GETTING STRAIGHT TO THE ROOTS, NO-LYE
BLACK HAIR IN WHITE AMERICA
“The hair is the richest ornament of a woman”

- Martin Luther King Jr.
KEY TERMS

• **Natural Hair** - hair whose texture has not been altered by chemical straighteners, including relaxers and texturizers

• **Relaxer** - a chemical treatment that turns kinky or tightly curled hair permanently straight. Early types of relaxers contained the chemical Lye

• **Lye** - a strong alkaline liquor rich in potassium carbonate. Often causes severe scalp burns and damage

• **Afrocentric** - emphasizing or promoting emphasis on African culture

• **“The Big Chop”** - When a Black woman cuts off all her relaxed and/or chemically altered hair leaving just a short afro style
Getting Straight to the Roots, No-Lye: Black Hair in White America, seeks to educate visitor on the culture and beauty of Black women’s hair. It will examine trends and styles, and the deep-rooted emotional and social factors that influence hairstyle choices, including European beauty standards, popular entertainment and mass media, toys, and workplace environments and polices.

The exhibition will encourage an open, yet personally relevant, dialogue between women within the Black community and foster understanding and acceptance among perspectives on how Black women wear their hair.
Visitors will develop the understanding that choices about how to style hair have social and psychological implications, hair is not merely fashion or superficial.

Visitors will learn the history and culture of African hair.

Visitors will learn that Black hair in America has a history from slavery to present day.

Visitors will explore the role popular media, entertainment, and white supremacy (racism), play in the choices Black women make in regards to their hair.

Visitors will confront their own choices about embracing their natural hair and have the opportunity to take action.
AUDIENCE

The target audience for this exhibition is Black women ages 13 and older. At the age of 13 most young girls are given more freedom to choose their own methods to maintain and style their hair.

Within the Black community there is often an unspoken conflict between women who choose to relax and chemically alter their hair and those who choose to embrace their hair in its natural state and wear more Afrocentric styles.
Washington, D.C. is affectionately known in the Black community as “Chocolate City” due to its high African American population.

It is home to one of the most prestigious and highly recognized historically Black colleges, Howard University.
This temporary exhibition will take place on the campus of Howard University, opening during the start of Homecoming Week.

Howard University is a historically Black university with a majority female demographic.

Howard Homecoming is an annual event which brings thousands of alumni across the world back to the campus to celebrate the legacy of their alma mater. The homecoming celebration is infamous and is highly recognized receiving mentions throughout popular music and media outlets.
LOOK & FEEL

Color Palette

Primary Color Scheme

Section Indicator Colors

Materials

Brick
Leather
Chrome Finish
Cherry Wood

Inspiration Images:
The exhibition will be divided into four thematic sections that will lead the visitors through the hair story of Black women through the use of objects, graphics, biographical stories, and interactives. Each of these four thematic sections will present compelling content that will encourage visitors to think critically and discuss the information presented.

1. **History**
   - Hair History Timeline
   - African Hair Traditions

2. **Childhood**
   - Dolls & Cartoons
   - Style Kiosk

3. **Adolescence**
   - Black Hair Industry
   - Magazine Covers

4. **Adulthood**
   - Black Hair in the United States Military
   - Black Hair in Corporate America

**CONTENT DIAGRAM**

- First Salon Interactive
- Second Salon Interactive
- Boardroom Interactive
- Photo Booth Interactive

Enter → First Salon Interactive → Second Salon Interactive → Boardroom Interactive → Exit
“A people without the knowledge of their past history, origin, and culture, is like a tree without roots.”

- Marcus Garvey
The time line wall cover major events in Black hair history from the 1440’s in Africa before enslavement to present day in America.

The time line is a combination of large graphics and wall mounted cases featuring selected objects.

Display Case:
- Vigrol Hair Straighter
- Blow Out Kit
- Just For Me - Hair Relaxer
- Miss Jessie’s Hair Products

Wall Mounted Vitrine:
- 1920’s Hot Comb
- Madam C.J Walker Product Tin
- 80’s Afro Pick
The African traditions sections cover the meaning of hair in Africa and educates visitors on how in African culture hair has a tradition for being the transmitter of messages.

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AFRICAN TRADITIONS SECTION: ELEVATION

Wall Mounted Vitrine: Ashanti Comb
Wall Mounted Vitrine: Wood Comb (Ivory Coast)
Wall Mounted Vitrine: Wood Comb (Ghana)
Wall Mounted Vitrine: Wood Comb (Mali)
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AFRICAN TRADITIONS


“My hair doesn’t need to be fixed, society’s view of beauty is what’s broken.”

-Unknown
The First Impressions section examines the role dolls and cartoons play in young girls' self-esteem. This section also features biographical stories of young girls who faced discrimination based on the style of their hair.
Three kiosk located outside the first salon interactive area allow visitors to explore additional information on different types hairstyles.

Tiana Parker’s true story is highlighted in the childhood section. Seven year-old Tiana Parker was removed from her Oklahoma elementary school after being told that her dreadlocked hairstyle did not look “presentable”.

LEARN A NEW HAIRSTYLE

CHILDHOOD SECTION: ELEVATIONS
Two functional salons allow visitors to take action! Visitors who feel moved by the information in the exhibition have the option to take the first steps towards a natural hairstyle. Visitors will be encouraged to make their “Big Chop,” which is the removal of all chemically straightened hair leaving just a short afro style.
The first salon is centrally located in the childhood section of the exhibition has an in-home salon look and feel.

Young Black girls earliest forms of haircare, maintenance, and styling is often conducted at home by their mothers, relatives, or trusted family friends. In-home salons have become increasing popular in the Black community in present day.

Inspiration Images:
**CHILDHOOD SECTION: PHOTO BOOTH INTERACTIVE**

What does your hair say about you?

Visitors will have the opportunity to take their picture and write a message about what they think they are communicating with their current hairstyle. The images will run on a continuous loop on the exterior of the photo booth for other visitors to observe.
“Relaxing your hair is like being in prison. You’re caged in. Your hair rules you...You’re always battling to make your hair do what it wasn’t meant to do.”

— Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Americanah
This section examines the multi-million dollar Black hair industry, images presented by the entertainment industries and mass media and how they influence Black women’s perceptions of beauty.
"Cover Stories", displays a selection of covers from Vogue magazine featuring Black women. Of the covers on display, only one features a Black woman with a natural hairstyle.

Beyonce and Blue Ivy Carter’s true story is highlighted in the adolescence section. Beyonce received extreme backlash over Blue Ivy’s natural hairstyle. The outrage reached a tipping point, and resulted in the creation of a change.org petition entitled “Comb her hair”, on June 10th 2014.
"The lighter, the brighter, the better."

- Nia Long
The second interactive salon is centrally located between the adolescence and adulthood sections. This salon has a commercial salon look and feel.

Neighborhood beauty salons in the Black community are not just a place to get your hair done, but they also provide a safe and comfortable location where Blacks can talk about what is happening within their communities.

**Inspiration Images:**
“Who taught you to hate the color of your skin?
Who taught you to hate the texture of your hair?
Who taught you to hate the shape of your nose and the shape of your lips?
Who taught you to hate yourself from the top of your head to the soles of your feet?
Who taught you to hate your own kind?
Who taught you to hate the race that you belong to so much so that you don’t want to be around each other? .... You should ask yourself who taught you to hate being what God made you.”

-Malcolm X
The Adulthood section examines pressures on Black women to conform to an European beauty aesthetic within the corporate workspace as well as controversial military grooming standards directly targeted at Black women.
"If your hair is relaxed, white people are relaxed.
If your hair is nappy, they're not happy."
- Comedian Paul Mooney
The Boardroom invites visitors to sit around a conference table and share their opinions about pressure to conform to particular beauty standards in the workplace.

Questions are projected on the back wall to help facilitate these conversations. Also within this space visitors can read biographical stories of women who were discriminated against in the workplace based on their hair.

Rhonda Lee's true story is highlighted within the Boardroom area. Rhonda Lee was fired from her Louisiana meteorologist anchor position when she responded to negative comments made towards her on the stations Facebook page.
ADULTHOOD SECTION: BOARDROOM INTERACTIVE RENDERING

SHARE YOUR STORY

Do you think Afros in the workplace are viewed as unprofessional in corporate America?
“Do not remove the kinks from your hair... Remove them from your mind.”

- Marcus Garvey
"Do not remove the kinks from your hair... Remove them from your mind."

- Marcus Garvey