



Jarnelle Robinson

May 13th, 2021

Senate Committee on Judiciary and Ballot Measure 110 Implementation

RE: Support HB 2935 the CROWN Act

Dear Chair Prozanski, Vice Chair Thatcher, and members of the committee:

My name is Jarnelle Robinson, and I live in North East Portland. I am a Forward Together Action community member testifying in support of HB 2935, the CROWN Act.

I am a current graduate student at the University of Portland, and recently moved to Portland from my home country of South Africa. Through my involvement at UP, I was connected to FTA and their advocacy work around the CROWN Act. When I learned that Black hair discrimination was still permissible here in Oregon, not only was I shocked, I was disappointed that such a great country which prides itself on freedom had no such laws to protect the so-called free.

In South Africa, I have seen first-hand the devastating effects of black hair discrimination. From our shameful history of Apartheid to my very own former high school, which institutionalized the policing of black hair in its rules, detailing the 'acceptable' inches apart that braids had to be, the 'neat' styles, the supposed 'natural' hair color and the type of braids allowed for black female students. Eventually, this led to a student protest that gained international attention- including that of the esteemed Dr. Angela Davis.

As a multiracial woman, a student that will soon enter the workplace, and a scholar whose area of expertise includes identity and critical studies, it's important to me that no Black person in our state has to go through the pain of succumbing to oppressive practices and losing cultural identity in the hopes of receiving education or a seat at the table, professionally. We all deserve respect, dignity, and safety when going to school, sporting events, applying for jobs, and showing up to work.

Protections for Black hair are long overdue, and Oregon has the opportunity to do the right thing and pass the CROWN Act. Please vote yes and support HB 2935. Thank you for your time today.

Sincerely,

Jarnelle Robinson

Forward Together Action

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