



Lessons School Leaders Can Learn from Hair Love

By Educator Barnes – February 10, 2020

Since I have been a writer for Indy K12, I have advocated for schools to eliminate discriminatory wording in their dress code policies that target black children. When school dress code policies state that children can't rock an afro, wear braids, or wear dreadlocks, black children are being told their hair is not beautiful unless it conforms to European standards. Black children should be allowed to wear their hair in the way that it naturally grows out of their head and wear it in styles that accommodates how their hair grows. We

have black children across the United States who are not receiving the best education, and instead of targeting that area, their hair is the focus.

In my November 2019 piece, "[We Shouldn't Need Laws to Stop the Policing of Black People's Hair](#)," I listed six other times when I have brought attention to this topic. It's about more than hair; it is about being seen for who you are. When a school administrator suspends black students over their hair, those students are being told that part of what makes them who they are is unacceptable; it is like saying you are unacceptable.

"Hair Love," writer and director Matthew Cherry and producer Karen Rupert Toliver wanted 18-year-old, DeAndre Arnold to know he is accepted, and his hair is acceptable the way it is. They invited the teen and his mom to attend the Oscars yesterday after learning the Texas teen was told he had to cut his dreadlocks to participate in his high school graduation. What is even better is that "Hair Love" won an Academy Award for Best Animated Short Film.

During his speech, Cherry said, "We wanted to normalize black hair. There's a very important issue that's out there, the CROWN Act, and if we can help to get this passed in all 50 states it will help stories like DeAndre Arnold." It is a shame that it is 2020, and black people have to fight for their hair to be seen as normal. When I think back to the discriminatory dress code policies at some schools, the root of those policies that ban hairstyles that are typically worn by black people is a belief that it is not normal or acceptable in our society to have your hair like that.

School is supposed to be a safe place. School is supposed to be a place where students are welcomed and loved. How can a student feel loved when there are harmful policies targeting them in their school's handbook? School administrators need to watch "[Hair Love](#)." They need to understand the importance of black hair. Maybe when understanding comes, changes will happen.

Black hair advocates aren't going away. We will continue to fight for black hair and the right to wear our hair as we please.