## Part 1 is the Advocacy

#### We begin this debate with a picture of hair as an object of beauty being stripped from Black and Brown people. Slave masters, colonizers, and intruders have kicked our doors down and demanded that we turn over our cultural identities - controlling hair has historically been a favorite tool of domination in the arsenal of oppressors.

#### The story of Chastity Jones is central to our understanding of hair and why it's so very important to coloniality and the hypocrisy of whiteness - it proves that cultural identities are seen as mutually exclusive with respectability.

Chante Griffin, 7-3-2019, "How Natural Black Hair at Work Became a Civil Rights Issue," JSTOR Daily, https://daily.jstor.org/how-natural-black-hair-at-work-became-a-civil-rights-issue/ //n33l

In 2010, Chastity Jones eagerly accepted a job offer from Catastrophe Management Solutions as a customer service representative. The offer, however, came with one caveat—she had to cut off her locs. Jones refused, and the company rescinded its job offer. The company’s hiring manager reportedly told Jones, “They tend to get messy.” The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) [filed a suit on Jones’s behalf in 2013 and lost](https://www.eeoc.gov/eeoc/newsroom/release/9-30-13j.cfm). In 2016, the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the district court’s ruling and dismissed the case. Jones’ case is not unique. 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. How Did We Get Here? Anti-black hair sentiment on U.S. soil has existed for centuries. In the 1700s, enslaved women who worked in the fields usually [covered their hair in head-rags due to the harsh demands of their work](https://www.jstor.org/stable/26505328?mag=how-natural-black-hair-at-work-became-a-civil-rights-issue). Enslaved Africans who worked in the “big house,” however, sometimes mimicked the hairstyles of their enslavers, either by wearing wigs that had become popular during that era or shaping their kinky hair to emulate them. In cities like New Orleans, however, where free Creole women of color donned elaborate hairstyles that displayed their kinks and coils with an air of regality, the city implemented laws—[the Tignon Laws](https://www.jstor.org/stable/4230881?mag=how-natural-black-hair-at-work-became-a-civil-rights-issue)—that required these women to wear a tignon (scarf or handkerchief) over their hair to signify that they were members of the slave class, regardless of whether they were free or enslaved. The end of the 19th century saw the invention of the hair-straightening comb, which would be used to “tame” black hair. Madam C.J. Walker, a black woman, popularized the comb, and “by the mid-1920s, straight hair had become the preferred texture to signal middle class status.” As a result, Walker became the first female African American millionaire. Although some historians have lauded Walker’s business acumen, others have chided her for perpetuating the idea that straight hair leads to social and economic advancement. For better or worse, she offered black women an avenue for increased societal acceptance in an era when minstrel songs mocked the hair texture of African Americans, “[comparing it to wool and often describing it as nappy](http://digitalcommons.auctr.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1007&context=continuum).” [“Don’t remove the kinks from your hair! Remove them from your brain!”](https://daily.jstor.org/how-natural-black-hair-at-work-became-a-civil-rights-issue/) Marcus Garvey The first wave of the natural hair movement emerged during the tumultuous 1960s. The “Black Is Beautiful” movement assured black women and men that their skin, facial features, and natural hair were admirable—as is. The activist Marcus Garvey encouraged black women to embrace their natural kinks, arguing that copying white eurocentric standards of beauty denigrated the beauty of black women: “[Don’t remove the kinks from your hair! Remove them from your brain!](https://www.jstor.org/stable/4317206?mag=how-natural-black-hair-at-work-became-a-civil-rights-issue&seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents)” The activist Angela Davis [sported an afro as a sign of black power and rebellion against white American beauty standards](https://www.jstor.org/stable/1343885?mag=how-natural-black-hair-at-work-became-a-civil-rights-issue). Wearing an afro became a weapon in the fight for racial equality, as well as a public declaration of self-love and solidarity within the black community. A 1972 study of black teens living in St. Louis revealed that [90 percent of young men and 40 percent of young women in the city sported their natural kinks](https://www.jstor.org/stable/273523?mag=how-natural-black-hair-at-work-became-a-civil-rights-issue), an uptick from the 50s and 60s. Although small in scope, this study captured the larger national trend. Whether rocking afros or pressed hair, black protesters demanded the signing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which “[ended segregation in public places and banned employment discrimination](https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/civil-rights-act).” The Act also created the EEOC, which operates “[as the lead enforcement agency in the area of workplace discrimination](https://www.eeoc.gov/eeoc/history/35th/pre1965/index.html).” When the EEOC was founded fifty-five years ago, the federal government’s primary concern was that black people be granted equal access to public workplaces. It didn’t foresee that black hair would need equal access as well. Meanwhile, public protests and pop culture pushed the Black Is Beautiful and civil rights movements forward. Released in 1968, James Brown’s “Say It Loud!” became a rallying anthem that encouraged black folks to embrace their blackness and fight against unequal treatment: Say it loud! I’m black and I’m proud Say it louder! I’m black and I’m proud Some people say we got a lot of malice, some say it’s a lotta nerve But I say we won’t quit movin’ until we get what we deserve The first natural hair discrimination cases wouldn’t appear until the next decade. In the 1976 case of Jenkins v. Blue Cross Mutual Hospital Insurance, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit upheld a race discrimination lawsuit against an employer for bias against afros. The appeals court agreed that workers were entitled to wear afros under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act. While afros were technically allowed in workplaces, the social pressure to emulate eurocentric hair permeated American society, impacting black women’s hair grooming decisions. In “Hey Girl, Am I More Than My Hair?,” the communications scholar Tracey Owens Patton wrote that “the progressive changes made during the Black Power movement eroded as assimilation became more dominant in the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s.” The 1980s and 1990s ushered in more black women sporting pressed and permed hair, thanks to [prevalent hair-care ads on TV and in magazines](https://www.jstor.org/stable/42975205?mag=how-natural-black-hair-at-work-became-a-civil-rights-issue) that encouraged black women to alter the texture of their hair. However, this time period also witnessed the popularization of styles like braids and cornrows. Images of black women celebrities showcasing braids—like Janet Jackson in Poetic Justice—encouraged black women to braid their tresses. Wearing these styles came with a price, as they created a legal firestorm. In 1981, a black woman took American Airlines to court because the company demanded she not wear her hair in braids. The court sided with the airline, stating that braids were not an immutable racial characteristic—unlike the afro. Less than a decade later, the Hyatt Regency used this ruling to make employee Cheryl Tatum resign after she refused to take out the cornrows she wore to work. The American Airlines ruling established the standing legal precedent. Finally, the 2000s welcomed the second wave of the natural hair movement. Spurred by films and the advent of social media, the movement fueled a cultural shift that has caused legions of black women to abandon their perms and pressing combs. Director Regina Kimbell’s My Nappy Roots: A Journey Through Black Hair-itage traced the history and politics around natural black hair in the U.S., thus raising consciousness in the African American community. This was one year before comedian Chris Rock would release Good Hair, a similarly themed documentary that focused on the economics of black women buying weaves and perming their hair. One of the most famous lines of the film was delivered by comedian Paul Mooney, who said, “[If your hair is relaxed, they are relaxed. If your hair is nappy, they are not happy](https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/blackcamera.5.1.56?mag=how-natural-black-hair-at-work-became-a-civil-rights-issue).” While both films raised social consciousness, prompting many black women to ditch their pressing combs, perms, and weaves, YouTube and other social media platforms empowered these women to act on their new awareness. YouTube and natural hair blogs allowed black women to discuss their hair-care journeys, share hair tutorials, and connect with other women—many of whom were learning to care for their natural hair for the first time. In “[YouTube Communities and the Promotion of Natural Hair Acceptance Among Black Women](https://www.elon.edu/docs/e-web/academics/communications/research/vol8no1/05_Cameron_Jackson.pdf),” Cameron Jackson wrote that the social media platform not only enabled newly minted naturalistas to “disseminate information about natural hair” but also caused “a shift in the cultural understanding of natural hair.” Today, natural hair communities abound on YouTube and Instagram. With one million subscribers, [Naptural85](https://www.youtube.com/user/Naptural85) is an acclaimed natural hair guru, while Instagram shows 21.8 million “natural hair” posts. These numbers suggest that natural hair is officially “in.” So “in” that [natural hair clip-ins are now available](https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/bjdg93/black-women-entrepreneurs-natural-hair-movement), offering buyers an assortment of “natural” kinks and curls. Hair product sales stats reflect this trend. According to the global research firm Mintel, spending on perm relaxers [fell 30.8 percent between 2011 and 2016](https://www.latimes.com/business/la-fi-natural-hair-industry-20170809-htmlstory.html). Estimates suggest that by 2020, relaxers will become the smallest segment of the market. Preferring natural crowns isn’t a passing fad, writes Kamina Wilkerson in “[The Natural Hair Movement](http://digitalcommons.auctr.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1007&context=continuum):” “It signifies an attempt at a healthier lifestyle, a more authentic existence and a redefinition of the meaning of beauty.” According to Wilkerson, it’s also “revolutionary as a self-created, self-perpetuating female-led movement.” The proliferation of natural hair [expos](https://www.afrolicioushairexpo.com/) and [festivals](https://www.curlfest.com/) exemplifies this reality. The leaders of this revolution are natural hair evangelists who preach the good news of organic hair products to their loyal followers and the newly converted—while flaunting fierce manes, the same hairstyles worn in countries in Africa in the seventeenth century. As natural hair care practices have gained increased acceptance in mainstream society, many corporations—and the U.S. government—have welcomed natural styles, even as courts decided they didn’t have to. Last year, for example, the U.S. Navy [changed its grooming policy to include braided styles and locs](https://www.public.navy.mil/bupers-npc/reference/messages/Documents/NAVADMINS/NAV2018/NAV18163.txt), which follows [a similar decision by the Army in 2017](https://www.armytimes.com/news/your-army/2017/01/30/soldiers-cheer-army-s-decision-to-authorize-dreadlocks-in-uniform/). However, the debate about what’s professional, presentable, and thus acceptable looms, affecting black children as well. In 2017, a preparatory academy in Montverde, Florida, asked a black teenage girl [to change her natural hair](http://www.fox35orlando.com/news/local-news/school-asks-teen-to-change-her-natural-hair-style) because it violated the school’s dress code; and in 2018, a middle-school student in Gretna, Louisiana was [removed from school](https://wgno.com/2018/08/20/christ-the-king-student-sent-home-over-unnatural-hairstyle/) due to her braided extensions. Undeterred, artists continue to propel the culture forward. In 2018, Netflix turned Trisha R. Thomas’s Nappily Ever After book series into a film, while Gillian Scott-Ward’s Back to Natural documentary (which hit the festival circuit in 2017) influenced the NYC Commission’s release of its groundbreaking guidelines. Where Are We at Now? In 2006, the EEOC issued its [Compliance Manual on Race and Color Discrimination](https://www.eeoc.gov/policy/docs/race-color.html), which details guidelines around what constitutes discrimination based on physical characteristics in the workplace. The manual protects against “employment discrimination based on a person’s physical characteristics associated with race, such as a person’s color, hair, facial features, height and weight.” The manual states that employers can impose neatness and grooming standards, as long as racial differences are taken into account and the rules are applied equally across racial lines. Employers cannot discriminate against an employee wearing an afro, for example, because that is black hair in its natural state. While employers might be able to request that an afro be groomed, they cannot demand that it not be worn at all. Neither can they apply hairstyle rules more stringently to hairstyles worn by blacks. [At the center of the current debate around natural hairstyles like locs is whether the style is a racial characteristic protected by the law.](https://daily.jstor.org/how-natural-black-hair-at-work-became-a-civil-rights-issue/) The EEOC’s guidelines, however clear, still leave room for judicial interpretation, with the EEOC and federal courts disagreeing. At the center of the current debate around natural hairstyles like locs is whether the style is a racial characteristic protected by the law. In Jones’ case, the Eleventh Circuit held that the employer did not discriminate against Jones based on race because the locs hairstyle is a “mutable—or changeable—characteristic.” The EEOC, however, maintained that race is a social construct that isn’t strictly limited to immutable characteristics. The Commission insists that race can also include “cultural characteristics related to race or ethnicity,” including grooming practices. The circuit court disagreed, ruling that although locs are traditionally associated with people of African descent, the employer did not engage in any race-based disparate treatment. Although the EEOC opted not to take the case to the Supreme Court and the NAACP’s subsequent request that the court hear the case was rejected, other government entities have drawn more stringent legal lines in the sand. In early 2019, the New York City Commission on Human Rights [declared its commitment](https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/cchr/downloads/pdf/Hair-Guidance.pdf) to protect residents’ legal right to wear their hair in locs, afros, braids, and other culturally specific styles, granting the city’s residents more protection than the federal government provides. The Commission argues that natural hair—and by extension any natural hairstyle—is inextricably tied to race and thus protected under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, which “prohibits employment discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex and national origin.” The Commission wrote: “Bans or restrictions on natural hair or hairstyles associated with black people are often rooted in white standards of appearance and perpetuate racist stereotypes that black hairstyles are unprofessional. Such policies exacerbate anti-black bias in employment, at school, while playing sports, and in other areas of daily living.” The Commission’s statement mirrored the EEOC’s position and implemented on the local level what the EEOC hopes to implement on a federal level. Two months after NYC released its guidelines, the California legislature [passed a bill](https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/california-senate-oks-ban-hairstyle-discrimination-n998286) that would ban discrimination against natural black hairstyles in the workplace. The bill awaits the Governor’s signature. If it’s approved, California would become the first state to ban discrimination against all natural hairstyles in the workplace. Where Do We Go from Here? While NYC residents can don any natural hairstyle they want in public schools and in workplaces, and California residents may soon join them, many African Americans aren’t afforded that same legal protection. Black citizens like Chastity Jones are still being denied jobs. Unless the Supreme Court reverses the Eleventh Circuit’s ruling, this judicial and legislative free-for-all will continue. Caught in the crosshairs, many African Americans will be forced to choose between embracing their identities and economic advancement.

#### Indigenous populations have not been exempt from the coded drive to use hair as a method of control - a perverse desire to dominate makes controlling hair joyful for colonizers.

Erin Reese, 8-5-2021, "Natural Hair Survives Colonization: Resistance, Business, and the CROWN Act," Yellow Scene Magazine, https://yellowscene.com/2021/08/05/natural-hair-survives-colonization-resistance-business-and-the-crown-act/ //n33l

Moving up the timeline One of the most common things we hear in testimonies from survivors of residential schools is children having their braids cut when they arrive. Make no mistake this was a form of purposeful genocidal violence done to “Kill the indian and save the man.” In other sociological texts, actions like this are called cultural imperialism. Notably prevalent in Western Native nations like the Lakota and Black Foot, men cutting their hair was only done to demonstrate shame or grief. Modern Native nations still place great significance on braids, both cultural and spiritual. For many indigenous Americans still today cutting your hair is still a sign of deep grief and mourning. Hair cuts were knowingly cruel tools of colonization. They were used to sever cultural and spiritual connections to indigenous Sovereignty. A closer view of this same form of violence shows African slaves having Afros cut off, and US prisoners being forced to get haircuts while incarcerated, both ongoing forms of shaming and forcing cultural conformity. The fascination with cultural braids and Afros by white women is pure colonizer culture. Everywhere we hear colonizers demands to own native natural hair styles. “Oh I love your braids,” one says as she reaches without consent to touch the connection to a culture that their ancestors cut up and severed with dull knives. “It’s not appropriation!” she cries from underneath braids that her grandmother would’ve cut off a Native and threw in the trash. “Your hair is a little long for our dress code,” he says, closing another door on employment for indigenous men. Throughout America’s murderous love affair with chattel slavery, hair from Black people not only became a target of violence, but in true cannibalistic style became a commodity. It’s not an entirely rare thing to find period furniture, from both the North and the South, which was stuffed with Black natural hair for padding. Natural hair became a primary tool of violent oppression for Black people from the beginnings of chatel slavery to modern day wage slavery. It took labor from so many in the community to bring natural Black hair to where it is today. Some of that work was done in Denver, Colorado. Madam C.J. Walker moved to Denver to sell hair products for Annie Turnbo Malone starting in 1905.

#### This isn't unique to the United States of Amerikkka - my home country partakes in the same views about hair that are rooted in racial hierarchies, casteism, and the patriarchy, especially for people in the press.

Rohina Katoch Sehra, [Sehra cares about the politics of style and beauty. She writes to amplify the voices of the people, movements and businesses that matter. She lives in New Delhi, India with her husband and dog- son Obi Wan.] 3-3-2020, "Indian Women Open Up About The Pressure To Keep Their Hair Long And Straight," HuffPost, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/indian-women-hair-pressure-long-straight\_l\_5e54236ec5b66729cf6064e3 //n33l

In India, hair and femininity are inextricable. The trendsetting industries of film and television, firmly in the grip of conservatism, haven’t shown much interest in broadening our understanding of femininity ― on or off screen, no A-list actors sport hair that isn’t well past their shoulders, and an artfully waved [lob](https://www.cosmopolitan.in/beauty/news/a10718/heres-how-choose-best-haircut-your-hair-type) is considered radical. Popular fashion designers like [Sabyasachi](https://www.instagram.com/sabyasachiofficial/?hl=en), who premised their careers on challenging conventions of femininity, are now associated with [deeply traditional iconography](https://www.vogue.in/content/sabyasachi-mukherjee-on-his-idea-of-the-perfect-indian-bridal-makeup) that features women in long, demure hairstyles. Quick to co-opt this idiom, the makeup and fashion influencer communities [mimic](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=92fKge8EGCk) these looks with relish. The country’s biggest national pageant has been [panned](https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-48442662) for selecting candidates with bizarrely [identikit hair](https://www.indiatoday.in/trending-news/story/miss-india-2019-organisers-blasted-for-fair-skinned-finalists-can-t-tell-them-apart-says-internet-1539494-2019-05-31). Miss India contestants. They all have the same hair, and the SAME SKIN COLOUR, and I'm going to hazard a guess that their heights and vital stats will also be similar. So much for India being a 'diverse' country. [pic.twitter.com/L4yXG0WvRu](https://t.co/L4yXG0WvRu) — labellagorda (@labellagorda) [May 27, 2019](https://twitter.com/labellagorda/status/1132911972968673280?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw) In ads and in movies, short-haired women are either mouthy tomboys, athletes or staunch careerists. They are almost never mothers or love interests. Short hair is for feminists and intellectuals ― a shrill, frumpy archetype devoid of softness and disinclined to pander. The renunciation of hair is acceptable only when sanctioned by [religion](https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/3yCPhcnn27tZ8S2vnJXpt8m/losing-your-hair-to-save-your-soul) or [custom](https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/tirumalas-gleaming-scalps-spell-shining-prospects-for-hair-business/articleshow/55776683.cms?from=mdr), not when it is a political statement or an act of self-love. Class and caste readings of hair throw up depressingly predictable themes. For example, when Priyanka Gandhi, scion to the first family of India’s oldest political party, cut her hair, she became the subject of [fawning press](https://www.hindustantimes.com/india/lovin-the-priyanka-cut/story-AfzjTnMfMyt5ILKpBjHxbO.html) that likened her look to her grandmother’s, the first female prime minister of India. Hair diversity is a problem, too. Big banner movies and commercials almost never feature curly haired leads. Curls do not feature in hair product ads and do not get the kind of care they need at most salons, because stylists consider kinky hair difficult. Curly brides seldom wear their natural hair and go pin-straight on their big day; mainstream bridal fashions simply don’t factor in curls. All of this underscores a cultural obsession with straight, “proper” hair. Shockingly, the country has only [just begun](https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/magazines/panache/indias-latest-acceptance-with-curls-lead-to-the-emergence-of-a-rs-200-crore-industry/articleshow/63860464.cms) to wake up to hair diversity. We talked to eight Indian women about their fraught experiences with their hair. Priyanshi Jariwala, Surat, Gujarat (Western India) Jariwala owns a sustainable fashion [line](https://www.instagram.com/thekhadicult/?hl=en) that champions a hardy hand-spun fabric with ties to India’s freedom movement. Growing up, she struggled with her curls. “I wanted to straighten them all the time only to be accepted. I remember a morning from my fourth grade when my teacher asked me if I’d combed my hair enough. She suggested I do it multiple times to get rid of the ‘shabby look.’” Jariwala has strong feelings about her community’s grooming expectations of women, considered attractive only if they are “tall, fair, slim and have long hair, even if the man has none on his head.” She’s glad for a dear friend who was so fed up she “cut her hair short to avoid marriage proposals. Women with short hair don’t qualify for Daughter-In-Law of the Year,” she said. Jariwala believes that women in visual professions, such as modeling, can sometimes pay for asserting their individuality. “I know fashion models who lost work because they decided to chop their hair. I think this bias is deeply rooted in the idea that long hair hides the ‘less attractive’ features, like chubby cheeks and an undefined jawline.” When it comes to her own profession, she plays it safe. “I work in a creative field where people are more accepting of your choices and appreciate nonconventional haircuts/colors, but I find myself at a crossroads when it comes to a conference or business summit. I do not remember ever leaving my curls open in a meeting. They are either tied in a bun or styled.” Then, colored hair signals sexual adventurism and could get women into trouble. “Women with crazy hair colors are [believed] to be asking for it, just how they’re asking for it when they wear short skirts or tops with deep necklines,” she told HuffPost. Despite comparisons to [Maggi noodles](https://in.pinterest.com/pin/350647520986186910/?lp=true), she’s found peace with her hair. “I think my hair is a representation of my wild and carefree side. People tell me that my hair makes me come across as a warm, approachable individual.” Rachana Iyer, Mumbai, Maharashtra (Western India) [Tamil](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tamils) by origin, Iyer is a mental health [advocate](https://www.instagram.com/rayiyer/?hl=en) and heads corporate social responsibility for a private bank. Fair skin and long hair are prized in her community and Iyer wrestled with her wavy curls, first growing them to waist length, then chopping them off to make a political statement. “I felt compelled to challenge the notion that I could look my best only in long hair,” Iyer told HuffPost. “I went from blunt to pixie and finally a beautiful red faux hawk! I absolutely loved the feeling of buzzing my hair and almost got quite addicted to it. Most people were shocked and upset that I would even take such a drastic step. This made me want to keep cutting my hair. I wanted people to realize how narrow their view of beauty is. People link femininity to having long hair and assume things about you based on its length. Although I do identify as bisexual, most people saw my short hair and called me names like ‘butch’ or ‘tomboy.’ They assumed that my sexuality and hair were somehow linked.” Iyer doesn’t care. She has attended weddings in traditional saris sporting buzzed hair, a vision undoubtedly jarring to her conservative community. “People assume you are a ‘junkie’ or a ‘punk’ when they see you with a buzz cut. I think coloring longer hair does not evoke the sort of response that coloring shorter hair does. I remember walking into a very popular bank and the lady at the counter openly mocked me to her colleagues and treated me poorly because of my hair. It got so bad that I had to escalate this to the manager. Society, especially women, can be really quick to judge you based on your hair. People also tend to slander a woman’s character, and although very subtle, I have personally experienced people thinking I am ‘very open,’ ‘forward thinking.’ They have taken the liberty to flirt even when I was clearly not interested.” Iyer believes that workplaces aren’t hair-inclusive. “A lot of companies have a policy about the types of colors allowed on women’s hair. Advertising agencies and the entertainment industry are a bit more relaxed, but there are still clear assumptions made based on the length of your hair. Medium or long hair that is straight, not frizzy and not colored, is considered the most professional. Most Indian corporations definitely consider buzz cuts unprofessional. It is assumed that you will not take your work seriously if your hair is fun!” Theyie Keditsu, Kohima, Nagaland (Northeastern India) Keditsu teaches at a government college and [advocates](https://www.instagram.com/mekhalamama/?hl=en) for the revival of traditional indigenous textiles and local artisanship. “[Nagas](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Naga-people) (from the northeastern part of India) in general hold long, black and thick hair as the gold standard of feminine beauty. This beauty standard is both a result of racial prevalence and patriarchal notions of femininity,” she told HuffPost. Keditsu’s hair journey straddles the personal and the political. “I started shaving parts of my hair as a teenager,” she said. “And then completely when I was 27. And then in parts from 2017 onwards. My parents disliked my latest experiments so much that they even prayed for me! For them, my mohawk was unbecoming of a mother and a responsible working woman. For some others, it clashed with their idea of Naga beauty and femininity. My husband loved it, as did most of my friends. The most recent experiments with my hair were simply a personal quest to explore what being beautiful meant to me. I’d reached a point of self-acceptance ― realizing that hair and other accoutrements of beauty were at once superfluous and vital to one’s personhood. With my mohawk, I wanted to challenge ideas of what a mother should look like, and what made a woman my age beautiful. In a very deliberate way, I chose to sport these hairstyles because they expand the idea of what it means to be feminine.” Keditsu would like young women to “see hair as a means not an end, not as an extension of oneself or one’s sense of worth but as a tool to express one’s politics or worth.” Niharika Chugh Vali, Nagpur, Maharashtra (Central India) Business owner Chugh Vali runs a children’s play [area](https://www.instagram.com/jumpnagpur/?hl=en) that encourages experiential learning. Her parents are Punjabi and Parsi, two cultures that value conformity in appearance, so she has only just now leaned into her big, curly hair. “I have worked before as a television news anchor and my hair was always a concern for everyone. It was gelled and tied back most times and when it was left open, it took twice as much time as anyone else to straighten it. The option of enhancing my natural hair or going curly did not exist,” she told HuffPost. “Like all curly-haired people, I’ve been advised by stylists and well-wishers to ‘do something about it,’ to get my hair smoothed or straightened or treated with keratin, as if the sight of my natural hair could hurt someone’s eyes,” she said. Shame around hair was learned in early childhood. “The volume was unmanageable, so it was cut in a short bob. Once I did decide to grow it out, I made sure it was tied back real tight and pinned well so nobody ever had to see what it really looked like,” she said. Today, Chugh Vali credits the [Curly Girl Method](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Curly_Girl_Method) and Indian actors like [Kangana Ranaut](https://in.pinterest.com/search/pins/?rs=ac&len=2&q=kangana%20ranaut%20curly%20hair&eq=Kangana%20Ranaut%20curly%20hair&etslf=3517&term_meta%5b%5d=kangana%7Cautocomplete%7C0&term_meta%5b%5d=ranaut%7Cautocomplete%7C0&term_meta%5b%5d=curly%7Cautocomplete%7C0&term_meta%5b%5d=hair%7Cautocomplete%7C0) and [Taapsee Pannu](https://in.pinterest.com/search/pins/?q=Taapsee%20Pannu%20curly%20hair&rs=typed&term_meta%5b%5d=Taapsee%7Ctyped&term_meta%5b%5d=Pannu%7Ctyped&term_meta%5b%5d=curly%7Ctyped&term_meta%5b%5d=hair%7Ctyped) for throwing out notions around “curly hair being an inferior hair type. It is also finally leading to a conversation about curly hair, and how its care is so different from the default straight-hair regimen we all follow blindly.” Mother to a 7-year-year old, she loves that animated children’s heroines like [Merida](https://www.google.com/search?q=Merida%2C+Brave&tbm=isch&ved=2ahUKEwjizvmkpsrnAhVLFnIKHXAJCfYQ2-cCegQIABAA&oq=Merida%2C+Brave&gs_l=img.3..0i67j0l9.2884.3809..4135...0.0..0.144.865.0j7......0....1..gws-wiz-img.rq6wzyL8HC0&ei=TAlDXuL4CcusyAPwkqSwDw&bih=618&biw=1366) (“Brave”) and [Moana](https://www.google.com/search?q=Moana&sxsrf=ACYBGNRkwiw9u8oXmmLLXvAzl-SxmO5kaQ:1581451646764&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjl34m9psrnAhWqyDgGHY2UC0sQ_AUoAXoECDkQAw&biw=1366&bih=618) have curly hair.

#### Hair is steeped in violent policing and judgement that make existence unbearable - why is the hair of Indian yogis attributed to their religious dedication but the shiny mane of blonde supermodels is associated with idiocy? It begs the question - do we style our hair or does our hair style us?

Siri Hustvedt, [Hustvedt is an author and lecturer of psychiatry at Cornell University with several published best-selling novels and highly-regarded research papers. She received a PhD from Columbia University in New York and has received the Gabarron International Award for Thought and Humanities, the Man Booker Prize, and the LA Times Book Prize for Fiction] 9-23-2015, "Untangling the Cultural Meaning of Hair," New Republic, https://newrepublic.com/article/122893/notes-toward-theory-hair //n33l

When my daughter was in elementary school, she wore her hair long, and every night before I began reading aloud to her, I sat behind her to comb and then braid it. If left loose during her hours of hectic sleep and dreams, Sophie’s hair was transformed into a great bird’s nest by morning. I especially liked the braiding ritual, liked the sight of my child’s ears and the back of her neck, liked the feel and look and smell of her shiny brown hair, liked the folding over and under of the three skeins of hair between my fingers. The braiding was also an act of anticipation—it came just before we crawled into her bed together and settled in among the pillows and sheets and I began to read and Sophie to listen. Even this simple act of plaiting my child’s hair gives rise to questions about meaning. Why do more girl children wear their hair long in our culture than boy children? Why is hairstyle a sign of sexual difference? I have to admit that unless a boy child of mine had begged me for braids, I probably would have followed convention and kept his hair short, even though I think such rules are arbitrary and constricting. And finally, why would I have been mortified to send Sophie off to school with her tresses in high-flying, ratted knots?  All mammals have hair. Hair is not a body part so much as a lifeless extension of a body. Although the bulb of the follicle is alive, the hair shaft is dead and insensible, which allows for its multiple manipulations. We are the only mammals who braid, knot, powder, pile up, oil, spray, tease, perm, color, curl, straighten, augment, shave off, and clip our hair. The liminal status of hair is crucial to its meanings. It grows on the border between person and world. As Mary Douglas argued in Purity and Danger, substances that cross the body’s boundaries are signs of disorder and may easily become pollutants. Hair attached to our heads is one thing, but hair clogged in the shower drain after a shampoo is waste. Read unlimited stories like this one.1 year for $10.Subscribe Hair protrudes from all over human skin except the soles of our feet and the palms of our hands. Contiguity plays a role in hair’s significance. Hair on a person’s head frames her or his face, and the face is the primary focus in most of our communicative dealings with others. We recognize people by their faces. We speak, listen, nod, and respond to a face, especially to eyes. Head hair and more intrusively beard hair exist at the periphery of these vital exchanges that begin immediately after birth, and once we become self-conscious, our concern that our hair is “in place,” “unmussed,” or “mussed in just the right way” has to do with its role as messenger  to the other. A never-combed head of hair may  announce that its owner lives out side human society altogether—is  a wild child, a hermit, or an insane  person. It may also signify beliefs  and political or cultural marginality. Think of the dreadlocks of Rastafarians or the long, matted hair of  the sannyasis, ascetic wanderers in  India. The combed-out Afro or “natural” for women and men in the 1960s communicated a wordless but potent political story. As a high school student, I thought of Angela Davis’s hair as a sign, not only of her politics, but of her formidable intellect, as if her association with Herbert Marcuse and the Frankfurt School could be divined in her commanding halo. Was the brilliant Davis a subliminal influence on my decision in the middle of the 1970s to apply a toxic permanent wave solution to my straight, shoulder-length blond hair, a chemical alteration that was literally hair- raising? The Afro style (sort of) on me—not just a white girl, but an extremely white girl—turned the “natural” into the “unnatural.” I was hardly alone in adopting the look. As fashions travel from one person or group to another, their significance mutates. Note the bleached blond hair of famous black sports stars or the penchant for cornrows among certain white people. Despite its important role as speechless social messenger, hair is a part of the human body we can live without. Losing a head of hair or shaving our legs and underarms or waxing away pubic hair is not like losing an arm or a finger. “It will always grow back” is a phrase routinely used to comfort those who have suffered a bad haircut. Hair that touches a living head but is itself dead has an object-like quality no other body part has, except our fingernails and toenails. Hair is at once of “me” and an alien “it.” When I touch the hair of another person, I am similarly touching him or her, but not his or her internally felt body. I remember that when my niece Juliette was a baby, she used to suck on her bottle twirling her mother’s long hair around her fingers as her eyes slowly opened and closed. It was a gesture of luxurious, soporific pleasure. Well after her bottle had been abandoned, she was unable to fall asleep without the ritual hair twiddling, which meant, of course, that the rest of my sister was forced to accompany those essential strands. Asti’s hair, as part of Juliette’s mother but not her mother’s body proper, became what D. W. Winnicott called a “transitional object,” the stuffed animal, bit of blanket, lullaby, or routine many children need to pave the way to sleep. The thing or act belongs to Winnicott’s “intermediate area of experience,” a between zone that is “outside the individual” but is not “the external world,” an object or ritual imbued with the child’s longings and fantasies that helps ease her separation from her mother. Hair as marginalia lends itself particularly well to this transitional role. Every infant is social from birth, and without crucial interactions with an intimate caretaker, it will grow up to be severely disabled. Although the parts of the brain that control autonomic functions are quite mature at birth, emotional responses, language, and cognition develop through experience with others, and those experiences are physiologically coded in brain and body. The lullabies, head and hair stroking, rocking, cooing, playing, talk, and babble that take place between parent and baby during infancy are accompanied by synaptic brain connectivity unique to a particular individual. The cultural-social is not a category that hovers over the physical; it becomes the physical body itself. Human perception develops through a dynamic learning process, and when perceptual, cognitive, and motor skills are learned well enough, they become automatic and unconscious—part of implicit memory. It is when automatic perceptual patterns are interrupted by a novel experience, however, that we require full consciousness to reorder our expectation, be it about hair or anything else. When Sophie went off to school with her two long, neat braids swinging behind her, she did not disturb anyone’s expectations, but when the psychologist Sandra Bem sent her four-year-old boy, Jeremy, off to nursery school wearing the barrettes he had requested she put in his hair, he was hounded by a boy in his class who kept insisting that “only girls wear barrettes.” Jeremy sensibly replied that barrettes don’t matter. He had a penis and testicles and this fact made him a boy, not a girl. His classmate, however, remained unconvinced, and in a moment of exasperation, Jeremy pulled down his pants to give proof of his boyhood. After a quick glance, his comrade said, “Everybody has a penis. Only girls wear barrettes.” Most boys in contemporary Western culture begin to resist objects, colors, and hairdos coded as feminine as soon as they have become certain of their sexual identity, around the age of three. Jeremy’s fellow pupil seems to have been muddled about penises and vulvas, but adamant about social convention. In this context, the barrette metamorphosed from innocuous hair implement to an object of gender subversion. The philosopher Judith Butler would call Jeremy’s barrette-wearing a kind of “performativity,” gender as doing, not being. Girls have more leeway to explore masculine forms than boys. Unlike barrettes on a boy, short hair on a girl is not subject to ridicule, noteworthy because the “feminine” has far more polluting power for a boy in our culture than the “masculine” has for a girl. During three or four years before she reached puberty, another niece of mine, Ava, had a short haircut and was sometimes identified as a boy. One year she played with gender performance in the costume she chose for Halloween: half of her went as a girl, the other half as a boy. Hair was a vital element in this down-the-middle disguise. The long flowing locks of a wig adorned the girl half. Her own short hair served the boy half. I began the fifth grade with long hair, but at some point in the middle of the year I chopped it into what was then called a pixie cut. When I returned to school newly shorn, I was informed that the boy I liked, a boy who had supposedly liked me back, had withdrawn his affection. It had been swept away and discarded at the hairdresser’s along with my silky locks. I recall thinking that my former admirer was a superficial twit, but perhaps he had succumbed to a Goldilocks fantasy. He would not be the last male personage in my life to fixate on feminine blondness and its myriad associations in our culture, including abstract qualities such as purity, innocence, stupidity, childishness, and sexual allure embodied by multiple figures—the goddesses Sif and Freya and the Valkyries of Norse mythology, the multitudes of fair maidens in fairy tales, numerous heroines in Victorian novels and melodramas, and cinematic bombshells, such as Harlow and Monroe (both of whom I love to watch onscreen). The infantile and dumb connotations of blond may explain why I have often dreamed of a buzz cut. The fairy-tale and mythological creatures so dear to me as a child may explain why I have had short hair as an adult but never that short and did not turn myself into a brunette or redhead. A part of me must hesitate to shear myself of all blond, feminine meanings, as if next to no hair would mean severing a connection to an earlier self. Iris, the narrator of my first novel, The Blindfold, crops her hair during a period in her life of defensive transformation. She wanders around New York City after dark wearing a man’s suit. She gives herself the name of a sadistic boy in a German novel she has translated: Klaus. The gap between what I was forced to acknowledge to the world— namely, that I was a woman—and what I dreamed inwardly didn’t bother me. By becoming Klaus at night I had effectively blurred my gender. The suit, my clipped head and unadorned face altered the world’s view of who I was, and I became someone else through its eyes. I even spoke differently as Klaus. I was less hesitant, used more slang, and favored colorful verbs. My heroine’s butch haircut partakes of her second act of translation, from feminine Iris to masculine Klaus, a performance that belies the notion that appearance is purely superficial. By playing with her hair and clothes, she subverts cultural expectations that have shaped her in ways she finds demeaning. Short hair or long? Interpretations of length change with time and place. The Merovingian kings (ca. 457–750) wore their hair long as a sign of their high status. Samson’s strength famously resided in his hair. The composer Franz Liszt’s shoulder-length hair became the object of frenzied, fetishistic female desire. The mini narratives of television commercials for formulas to cure male baldness reinforce the notion that the fluff above is linked to action below. Once a man’s hair has been miraculously restored, a seductive woman inevitably appears beside him on the screen to caress his newly sprouted locks. But then shampoo commercials for women also contain sexual messages that long, and sometimes short, frequently windblown tresses will enchant a dream man.

#### The resolution is part and parcel of the same system that is coded against Black and Brown hair - the press is violent and incapable of prioritizing objectivity or advocacy.

Kaitlyn McNab, [McNab is a culture writer, editor, and multimedia storyteller. She holds a BA from New York University with a self-designed major titled "How to Tell Stories While Black." Her work has previously appeared in Teen Vogue, Bustle, NYLON, and EBONY; on the beauty beat, she's also written for brands like Youth To The People and Milk Makeup.] 4-4-2021, "Black Newscasters Are Redefining What It Means to "Look Professional" On-Air," Allure, https://www.allure.com/story/black-news-anchors-braids-natural-hair //n33l

In the replies to Roberts's viral tweet was New Orleans-based WDSU anchor [Christina Watkins](https://www.instagram.com/cwatkinstv/), who [tweeted](https://twitter.com/CWatkinsWDSU/status/1290979964389654529) back a short video of herself wearing knotless braids and a message of solidarity, complete with crown emoji: "Yesssss! Come through, black women on TV with braids!!!! Wearing mine for the first time, too!" In January 2021, Terry, the weekend sports anchor/reporter of WREG 3 in Memphis, joined Roberts and Watkins in their protective style on-screen debuts. The brevity of Terry's [tweet](https://twitter.com/samariaterry/status/1350596967739621377) was reflective of the situation's gravity: Mustered up the courage to rock braids on air! "It was ingrained in my brain that professional hair was straight," says Terry. "I learned this in school, from watching people on TV growing up, from image consultants that we have at stations that I [previously] worked in… mustering up the courage was really hard." After another Black anchor at her station [posted a negative comment](https://twitter.com/SymoneTV/status/1292517349854261255) she received from a viewer after wearing braids on-air, Terry was worried about how her own hair would be received by viewers. "We're so presentable and relatable and people feel like they know us," Terry explains. "They see us out, they speak to us, they will message you, and they will tell you what they like and what they don't like." "If they say, 'Wow, I really like Christina's hair,' maybe the next time an employee of theirs comes into [their] workplace in corporate America, they won't be as shocked, because they will recall seeing their 'news lady' with hair like that." The potential criticism from viewers is enough to dissuade some Black women reporters from wearing a natural or protective hairstyle. But the pressures to conform to a specific standard of beauty aren't always so forthright. They are also coded within the contractual language of workplace dress codes that limit the look of professionalism for Black women as opposed to women of other races or ethnicities — further contributing to a history of oppression in which Black women are forced to sacrifice their self-expression to become more palatable. In 2019, Brittany Noble Jones, a news anchor who formerly worked at WJTV in Jackson, Mississippi, [wrote a Medium piece](https://medium.com/@thenoblejournalist/why-i-disappeared-from-the-news-desk-at-wjtv-in-jackson-mississippi-bd734b1affb3), in which she says she was fired from her job after she wore her natural hair on air. She claims that after she had her son, she asked if she could stop straightening her hair. According to Noble Jones, she was told that her hair looked "unprofessional and the equivalent to throwing on a baseball cap to go to the grocery store." A spokesperson for the station denied that Noble Jones's hair was the reason for her termination, telling [Today](https://www.today.com/style/brittany-noble-was-told-her-natural-hair-was-unprofessional-fired-t146857), "Allegations that Ms. Jones' employment was terminated for her choice of hairstyles have no basis in fact and are vigorously denied." "With some of our other [non-Black] counterparts, nobody ever questions when somebody goes a little shorter [in length] because it's the summertime," says Pringle. "Or [if they] added a little bit of highlights because it's fall or [if] they're gonna let it grow out because it's wintertime. Nobody questions if they decide to curl wand their hair one day or wear it straight another day. The same flexibility and respect given to women who may have a different hue should be given [to Black women] without having to have a federal law passed." Many of the stories we hear about Black hair discrimination are in corporate industries, but there is a degree of uniqueness to hair discrimination in broadcast journalism due to the sheer level of visibility of on-air reporters. This visibility is intensified even more by the existence of social media. And while the overwhelming amount of responses and opinions can be daunting, this hypervisibility is exactly why these women believe it's more important than ever to push for representation in their field. Terry discloses that her biggest takeaway from going viral was the number of people who weren't aware of the fierce hair discrimination Black news reporters endure. "The issue is if you're not Black, if you're not a woman, if you're not in broadcast, you would never know these experiences even existed," reasons Pringle. "You'd never know that there are people that sit in news directors' offices and beg and plead with them to change their hair." "As Black women on TV, there are so many eyes on us," shares Watkins. "Eyes from people of all backgrounds. They look at us as a trusted source. To see someone who is able to switch up their hair, whether it be braids, locs, twist-outs, blowouts — to see someone who can do that on a platform like [the] one I have, it gives other people who may not have seen something like that before a different idea. If they say, 'Wow, I really like Christina's hair,' maybe the next time an employee of theirs comes into [their] workplace in corporate America, they won't be as shocked, because they will recall seeing their 'news lady' with hair like that." While there are trolls who aim to invalidate and dismiss their experiences, all four women have received mostly positive feedback on their hair from the folks watching at home, many of whom say they have been inspired to share their own stories and begin new journeys of hair love. In many cases, wearing their hair in natural or protective styles has actually made these newscasters more relatable to Black viewers. "[There are] people who are showing their children [my hair] and their children are excited about wearing braids," Roberts says. "That is why it's important. When we show who we really are on the news people say, 'She looks just like me! Her hair is just like mine! Maybe I can be on the news one day.' [We are] indirectly and directly impacting people and letting them know that there's space for you here. You can do this, too." Pringle has received messages from viewers saying that she is the reason they went natural, as well as notes from parents who say that she has made their daughters with short hair more confident in themselves. "It's a great reminder for people that… when being yourself, the world will adjust. Period," Pringle shares. "[I hope to reach] women who look like me, whether old, young, or my same age, [and] remind them that you can show up just as you are, and that is beyond good enough."

#### This isn't just a phenomenon in the news - we find ourselves complicit in the structures of violence within debate. A Sikh wearing a turban being called a terrorist, a person with blonde hair being called an idiot, and a person with long hair being called a bitch are all real and conceivable examples of violence that have occurred in debate. These instances result in skewed perceptions and psychological harm - only deconstructing hair as a starting point to think of ourselves and one another can solve perception-based violence. The role of the judge is to endorse the best strategy to resist perception-based violence in the context of how we view one another.

#### Thus, we affirm "a communal buzz-cut" as a symbolic act of sexual and racial liberation that says fuck you to codification and embraces the beauty of a blank slate. This is the act of driving with friends to get your hair cut, using box dye with others in the rec center bathroom, and carving eyebrow slits at protests - we ought to work together to recreate beauty through a queer and colored lens.

Jenna Igneri, [Igneri is an author and freelance journalist that writes predominantly about hair and it's transformative power. She is a professional hair stylist.]5-31-2017, "A Brief Look At The Empowering History Of The Female Buzz Cut," Nylon, https://www.nylon.com/articles/significance-of-female-buzz-cuts //n33l

Once a look reserved for the margins, the buzz cut has recently surged in popularity with women and can be seen on more heads than we can count. In 2017 alone, we’ve noticed a number of [powerful celebrities](http://www.nylon.com/articles/bleach-and-buzz-celeb-hair-trend) take the follicular leap, whether for a movie role or as a personal choice. Of course, long before this hairstyle became buzz-worthy celebrity trend (no pun intended), it has been a style worn by women from all walks of life for decades, for reasons that transcend trendiness and instead find their roots in politics and activism. While many simply associate the look with the rebellious, punk aesthetic, it’s a historically important symbol in both black and queer culture and has been used as a means to combat gender norms and white ideas of femininity. Long embraced by women of color, the buzz cut has been worn by black icons like Grace Jones and Pat Evans, proving that conforming to white beauty standards is not a mandate. Evans, one of the biggest (and highest paid) models of the ‘70s, rocked a bald head in defiance against an industry that did not embrace black beauty values. In an interview with [Ben Arogundade](http://www.arogundade.com/pat-evans-black-model-cover-girl-for-the-ohio-players.html), author of [Black Beauty](https://www.amazon.com/Black-Beauty-Celebration-Ben-Arogundade/dp/156025341X), Evans explains that she was uncomfortable with the modeling and fashion industries’ obsession with straight hair and the pressures that were placed on black models to conform. To her, embracing baldness was the highest form of protest. The buzz cut has also been long associated with queer women and the battle against heteronormative beauty ideals. And as writer [June Thomas](http://www.advocate.com/current-issue/2016/1/11/short-length-my-true-loves-hair) explains, while not every queen woman has short hair, and not every short-haired woman is queer, short haircuts have commonly become associated with queer identity. She considers short haircuts serving as a “lesbian rite of passage” of sorts, explaining in an article in [The Advocate](http://www.advocate.com/current-issue/2016/1/11/short-length-my-true-loves-hair) that the way queer women wear their hair is a more obvious way to signal their queerness to others. While not all of these shorter haircuts are necessarily buzz cuts, that ultra-short crop is certainly one commonly used option. We've definitely come a long way from the time when the buzz cut was a rarely seen occurrence and exclusively the domain of black and queer cultures. Now, while the look still retains those historical ties, it is also seen on a much wider variety of women, and the path to the buzz cut is different for every woman—a personal journey, as told through her hair. We talked to four women who sport the hairstyle, as well as two psychologists, to break down the significance of why so many women are getting buzz cuts today. From the dismantling of gender conformity to the volatility of the current political atmosphere, the buzz has taken on new meaning for women of all races, identities, and backgrounds. “I’ve always felt the most sexy, confident, and powerful after I shaved my head,” says [Clara Rae Natkin](https://www.instagram.com/clara_rae/?hl=en), a makeup and visual artist who has been playing with the length of her hair since the age of 18. From chopping all of her hair off into a shaggy pixie to going for the full buzz, her hair decisions have been emotionally charged. “I’ve always felt like my outward appearance needed to match what or how I was feeling internally,” she says, “I wanted to transform my life, and the quickest way I knew how to transform my outsides was to cut off all of my hair.” Natkin treats buzzing her head as a new beginning, a rebirth of sorts. Speaking of the second time she buzzed it all off, she tells me, “I felt like I needed to start over and force myself to be in what I call ‘fetus mode,’ in order to transform my life again without any hair or makeup—just being completely raw. Having a buzzed head was slightly like having armor against the world. Now, I’m growing it out again because I feel like I’m reaching yet another stage of my life where I want to be gentler and softer with myself.” Similarly, others found the act of cutting off all of their hair very releasing—even without a corresponding emotional tie. [Cherie Camacho](https://www.instagram.com/cheriecamacho/?hl=en), associate manager of team and culture at Glossier, never felt attached to her hair and cut it off simply because she wanted to. “I gave myself a pixie cut in my bathroom one day after work. I stood in front of the mirror with a pair of craft scissors and started chopping it off. I didn’t blink at all—it was very cathartic,” she says. Eventually going to a salon to transform her DIY pixie into a full-on buzz cut, Camacho says that she 100 percent plans on maintaining it. “This is the sexiest I’ve ever felt in my life! I feel so badass in a way that I’ve never felt before. I’m finally in love with myself.” [Vijayeta Sinh PhD](https://www.drsinh.com/), psychologist and owner of NYC Family Therapy, explains that sometimes people will use their bodies to communicate something they’re feeling, especially if they have difficulty communicating with words; a change as drastic as a buzz cut can be liberating, and even life-changing. (And no, she’s not having a Britney Spears in 2007 moment, so don’t even ask that.) Aside from emotional significance, a woman’s choice of hairstyle can also be extremely political. Sinh says that it may be a way of giving a “middle finger” to gender-related norms of femininity and beauty. As [Leslie Carr](http://lesliecarr.com/), clinical psychologist, tells me: A woman’s hair is deeply rooted in symbolism. It’s often viewed as an element of female power and personal expression, but it’s also deeply tied to the patriarchy. Women often receive certain types of messages—like that men prefer long hair on women—which is something that psychologists and evolutionary theorists postulate because long, healthy hair is a sign of fertility. Meanwhile, older women are often told that they need to make their hair shorter as if they’ve aged out of the ability, or the right, to wear their hair long and loose. Hair, for women, is deeply personal and also deeply political.

## Part 2 is the Underview

#### Vote affirmative to rupture debate and create a teachable moment that uses unfairness to educate.

**Warren 11**Warren Waren University of Central Florida, Orlando, Using Monopoly to Introduce Concepts of Race and Ethnic Relations The Journal of Effective Teaching, Vol. 11, No. 1, 2011, 28-35 [Shreyas] recut //Jay //recut n33l

Undergraduate students often enter our classrooms convinced that the battles of the Civil Rights Era solved the issue of race in America. They are generally unacquainted with the long history of race in the United States and almost universally underestimate the structural forces which carry racial disparities into their new century. As sociologists and teachers, it is our responsibility to tell that story and explain those forces. Our new challenge is: How do we teach students the extent of racism in America when, from their point of view, the problem of the color-line has been solved? One option is to use a game. Sociologists have used games or simulations to spark the sociological imagination (Dorn, 1989; Jessup, 2001; Fisher 2008), to stimulate critical thinking (Pence 2009), and to introduce social stratification (Ender, 2004; Waldner & Kinney, 1999). When students from relatively privileged backgrounds “experience” a temporary bout of unfairness in a simulated game, it creates the opportunity to change their perspective (Coghlan & Huggins, 2004; Haddad & Lieberman, 2002). The injustice of the situation, if directly connected to broader theory, can lessen a student’s social distance from marginalized groups. A game may help a student to understand some of the previously inexplicable attitudes and behaviors of actors on either side of a power relationship. Also, as this paper demonstrates, a properly constructed simulation can give the student a sense of the structural nature and lasting legacy of racial discrimination—a fuller sense of the “history and biography” of race in the United States (Mills, 1959). The great advantage of a game is that it is a completely controlled environment—there are no unexplained variables. In fairness to all the players, all rules are explicitly stated at the outset of game play and apply to all players equally (Waldner & Kinney, 1999). Ordinarily, in a competitive game this assumption of fairness supports an ideology of individualism. However, a pedagogical game is concerned with learning, not winning. In order to disentangle a complicated issue, the instructor may purposefully introduce inequality into an otherwise “just” world. Again, because all rules are explicit (even unfair ones), the problem exists in the game without confounding effects. This simplification allows students to easily focus on the nature and development of the problem. By extension, it is hoped that the game encourages students to reassess similar problems in the real world. Use of Pedagogical Games Dorn (1989) identifies multiple criteria for games or simulations to be effective in the classroom as pedagogical tools. He argues the games must: reflect reality; motivate students through "experience"; develop awareness of personal values through moral and ethical implications of the game; connect abstract concepts with concrete experiences; create a shared experience from which the students can draw; offer a form of debriefing to both address emotional issues and to connect theory to experiences. In the technique I describe below, I try to incorporate these ideas with Straus’ (1986) emphasis on simplicity for in-class games. In teaching and learning, the goal of simulation is the “experience” itself. Jessup (2001) argues that simulation should be the “experiential anchor for the elaboration of conceptual tools” (p.108). Therefore, this game is created to offer a chance for relatively privileged students to experience the unfairness of structural inequality. After temporary exposure to an analog of racial discrimination, students with no prior familiarity of racial discrimination will have a deeper understanding of the effects of racism on many levels. Pedagogical games are used to challenge our assumptions about how the world works (Waldner & Kinney, 1999). For example, the basic assumption of competitive games is fairness. This assumes that the world is fair (i.e., a meritocracy) and that individual effort or talent is the main factor in success (i.e., an ideology of individualism akin to Ross’ (1977) fundamental attribution error). In competitive games therefore, groups are treated equally and the best players win. But a pedagogical game may challenge the assumption of fairness directly by having structural inequality built into the game. The experience of a good player losing an unfair game creates cognitive dissonance—that cognitive dissonance is our teaching moment. I assume that students as game players can easily identify games that are “unfair” based on unequal outcomes for equivalent behavior. As a pedagogical tool, I want it to be relatively easy for them to spot the explicit rules which cause the inequality.

#### Reject claims of true inclusion absent a method to achieve it - procedural questions claim to help minorities but are used to oppress us.

Holloway Sparks, 2003 <Assistant Professor in the Department of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at Emory University in Atlanta. Queens, Teens, and Model Mothers: Race and the Politics of Welfare Reform> https://www.press.umich.edu/pdf/9780472068319-ch7.pdf //n33l

In spite of the participatory principles embodied in these theories, some deliberative democrats have given inadequate attention to the bar- riers to public sphere participation confronted by marginalized citizens. Activists, dissidents,2 racial and ethnic minorities, and particularly poor citizens are regularly excluded from both decision-making and delibera- tive venues, but this problem is often sidestepped in the mainstream the- oretical literature by theorists who downplay the effects of social and economic inequality on public participation (see, e.g., Barber 1984; Cohen 1989; Dryzek 1990). The claim that we can effectively bracket inequality in the public sphere, however, has been strongly criticized recently by a group of theorists explicitly concerned with problems of democratic inclusion. These scholars, including James Bohman (1996), Nancy Fraser (1997), Jane Mansbridge (1991, 1999), and Iris Young (1993, 1996, 2000), have emphasized the fact that formal political equality does not guarantee equal authority in or even access to the public realm. Iris Young, for example, has identi‹ed two forms of exclusion that prevent citizens from fully participating in democracies. What she calls external exclusion “names the many ways that individuals and groups that ought to be included are purposely or inadvertently left out of fora for discussion and decision-making” (2000, 53–54). External exclusion can be as blatant as deliberately failing to invite certain groups to impor- tant meetings, or can take more subtle forms such as the way economic inequalities affect access to political institutions. As Nancy Fraser has noted, in societies like the United States in which the publication and cir- culation of political views depends on media organizations that are pri- vately owned and operated for pro‹t, those citizens who lack wealth will also generally “lack access to the material means of equal participation” (1997, 79). This criticism has obvious salience for families living on wel- fare budgets. On a more basic level, money and time are also necessary for participation in putatively “free” political institutions. Poor parents with young children, for example, might not have the resources to pur- chase child-care in order to attend a town council meeting at which important political decisions are made.3 Race and the Politics of Welfare Reform 174 Race and the Politics of Welfare Reform Sanford F. Schram, Joe Soss, and Richard C. Fording, Editors http://www.press.umich.edu/titleDetailDesc.do?id=11932 The University of Michigan Press, 2003 Internal exclusions, in contrast, “concern ways that people lack effec- tive opportunity to influence the thinking of others even when they have access to fora and procedures of decision-making” (Young 2000, 55; emphasis added). Citizens may ‹nd that “others ignore or dismiss or patronize their statements and expressions. Though formally included in a forum or process, people may ‹nd that their claims are not taken seri- ously and may believe that they are not treated with equal respect” (55). Internal exclusion can take the form of public ridicule or face-to-face inattention (Bickford 1996), but it can also stem from less obvious sources, such as the norms of articulateness, dispassionateness, and orderliness that are often privileged in political discussions (Young 2000, 56). As Young observes, In many formal situations the better-educated white middle-class people . . . often act as though they have a right to speak and that their words carry authority, whereas those of other groups often feel intimidated by the argument requirements and the formality and rules of parliamentary procedure, so they do not speak, or speak only in a way that those in charge ‹nd “disruptive.” . . . The dominant groups, moreover, often fail entirely to notice this devaluation and silencing, while the less privileged often feel put down or frustrated, either losing con‹dence in themselves or becoming angry. (1996, 124) Since “unruly” forms of speech tend to be used primarily by women, racial minorities, and working-class people, large groups of citizens face the devaluation of their political participation.

#### Only the affirmative advocates a departure from prescribed notions of what debate is and who its for.

**Power 16** (Nina Power, Senior Lecturer in Philosophy at Roehampton University, PhD in Philosophy from Middlesex University, It’s Not a Debate It’s a War! Hostis Journal Online, April 8 2016, Zine, <http://incivility.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/power-not-a-debate-imposed.pdf>, [AB]) //recut n33l

One thing the ruling class loves above all else is ‘debate’. Although the rule of law came about as a consequence of the bourgeoisie getting sick of being thrown in jail by whimsical aristos, today’s elites, all of them, know that the law is always on their side, regardless of whether they are really old school feudal elites or only posh since the last 300 years. Debate is class war, as determined by them. ‘Debate’ is what future arms dealers are taught to engage in, how future prime ministers are taught to eradicate all residual human feeling, how judges are able to sleep at night and how the powerful are able to pretend that the normal running of things is in any way ‘fair’. When the 2011 Eton entrance exam asks 13- year-old boys to hypothesise being Prime Minister and to defend the shooting dead of protesters, we catch a glimpse of this taught moral flexibility: The year is 2040. There have been riots in the streets of London after Britain has run out of petrol because of an oil crisis in the Middle East. Protesters have attacked public buildings. Several policemen have died. Consequently, the Government has deployed the Army to curb the protests. After two days the protests have stopped but 25 protesters have been killed by the Army. You are the Prime Minister. Write the script for a speech to be broadcast to the nation in which you explain why employing the Army against violent protesters was the only option available to you and one which was both necessary and moral. But unfortunately for everyone else, this kind of imaginative exercise doesn’t remain hypothetical for very long. These people move from volatile scenario on page to violent action in real life without ever encountering people who might have reason to protest, protected as they are by gated communities, boarding schools, poorly-treated nannies, private education, money to burn, member’s clubs and, above all, money, assets and private property. Being trained to argue anything so long as it preserves the existing order is the definition of law as practiced by the state. The moral flexibility that private schools and debating societies teach is the rhetorical lubricant that ensures that the ruling class will always win. No one else will ever win ‘the debate’ because the entire purpose of debate is to prevent anything truly disruptive from happening, all the while masking real violence from being seen. While Britain brutally colonised half the globe, its posh young men were learning to equivocate over glasses of sherry. Just as the police are trained to regard members of the public as dangerous, incomprehensible beings best handled at the end of a baton, so the people who give them orders are trained to eliminate all normal human feeling. The notorious hierarchy and cruelty of British boarding schools is no coincidence: how else to treat the rest of the world as inferior without having internalised a hard, intractable kernel of inhumanity inside your soft young self? Debate is merely one disciplining technique among many, but it’s a technique that runs all the way up from school to court to parliament. If anyone deviates from the ‘rules’, that is to say sees the debate-form for the sham it is, or takes to the streets, displacing the imposed ‘platform’ for the construction of a new order, then the true face of all those who defend ‘debate’ is revealed: suddenly those who are most powerful pretend that they are under siege by those who are ‘unreasonable’ – we see this lately at universities where those with bigoted views pretend that they are forced to pull out because of the menace of protest, to cities when politicians responding to the riots fall over themselves not to understand why people might resent being killed and harassed by police officers who never suffer any consequences. Debate is a cover-story: never having to be honest about your true intentions while pretending to be open-minded. Debate dissociates argument from passion; phony talking-points from real life. There are multiple things we do not agree about – and we also disagree with the way in which you want us to say it. The narrowness of the debate-form allows those with power to dictate the boundaries of ‘reasonable’ discussion and ignore (or police) everything that happens outside it. But really, from Oxbridge to courts to government, we can easily see it’s not a debate, it’s a war.

#### **The affirmative is a necessary step towards the realization of movement potential.**

Chambers-Letson 18. Joshua, Associate Professor in Performance Studies at Northwestern University, “*After the Party: A Manifesto for Queer of Color Life*.” NY: New York University Press, 2018

The weekend after your death, everyone converges at your apartment. I get the call, but wait a day to catch my bearings before catching a flight from Chicago to New York. A cab through the Village to your building where your doorman doesn’t stop us and we walk right in. When the elevator hits your floor, the familiar sound of a party pouring through the opening doors and into the empty space beside us where you used to be. I don’t know why it surprised me that it would be a party. Even though, or maybe because it belonged to your employer, your apartment was our party’s headquarters. It was something you stole back to give to those who didn’t have a home. Now, in the wake of your death, every room is full of people who are full with the loss of you. Someone puts a drink in my hand. This is just the first of an endless string of parties. Our party was the formation of a new communist party. The party: an organic entity, a living, breathing being, a gathering together of the multiple in the one, an obscure order, a whole which is not one, a many that is singular, a kind of provisional “we” at difference with itself from the inside out. The party, writes Fred Moten, “could be called the house party but don’t let that mislead you into thinking that house implies ownership; this house party is of and for the dispossessed, the ones who disavow possession, the ones who, in having been possessed of the spirit of dispossession, disrupt themselves.” The party is as much a site of refuge as it is the site of revolutionary planning, but “even though the party is, and takes place in, and takes place as, a kind of refuge, refuge still indicates that those who take it are refugees and people tend not to want to have to live like that.” The party, as refuge, is a place to catch one’s breath when you can’t breathe. It is a way of staying alive and of keeping each other alive. In your case, it was a way of sustaining your life after your death. And it was akin to what you called the punk rock commons or the “commons of the incommensurate.” Our parties go on for days, for years. They would begin around ten a.m., when the hangover was starting to wear off and we’d roll from one gathering to the next: cocktails, a memorial, breakfast with drinks, lunch with drinks, a family dinner, an impromptu gathering at some­ one’s house, a joint on the balcony, a talk in the hallway. Repeat. After your first memorial, we pick up drinks to take to a friend’s apartment and converge with an endless flood of smiling faces smiling sometimes. They verge, fall, pull toward and apart from each other. All the wars are briefly suspended and for a few flickering moments, as Wallace Stevens might have said, “We collect ourselves, out of all the indifferences, into one thing.” Though we were collected out of indifference by the shock of your death, we remain in difference from each other, which is to say that were not quite one thing but instead a singular being made up of the many, or what Jean-Luc Nancy calls being-singular-plural: “Being cannot be anything but being-with-one-another, circulating in the with and as the with of this singularly plural coexistence.” So rather than the coercive “we” that dominated the communist parties of historical communism, we became a “we” in difference from itself, gathered together in the wake of your death. I’ll be honest, I was kind of devastated. After your death I spent a lot of time trying to find you in the places you used to hide and especially the songs you used to listen to. The first thing I put on was the Germs (you loved Darby Crash) but that didn’t last long. I never shared your attachment to punk. Being manifestly uncool, my relationship to punk was pretty much Siouxsie Sioux, to whom I cathected around the age of twelve. There was something about her rejection of the domestic, suburban, and normal that made sense to teenage me—a queer black, brown, and blue boy adrift and alone in Northern Colorado. I don’t think you had strong feelings for Siouxsie one way or the other, but there is more than a passing resemblance between my teenage attachment to Siouxsie and yours to Crash. Both began as bad objects in their scenes: Crash in Los Angeles and Siouxsie in London. They were unlikely figures for two queer of color kids to identify with, least of all because both attempted (and failed) to appropriate (ironically or otherwise) the symbols of white supremacy by employing the swastika in their early acts. The swastika was something Siouxsie tried to atone for and that Crash refused to atone for and didn’t have time to do anyway because he, like you, died too young. Siouxsies name was itself an appropriation of the tribal name of the Sioux people, another chapter in the ongoing dispossession of the already dispossessed. We shouldn’t forget these transgressions, their unnerving entanglements with the violence of whiteness and white supremacy, but something about them nonetheless helped us sustain life in spite of the odds stacked against us. And the odds are stacked against queer teen­ agers of color in these United States. Darby’s and Siouxsie’s performances became the stage for what you described as the punk rock commons, “a being with, in which various disaffected, antisocial actants found networks of affiliation and belonging that allowed them to think and act otherwise, together, in a social field that was mostly interested in dismantling their desire for different relations within the social.’” In this punk essay, you cited Tavia Nyong’o, who argues that the word “punk” owes a debt to blackness, queerness, and the violent measures through which a phobic world responds to both. Siouxsie acknowledged a part of that debt when describing the queerness of the parties that gave birth to Londons early punk scene: It was a club for misfits, almost. Anyone that didn’t conform. There was male gays, female gays, bisexuals, non-sexuals, everything. No-one was criticized for their sexual preferences. The only thing that was looked down on was being plain boring, that reminded them of suburbia. Notice here how Siouxsie’s party resonates with the one described by Moten: “This is the party of the ones who are not self-possessed, the non-self-possessive anindividuals. This is the party of the ones in whom the trace of having been possessed keeps turning into this obsessive compulsive drive for the total disorder that is continually given in continually giving themselves away.” Which is a way of saying that our party owes a debt to the black radical tradition as much as to the radical tradition of black and brown queer house parties on Chicago s South and West sides. Unlike Crash, Siouxsie survived the early 1980s and with her survival came the emergence of a new sound characterized by thick, textured melodies, lush orchestration, and heavily processed vocals. Some people described it as post-punk and others described it as goth, but everyone seemed to agree that it lingered in the darkness—perhaps an unacknowledged way of acknowledging her debt to blackness. Like blackness, Siouxsie’s darkness wasn’t merely negative space. Her dark­ ness was from the underside, the B-Side, the upside-down world of the normative, retrenched, dystopian, suburban, white, neoliberal hell that took hold in Thatcher’s Britain and Reagan’s United States. Siouxsie’s darkness was a pharmakon to the annihilating “light” cast by the shining city on the hill. It was dense, dark negation as the negation of the negation. Darkness, for the members of Siouxsie’s party, was a place where the freaks could gather, take cover, and keep each other alive as the “light” tried to burn them out of their holes and snuff them out of existence. If their party was increasingly imperiled by the normative regimes of social comportment demanded by Thatcher and Reagan, the 1986 song “Party’s Fall” tells the story of the breakdown and falling apart as a condition of possibility. In the song, the collapse of each party becomes the condition for the emergence of something new the next night: “Your parties fall around you Another night beckons to you Your parties fall around you Another night beckons to you” That the party falls apart only to come back another night is why, following Moten, “the party I’m announcing is serially announced.” In “Party’s Fall” the present is always returning to itself, as Siouxsie points us toward a future in which the very thing that has fallen apart (the party) reconstitutes itself. Which is a good thing, it turns out, because the party is the one thing standing between the subject of her address and annihilating loneliness. About a year after your death, a friend and I are talking about you in a bar. He looks at his drink and says, “I used to be alone. And then I met him and I wasn’t alone. Now he’s gone and I’m alone again.” The party is a way of ameliorating loneliness, and the endlessly renewable capacity to throw another party becomes Siouxsie’s condition for a practice of being with in which the misfit’s loneliness becomes the conditions for a relation of being together in difference and discord with other misfits that are lonely and (un)like her. I suspect that this is why we threw so many parties after you died. They were a way of bringing you back to us, of making us a little less alone again. Ours was not a political party, like The Communist Party. Political parties endure, but they often endure through coercion, violence, and force. Instead, I mean our communist party as a name for what Siouxsie describes as the endlessly renewable chain of events performed into being by a plurality of broken people who are trying to keep each other alive. For you. Crash’s performances were an antidote to (but not a denial of) loneliness. Loneliness is common, and it is often crushing for queers and trans people of color. But it can also be a condition for the emergence of queer sociality and the undercommons. While it would be easy to assume that your punk essays are about the white boys in them (Crash in particular), it would be more accurate to say that they are about the work to which queers of color put these performances while struggling to stay alive, get free, and open up other ways of being (and surviving) in the world together. “Through my deep friendships with other disaffected Cuban queer teens who rejected both Cuban exile culture and local mainstream gringo popular culture,” you wrote in Cruising Utopia, “and through what I call the utopia critique function of punk rock, I was able to imagine a time and a place that was not yet there, a place where I tried to live.”” Today, we place an emphasis on “tried.” Near the end of Siouxsie’s song, she utters the phrase “maybe you’re alone,” breathlessly as if it were an aside. But this is the kind of aside that matters so she repeats it again, supporting the voice with the fullness of a wail. As she sings this bridge to nowhere, you would have noticed that the lyrics reach melodic resolution, which has been otherwise absent in a song that lingers in the minor key. Siouxsies wail stretches across the lyric, her voice breaking on the word happiness : My happiness depends on knowing / this friend is never alone / on your own.” I can’t help but imagine that as she begs her friend not to cry, applying her signature wail to the lyric and promising “a party on our own,” that she’s singing to a much younger version of you or me or some other teenage queer and trans black and brown boy and girl perched on the precipice of self-obliteration. Her wanting for a commons (to be with and take care of a friend in need) is Siouxsie’s precondition for a life in happiness. It was yours as well. If I follow you, Siouxsie, and Moten in suggesting that the party has some kind of relationship to the making of the (under)commons, I am also following Nancy when he writes that it is death that gives birth to community. After all, our communist party was formed in the wake of your death. “It is death—but if one is permitted to say so it is not a tragic death, or else, if it is more accurate to say it this way, it is not mythic death, or death followed by a resurrection, or the death that plunges into a pure abyss; it is death as sharing and as exposure,” he writes, “it is death as the unworking that unites us.” Our party was born from your death. So in the wake of your death we threw parties to resurrect you. Though yours was a death without resurrection, performance and parties were a way of sustaining you, bringing you back, and keeping you alive. Your death was tragic, brutal in its suddenness. But in spite of what people might think, there was nothing mythic about it. It was mundane. You were another gay brown man dead before fifty. To say that queer and trans of color death is mundane is not to diminish their horror, but on the contrary to name the shocking fact of this kind of deaths everydayness. Trans and queer of color life is lived in constant and close proximity to death. “In any major North American city,” writes Rinaldo Walcott, the numerous missing black women (presumed murdered), the many ‘missing’ and murdered trans-women, the violent verbal and physical conditions of black life often leading to the deaths of gay men, lesbian women, and trans people remain a significant component of how black life is lived in the constant intimacy of violence on the road to death. Death is not ahead of blackness as a future shared with others; death is our life, lived in the present.” For similar reasons Christina Sharpe describes black life thus: "I want... to declare that we are Black peoples in the wake with no state or nation to protect us, with no citizenship bound to be respected, and to position us in the modalities of Black life lived in, as, under, despite Black death.” If I think of your death in relation to the forms of black life and death named by Walcott and Sharpe, it is not to suggest that they are commensurable. This would distract us from the way the history of black death in the Americas from the Middle Passage forward produces a present in which, as Walcott insists, “Black people die differently.” But what I could see clearly in the wake of your departure is that black and brown queer and trans death, like the deaths of women of color, produced by different yet overlapping histories of colonialism, capital accumulation, white supremacy, and cis-heteropatriarchy, share something with each other not in spite of but because of their difference. I want to suggest that black and brown people’s emancipation from these conditions are mutually implicated, not in spite of but in relation to our incommensurability. What we share is that under such conditions, which are far beyond our ability to control them, survival can be hard. So, if I call your death mundane, it’s not to underplay the importance of your life. It’s only meant to serve as a bitter acknowledgment of the ubiquitous and disproportionate distribution of death toward queers, women, and trans people of color. Dying for different reasons, often dying before really living, but dying nonetheless. It can be as hard to survive as it is to live on in the wake of those who didn’t. But you taught me that performance is imbued with a weak power of resurrection, or at least the power to sustain some fragment of lost life in the presence of a collective present. Performance, you wrote, is what allows minoritarian subjects to “take our dead with us to the various battles we must wage in their names—and in our names. And performance is also a way of drawing people together. Throwing parties was a way of resurrecting you and keeping you alive. Being with each other was a way of being with you. In the wake of your death we became common to each other. We became communists.

#### Endless violence necessitates that we engage in service.

Moten, Harney, and Shukaitis 21 – Fred Moten and Stefano Harney. Interviewed by Stevphen Shukaitis. ("Refusing Completion: A Conversation," March 2021, <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/116/379446/refusing-completion-a-conversation/>) //recut n33l

SS: That reminds me of the discussion in the beginning of the book about property and dispossession. There you flip the usual narrative to say that **rather than talking about how to make things common, it’s more the case that** that’s their default state, **that sharing is the default**. Rather it’s the default sharing which needs to be broken down and individuated. To me that changes a few things in that **it gestures less towards needing to find ways to collaborate and more towards the necessity** of blocking and **stopping the processes which have stopped us from collaborating and sharing.** SH: Yes. You know it’s a Mario Tronti formulation, “the workers first, then capital.” Sharing first, then individuation, locates the energy source correctly. Collective resistance, even when practiced in singular acts, is the engine. But this is also a George Jackson and a Gilles Deleuze formulation. That is to say it is an ontological formulation even when it is not necessarily a temporal formulation. The riot precedes the police. Love precedes its regulation into “love” and hate. Cedric Robinson calls this the preservation of the ontological totality, the proliferation of life before, after, and in-excess-of its historically brutal regulation and/as individuation. And it is because life (and nonlife) proliferate even as death. That repeating flash in/out of time, the flash of sharing, of love, of riot, and then the coming into being of an already latent regulation is everything. Because that’s where the nonlocal is, that’s black quantum life, that’s the fugitive wormhole, the whole physical sociality that Denise teaches us. That’s where the order of one and the other, resistance and regulation, gets disordered, continually, where symmetry slips, and in a flash there’s a party going on. We work under the assumption that we are shared even if it only comes to us in the flash of a match, of a smile, or a touch. We work under the assumption that we have what we need though it is constantly stolen from us because we must give it away, as Fumi Okiji reminds us. We have what we need and, now, what we need to do is to want what we have. We work under the assumption that we are constantly being driven apart but that this is always ultimately unsuccessful at every level because we’re not apart. Not only do we fail, even the most exalted of us, at individuation, but also this attempt to destroy our sharing destroys the earth. We work under the assumption that the making of the world—which is none other than the grandest and most grotesque project of separating us—is genocidal and geocidal. And we work under the assumption that in the face of all this carnage, if we will have black study it has us. FM: Maybe what we always also want to be doing is operating under the assumption that when it comes to thought, rigor and generosity are not separate from one another. That “intra-action,” to use Karen Barad’s term, is intra-active with another: that of black study and black studies. That’s where it’s at, as the Godfather would say. That’s what we’re interested in. And that’s also where we’re at in our lives, in our intellectual life together, and in our social life together as friends. It’s just that the syntax and the semantics that we have been given in order to try to understand that double intra-action is inadequate for the most part. We ask ourselves, how do we understand the relation between black study and black studies, and then we have to take two months to try to overcome the fact that “relation” ain’t the right word. In other words, the intra-action of black study and black studies requires something like what Barad calls “experimental metaphysics.” Or, maybe another way to put it is that what’s required are some experiments in anti-metaphysics. Maybe black study is just this continual experiment in anti-metaphysics. SH: All Incomplete is also about the next town, about what we heard about the next town, about the next experiment already going on, continually as Fred says. And so, for instance, I’m very grateful to the current generation of Guyanese feminist, activist scholars such as Kamala Kempadoo and Alissa Trotz who have made more available the work of the great Guyanese feminist activist intellectual Andaiye. We’ve been studying and teaching with Andaiye’s The Point Is to Change the World, and also with Lessons from the Damned by the Damned, the latter a collectively written book about a freedom school set up by black women in the late 1960s and early ’70s in Newark. Now, Andaiye talks about the research she did as part of Red Thread, an independent cross-racial organization of women in Guyana. She talks about how the poor and working-class women who are keeping diaries on their social reproductive labor were doing research that she, Andaiye, could never do as well as them. Then, from the Damned, we hear the story of a key turning point in the freedom school. The women running the school have met some middle-class, teacher-qualified black women at a Vietnam protest and invited them back to the school. Much is gained by the encounter, but after a few weeks the women who run the school say something to the effect of, we loved them, but we had to send them away because they could not believe that we—in our position as black working-class women—were better placed to theorize this world. If we take these lessons from Andaiye and the Damned seriously, maybe we can get out of some of the metaphysical assumptions of our positions and roles. What Andaiye and the Damned are saying is that poor people, poor black and Indian and indigenous women, in these most vital instances were better researchers and better theorists than those of us who are traditionally and institutionally trained as such and rise through the “meritocracy.” So, **we have to find some other reason for doing what we are doing—cause it is not because we are the best at it—**and so we have to find some other way, beyond this metaphysics of meritocracy we inhabit. And from there **it becomes clear that we are not the ones to sit in judgment, and this means we can practice nothing but open admissions and open promotion in the places where we teach**, whether elementary schools, universities, or art academies. And what we would do is support the primary theorists and researchers as they come through, should they wish to come through, and should they wish to stay. And isn’t this serving the people? After all, serving the people never meant serving them breakfast. It meant being at the service of the people, because the people held what we all need, precariously, with only partial access sometimes themselves to this wealth, knowledge, and practice of how to learn about society and how to analyze it because it needs to be changed. That is why it was called a party of self-defense: to defend all this, not to imagine that the party was going to generate the wealth itself. **Service becomes the answer to all the anxieties about allyship and class. And service is debt, partiality, incompleteness in action.**

#### That incompleteness is good - all we can really do is feel violence and be with one another.

Moten, Harney, and Shukaitis 21 – Fred Moten and Stefano Harney. Interviewed by Stevphen Shukaitis. ("Refusing Completion: A Conversation," March 2021, <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/116/379446/refusing-completion-a-conversation/>) //recut n33l

SS: Your use of **incompleteness reminds me in certain ways of how before you talked about debt not as this crushing condition but as something that, in being unpayable,** is **the** very **principle of sociality.** So debt not as IMF-backed austerity measures, but debt as **all those things we owe to each other.** The way you talk about **incompleteness strikes me as similar in that it’s not incompleteness as a problem—like there’s something lacking in myself which is fulfilled through another person—but rather as a permanent state which is more of a blessing, or something to be preserved.** It’s not something that needs to be dealt with as a problem. Is that a fair reading? SH: Yes, I think that’s right. FM: Have you ever seen the film Jerry Maguire? The title character is this brutal drone of individuation whose whole life ends up depending upon his exploitation of a black football player, which he accomplishes with the help of a female assistant whom he later marries. The movie begins with Jerry Maguire being a successfully individuated man who’s complete, or thinks he is, until he gets stripped of all that. In order to find himself he’s got to attach himself in a more or less straight Hegelian mode to one who’s not quite really one, this player who shows out on and off the playing field while also modeling an authentic and loving family life, all of which reveals him never to have been the kind of free subject Jerry used to be. They call this a romantic comedy. It’s the story of the man who at the end of his personal (re)development—after having the biggest night of his life because the black football player literally endangers his own health in order to make a catch that will make him a superstar so that Jerry MaFuckingGuire can exploit him and attract other superstars who he can also exploit—finds that he can’t enjoy it without the woman who has made it all possible but whom he has exploited and demeaned and overlooked. That’s when this motherfucker breaks into a feminist consciousness-raising group in order to reclaim his wife. How does he get her back? Just by saying, “Hello,” according to her, but he gets to finish his speech by saying to her, “You complete me.” Like, he was at 87 percent and she was the final 13 percent. Now, he’s fucking complete when he gets her back. Well, **fuck completeness. Not only that, fuck completeness as a way of understanding anything about what love actually is.** What they call romantic comedy is really anti-romantic tragedy. It’s amazing that something like Jerry Maguire is offered as a representation of what it’s like to fall in love. If you’ve ever fallen you know that the other person or persons don’t complete you. They incomplete you. They fuck you the fuck up. **It doesn’t leave you intact.** It plays you, undermines you. **It disturbs and disrupts your individuation. It obliterates not only the possibility of but the desire for individuation.** If you think about it in those terms, incompleteness is a consummation devoutly to be wished. The entire genre of the romantic comedy is usually some white dude who’s being dragged against his will into the condition of incompleteness. When, finally, he submits to it, you know that the sequel of that movie will be all about the breakup, which follow’s the idea of individuation having had a chance to rally, which the regular miseries of monogamous heterosexuality—which Samuel R. Delany teaches us is the deepest perversion—are happy to provide. **The idea of completeness is ridiculous** and genocidal. **There’s** just **no end to the ways it continually seeks to destroy our shared capacity to breathe** and ground. It predicates and requires the constantly asserted revision of what Robinson calls “the terms of order.” **It** predicates and **necessitates the constant brutalization of all the people in the world who resist** those terms of order and **who practice modalities of social existence that are not predicated on those terms of order**, as Robinson shows in his beautifully radical use of ethnographic and anthropological work in The Terms of Order. **We advocate for incompleteness.** We think such advocacy is part of what it is “to preserve,” as he says, “the ontological totality.” **To preserve the totality is to refuse its completion. That’s our** ongoing ante- and anti-metaphysical **experiment.** SS: To stay with the absurd then, that reminds me of when I was on my honeymoon in India and I ended up randomly watching this interview with Jeff Bridges where they’re asking him about how he’s ended up married so long and how that’s very unusual for a lot of successful Hollywood actors … that kind of crap. And his response to that is excellent. He says that he loves being married not because when things go bad his wife can magically fix things. **There’s no expectation of completeness**. Rather he says that **when things go bad** for either of them **the other will be able to feel and understand that pain deeper and more fully than anyone else could.** It’s not that the other is the solution to a problem but rather that **the relationship makes it possible to feel in ways that would not be possible by oneself.** You could make the same points about other emotions as well. He talks about how that develops through spending and sharing years together with someone. That really struck me as a better, non-idealized version of a relationship. **It’s not that anything gets fixed, it’s that the everything is felt more deeply** … like when Spinoza talks about affect **both in terms of developing greater capacities to affect and be affected by the world.** SH: When my partner Tonika and I found each other in Singapore, the first gift she ever gave me was a book called The Dude and the Zen Master. I read this book from cover to cover. In the book, Jeff Bridges has a series of conversations with a Zen master. They’re trying to lose themselves together. Getting lost together where the loss of self does not lead to selflessness alone but to a new state of being lost together, a shared state of (non)self. So, when I say Tonika and I found each other I also mean this: that we got lost together not in each other, but instead of each other. SS: That book is great. I’m quite fond it myself. I really like how Bernie Glassman, who’s the Zen master and a long-time friend of Jeff Bridges, talks about that for him dharma practice is a way that undercuts or escapes from the subject-object relationship. In some ways the way that book comes together through a long-standing friendship and series of ongoing conversations is similar to the dynamic between you two. And since Stefano is the Dude, Fred, that makes you the Zen master … Another thing that comes up in their conversation is the idea that The Big Lebowski is formed around a series of Zen koans. Maybe I’m stretching the comparison too far, but I might even suggest that The Undercommons is likewise formed around a series of paradoxical observations, like the university being the place you cannot study. It’s those things that are strange ideas when you first hear them, and their value is as much in what it produces as you engage with it, preferably with other people, even more so than the value of the literal statement itself. It’s something you need to sit with. FM: It makes you want to think about what the relationship is between the dialectic, the antinomy, and the koan. We want—and then imagine that as we get older and have a chance to read more books that we will receive—other terms in other languages from other places that also correspond to this. Let’s stay with the work of paradox and the way paradox constitutes a motive force or an engine for thinking. Stefano, you’re saying that you get lost with others. Generally, our experience of being lost is not described like that. Man, one of my earliest memories is of being lost in a grocery store in Las Vegas called Vegas Village. I remember going to Vegas Village, when I was maybe three or four years old, and getting separated from my mom. At a certain moment, you’re wandering, looking at toys, and all of a sudden, where’s mama? And I got all upset and I was crying, and it wasn’t my mother who found me. It was some other person who found me and helped me then to reunite with my mom. But I remember that very vividly now because I was found by someone else. It’s as if being found is that moment when, having realized one is alone, one finds that one is not alone. It was as if I had been found by a principle; that principle, Stefano, of being lost with others. There are these famous lines from The Faerie Queene: “What though the sea with waves continuall / Doe eate the earth, it is no more at all; / Ne is the earth the lesse, or loseth ought: / For whatsoever from one place doth fall / Is with the tyde unto another brought: / For there is nothing lost, that may be found if sought.” Edmund Spenser is ruminating on this intra-action of the lost and found. He elaborates this relation between loss and finding and seeking that ends up being something like an early version of Newton’s law of conservation of matter and energy. There’s a physics, or an anti-metaphysics, to this shit, and a question concerning the no-thing, the non-singularity of the lost and found and sought. My relation, to the extent that I have one, to Zen was initiated through a book by Gary Zukav called The Dancing Wu Li Masters. It was an extension of the interesting work in physics that this group in the Bay Area, the Fundamental Fysiks Group, was doing again in the mid-seventies. They were really interested in the philosophical foundations and implications of quantum mechanics and in what they saw as these absolute affinities between quantum mechanics and Zen Buddhism. Our old friend, Alan Jackson, is the one who gave me this book. I’ve been trying to read this book for thirty years now and not quite getting there. Let’s use the word “sharing” to describe what Jeff Bridges is talking about with his partner even though maybe the obvious word that would come to mind is “empathy.” Let’s use the word “sharing” in order to take into account the righteous and legitimate critique of a certain kind of racialized and highly gendered and brutal empathy that Saidiya Hartman gives us in Scenes of Subjection. Or, if we move by way of a certain radical recovery of empathy that Hortense Spillers gives us in Arthur Jafa’s Dreams Are Colder than Death, then we can move from that recovery of empathy towards something like sharing. But if we try to understand this notion of sharing, which we’ve tried to talk about under the rubric of debt, this implies that we’re not trying to establish or to justify the metaphysical foundations of politics, which are predicated on brutalities including those that Hartman delineates. Rather, **what we’re interested in is a social physics of sharing that is intra-active and which is predicated on this interplay of losing and finding and seeking** that Stefano is talking about under the general rubric of subtle selflessness. **This is something to which we can’t simply declare our allegiance; we have to practice it. That practice bears a revolutionary imperative.** It’s fucking communism.

## Part 3 is the Demand

#### Give me a 30 and/or a donation at tinyurl.com/hairdonation (alternatively, you should share it on facebook)- millions of young people don’t have hair due to alopecia, cancer, or other conditions that induce hair loss and they deserve the ability to decide what hair can do for them. The same negative hypervisibility that stigmatizes natural hair on TV can be retooled to be a positive project - you should engage in material resistance strategies that benefit everyone and prove that debate has potential to be good.