

## Abstract

---

### **A Lawyer's Point of View: Legal overview, Case Studies, and Experiences with Hair Discrimination**

**Crystal Richardson, Esq.**, The Law Office of Crystal M. Richardson PLLC, Durham, NC, Bernice Rumala, PhD, M.A., Ed.M., M.Phil., Institute for Healthcare Improvement, Southern California, CA and Adjoa Asamoah, ABA Consulting, Washington, DC

*APHA's 2019 Annual Meeting and Expo (Nov. 2 - Nov. 6)*

Hair discrimination is pervasive across all sectors and socioeconomic groups within the black community. Hair is not only a sense of identity, but it is most importantly a sense of pride, courage, and strength. Being black in America while having the courage to wear one's hair in its natural state can be perceived as a radical act in some circles. Moreover, racism is so deeply rooted in this country that there are some who are forced to adopt to white European cultural standards of hair for acceptance as professionals due to policies, laws, and social cues leading to the abandonment of hundreds of years history and rich culture. The consequences of not conforming to women European standards are too costly — they're costly in pay, health, and social discrimination. These policies which are discriminatory should be unlawful at the city, state and federal levels. The author will provide a legal overview and some recommendations for revisiting existing policies to prevent race discrimination based on hair towards equity. Additionally, the author will present case studies and lived experience narratives of navigating hair discrimination inequities as a black woman lawyer in the professional sector. The hair discrimination lived experience narratives include the author being threatened with job insecurity based on her natural hair, the author being prevented from seeing clients, and the author being informed during earlier years as a student not to reveal length and natural texture of hair but to pull neatly in a bun as part of professional decorum.

Diversity and culture Ethics, professional and legal requirements Other professions or practice related to public health Public health or related laws, regulations, standards, or guidelines Public health or related public policy

