

SAVANNA'S ACT AND NOT  
INVISIBLE ACT

HON. GREG STANTON

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, September 22, 2020*

Mr. STANTON. Madam Speaker, I offer my staunch support for Savanna's Act and the Not Invisible Act. It is a horrific fact that Native American women face a murder rate ten times higher than the national average, with eighty-four percent experiencing some form of violence in their lifetime. To make matters worse, without a dedicated federal database designated to collecting information on the number of how many Native women go missing or are murdered every year, we do not have the whole picture—this is completely unacceptable. Savanna's Act and the Not Invisible Act begin to address the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

In Arizona, a state home to 22 Native American tribes, we recognize and know the horrors of this crisis. We know that it is a misconception that Native women only go missing on Tribal lands. Studies have shown that the majority of Native Americans and Alaska Native people now live in urban communities, where they also go missing. Violence against Native women spans beyond tribal lands and thus so must the solutions.

I am encouraged to see these bills come to the House Floor for consideration because it has taken us too long to act on this issue. It has taken us too long and lives have been taken and lost. We cannot in good conscience continue with inaction. I support the passage of these bills and hope they are signed into law as soon as possible—we owe it to the Native American women who we have lost and those who are still with us today and worry they might be next.

CREATING A RESPECTFUL AND  
OPEN WORLD FOR NATURAL  
HAIR ACT OF 2020

SPEECH OF

HON. SHEILA JACKSON LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, September 21, 2020*

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, as a senior member of the Committees on the Judiciary and on Homeland Security, and the Congressional Black Caucus, and as a cosponsor, I rise in strong support of H.R. 5309, the "Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair Act of 2019" or the "CROWN Act of 2019," introduced by Congressman RICHMOND, which explicitly prohibits discrimination on the basis of hair texture or hairstyles commonly associated with a particular race or national origin in areas of the law where discrimination on the basis of race or national origin is already prohibited.

It has long been my position that discrimination based on hair texture and hairstyle is a form of impermissible race discrimination.

According to a 2019 report, known as the CROWN Study, which was conducted by the

JOY Collective (CROWN Act Coalition, Dove/Unilever, National Urban League, Color of Change), Black people are "disproportionately burdened by policies and practices in public places, including the workplace, that target, profile, or single them out for their natural hair styles—referring to the texture of hair that is not permed, dyed, relaxed, or chemically altered."

The CROWN Study found that Black women's hair is "more policed in the workplace, thereby contributing to a climate of group control in the company culture and perceived professional barriers" compared to non-Black women.

The study also found that "Black women are more likely to have received formal grooming policies in the workplace, and to believe that there is a dissonance from her hair and other race's hair" and that "Black women's hairstyles were consistently rated lower or 'less ready' for job performance."

Among the study's other findings are that 80 percent of Black women believed that they had to change their hair from its natural state to "fit in at the office," that they were 83 percent more likely to be judged harshly because of their looks.

The study indicated that Black women were 1.5 times more likely to be sent home from the workplace because of their hair, and that they were 3.4 times more likely to be perceived as unprofessional compared to non-African-American women.

Three years ago, the United States Army removed a grooming regulation prohibiting women servicemembers from wearing their hair in dreadlocks, a regulation that had a disproportionately adverse impact on Black women.

This decision was the result of a 2014 order by then-Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel to review the military's policies regarding hairstyles popular with African-American women after complaints from members of Congress, myself included, that the policies unfairly targeted Black women.

In 2015, the Marine Corps followed suit and issued regulations to permit lock and twist hairstyles.

The CROWN Study illustrates the prevalence of hair discrimination but numerous stories across the country put names and faces to the people behind those numbers.

In 2017, a Banana Republic employee was told by a manager that she was violating the company's dress code because her box braids were too "urban" and "unkempt."

A year later, in 2018, Andrew Johnson, a New Jersey high school student, was forced by a white referee to either have his dreadlocks cut or forfeit a wrestling match, leading him to have his hair cut in public by an athletic trainer immediately before the match.

That same year, an 11-year-old Black girl in Louisiana was asked to leave class at a private Roman Catholic school near New Orleans because her braided hair extensions violated the school's policies.

The next year, two African-American men in Texas alleged being denied employment by Six Flags because of their hairstyles—one had long braids and the other had dreadlocks.

And earlier this year, there were news reports of a Texas student who would not be al-

lowed to walk at graduation because his dreadlocks were too long.

The CROWN Act prohibits discrimination in federally funded programs and activities based on an individual's hair texture or hairstyle if it is commonly associated with a particular race or national origin, including "a hairstyle in which hair is tightly coiled or tightly curled, locs, cornrows, twists, braids, Bantu knots, and Afros."

The legislation also provides that the prohibition will be enforced as if it was incorporated into Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin in federally-funded programs, and that violations of Section 3(a) will be treated as if they were violations of Section 601 of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Mr. Speaker, allow me to give another example of why this legislation is necessary and why I support it so strongly.

In July of this year, Barbers Hill Independent School District, just east of my home city of Houston, Texas school district reaffirmed its discriminatory grooming policy that led to the suspension of two Black students earlier this year.

The students—cousins Kaden Bradford and De'Andre Arnold—wear their hair in long dreadlocks.

But the school district forbids male students from keeping their hair at a length "below the top of a t-shirt collar, below the eyebrows, or below the ear lobes."

De'Andre Arnold had complied with the dress code throughout high school by keeping his hair up.

But in 2019 the school board made the code more stringent, requiring that students' hair meet the district's length requirement even if not worn let down, which meant that De'Andre Arnold would have been required to cut his dreadlocks and in the process, destroy them, all in contravention of West Indian cultural traditions that specifically prohibit cutting or trimming locs.

De'Andre Arnold, a senior who had been in the school district since pre-kindergarten, was told by school officials that he would not be able to go to the senior prom or walk in his high school graduation until he cut his dreadlocks.

Mr. Speaker, Black students are and have been disproportionately targeted and penalized for violating facially race-neutral grooming policies that are designed to, and have the effect of, profiling, singling out, and burdening Black children for wearing their hair in its natural state.

Students like De'Andre Arnold should not be faced with the impossible choice of either suppressing their cultural heritage and Black identity by cutting their natural hair or forfeiting their right to equal educational and extracurricular opportunities.

The CROWN Act says to students like De'Andre Arnold and others similarly situated that the Congress of the United States hears him, sees him, and affirms his beauty and dignity and pride in his culture.

I strongly support this legislation and urge all Members to join me in voting for its passage.