



Stop Policing Black Students' Hair

By Educator Barnes – April 28, 2019

If you have been following my writing, you should know that I do not support many school dress codes when it comes to the hair section. Every month, there is an incident involving a dress code violation over hair. The offender many times is a black student.

“We are a culturally responsive school.” Sure you are. Being culturally responsive is not a checklist of items. It is a belief system; it is a way of life for your school. If you are a school and

have racist dress codes that target certain groups of students, in particular students of color, you don't get what being culturally responsive is.

In the latest school dress code foolery, we have a student who got a new haircut. Getting a haircut seems like an action that shouldn't involve disciplinary action, so what was the issue? The issue was the black male student had a design in his haircut, the letter m. According to the school's dress code, "Hair must be neat, clean and well groomed. Extreme hairstyles such as carvings, mohawks, spikes, etc. are not allowed." This boy's haircut is not an extreme style. It is common for black boys to get a design in their hair. I wouldn't have even given this student a second look except to say, "Nice haircut."

As a teacher, I'm pretty confident that I can teach a student the difference between a simile and a metaphor whether or not he had a letter buzzed into his haircut. Again, I ask, why is this an issue? Many black boys I know who frequently cut their hair have a design in their haircut. When a school's policy targets hairstyle of people from certain groups, they are racist and need to be removed.

When you have stupid school policies, you get stupid responses to enforce the policy. Many kids get sent home for dress code violations or are isolated in a room for in-school suspension. Now, we have students missing an entire day of learning over a hairstyle. According to a [recent article](#), an administrator colored in the letter with a permanent marker. After an uproar from the public, the school district responded by placing the administrator who colored in the letter on administrative leave.

Had this not been a policy in the first place, this situation would not have occurred. If you are reading this and you know of some racist hair policies, speak up. Only by speaking up can we get these racist policies off the books.