct. 13, 2025) (on file with authors).

82. Letter from Dr. Tammy Jolivette to author D. Wendy Greene (Oct. 13, 2025) (on file with authors).

recognition that the interdisciplinary nature of the *Weaving it All Together* symposium was particularly generative, prompting fresh ideas, invigorating conversations, and renewed appreciation of the importance of scholarship to social, legal, policy, and personal change.<sup>83</sup> Dr. Ingrid Banks, University of California (Santa Barbara), called it “the best symposium I have ever attended (and I have attended many)” and praised its breadth of coverage, including “policy, activism, business, science, theory, [and] history.”<sup>84</sup> Professor Etienne Touissant, University of South Carolina School of Law, noted that the “conversations were rich, the community was inspiring, and the energy in the room reminded me why this work matters.”<sup>85</sup> Professor Camille Lamar Campbell, Nova Southeastern Shepard Broad College of Law, reflected that after attending the symposium, her “faith in the transformative power of law as an agent of social change is renewed.”<sup>86</sup>

Unlike many law school symposia and conferences held in 2025, which were understandably reactive to contemporaneous political developments, *Weaving it All Together* brought together forward-thinking scholars and advocates with long-standing interests in and commitments to issues at the intersection of

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83. In March 2026, symposium attendee Arielle Humphreys (Assistant Counsel and Manager of Professional Development with the NAACP-Legal Defense Fund) authored the public report, *Toxic Beauty*. See Arielle Humphreys, *Toxic Beauty: How Chemical Exposure from Hair Products Contributes to Racial Disparities in Black Women's Health*, LEGAL DEF. FUND: THURGOOD MARSHALL INST., Mar. 2026, <https://tminstituteldf.org/toxic-beauty-how-chemical-exposure-from-hair-products-contributes-to-racial-disparities-in-black-womens-health/> [<https://perma.cc/64N9-BVB2>]. The Discussions during the symposium and with Professor Greene helped to inform this advocacy report, which advances key recommendations for “policymakers and consumers to redress the potential adverse health consequences of chemical exposures from personal care products, and in turn remedy the racial health disparities affecting Black women.” *Id.*

84. Letter from Dr. Ingrid Banks to author D. Wendy Greene (Oct. 18, 2025) (on file with authors).

85. Letter from Professor Etienne Touissant to author D. Wendy Greene (Sep. 28, 2025) (on file with authors). Professor Etienne also shared publicly excerpts of his essay, *Flesh that Weeps*, presented during the *Weaving it All Together* symposium. See Etienne Touissant, *Flesh That Weeps: The Professional Politics of Hair in Legal Workplaces*, SUBSTACK: FREEDOM PAPERS (Oct. 07, 2025), [https://freedompapers.substack.com/p/flesh-that-weeps?utm\\_campaign=post&utm\\_medium=web&triedRedirect=true](https://freedompapers.substack.com/p/flesh-that-weeps?utm_campaign=post&utm_medium=web&triedRedirect=true) [<https://perma.cc/ZH8A-9VZR>].

86. Letter from Professor Camille Lamar Campbell to author D. Wendy Greene (Sep. 28, 2025) (on file with authors).

hair, health, law, and policy. While the work itself is not new, the opportunities for disseminating original research, creating innovative collaborations, and organizing for sustained action were unprecedented. We are grateful to everyone within the Drexel community, especially Tom Kline and Dean Dan Filler for their support; Mallory Heller, Mary McGovern, and Law Review editors Molly Kernis and Michelle Lebed for their tremendous work; and to the new community of *Weaving it All Together* participants who contributed to this special symposium. We look forward to continuing the conversation.