

Big Hair Don't Care

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Abstract

The purpose of this series was to collect recent works of mine that featured my attempts to capture the personality of curly hair in an effort to normalize its presence in art.

I observed that in most depictions of feminine beauty in modern movies and art, the figure is shown with flowing straight hair. I also noticed that in my own interpretations of beauty, I often gave my figures straight hair as well. It was not until I witnessed one of my own siblings struggling with her baby's curls that I feared a lack of representation. From this concern I decided to focus on the pattern and volume of my own hair and hair types like mine. Although it is not my main concentrated inspiration, I want to make sure other hair types are normalized in art and our everyday lives.

From my own experience, I noticed I was more likely to get a call back for a job if I walked into the interview with my hair straightened. Issues of preferred hair types spread across many cultures and generations, In my own family the gross majority of people simply did not know how to handle or respond to hair that existed outside what they were taught was beautiful. I believe there is still an association straight hair and professionalism. In an age where we pride ourselves on our progressiveness, it is imperative that we saturate every step with self-reflection. There is still an underlying acceptance of a specific look. "Professionalism was, and still is, closely linked to European features and mannerisms, which entails that those who do not naturally fall into Eurocentric norms must alter their appearances, sometimes drastically and

permanently, in order to be deemed professional," (Griffith, 2019, para. 6).

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." (Griffin, 2019, para. 2). Chastity Jones was offered a position in 2010 as a customer service representative, provided she cut her hair. When she refused the offer was retracted. "Jones' case is not unique. In 2019 a Georgia Elementary School was accused of being racially insensitive when they posted a list of inappropriate hairstyles. Photos of approved hairstyles were all short; all styles with anything longer were labeled

inappropriate. “Some schools have argued that dress codes are a critical component of school culture, and certain hairstyles or headwraps are distracting, unprofessional, or promote gangs or prison culture. Increasingly, students have pushed back, arguing that such definitions of professionalism are rooted in racism.” (Belsha, 2020, para. 11). Some states like California have recently put new laws in place stop employers from discriminating against employee candidates based off their hair.

My hair was always thick and had a mind of its own. I had spent years trying to figure out the right way to style and nurture it. When my niece’s hair started to grow in, I quickly realized she would have an impressive amount of curls on her head. I decided that I wanted to include more curls in my artwork. I do not consider curly hair to be a main theme in my work but I wanted to help cultivate a future that is more accepting and appreciative of curls.

References

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