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#### We'll continue 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.

#### 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" \t "_blank) (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 affirmative is part and parcel of the same system that is coded against Black and Brown hair - the press always prioritizes a false and naive form of objectivity that inevitably excludes some.

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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 advocate "a communal buzz-cut" as a symbolic act of sexual and racial liberation allied with collective advocacy 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.

#### Give me a 30 and/or a donation at https://www.facebook.com/donate/309997691109640/1010973033165238/

#### (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.

## 2

**The 1AC’s abstraction from the material consequences of racialized violence-- their race-neutral rhetoric and humanistic principles reduces systemic racism to a problem of recognition that prevents effective mobilization against white supremacy**

Tommy J. **Curry and Curry 18** [Tommy, PhD, Prof. of Philosophy @ TAMU, Gwenetta, PhD, Ass. Prof. of Gender and Race Studies @ Alabama], “On the Perils of Race Neutrality and Anti-Blackness: Philosophy as an Irreconcilable Obstacle to (Black) Thought,” American Journal of Economics and Sociology, Vol. 77, Nos. 3-4 (May-September 2018). DOI: 10.1111/ajes.12244

We begin with the first author’s reflections on philosophy and its recurring problem of denying the realities of race and racism, reflections that have arisen as a Black (male) philosopher whose life has been threatened for doing Black philosophy. The experience of confronting death, being fearful of being killed doing my job as a critical race theorist, and being threatened with violence for thinking about racism in America has a profound effect on concretizing what is at stake in our theories about anti-Black racism. Whereas my work on race and racism in philosophy earlier in my career was dedicated to the problems created by the mass ignorance of the discipline to the political debates and ethnological history of Black philosophers in the 19th and 20th centuries, I now find myself thinking more seriously about the way that **philosophy**, really theory itself—our present categories of knowledge, such as race, class, and gender, found through disciplines—actually **hastens the deaths of subjugated peoples in the U**nited **S**tates. **Academic philosophy routinely abstracts away from**—directs thought to not attend to the realities of death, dying, and despair created by—**antiBlack racism. Black, Brown, and Indigenous populations are routinely rationalized as disposable flesh. The deaths of these groups launch philosophical discussions** of social injustice and spark awareness by whites, **while the deaths of white people direct policy and demand outrage. Because racialized bodies are confined to inhumane living conditions that nurture violence** and despair **that become attributed to the savage nature of nonwhites and evidence of their inhumanity, the deaths of these** **dehumanized peoples are** often **measured against the dangers they are thought to pose to others**.

**The interpretation of the inferior position that racialized groups occupy in the U**nited **S**tates **is grounded in how whites often think of themselves in relation to problem populations. This relationship is** often **rationalized by avoidance and by** the **denials** of whites **about being causally related to the harsh conditions imposed on nonwhites in the world. Philosophy, and its glorification of the rational individual, ignores the complexity of anti-Black racism by blaming the complacency**, if not outright hostility, **towards Blacks on the mass ignorance of white America**. To remedy this problem, Black philosophers are asked to respond by gearing their writings, lectures, and professional presence to further educate and dialogue with white philosophers in order to enable them to better understand anti-Black racism and white supremacy (Curry 2008, 2015). This therapy is often rewarded as scholarship. **Philosophical positions that analyze racism as a problem of miscommunication, misunderstanding, and ignorance** (philosophies predicated on the capacity of whites to change) **are rewarded and praised as the cutting edge and most impactful theories about race and racism. Reducing racism to a problem of recognition** and understanding **allows white philosophers to remain absolved of their contribution to the apathy that white America has to the death** and subjugation **Black Americans endure** at the hands of the white race.

To some readers, speaking about races as different groups with opposite, if not antagonistic, social lives seems to run contrary to the idea that there are no real races, just people, only the human race. This is the core of **race-neutral theory** in academic philosophy. Race neutrality **asserts that while race, class, and gender may** in fact **differentiate bodies, the capacity for reason—the human essence beneath it all—is what is ultimately at stake in the recognition of difference**. While **this mantra** has been offered to whites since the integrationist strategies of the U.S. Supreme Court in the 1950s under Chief Justice Earl Warren, it **has had little effect in restructuring the psychology of white individuals or remedying** the **institutional** practices of **racism that continue to exclude** or punish **Black Americans**. How are Black scholars to speak about racism, specifically the violence and death that seem to gravitate towards Black bodies if the rules of philosophy and the fragility of white Americans insist that racism is not the cause of the disproportionate death Black Americans suffer and race is not a significant factor in Black people’s lives?

This article is an attempt to debunk the seemingly neutral starting point of academic philosophy. **For decades, Black philosophers have attempted to** educate white philosophers and **reorient the philosophical anthropologies of the discipline. Black, Brown, and Indigenous philosophers have dedicated their lives** and careers **to educating white philosophers** and students, **with little to no effect on the composition** and disposition **of the discipline**. While it is not uncommon for philosophy departments to say they support diversity, the reality is that many, if not most, Black philosophers continue to write about the problem of racism, their experiences of marginalization, and the violence they suffer from white colleagues, disciplinary organizations, and universities. **This article should be read as an attempt not to amend the Western metaphysical tradition but to reveal the obstacles that indicate its perennial failure**. It is the position of the authors that many of the demands for disciplinary change are often expressed as politics, when in reality **there are issues of metaphysics** (the concerns of being) **and philosophical anthropology** (the concerns about the (non)being capable of thinking) **that are unaddressed in much of the current literature**. Section I of this article describes what Black philosophy has taken to be the problem of racism in academic philosophy more broadly. Since the 1970s Black philosophers have criticized, attacked, and attempted to reform the discipline with little effect. This section interrogates why that is the case. Section II argues that the failure of philosophy to change is a problem of metaphysics or the illusion that Blackness is compatible with the idea of the white human. Section III presents the social scientific evidence demonstrating the seeming permanence of anti-Black racism and the dangerous nature of colorblind ideology, which does not recognize that societal organization and racism determine the life chances of Blacks. This article ends with a suggestion of what Black philosophy would look like if its primary mandate were not to persuade whites to remedy their own racist practices, but to diagnose and build strategies against the present problems of racism in philosophy before us.

**Even if they win that their colorblindness is theoretically ideal, it is practically impossible because racialized bodies are marked by their skin color – the psychological construction of Black as inferior makes their impacts inevitable – philosophy’s segregation of black scholarship is not neutral.**

Tommy J. **Curry and Curry 18** [Tommy, PhD, Prof. of Philosophy @ TAMU, Gwenetta, PhD, Ass. Prof. of Gender and Race Studies @ Alabama], “On the Perils of Race Neutrality and Anti-Blackness: Philosophy as an Irreconcilable Obstacle to (Black) Thought,” American Journal of Economics and Sociology, Vol. 77, Nos. 3-4 (May-September 2018). DOI: 10.1111/ajes.12244

Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2010: 15) explains that **colorblind racism emerged as a new racial ideology in the late 1960s** concomitantly with the crystallization of the “new racism” as America’s new racial structure. **Whites could no longer get away with the overt racist practices** that were used before the civil rights movements **but instead depended on more subtle ways to maintain their racial dominance** without using race. In today’s society, there are very few whites who outwardly consider themselves to be racist, but they will still support systems that create inequalities among minority populations.

Bonilla-Silva’s (1996) account of racism leads him to develop the idea of racialized social systems, a term that refers to societies where economic, political, social, and ideological levels are partially structured by the placement of actors in racial categories. Bonilla-Silva theorizes that **the racialized system incentivizes how racialized persons develop their identities within racist structures. Race is not simply imposed on bodies but is psychologically invested in by individuals in terms of how dominant racial groups identify themselves in relationship to the** **groups** and individuals **they construct as inferiors. For some groups assimilation is possible. This is the case for ethnic groups like the Irish and the Jews because their skin color is closer to that of whites, but it would be impossible for Black groups to similarly disappear. Colorblindness could exist in theory, but in reality, people see skin color, and in America, white skin stands for superiority.**

Racial **segregation** has been a mainstay of the American race problem since the beginning of slavery. Assigning the places that Blacks belonged, whether it be in the fields or as the “house Negro,” **has been one of the primary ways that racism has been enforced against Blacks**. Even after the end of slavery, **Jim Crow was established to terrorize Blacks into staying confined by their segregated spaces**. We would argue that **even today**, the established racial dynamic in America maintains racial segregation. In The Hidden Cost of Being African American, Thomas Shapiro (2004: 152) has shown how **whites have been able to move into the neighborhoods with the better schools and resources with the help of their inheritances**. Many of the people he interviewed about their housing location stated that they did not look at race when deciding to move to certain neighborhoods but rather they focused on the lifestyle and “standards” of the people. **Most stated that “it just happened” that there were no African Americans at the school their child attends. These understandings of “standards” and lifestyle are nested in the notion that white culture defines the norms and standards**. Eduardo Bonilla-Silva’s concept of “white habitus” explains the tendency whites have for racial segregation, namely, their preference for moving to all-white neighborhoods and the effects this practice has on African Americans.

Shapiro’s work parallels the findings of Bonilla-Silva’s theory of white habitus. Bonilla-Silva et al. (2006: 233) describe “white habitus” as a racialized, uninterrupted socialization process that conditions and creates whites’ racial taste, perceptions, feelings, and emotions and their views on racial matters. The most pronounced effect of white habitus is that “it promotes a sense of group belonging (a white culture of solidarity) and negative views about nonwhites.” **In these all-white spaces, whites become the standard or norm while anything or anyone different becomes unnatural or problematic**. White habitus promotes minorities being viewed based on stereotypes and generalizations perpetuated by the media or through other second-hand sources. **The greatest irony of Bonilla-Silva et al.’s interviews was their finding that “whites do not interpret their racial isolation and segregation from Blacks as something racial.”** This qualitative project shows that **even when whites are communally segregated** from Blacks, **they do not interpret this as a racialized or racist environment**. The absence of Blacks is thought to be compatible with how white Americans think about colorblindness. The idea of white superiority, or whiteonly neighborhoods, is not understood by many white Americans as racist. In one of Shapiro’s (2004: 152) interviews, the participant states that she has “Black friends.” However, Bonilla-Silva et al. (2006: 248) point out that when whites claim to have Black friends, they usually are referring to formal activities such as sports or classroom work groups. Once the activity is over the relationship ends; the so-called Black “friends” are not actual neighbors or friends who live within their social environment. **Academic philosophy operates similarly**.

**Racism deems Black life disposable and demands racialized violence – we’re not an ad-hom that criticizes the positionality or personal views of their authors – their philosophy is actively used as an expression of white supremacy and to rationalize the deaths of Black men and women.**

Tommy J. **Curry and Curry 18** [Tommy, PhD, Prof. of Philosophy @ TAMU, Gwenetta, PhD, Ass. Prof. of Gender and Race Studies @ Alabama], “On the Perils of Race Neutrality and Anti-Blackness: Philosophy as an Irreconcilable Obstacle to (Black) Thought,” American Journal of Economics and Sociology, Vol. 77, Nos. 3-4 (May-September 2018). DOI: 10.1111/ajes.12244

**Far too often, the Black philosopher is charged with making sense of the irrationality of white America’s erroneous perceptions of Black, Brown, and Indigenous people. The histories of terror, death, rape, and murder are** often **said to be remnants of the past. To speak of anti-Black racism as an ever-threatening doom**—a looming threat of death and dying—**after** the presidency of Barack **Obama seems heresy to many white Americans**. Despite the horrors that now confront the United States under the presidency of Donald Trump, it is often very difficult for Black speakers to convince white audiences of the divergent worlds codified by anti-Blackness. Black philosophers, especially Black men, often try to persuade academic audiences, who fear being in the same room as them, of their humanity through the academic endeavor. Because this Black person is a professor, there is, standing in front of the white audience, evidence that Black people are not all criminals, and that Black males specifically are not all violent or dangerous. In performing what a human being is thought to be by whites, the Black philosopher imitates that human for whites in hopes of being interpreted as human and consequently heard. To be a Black philosopher is to assert that the perilous nature of being Black is outside of the human. Whereas white philosophers often share a similar language with other whites, namely, that all people are human beings and rational individuals, Black philosophers who study race often speak in terms of their negations: non-being. Harris (2018) refers to this as “necro-being.” Curry (2016, 2017, 2018a, 2018b) speaks of the Man-Not. Wilderson (2009) writes of the slave.

**To be Black is to render the very grammar of the academy delusional. To speak of impending death and sub-personhood** and explain the experiences of violence and dehumanization that accompany this position to white individuals who only think of their existence in terms of always being human and persons is ineffable. **Perhaps** the theorist Calvin **Warren best captures this problem in his book Ontological Terror**: Blackness, Nihilism, and Emancipation. Warren (2018: 2) argues:

**The human being provides an anchor for the declaration, and since the being of the human is invaluable, then Black life must also matter, if the Black is a human** (the declaration anchors mattering in the human’s Being). **But we reach a point of terror with this syllogistic reasoning. One must take a step backward and ask the fundamental question: is the Black, in fact, a human being?** Or **can Black(ness) ground itself in the being of the human? If it cannot, then on what bases can we assert the mattering of Black existence?**

The consequence of attending to the problem of Blackness and the realities of death is that **the theories that emerge to account for what is taken to be the accidental positionality of whites who are thought to be human**, individuals, citizens, and persons **must make sense of a reality where to be Black is to be nonhuman, savage, alien, and reified and consequently subject to violence and wished dead. As** the late Critical Race Theorist, **Derrick Bell** (1997: 23) **once said**:

**We have never understood that the essence of the racism we contended against was not simply that we were exploited in slavery**, degraded by **segregation, and** frustrated by **the unmet promises of equal opportunity. The essence of racism in America was the hope that we who were Black would not exist**.

Instead of racism being defined as a set of attitudes or beliefs about racial groups held by biased individuals, the authors prefer to understand racism as

a complex nexus, a cognitive architecture used to invent, reimagine, and evolve the presumed political, social, economic, sexual, and psychological superiority of the white races in society, while materializing the imagined inferiority and hastening the death of inferior races. Said differently, racism is the manifestation of the social processes and concurrent logics that facilitate the death and dying of racially subjugated peoples. (Curry 2017a: 4)

**Racism is a social process that demands the extinguishing of Black life. Racism craves death**. It is constructed, then legitimized through cultural and individual complacency. **When a young Black boy is killed, the instruments of the state, the authority of the police, and the vulnerability of the Black male body converge in the ultimate expression of violence** that results in death. **The public then rationalizes this exercise of state violence** and the individual will of the police officer who killed the Black boy **through empathy**. The white individual who sees the dead Black male body understands the need to kill the Black boy because Blackness socially expresses criminality, danger, and the possible death of a white life. **This fear of Blackness creates empathy for the officer who killed the Black boy**. He is thought of by the white interpreter who is watching the dead Black male body as a corpse. The fear shared between the officer and white onlooker is legitimated by the state because the state offers its society security from this Black male threat. **This is how populations feared by the society are simultaneously constructed and destroyed**.

This brief example describes the depth of the problem involved with racism. **Black philosophers are not simply objecting to the thoughts individuals hold about different groups of people, but how the thoughts that white individuals hold can be supported and expressed in violence against Black men and women in the world**. Because a white supremacist world supports the fears of the white racist, **the** individual **racist’s anti-Blackness is aspirational. It is expressed as a will for there to be no Black bodies** there. **As such, the human becomes an untenable account of Black life, given this disposability**. The world is simply not organized in such a way that allows Blackness to not be seen, perceived, and dehumanized in relation to whites. **No amount of evidence** or argument **seems to be able to displace the faith philosophers have in education, dialogue, and mutual understanding** between Blacks and whites as the remedies of racism (Curry 2008). Generations of nonwhite philosophers have spent their careers and research showing the discipline the horrors of racism, xenophobia, and ethno-nationalist thinking, but there has been little to no change in departments or the discipline at large.

For many philosophers, the idea that racism is permanent is unthinkable. Despite the words and works of Black political theorists like the lawyer Robert F. Williams or Dr. Huey P. Newton, or even more canonically established Black figures like W. E. B. DuBois, Carter G. Woodson, Frantz Fanon, or Derrick Bell, philosophy as a discipline and **philosophers** more generally **refuse to acknowledge that racism remains the core and most determining aspect of America’s social processes**. Enamored by the stories of Blacks suffering, many scholarly conversations about Blackness and racism focus on the harm that Black individuals suffer at the hands of whites or the discipline of philosophy. Relatively few works actually analyze racism structurally or beyond identity at all. **Philosophical analyses do not revolve around death or the material consequences of anti-Blackness**. Instead, the fear and anxiety that Black philosophers and graduate students share with whites become more worthwhile topics.

**This turns the aff – America is organized around the subjugation and death of non-white people – discriminatory applications of their policy are inevitable absent a recognition of racialization in the law – their colorblindness is mutually exclusive with the necessary upheaval of the racial dynamics that necessitate inequality.**

Tommy J. and Gwenetta **Curry and Curry 18** [Tommy, PhD, Prof. of Philosophy @ TAMU, Gwenetta, PhD, Ass. Prof. of Gender and Race Studies @ Alabama], “On the Perils of Race Neutrality and Anti-Blackness: Philosophy as an Irreconcilable Obstacle to (Black) Thought,” American Journal of Economics and Sociology, Vol. 77, Nos. 3-4 (May-September 2018). DOI: 10.1111/ajes.12244

It is now accepted fact that **scientists have been able to demonstrate that race does not exist on a biological level, but instead was constructed by society**. Classifying race as a social construct conveys that there is a “process of endowing a group or concept with a delineation, name or reality” (Delgado and Stefancic 2012: 155). Race has a reality to it, a substance given by the historical and cultural projections of the specific society within which it is birthed. **While philosophers commonly entertain**, at least at the theoretical level, **the idea that race does not have any real consequence, that is a pernicious supposition**. Tessman and On (2001: 5) suggest that “**an analysis of racialization as the process of the social construction of race can lead theorists away from the possibility of race-conscious strategies for struggling against racism**.” **If the issues surrounding race and racism are not addressed, minorities will still fall victim to unfair treatment in education, housing, and the court systems**.

Although the concept of race is socially constructed, the populations most affected by racialization and racial disparities agree that **there are still real consequences to race because of its embeddedness within** practically **all facets of American society. Race consciousness is necessary to diagnose the function** and effects **of racialization in law, policy, and social interactions**. As the sociologist Michael Banton (2001: 164) argues, some elements of the racial idiom are still needed in law because “the concept of a racial group is the price to be paid for a law against indirect discrimination.” Contrary to the idea that race is mere societal rhetoric, Banton argues that the language of race is needed in law to combat prejudice and discrimination against victim groups. This point is made extremely clear by the data presented by Michelle Alexander in The New Jim Crow: Colorblindness in the Age of Mass Incarceration. She argues that **racism is a driving force behind social organization—an architecture around which social hierarchy and disparity accumulate. Racism explains why the penal system is filled with Black men who are incarcerated and how labeling them as felons**, primarily due to the criminalization of drugs, **causes them to lose their basic civil rights**. The Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988, passed by Congress as part of the War on Drugs, called for strict lease enforcement and eviction of public housing tenants who engage in criminal activity (Alexander 2010: 142). In the spirit of the Anti-Drug Abuse Act, the Clinton Administration sought to strengthen the law in 1996, adding **the “One Strike and You’re Out”** legislation whose goal is to prevent people with criminal records from being able to live in public housing. This **measure to “crack down” on crime has had a debilitating effect on the family lives of people of color living in public housing units**.

**America is organized around the subjugation, death, and political suppression of racialized people’s voice**. Even under the ethno-nationalist regime of Donald Trump, there is a reactionary consensus that has reemerged, namely, that a truly white supremacist society is colorblind. This follows a similar logic as the dissent of Justice John Harlan in Plessy v. Ferguson (1896):

The white race deems itself to be the dominant race in this country. And so it is, in prestige, in achievements, in education, in wealth, and in power. So, I doubt not, it will continue to be for all time, if it remains true to its great heritage and holds fast to the principles of constitutional liberty. But in the view of the Constitution, in the eye of the law, there is in this country no superior, dominant, ruling class of citizens. There is no caste here. Our Constitution is color-blind and neither knows nor tolerates classes among citizens. In respect of civil rights, all citizens are equal before the law.

Notice how the assumption behind Harlan’s words asserts that the law guarantees equality, while the disparities in society are due to the racial superiority of the white race. In this sense, race is irrelevant in law, but undergirds the dynamics that produce inequality in the society. Harlan believed that white supremacy was natural. He suggested, like many white liberals and conservatives today, that race should not matter in policy and the law, and that the social consequences that befall racial groups are the result of their superior or inferior racial traits.

Not even a decade ago, white America celebrated being post-racial. The election of President Barack Obama seemed to be a great leap forward and evidence that the United States, as a majority white country, had indeed moved to a place where race did not indicate the capacity of an individual. However, racial progress is interpreted differently by the oppressed populations. Racism has always existed in American society and continues to be a major problem for many people of color who live in the United States. The recent election of President Donald Trump showed that there are always going to be consequences for disrupting the grand narrative of white supremacy. Perhaps the best way to understand this backlash that resulted in the election of Trump is through a measure of covert or overt racism. While many philosophers maintain that it is desirable to live in a colorblind society where race does not matter, social science research has vehemently rejected this notion. Joe Feagin’s theory of systemic racism is beneficial for race analysis because it places white agents at the front of racial oppression. Feagin (2012: 937) refers to systemic racism as “the foundational, large-scale and inescapable hierarchical system of US racial oppression devised and maintained by whites and directed at people of color.” Racism is seen from a structural view and negatively impacts people of color because whites dominate the structures that dictate the order and organization of society. Systemic racism, as described by Feagin (2006), consists of six parts: the patterns of impoverishment and unjust enrichment and their transmission over time; the resulting vested group interests and the alienating racist relations; the cost and burdens of racism; the important role of white elites; the rationalization of racial oppression in a white-racist framing; and continuing resistance to racism. Feagin challenges Harlan’s explanation for white supremacy: instead of whites being inherently superior, they rely on institutional racism to produce social structures that reward and elevate whites.

**Vote negative to endorse Black philosophy as a site to engage in radical theorizations—any attempt at integration commodifies forces Black philosophy to a form for white philosophers to deem respectable scholarship –reorientation away from universal reason is key.**

Tommy J. **Curry and Curry 18** [Tommy, PhD, Prof. of Philosophy @ TAMU, Gwenetta, PhD, Ass. Prof. of Gender and Race Studies @ Alabama], “On the Perils of Race Neutrality and Anti-Blackness: Philosophy as an Irreconcilable Obstacle to (Black) Thought,” American Journal of Economics and Sociology, Vol. 77, Nos. 3-4 (May-September 2018). DOI: 10.1111/ajes.12244 Recut Ngong

At its most basic level, philosophy is an activity of inquiry into the world which is supposed to guarantee its practitioners some level of assuredness in the ways we interpret the realities before us. If we take African American philosophy to be philosophical activity, then we should expect, by necessity of being philosophy, that Africana philosophy should result in the same methodological rigor—some assuredness in the ways that Africana people have used to interpret their realities. Unfortunately, the present day crisis of African American philosophy makes this simple formulation an impossibility. By making the methodological rigor of Africana philosophy dependent on its popular acceptance; its closeness to the political dogmas of our racial era, we condemn our area of study to under-specialization whereby our works of philosophical genius, past and present, will be judged solely by the degree to which they extend the universalizing character of Europe and her theories. **To the extent that African American philosophy chooses to abandon the genealogical patterns of Black thought for philosophically privileged associations with white thinkers, it remains derelictical—continuing to neglect its only actual duty**—the duty **to inquiry into the reality of African-descended people as they have revealed it**.

We begin with the premise that **racism permeates the discipline of philosophy**. We are attempting to bring attention to the ways in which **authentic Black philosophy has been revised and denatured into a form that whites in the discipline accept as philosophical**. Whereas all disciplines have norms or rules of scholarly rigor, **philosophy demands that Black thinking and thought tend towards specific political ends in order to be considered philosophy**. Whether or not the thought and texts of Black philosophers are correctly interpreted, understood, or even read ultimately becomes irrelevant to the larger political orientation of the discipline.

**Black philosophers are read as extensions of white thought. A Black philosophical figure is relevant only to the extent that [they] he or she can be understood as the unrealized intentionality of canonical white figures. Black historical figures are made philosophical by the extent to which their voice can be imagined as what Dewey, Hegel, Addams, or Foucault would have said if they thought more seriously about race** and racism. Consequently, writes Curry (2011b: 141):

**Black thinkers function as the racial hypothetical of European thought whereby Black thought is read as the concretization of European reflections turned to the problem of race, and Black thinkers are seen as racial embodiments of white thinkers’ philosophical spirits**. In this vein, the most studied Black philosophers are read as the embodiment of their white associates; **W. E. B. Du Bois is read as the Black Hegel, the Black James, the Black Dewey, and Frantz Fanon as a Black Sartre**, or Black Husserl. **This demonization of Black thinkers by the various manifestations of the European logos as necessary to the production of AfricanAmerican philosophy is a serious impediment to the development of a genuine genealogy** of the ideas **that actually define Africana philosophy’s Diasporic identity**.

The insistence that Black philosophy parallel white philosophical traditions, such as pragmatism, feminism, and Rawlsianism, and arrive at integrationism as the concluding political goal suggests that the study of Black philosophy is little more than a disciplinary ruse. Critical Race Theory is consistently revised away from materialist interpretations of racism and racist institutions towards a focus on the history and racism of particular white European thinkers (Curry 2017b). This derelictical demand is so powerful that Black philosophers are rarely asked to verify, empirically or historically, their theories about racism. Instead, they are evaluated on the basis of the extent to which white philosophers can or do agree with their position. Said differently, the racism of philosophy is so overwhelming and severe that the question of whether or not a claim or statement about racism or Black people is true or false is arbitrated by whether or not there is a white consensus supporting or rejecting the claim. Often, manifestly false statements about Black people are made by white and Black philosophers that are taken to be fact because white philosophers and the discipline at large agree to act and think as if the statement is true. These debates often concern easily verifiable facts of underrepresentation, the use of discourse and education to solve racism, and gender dynamics both intra- and inter-racially.

The problem of dereliction emphasizes the point that philosophy is constructed with a white audience and public in mind. The admission of Black, Brown, and Indigenous students into graduate programs across the country is not meant to fundamentally change or reorient the discipline. As a matter of professional survival, racialized minority students are being professionalized to accept that their work must focus on global problems and sustain the supposed universalism of reason, ethics, and dialogue, even while they rhetorically claim they reject such an orientation. Ensuring that young Black philosophers fear being labeled as too radical, or having their work designated as controversial or unsafe, is reason enough to self-censor and revise the original thinking of Black scholars. As such, Black philosophy becomes a discipline accepted as philosophy by the extent to which it mirrors, or Blackfaces, the insights of white thinkers and theories. Philosophy departments have ensured that conversations go unattended that concern the permanence of racism and the histories of trauma and bidirectional violence amongst Blacks (Hernandez et al. 1993; Cascardi and Avery-Leaf 2015; Curry and Utley 2018c). They have also ignored the imperialism and colonial heritage of feminism and the paternal benevolence that white women receive from patriarchal power and sexism, despite decades of research that documents the truth of such positions in the social sciences and history (Newman 1999, 2007; Glick and Fiske 2001).

Black philosophy is forced to interpret the world in the most elementary terms of white theory. Ellen Pence, one of the founders of the Duluth model, admitted that she simply made up the idea that patriarchy and sexist attitudes are causally linked to intimate partner violence, but Black philosophy commits itself to propagating this theory despite countless studies showing this is not true in white culture, and has never been the case amongst Blacks (Pence 1999; Mills 2009; Caetano et al. 2005). The intellectual repression of Black philosophers is so severe that popularly held opinions and majority (white) consensus can dictate the interpretations of race, class, and gender amongst Blacks. Many of the theories proposed by Black philosophers concerning racism, intimate partner violence, classism and privilege, underrepresentation, and sexism are routinely found to be out of line with, if not outright rejected by, the scientific accounts of the very same social problems. The social sciences, history, and epidemiology have shown that the causes of social problems in white communities often have very different causes when analyzed in Black or Brown communities. In philosophy, however, there are no distinctions in causation. All social ills stem from ignorance, patriarchy, or some incredibly general theory that often lacks cultural specificity or racial nuance. To appear legitimate, these categories simply mimic the already established thinking of whites and in doing so gain the appearance of truth. No matter the empirical findings or authoritative literatures by experts in other disciplines, all conversations about racism and Black folk that run contrary to the endorsed whites are effectively banned by social stigma and punished through professional ostracism.

Black philosophy has a responsibility to engage the Black experience as a genuine site of existential reflection and epistemological tool making. The idea that Black experience and reality must be accounted for by white theories of causality or aim towards the same ends of white philosophy is delusional. Black philosophy must engage in radical theorizations that can be traced back to the problems tackled in the texts and debates of Black thinkers. The social prognoses suggested by Black philosophers should also have some accountability to the realities that Black people are facing in the United States, if not the world. There is no time for idle thought that simply attempts to imitate white theories of causality and canonical traditions in order to be accepted. How can we demonstrate the importance of Black philosophy, if not for what we observe and verify in the lives of Black people in the world? Its ability to express the full complexity of Black life and death in theory at the most abstract levels of thought is what is at stake in the Black philosophical project.

## case

#### Reject their dangerous philosophy:

#### Homosexuality DA: Gay people cannot operate under the assumptions of the 1n - you have made the round unsafe for them by deploying homophobia. SOBLE (2):

What was it like to listen to the distinguished Kant lecture on sexual perversion, to sit in Kant's classroom in 1780, hearing his emotional, weakly-argued condemnation of masturbation and homosexuality, and copying it into a notebook?96 Did his students titter? Was tittering tolerated in the German classroom? Did they at least roll their eyes? Were they disgusted, along with Kant, at homosexuality, or were they disgusted by his disgust? (Are my students disgusted, along with me, by homophobia, or are they disgusted by my being disgusted?) And those in his classes who masturbated or were homosexual, how did they respond? Consider the pain of hearing oneself accused in the strongest terms of being lower than a beast, and being accused by no less an authority than Professor Kant. His diatribe against homosexuality is little more than intellectual gay-bashing. Thus I imagine the profound fear felt by his targets who attended his lectures. I wonder if I would have had the courage to confront Kant in class, if I would have had the manly balls of my rational autonomy to do what the lesbian sadomasochist Pat Califia does: If I am going to be called all those bad names anyway, I might as well be the first one to spread the good news. When you come out, you make yourself vulnerable to disapproval, criticism, and discrimination. But you also get to define your own terms. You get to go first and be the one to say who you are and what that means. And after you've already admitted in public that you're a hopelessly twisted slut, what are your detractors going to do?97 I don't know if I would have been able to confess my own 'pervy' sexuality in Kant's auditorium. Maybe it is only from the comfortable, far away position of the early 21st-century that I feel safe calling Kant's account of sexual perversion a clunker concocted by a kisöreg.

#### Ableism DA: Kantianism requires rationality that constructs a perfect subject – this form of rationality isn’t accessible to all people, reifying ableism

Ryan**:** Ryan [Philosophy student] “Cognitive Disability, Misfortunate, and Justice.” *Introduction to Ethics, Binghamton University.* 2011. RP

**In Kant's deontological ethics, one has a duty to treat humanity not as a means, but as an ends. However, Kant's criterion for being part of humanity and moral agency is not biological. In order to be considered fully human, and a moral agent, one must be autonomous and rational**. If one lacks rationality and autonomy they cannot escape the chain of causality to act freely from moral principles, and hence are not moral agent's. **Kant's moral program fails to account for those who are cognitively impaired because they lack autonomy and rationality.** Since Kant's requirement for moral agency is so cut-and-dry and leaves no room for ambiguity, there is no clear moral distinction made between the cognitively impaired and other non- human animals. **In the case of Kant, there could be no universal moral law from the categorical imperative that would apply to the cognitively impaired and not non-human animals as well**. McMahan reaches the same conclusion as Kant, namely that, there is no meaningful moral distinction to be made between the cognitively impaired and other non-human animals. McMahan takes it to be the case that certain psychological attributes and capacities constitute a minimum for us to value a person as a moral agent. **The cognitively impaired fall below the threshold for moral agency because they do not have certain psychological attributes and capacities that McMahan takes to be constitutive of moral agency**. Therefore, as morality dictates we be impartial, we cannot give favor to the cognitively impaired over animals with similar psychological endowments. According to McMahan we have no non-arbitrary basis to do so. While McMahan agrees that many accept that we have reasons to give priority to those most proximal to us (which would give the family of someone cognitively impaired reason to favor them over a similarly endowed non-human animal) it does not give a reason for society as a whole to give this preference. **Kant and McMahan are similar, in that their standards for moral agency exclude the cognitively impaired (rationality/autonomy and psychological capacities respectively). In Kant's morality, those who are rational and autonomous are to be treated as ends in themselves. In the case of the cognitively impaired, there is no such requirement.** Similarly, in McMahan's moral theory, those who are human and unfortunate are entitled to compensation by society under the dictates of justice. **However, according to McMahan the cognitively impaired are not human in the relevant sense (possessing certain psychological capacities and features) so they are not entitled to compensation. In excluding the cognitively impaired from moral agency, both Kant and McMahan reach a conclusion that many of us find unsettling, in which we might give the cognitively impaired a moral preference over a similarly endowed non-human animal, is because of a responsibility to respect the family members of the cognitively endowed, not because they have any value as moral agents in themselves.**