

Editorial: Human Hair: Intrigues and Complications

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Human hair plays significant roles in the development of social constructs about the body. For centuries black people around the world were discriminated against because of their skin, hair and culture. White attributes, including straight hair, were constructed as ideal, hence compelling black women to emulate Western hairstyles. Consequently, hair formed a subtle, yet substantive tool for Pan-Africanists' and black nationalists' struggles for liberation, equality and independence. A more fundamental dimension of hair is its political underpinning which is highly contentious. The politics of Black hair is quite unique, with varying situations from different parts of the world. For instance, despite India's shared colonial experience with Africa, Indian women have largely retained their cultural hairstyle - basically because they do not have the coarse, kinky hair which is peculiar to Africa and requires straightening. In other parts of the world, multiracial, liberal and environmental factors have conventionally determined hairstyles, with fashion and fad being more recent explanations for hairstyles in contemporary societies.

In recent past, there has been the renaissance and consciousness of black beauty which spurred a rise of the natural hair movement, bearded gangs and campaigns which resonate with political and racial agencies and the rupturing of black hair stereotypes and stigma. On this note, hair as a discourse in body politics raises critical issues in economics, social life, international relations and religious settings (Omotoso, 2016) requiring that analytical, intellectual and practical ideas to address a number of inter-related problems spanning power relations, urbanity, poverty, identity among others that would broaden the scholarly attention of the hair discourse be brought to the fore using case studies and experiences rooted in praxis from scholars and practitioners. Having noted how this visible component of identity-making in Black history has not enjoyed sufficiently robust scholarly attention, we have brought scholars across the globe to discuss salient emerging issues in this regard.

Starting with the paper titled "Gender and Hair Politics: An African Philosophical Analysis" Sharon Omotoso set out by philosophizing hair politics in Africa along gender lines. The article is unique because of its emphasis on gender and Africanness. She discusses how human hair influences African thoughts which equally connotes a number of issues and challenges confronting Africa. By arguing for existent influence of hair at different epochs in Africa, cutting across spiritual and physical dimensions is analyzed, Omotoso brings to the fore, diverse African cultural hairstyles for men and women and the messages they convey, covering pre-colonial, colonial, postcolonial, neocolonial and globalization periods. She proceeds to the implication of varying philosophies by metaphorically presenting human hair as an essential commodity Africa fails to localize with the aim of boosting the continent's economy.

In the article titled ‘The Hairs of Your Head Are All Numbered’. Symbolisms of Hair and Dreadlocks in the Boboshanti Order of Rastafari’, De-Valera Botchway offer readings of the philosophy or culture of Rastafari through the optic of Boboshanti (a Rastafarian branch) in relation to their hair (dreadlocks) which is undoubtedly celebrated particularly among the black race and generally the world over. The article teases out the symbolic representations of dreadlocks as connecting social communication, identity, subliminal protest, and general resistance to oppression as well as other forms of racial discrimination. By exploring hair symbolisms in connection with dreadlocks and how they shape an African philosophical thought or movement known as ‘Boboshanti Order of Rastafari’, Botchway argues that the theorization of hair can elucidate the link between the physical and social bodies within the context of identity and ideology.

Maria Delongoria writes on ‘Misogynoir: Black Hair, Identity Politics, and Multiple Black Realities’. The paper explores the extent in which the color of Black women hair in the United States of America defines their identity in so many ways. She carefully analyzes the realities of politics of hair targeted against the Black women in different ways, noting that apart from the plight of dealing with the issue of identity, Black women have to struggle in public places just because of the nature of their hair. The work examines how such feeling generated by this socio-cultural tendency, strengthens the resolve of the Black women who instead of being held down, rather gets inspired through their solidarity on social media and other avenues. The coping mechanism adopted by the Black women as examined makes the narrative more engaging and interesting. Also, from the United States of America, Chic Smith in her article titled ‘The Policing of Black Women’s Hair in the Military’ discusses a salient part of the society which is often ignored in the name of being sacred. By providing historical foundations to hair issues among Blacks, it expounds how Black women have been othered within military policies in the United States of America. From Canada, Shaunasea Brown interrogates the anti-Black racist ideals and different levels of ill-treatments routinely unleash on Black Canadian women and other mixed colored women of Canada, simply owing to their type of hair. The paper titled ‘Don’t Touch My Hair’: Problematizing Representations of Black Women in Canada’ demonstrates how inhuman tendency meted out to Black Canadian women assumes a frightening dimension which takes serious toll on their entire well-being of given the discriminatory consequences such realities bring. Shaunasea provides evidences of women’s online activism used to counter oppression in Canada, reflecting the need for women to begin using the internet, particularly the social media to their own favour (Omotoso 2016). For her, it is important to note that the Natural Hair Movement and Naturalistas do not solely exist in a virtual environment, as these online engagements translate from imaginary spaces into tangible areas underscoring how hair represents Black Canadian women’s efforts to disrupt hegemonic beauty ideals while concretizing their identities in Canada.

In line with Shaunasea’s hair activism, Omotoso Sharon & Ajisogun Omowumi discuss ‘Spatial Realities of Salon Cultures among Female Undergraduates of the University of Ibadan, Nigeria’. Their main objective was to consider the practices and discourses of female undergraduates in salons in line with the salon culture, in determining how such would help them create identities for themselves to grow into elite women in the future. They argue that the ancient Western conception of salons, where people meet up for discussions is beginning to resurface with women who now escape to salons for secondary purpose of freedom of expression and for more extensive discussion of personal and social issues which have far reaching effects, as against the primary purpose of self-adornment. These reiterate how

cultures of bonding, affirmation or class could influence perspectives and personalities of female undergraduates.

Further interrogating Nigeria's 'hair space', Nnadi Daniel in the article titled "Gender Role Reversal in Hairdressing Profession and Female Clients' Perception of Male Hairdressers in Ibadan North Local Government Area, Oyo State, Nigeria" investigates factors responsible for the recent trend of gender role reversal in the hairdressing profession where more men are venturing into the profession and acquiring more female clients. Addressing issues of gender occupational stereotypes held by some clients, Nnadi introduces positive deviance theory to examine factors responsible for the role reversal in the hairdressing profession; the perception of female clients' about male hairdressers, the extent to which customer service skills of male hairdressers influence their customers' patronage and the extent to which gender difference increase patronage of male hairdressers.

With the title 'Growing Lawless Hair in White Australia', Ann Lawless examines the experiences of Black women in Australia as victims of racism due to the texture of their hair. Racial abuse gained ground due to the enactment of certain racial policies known as *White Australia policy* causing Black women to experience discriminations. Shocking revelations are creatively explored in the narrative by engaging true life stories on this subject matter. The vividness of the story lines brings the experience and story closer to readers thereby making the account a very touching piece.

As an Artist, Temitayo Ogunbiyi in her work titled 'You Will' skillfully engages history through the 'metaphor of hair' as represented in her fine piece of art work on paper. Her art work (different styles) of human hair as a metaphor, examines human society as it concerns some realities such as; distinction between socio-economic classes, dynamism of culture, impact/ value of culture among other relevant issues close to the heart of human society. Her work clearly demonstrates how metaphor of hair influences human society in different ways beyond the limit of one's imagination. Also, the work analyzes how historical metaphor mirrored through hair style, reflects the realities of class struggle in human society with reference to south-west Nigeria. More importantly, the piece of art work engages the imagination of the viewers or readers (as the case may be), through the beauty showcased in different forms and shape of human hair styles. Nevertheless, the historical facts of the work remain timeless and reflective of cultural interactions across the globe.

We have found *Africology: Journal of Pan-African Studies* suitable for sharing our findings based on the Journal's reputation and commitment to the production and dissemination of scholarly research regardless of cultural boundaries and biases. This special issue is a timely response to trending debates on the hair, particularly, of people of black origin. With articles, drawn from scholars and practitioners from fields such as; Political Science, International Relations, Communication, History, Sociology, Philosophy, Psychology, Religion, African Studies among others, this special issue teases out hair intrigues and complications among blacks in rural and urban spaces across continents, connecting them with day-to-day lives of Black people (especially women) in selected regions.

Reference

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