

Getting to the Root: A Historical Review of Hair in US White-Black Race Relations and the Importance for Dermatologists

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Pre-Civil War- Kinky hair and dark complexion are associated with African ancestry, slavery, and inferiority in early American history.



Reconstruction Era - White centric standards for appearance limited the Black community's social mobility.



Late 19th century- To demonstrate being assimilated American citizens, the Black community thought carefully about how to present themselves in society.

Early 20th century- The straightening "hot" comb is introduced.



To avoid discrimination Blacks invested in hair straightening techniques while striving for a place in society.

Late 20th century and early 2000s- Black women and men hairstyles carry less political associations. Motives for hairstyles are: health, economic, convenience, personal preference, familiarity, and cultural aesthetics.

Today- Natural hairstyles continue to gain in popularity, but are still met with discrimination and a lack of cultural understanding.



1960s- Declarations of *Black is Beautiful* challenged the mainstream beauty ideals of light skin and straight hair.



Civil Rights Era- Afros and dreadlocks symbolize Black empowerment and political consciousness.

1950s -Chemical lye-based hair treatments were introduced to conveniently offer longer-lasting straightening of curly hair types.

Recommendations for Dermatologists

Support legislation that bans the discrimination of natural hairstyles.

- Create a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair (CROWN) Act

Advocate for funding to research hair disorders in people with skin of color (SOC).

- American Academy of Dermatology (AAD) HAIR Grant

Utilize skin of color educational resources in training and practice.

- AAD SOC curriculum

Perform shared decision making that is informed by the nuances of dermatoses and hair loss in people with skin of color.

