

# Hair discrimination: A toolkit

The @Work Toolkit is a collection of additional resources and tips that might be useful when discussing the topic with your team.

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## Definitions

**Locs:** A natural hairstyle that has existed over a variety of cultures and civilizations and spanned centuries. In Hindu Vedic scripture from India written some 2,500 years ago, locs were “jaTaa” meaning “wearing twisted locks of hair.” Some prefer the use of locs, instead of “dreadlocks.” According to the author Lori Tharps, the modern use of “dreadlocks” derives from the British, who while fighting Kenyan warriors during the colonial period, found the warriors hair “dreadful” — thus coining the term.

**Natural hair movement:** During the 1960s, natural hair became the symbol of power and self-determination for Black Americans. Activists like Angela Davis adopted the afro as a rebellion against and rejection of Eurocentric beauty standards and as a signal of the fight for racial equality and solidarity and self-love within the Black community.

(Sources: [Istor Daily](#), [Vogue](#))

## Did You Know

“In general, (the CROWN Act is) a step towards recognizing and reconciling racial equity in our policies and practices. Any time that you center Black women and girls in economic policies and initiatives, there is a ripple effect that benefits everyone that has experienced discrimination. Regardless of whether people are working from home or in a building, it is important to create spaces where there is no discrimination.”

— Ashlei Spivey, co-founder of I Be Black Girl in Omaha, Nebraska

## How to talk about differences

Acknowledge the limits of understanding. One of the first steps to talking about human difference is acknowledging what you don't know. Start with saying aloud: “I don't know what I don't know.” Most of us are so situated in our own experiences with race that we don't fully understand the racialized existence of others or even how our social locations shape our day-to-day lives. Complicated conversations about race begin with undoing our assumptions. It requires acknowledging that we cannot fully know someone else's lived experience. Reflect more on the phrase, “I don't know what I don't know.” Consider: What does it mean to admit that you “don't know”? How can acknowledging the limitations of your perspective impact your workplace?