

Black women struggle with their hair

Whether natural or relaxed, black women should accept their hair

All women, especially black women, should accept and love their hair.

Whether it's straight, curly, kinky or nappy, all women face the pressures of being conforming to the American standard of beauty.

Unfortunately, black women tend to deal with the most issues when it comes to hair.

Because our hair is naturally coiled, it needs more maintenance and treatment than the hair of others.

African hair, or black hair, is the slowest growing of all types of hair, at less than 0.9 centimeters per month, according to the L'Oreal Cosmetic Company.

It is denser than any other hair type, and it twists as it grows.

"The process of washing my hair is my main frustration," said junior Deann Brame. "I feel like I have to set aside this whole block of time to make sure I can get it all done. Since I have natural hair, it takes me just a bit longer to wash, dry and style my hair."

Like other hair, black hair comes in many different textures. Although all black hair textures are beautiful, a lot of black families form perceptions of what they view as 'good' and 'bad' hair.

To my family, I had "good" hair due to its soft texture. My sister had "bad" hair because of it's nappy, tightly coiled texture. I hated it.

My family still shows favoritism to my hair today because it's more presentable and manageable than my sister's hair. This is a problem.

For years, my sister had low self-esteem.

Not only did her hair not look like mine, it didn't look like the other white children at school. Eventually, black and white children teased her about her hair.

It's devastating to know that something as simple as hair could cause such psychological damage to young black children.

A lot of black women today feel pressured to chemically straighten their hair or wear weaves because other famous black women like Oprah, Beyonce and Michelle Obama, look this



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way.

This belief is wrong and damaging to the self-esteem of black women who go to extremes, using dangerous chemical products and spending a lot of time and money on straightening their hair.

These products include hair relaxers used to chemically straighten black hair, according to the Food and Drug Administration.

"My hair was extremely difficult to manage when I was a child," said junior Cecelia Mckoy. "My mother tried everything. First, I had braids when I was a kid, and, when I grew older, we finally decided to relax it."

Although hair relaxers help straighten our hair, they are also very damaging.

The main ingredient in hair relaxers today is sodium hydroxide, also known as lye, according to the Food and Drug Administration.

This chemical can cause serious burns and even hair loss when used incorrectly.

"I'm glad I got my hair relaxed at that age because I needed it," Mckoy said. "When you start the process of relaxing your hair, you have to take care of it or it will fall out."

Black women: Accept your natural hair texture, and don't feel forced to change your hair in order to look beautiful.

All hair is beautiful, regardless of its texture.

"I think most black women straighten their hair because it is more manageable," Brame said. "We will never be white, and we will never naturally have white hair."

This doesn't mean black women should wear weaves or feel forced to straighten their hair to assimilate.

Women should only change their hair in reference to style choice.

"I think we envy white people a lit-

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Photo illustration by Jesse Michel

tle because it seems that they can just wash their hair and go," Brame said. "Sometimes straightening black hair is much easier than wearing it natural."

Natural hair is similar to the Angela Davis Afro in the 1960s or the Whoopi Goldberg dreads of the 1990s. Black hair without chemical products is not "bad" hair. It's beautiful hair.

Dermatologists from the American Academy of Dermatology recommend changing hairstyles if hair is falling out or breaking off along the hairline due to perms and relaxers.

"I've thought about growing my hair natural, but I can't do it," junior Shameka Williams said. "I wouldn't want to start over and cut all my hair off. It would take too long to grow out, and I don't know how I would look."

All women should go natural at

some point in their lives.

As a black woman, I feel pressured to wear my hair straight all the time, not because I want to look white, but because it's what most black women do to their hair.

Natural hair is definitely becoming a trend for some black and white women.

It probably feels liberating to cut all of your relaxed hair off and grow it back natural.

This action takes time and confidence, but that's for you to decide.

One day I will go natural, but this action forces me to accept my own hair.

What do you think about this topic? What other things would you like to see in Campus Voice?

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