



## If Schools Don't Like Black Hair, We Shouldn't Give Them Our Black Children

By Shawnta S. Barnes - August 19, 2018

Almost every month, there is a report of a child's education being thwarted because of dress code violations. Students have been assigned detention, suspended, or sent home as a consequence. Some policies seem to target students of certain races and backgrounds and police what is acceptable for them as a person living in our society.

As schools are getting back in session across the nation, we already have a report of another incident. Six-year-old first-grade student C.J. Stanley was sent home from a school he won a scholarship to attend school because he wore his hair in dreadlocks.

According to A Book's Christian Academy's handbook, "All boys hair must be a tapered cut, off the collar and ears. There are to be no dreads, Mohawks, designs, unnatural color, or unnatural designs." This is my 13th year as an educator and I have never had my lessons ruined due to students' hair color or style.

In response to the public backlash, John Book, Director A Book's Christian Academy said, "You can see my school, it's probably 95 percent black. Obviously, I am not a racist. [...] But we try to uphold certain Biblical standards and certain degrees of order that enable us to maintain a school."

Let me break down this director's statement and school policy.

1. Being around black people does not mean you are not racist. Having a school that is majority black does not mean that your school policies are not racist. I wonder how many black boys at this Christian academy would like to wear their hair in twists, braids, or dreads, but can't because their parents decided to sacrifice an appropriate way to style black hair so they could attend the school.
2. How does long hair interfere with Biblical standards? Besides the manger displays during Christmas, every depiction of Jesus I have seen has him with long hair. Isn't it a shame that Jesus couldn't even attend this Christian school?
3. We know that dreadlocks is a hairstyle that is typically worn by black people. When you have a policy that excludes a hairstyle that is worn by people in a particular community, it is racist. It is another form of policing black bodies. People are attached to their hair and to make a six-year-old child feel that his hair that has the curl pattern to dread is a problem is unacceptable.

I'm glad the parents switched him to another school because a child should not have to change an aspect of himself that does not interfere with his education because a school leader has a lack of understanding of the children his school is serving.