UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

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Travelling Hair Pains of the Past:
The Continued Impact of Colonialism on the Construction of Black Women's Hair

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By

Buhle Zulu

ZLXBUH003

Supervised By:

Dr. Gavaza Maluleke

Faculty of Humanities

University of Cape Town

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Abstract

The study of Black women's hair politics is recent. It refers to the existing social discussions and analyses of Black women's hair by Black women. And focuses on Black women's racial, gendered, political, and personal experiences with their hair. It explores how their views relate to dominant societal meanings attached to their hair. Over the years, this conversation has helped Black women voice and uncover how others perceive their hair. They explore these perceptions in the context of race, gender, location, and class. One dominant narrative that has emerged out of this discourse is the recurring issue of emotional pain experienced by Black women with African textured hair. From the early 1980s to the late 2000s, academic studies showed that Black women's pain about their African-textured hair came from historical racial discrimination and Euro-American beauty standards. Furthermore, these studies showed that western biases informed by discrimination target Black women and their hair. The dissertation analyzes the historical relationship between African and American experiences of Black women and Black hair. It explores how slavery connects these contexts. Furthermore, it examines three critical gaps in the association of Black women's African textured hair with pain. Firstly, the dissertation examines how African textured hair got to be associated with pain over the years. Secondly, it traces how racial historical perceptions on Blackness transformed the pain of having African textured hair to be solely centered on Black women. Thirdly, the dissertation explores how biological determinism during the American slavery era led to the perception of associating African textured hair with pain to be a Black female problem. This dissertation argues that the historical habitual tendency to associate Black women's African textured hair with pain, travels and is a repetitive issue that still affects Black women today. This dissertation used the post-colonial feminist research method. It included an in-depth discourse analysis of existing academic literature on Black women's hair discourses. It also analyzed the work of post-colonial (feminist) theorists in the areas of Black Feminist Thought and Transnational Feminism. This dissertation also analyzes contemporary material data from academic journals, newspaper articles, and YouTube material from the early 2000s Natural Hair Movement (NHM).

Keywords: Black women's hair, Black hair, pain, Black hair pain, 'Difference', Natural Hair Movement, post-colonial, transnational transmission, Western constructions, myths, mainstream versus Othered epistemes.

Acknowledgements

Every school holiday, my mom and my aunts would send the grandchildren of the Zulu household to my grandmother and great grandmother, in Soweto, Orlando West. Within a few hours of having arrived, I would often hear my great grandmother, uKhokho, uBusisiwe Mabel Zulu, shouting from the other room; *"Nangu umtwana kaZanele useqalile ngezinywele zakhe! Hawu Babawami! Zipez' kombede, kwamasofa, nasekudleni*!", soon after, knowing a hiding would follow, I would run and hide under my grandmother's skirt. On other occasions, she would just give me a side eye and laugh silently to herself. In 2007, it all changed, when she, overcome by curiosity, calmy asked; "*lento yakho nezi nywele iyaphi vele*?" I gave her an answer of something along the lines of, I wanted to understand hair better, in depth, or stuff like that. In all honesty, I too, never knew where I was going with this hair thing. But that conversation with my Khokho, in the years to follow, stayed with me. All I knew was, I loved playing with hair so much. I also loved talking and writing about it. Hair excited me! In my mind's domain, hair transcends beyond common human values and uses, it is art, it is a form of textile, it is a spark, and it is fire! and as I grew older, I realized that it is a tool that I had unconsciously chose to communicate my thoughts, creativity, and observations in the world. uKhokho uBusi, has since transitioned from this realm to be with uMvelingqangi and those who walked this life path before her, and though I never got the chance to share this realization with her in time, I am glad she got to see me share my love for hair on TV, YouTube, and newspaper articles. I would like to dedicate this thesis to her. This journey would not have been possible without my Gogo, uThembeni Gladys Zulu and my Mom, Juliet Zanele Zulu, thank you for lighting up when you see me walk into the room. Despite my highs and lows, I know that I remained loved and adored. To Sabelo Pule "Khaliba", my best friend! You have added so much light into my life! I am so grateful for you, those jelly tots' chocolates, love, hugs and for always seeing the best in me. I also wish to thank Ushna "Ush Ush" Garach for proofreading my work. To my supervisor, Dr Gavaza Maluleke, I would like to say, it has been such an honor being under your supervision. I am so grateful for your support throughout this dissertation journey.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1. Black Women and Hair

"*So much of [Black women's] hair truths, are attached to so much trauma*"

AAFCA Virtual Roundtable (YouTube, 2022)

For decades, theoretical developments in Black women's hair discourses[1] have revealed that a significant portion of the experiences of Black[2] women, in relation to their hair, is rooted in pain. But how did this come to be? This dissertation aims to interrogate this through the following research question: **How has the African textured hair type become associated with pain over the years?** The above opening quote, taken from Tracee Ellis Ross's docu-series titled *Hair Tales* (2022), has not only attested to how having African textured hair has caused pain for the majority of Black women. In fact, the above remark expressed by one of the African American women who were interviewed for the docu-series last year, indicated that the discussion of Black women's hair in relation to the experience of pain has been an issue that has matured over the years. Historically, American scholars such as, Ayana D. Byrd and Lori Tharps observed that, despite having come into the dawn of a new era where Black women could speak freely and publicly about their natural hair[3], the downside of the new culture of Black women's hair was that,

[1]The term Black women's hair discourses, refers to the existing social discussions and analyses of Black women's hair by Black women. The focus of this discourse is mainly on Black women's perceptions of their hair, in relation to dominant societal meanings attached to their hair. The discussion offers everyday perspectives of Black women on the central topic of their hair. This discourse aids Black women to voice out and uncover how their hair is perceived within the central intersections of race, gender, geographical location, and class.

[2] The terms 'Black' has been previously a highly debated term. In America, this term is inclusive of biracial people (Powe, 2009). This is due to the fact that the American form of racial categorization, recognizes all individuals with a drop of Black blood as Black (Powe, 2009). In the South African example, however, the term 'Black' was used by the South African Apartheid regime, to refer to the 'bantu' people. Mixed identities such as Coloured people, where given a different category through the 1950 Population Registration Act (Oyedemi, 2016:3). As a result, South African people were grouped into four racial categories; White, Indian, Coloured and Black. Post 1994, the South African government also began to use the terms 'Black' to include mixed identities, such as Coloured people and Asian (Kolawale,2002:96). Given the heavily contested history of the term, this thesis centers its boundaries on the use of the term 'Black', to refer to people of African ancestry. In addition, this dissertation employs the following definitions of the term 'Black women'/'African women' to refer to "a group of women from various African countries, they are termed as a group for methodological convenience (Maloiy, 2018)

[3]This dissertation uses the term 'natural hair' to refer to hair that has not been previously chemically altered. There exist contentions regarding the definition of the term 'natural hair' within the diasporic community of Black women. Where some identify 'natural hair' as hair that has no previous exposure to hair straightening chemicals such as the crème relaxer, hair lye, as well as hair dyes. Other opposing debates, state that natural hair should be defined as hair that has not been previously manipulated, whether naturally or unnaturally. The above latter definition of 'natural hair' is not common. The wearing of hair naturally, and without manipulation, has led to hairstyles such as hairlocks, where African textured hair naturally locks itself when left alone. However, the most popular definition of

> "…these conversations have also provided a platform that show[s] the lingering hold of some of the culture's most troubling hair demons. Simply because [a country] was in the early days of a new century did not mean that it had freed itself from the traumas of the past" (Byrd & Tharps, 2001:194).

At a universal level, hair is a multifaceted subject for Black women. It shapes their existence in personal, public, social, and political domains. However, central to this multifaceted subject is the topic of Black women's natural hair. Traditionally, Black women's natural hair is often described as the 4c[4] hair texture hair type, or the African texture hair type. This type of hair has always been discussed as a painful occurrence, with links tied to the racial and colonial history of Black people. In the past several decades, research on Black women's natural hair has evolved. It has become a tradition for researchers to only focus on the recurring issue of how natural Black hair is negatively perceived by Western societal standards (Thompson, 2009:831). In a time with many cross-border and cultural views on how Black women's hair connects to the past, the issue of how this happened and continues today has been understudied. Currently, there is a scarcity of research examining how having African textured hair has become a painful experience for Black women. Yet, in the past decade, Black women have expressed emotional pain about how their natural hair is treated. This is according to several existing Black hair studies. These studies include work by Henning et al (2022), Magubane (2007), Mokoena (2017), *A Focus Group* (2015), and Dixon (2014). To account for why this thesis recognizes the issue of pain in Black women's hair as an important area of interrogation, a detailed contextual background discussion on the politics of Black hair is warranted.

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the term 'natural hair', within Black women's hair discourses, refers to common naturally manipulated hairstyles such as; Afros, sisterlocks, dreadlocks, braids, twists out, Nubian knots, bantu knots, cornrows, short hair hairstyles and bald.

[4] 4c hair, the 4c hair texture, or African textured hair, can be described as hair that is tightly coiled. This term was first introduced in 1998, by hairstylist, Andre Walker. In which his numerical system of classifying hair in human races, "goes from one through four, with A, B, and C variations. The straighter the hair, the lower the letter and number. Most Black women fall somewhere between 3B and 4C" (Byrd & Tharps, 2001:209). In addition, it should be noted that there have since been four hair types found in African people's hair textures, these will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 3.

1.1. Literature Review

1.1.1. The Dominant Narratives in Scholarship on Black Hair

The average Black woman is constantly caught between the option of either wearing her natural hair or altering it through heat and chemical products, such as crème relaxers. She also faces the choice of wearing a weave, wig, or not. The dominant narrative in scholarship on Black Hair has mainly focused on how each of the hair choices stipulated above has played a huge role in how society treats and perceives Black women (Rosado, 2004; Byrd & Tharps, 2001; Madlela, 2018; Madlela, 2020). This scholarship first emerged when Black women were seeking ways to affirm their power as human subjects. They wanted to express their own Black female self-definitions (Collins, 1990:107). The dominant narrative in Black women's hair was mainly driven by the need to understand and identify the places where Western influence and colonialism scarred Black women (hooks, 1989; hooks,1992; Rock, 2009; Carr, 2013). The subsequent narratives that emerged under Black Hair scholarship revealed that the one major colonial aspect that scarred and affected Black women's 'inner lives' was the issue of their hair (Rowe, 2019:25). By identifying the fact that the hair that was used to undermine Black existence was the African textured hair type (Olofinlua, 2020:113), a huge part of Black women's 'inner lives' was affected. The African textured hair type was recognized as the aspect that "…articulated the existence of that which Black women have covered or suppressed, in the interest of self-preservation and self-protection" (Rowe, 2019:23).

This led many American Black women scholars to explore the links between colonial knowledge and the messages imbued in their Black hair. There were three key moments that were explored in the African American racial history. These key moments were mainly; the discussion that hair played a sacred role in African rituals in pre-slavery Africa, the shaving of the enslaved Africans' hair, as well as historical Black hair discriminations. The role that hair played in pre-slavery Africa is often accounted as an important tool in African cultures. African "hair styling signified aspects of one's worldview, tribal ancestry, social status, religious affiliation, marital status, community leadership and power" (Carr, 2013:67; Henning et al, 2022; Byrd & Tharps, 2001; Mbilishaka & Clemons, Hudlin, et al., 2020). The investigation of what Black hair was in Africa, aided scholars

such as Joi Carr (2013) as well as Henning et al (2022) to trace the hair shifts that occurred in-between the voyage from Africa to American shores. This was significant as it showed the scholars how Black hair moved from being an object of pride to being an object of derision. The second aspect that was focused on in African American history included discussions on how the shaving of Black people's hair was a dehumanizing act (Johnson & Bankhead, 2014; Byrd and Tharps, 2001). The issue that was studied was the dehumanizing act of the shaving of enslaved Africans. It disconnected them from their hair practices and African cultures. The act of shaving enslaved African people's hair merged with Western values. Western values saw shaving as "associated with trauma, brutality, and the loss of individuality or strength" (Barkham, 2007). The argument that the above scholars' drove was that this further led to Black people's hair pains.

Vanessa King and Dieynaba Niabaly (2013) further stated that, the above convergence, was supplementarily widened by the divisive practices that slave masters enforced. They wrote, "the importance of hair in determining one's status, became even more apparent during slavery, [where], in the United States, black women with kinky hair textures had to work in the fields while those with a more Caucasian like hair texture were house slaves" (King and Niabaly, 2013:4). This then subsequently, enabled slave masters to implement different values on the varied hair textures of African people's hair. Furthermore, this disruptive practice further influenced the manner of ways in which African people with different hair textures were treated. Dominated by the perception that those with hair that looked Caucasian were better, slaves with African textured hair were "…deemed wholly unattractive and inferior by the Europeans" (Thompson, 2009:833). The African field slaves, especially women, had to wear headscarves to hide their textured hair from white slave owners. The owners called their hair "wool," and found it offensive (Bellinger 2007:64). Even more so, author Carol Antunez (2013), stated that, this divisive practice was not between White masters and Black slaves only, but also it created a wedge between female house slaves and female field slaves. Antunez revealed in her text, "many times the females in the slave masters' household would force female slaves to keep their hair unkempt as a form of humiliation" (Antunez, 2013:12). The third issue that was studied under this scholarship, was the issue of Black hair discrimination. The first example of Black hair discrimination in American history, took place around the time of the enactment of the Tignon Laws. In the early 1700s, "…black women in Louisiana were known to wear their hair in elaborate styles, attracting the attention of white men.

In order to diminish 'excessive attention to dress' among women of colour, Spanish colonial governor Don Esteban Miro, enacted the Tignon Laws" (Nasheed, 2019). According to Nasheed (2019), the Tignon laws, "…required Creole women of colour to wear a tignon scarf (scarf or handkerchief) to cover their hair as a way to indicate that they belonged to the slave class (Nasheed, 2019). This first incidence of Black hair discrimination, targeted specifically to Black women, aided the scholars under this scholarship, to account for the fact that the American slavery era, informed the enforcement of the "wielding [of Black hair] as a social tool for racial rejection throughout American history" (Mbilishaka & Clemons, Hudlin, et al., 2020:591). All the above points studied in this area of scholarship, led scholars to argue that the main reasons that contributed to Black women's pain for having African textured hair were informed by the transitions that took place in American history. Moreover, this scholarship also indicated that, much of the then current experiences of Black historical hair pains, were informed by the societal perceptions that still held colonial and racial ideas about Blackness. This scholarship also enabled scholars to understand why Black women began to transition from wearing their African textured hair, to altering their hair through hair straightening techniques of heat and chemicals, as a necessary shift that sought to protect them from discrimination, as well as open social and work opportunities for them (*AAFCA Virtual Roundtable*: YouTube, 2022). Overall, the general studies on Black women's hair led to the discovery, that hair, for Black women, was both shaped and informed by Western history. However, this scholarship had a few gaps. Firstly, in the studies of American history, the authors under this scholarship hardly accounted for how historical Black hair pains turned into solely a Black woman's problem. This scholarship on African American hair history rationalized hair as a feature that was important to Black women, without stipulating how this became so.

1.1.2. Scholarships on Black hair as a tool of resistance

The scholarships on Black hair and resistance were motivated by pro Black political spheres. With the focus once again on America, a core theme in the African American resistance movements, such as the Black Panther Movement (Garrin & Marcketti, 2017) was to challenge White America's racist system of segregation. The Black Panther movement (Garrin &Marcketti, 2017), in its determination to reject Euro-American centric laws, sought drastic measures such as; sit ins,

protest, and visual tools to refute White domination in America. The use of hair, particularly the naturally manipulated hairstyle, commonly referred to as the Afro, took center stage as a useful tool of resistance for the movement to enforce social change. The pride in publicly wearing African textured hair was particularly important. This is because it sought to counter the Eurocentric ideal standard of beauty (Garrin & Marcketti, 2017:2). Garrin and Marcketti further stated that, "historically in the United States, a cultural preference for Eurocentric features deemed as beautiful ha[d] dominated values of appearance (Garrin & Marcketti, 2017:1). Influenced by the Black Panther movement's notions of 'Black pride' (Garrin & Marcketti, 2017:1), the Afro, from the 1960s historical time, became widely adopted as an example of "culturally contextualized everyday resistance" (Kuumba & Ajanaku, 1998:227).

At a gendered level, Kabura Nganga (2016), stated that, Angela Davis' 1960s arrest, additionally popularized the Afro among Black women (Nganga, 2016:91). Furthermore, the author argued that Davis' popularization of the Afro through her arrest, "…served as a catalyst for [Black women's] re-politicization and re-energisation" (Nganga, 2016:91). Due to the fact that the Afro "…came to symbolize collective identities rooted in Black Pride and other counterhegemonic efforts" (Garrin & Marcketti, 2017:6), scholars under this scholarship often interrogated and problematized the rising normalcy of the harmful and damaging Eurocentric hair choices by Black women (Byrd &Tharps, 2001; Carr, 2013; Rosette and Dumas, 2007; Byrd and Tharps, 2001). The central argument, that arose from the scholars under this scholarship of Black women's hair, was that "these [Eurocentric] hair practices create[d] a safe space for racist ideolog[ies] to simmer silently" (Carr, 2013:63). According to Henning et al, this standard of beauty often depicted "good hair to be long straight and smooth hair, while Black/African American hair that is naturally coiled in texture, as bad hair with derogatory descriptions such as 'kinky' or 'nappy'" (Henning et al, 2022:76; Magubane, 2009). This American historical account of the ways in which Black hair was used as a tool for resistance, revealed the development of the resistance against the Western hair binaries of 'good' and 'bad' hair, giving rise to the scholarship of Black hair resistances. What these scholarships on Black hair resistances sought to highlight in their studies, was the fact that, the perceptions of Black hair as 'bad', coerced Black women back to Eurocentric forms of beauty (Oyedemi, 2016; Mercer, 1991). Other studies, under this scholarship, also furthered the above argument, by focusing on how the African textured hair type is slowly becoming invisibilized from

society, through the notion that it is regarded as 'bad' hair. Toks Oyedemi (2016), further called into question, the manner in which Eurocentric ideal standards of hair, have organized White hair as 'good' and Black hair as 'bad'. She argued that, this organization, coupled with Black women returning back to Eurocentric hair practices, also, "...tends to lead to the invisibility of African hair" (Oyedemi, 2016:1). Khulekani Madlela (2020), described the pain and the reasons of why this invisibilization of Black women's African textured hair is slowly becoming possible. Writing under the topic, *Reinforcing or Reframing Dominant Views? A Discourse Analysis of Black South African Women's Self-Representations of Natural Hair in the Blogosphere*, the author maintained that, "…disparaging and presenting natural hair as inferior may lead to humiliation, low self-esteem, and self-hatred, which in turn may lead to some Black women to internalize and propagate their own invisibility and invisibility of African hair" (Madlela, 2020:20). One important factor that this scholarship highlighted, in relation to this dissertation's topic, is that it revealed that there was a particular treatment that was accorded to African textured hair, that led to the painful experiences of self- hatred and low self- esteem for Black women. This treatment of Black women's African hair, saw their hair being visible in other areas and invisibilized in White dominated spaces. By employing Honneth's 1995 theory of recognition, the author argued that African hair's "Social invisibility [in White dominated spaces] entailed, 'a denial of recognition', which in turn leads to, 'social non-existence'" (Madlela, 2020:20). In addition, this described treatment of African hair as non-existent, led to the emotional experiences of low self-esteem and self-hatred. Madlela's study also revealed that Black women too, similarly, treated their African textured hair in a manner that further invisibilizes their own hair. Madlela, further highlighted that some Black women chose to wear wigs to work as a protective hair style to their natural hair. Of which natural hair, was allocated to be worn on weekends or in private spaces. The author explained that this hair practice of wearing wigs to protect natural hair, also revealed that, the wig, as a "… so-called protective style, conceal[ed] natural hair, thereby rendering it invisible (Madlela, 2020:28). What this scholarship of Black hair resistances, habitually fixated its attention on, was on reinforcing the performance of wearing the Afro, which was seen as a 'symbolic grammar', that indicated the enunciation of Black self-acceptance (Rosado, 2004:62). Since the wearing of the Afro was historically recognized as a symbol of Black activism and Black pride, the Euro-centric hair practices of Black women were seen as the opposite. The grouping of hairstyle practices, to be on either ends of the spectrum, of White and Black, were commonly treated as

immovable foundations. The use of this spectrum, posed, as fact, kept Black women stuck within a Sisyphean cycle, where their wearing, of the hairstyle choices on either end, were interpreted to communicate Black women's political standpoints, which made them dually vulnerable to Black and White criticisms. Whether Black women wear their hair naturally and unnaturally, onlookers in society are left dissatisfied with Black women's hair choices. For instance, if Black women wear their hair unnaturally, there exists a faction that sees them as individuals who hate themselves, whereas, if they wear their hair naturally, there exist those who want to repeat the old Western pattern of discriminating Black women for wearing their natural hair. This discontent with Black women's varied hairstyles choices, has sentenced Black women to an uncomfortable repetitive hair cycle and conundrum. Anderson and McCann (2002), argued that, "it is through the reappearance of subjugated [African practices] …that [Western] criticism performs its work" (Anderson & McCann, 2002:7). As such, the reappearance of Black women's natural hair in the past decades and in contemporary society, has to a great extent, in both Black hair resistance movements and everyday perceptions of Black women's hair, seen an upsurge and reemergence of old colonially constructed discriminations of the African textured hair type. This has typically become a complex problem in this domain. Moreover, the issue of the experience of pain for having African textured hair, is touched on under this scholarship, as White and self-inflicted. As a result, the implication that the hair choices of Black women ought to be imbued with socially imposed meanings, paints Black women as non-active individuals that lack agency and control in their hair choices.

1.1.3. Scholarships on Black hair and pain

A challenging problem which arises in the discussions of Black women's hair and pain, is that it is scattered. This is because there is no specific study that focuses on the issue of Black women's hair with regards to pain. The concept of pain in Black women's hair discourses is touched on in different academic texts. When some texts choose to touch on the concept of pain in Black women's hair, it is usually in relation to issues that pertain to the effects of racial difference. Others, as previously stated, would typically introduce the concept of pain to describe the humiliation of having African hair, which leads to the experience of low self-esteem. Whilst, some would choose to focus on the fatigue and the frequently disheartening position, that sees Black women enduring

emotional pain, due to being expected to constantly explain the reasons behind their 'natural' hair choices, whereas, others centralize the experience of pain as having stemmed from Eurocentric hair practices, that cause scalp damage and hair loss, in the illusive quest of achieving 'good' hair (Byrd and Tharps, 2009). What towers above all in the discussions of Black women's hair and pain, is that the pain in the discussion of Black women's hair is reported to have been caused by outside societal perceptions. Recent works, by African scholars such as Simidele Dosekun (2016), have questioned whether the negative emotions felt by Black women in Black women's hair discourses are imposed by the "…public panics and debates over what [Black] women are doing (Dosekun, 2016:3), where their "…voices, thoughts and desires of the [Black] women in question are little heard" (Dosekun, 2019:3). Situating her text within the discussion of societal impositions of the Black hair practices of weaves and wigs, Simidele contended that the ever-progressive hair and beauty technology of weaves and wigs, and the use of these hairstyles in the lives of Black women in Africa, should not be looked at "..as evidence of a relative racial self-hatred and inferiority complex; as a form of repudiating 'blackness' and sign of desiring 'whiteness'" (Dosekun, 2021:63). The majority of Dosekun's text argues that Black women use the wearing of weaves and wigs, as another form of exploring creativity with their hair. Moreover, Dosekun argues that, contrary to popular Western belief, Black women do not wear weaves and wigs because they hate themselves, but that they use these hairstyles to both play around with their hair and is a hairstyle preference for some. The other category of the scholarship on Black hair and pain, focuses on the Western Euro-American hairstory perception of Black women's hair. In the Euro-American perception, the topic of Black hair sees Black women constantly sensitive to how their hair is talked about in society, which often shows up in instances where Black women have to over explain their choices for going natural (Mokoena, 2017:121). In her 2017 article, *If black girls had long hair*, South African scholar, Hlonipha Mokoena, stated that, even in an attempt to still wear their natural hair as a way of showing self-acceptance, Black women have had to deal with "…the painful fact of defending and/or explaining their choice to go natural continuously" (Mokoena, 2017:121). The author concluded that there has been an uncomfortable complication that comes with having Black hair, "there are no neutral words to write and talk about black hair. Maybe it is the paucity of the English language, but there are simply no words that are not hurtful or potentially insensitive" (Mokoena, 2017:115). Mokoena's observation pointed to the complexity of the issue of hair, particularly for black women, in which, hair, like a fragile wound,

has often become a heavy issue to discuss, because "...every word touches a nerve, including the word "touch" (Mokoena, 2017:115). What Mokoena's discussion of the emotional experience of pain reiterates, is that the emotional experience of pain, is often coming from outside ponderings of Black women's hair. However, other scholars, such as the Canadian academic Shaunasea Brown (2018) have produced findings that show that Black women have since had a different view regarding this matter. Brown, who locates her work within the diasporic position of Black women in the diaspora, where this diasporic position allows Black women to "…make inventive demands on existing political, institutional, and epistemological constraints (Brown, 2018:65), has stated that, the Black Canadian women in her study, have questioned why their hair has to exist to mean something else, instead of just existing as hair, as seen with women who belong to other races. Shirley Anne Tate (2009) reasoned that the negative and positive meanings attached to Black women's hair, particularly their wearing of their natural hair, has coerced Black women to stay stuck in the 'black' performance of wearing their hair according to what is expected from their race (Tate, 2009:7). In addition, other authors such as, Althea Prince (2009) and Noliwe Rooks (2001), revealed the findings that perspectives from outside and inside the Black community, have often judged Black women "…for wearing one's race wrong [in which], hairstyles are often the means others use to determine whether [Black women] are wearing [their hair] right or wrong [in accordance with their] racial identity" (Rooks, 2001:280) and (Prince, 2009:63).

How this thesis' approach differs in relation to the above scholarships on Black women's hair, is that it seeks to further problematize the already existing gaps found in Black women's hair discourses. Through highlighting an age-old post-colonial argument, that stipulates that all existing ideas in society, were socially constructed and are constantly reinforced (Bhabha, 1998:385), this thesis aims to bring the same argument in the discourses of Black women's hair. Firstly, the thesis takes the position that, the discourses of Black women's hair have followed the hairstory of African America experiences as well as Euro-American frameworks of seeing. This Euro-American framework of seeing, on the themes explored in the topic of Black women's hair, has shaped the negative self-inflicting ways of how Black women interact with their hair. By looking at how has the African textured hair type come to be associated with pain over the years? What I seek to understand in this dissertation is how American slavery influenced this association. The sub questions that emerge from this dissertation's research topic are; **What is the pain found in**

having African textured hair? **What are the historical events that influenced this association**? **And how does gender feature in this**? This dissertation argues that negative perceptions about Black hair were colonially constructed. It also argues that the transfer of the idea that the existing issues of the experience of pain, discriminations, and perceptions found in Black women's hair were colonially erected. Furthermore, The dissertation will look at how Euro-American historical ideologies have negatively molded Black hair. As well as how they have turned the negative perceptions of Black hair to be a Black women issue. The dissertation will uncover how this happened. It will also address the issue of pain in the experience of having African textured hair in Black women's lives. The dissertation will then discuss how these unshakeable Euro-American historical foundations have managed to remain repetitive and sustainable over time.

1.2. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this thesis is guided by postcolonial (feminist) theorists. This is because most of the scholars in this thesis are postcolonial theorists, such as Patricia Hill Collins (1986), and Maria Lugones (1987;2008). They are also considered feminist. Through these theorists, the thesis offers a theoretical lens on this dissertation's standpoint on Black women's hair discourses. Furthermore, this section also offers a postcolonial (feminist) theoretical lens. It shows how this thesis defines the major concepts used in the dissertation. These concepts are mainly; Western frameworks of seeing, pain/Black hair pains, and Difference. The concept of difference is further broken down into three parts: cultural difference, racial difference, and gender difference. The concept of Intersectionality is used to enunciate and "denote the various ways in which race and gender interact to shape the multiple dimensions of Black women's [experiences with their hair]" (Crenshaw, 1991:1244).

Post-Colonial Theory:

In a general sense, post-colonial theory is described as a study of interactions between European nations and the societies they colonized (Bahri and Vasudeva, 1996). Post-colonial theorists are constantly trying to show the influence of power imbalances caused by colonizer nations on formerly colonized ones. And they have done this by focusing on a vast number of post-colonial

societal issues. However, central to this thesis is the post-colonial societal issue of masking "…neocolonialism in the guise of modernization and development in an age of increasing globalization and transnationalism" (Bahri and Vasudeva, 1996). Post-colonial theorists, like Homi Bhabha (1984;1998;2008), are concerned that previously colonizer countries not only damaged previously colonized nations but also constructed old damages to survive in contemporary society. This is due to the fact that much of the world has been built on Euro-American/ Western foundations (Bahri and Vasudeva, 1996). The works produced by Dipesh Chakrabarty (2000) and Homi Bhabha, are mainly the lens in which this dissertation sees the argument that is researched. Chakrabarty's post-colonial standpoint, introduced the idea that the rest of the world has always followed Western logic and Western frameworks of seeing. This way of seeing can also be defined as a Western framework of seeing. In this framework, the world privileges Euro-American knowledge production, experiences, and everyday life over Othered ways of seeing. In this respect, this thesis opted for post-colonial approaches. It reveals and contends that repeatedly linking Black women's African textured hair with pain is a pre-planned colonial occurrence. In which it inflicts emotional, personal, political, and societal violence on Black women.

At the same time, this dissertation is aware of the dangers that come with the choice to use post-colonial theory as a vehicle that "helps us describe or characterize the shift in global relations" (Hall, 1995:246). Where this " shift marks the (necessarily uneven) transition from the age of Empires to the post-independence or post-colonization moment (Hall, 1995:246). In *Nietzsche, Genealogy, History* (1978) Michel Foucault, argued that making sense of the past can be dangerous because it "encourages the consoling play of recognitions" (Foucault 1978:153). According to Hall, when we examine history for moments of [colonial]power imbalances, we find that our understanding of the postcolonial moment reinterprets 'colonization' as part of a global process. " 'Global' here does not mean universal but it is not nation- or society specific either" (Hall, 1995:247). Ultimately, Hall explains that we end up understanding pre-planned colonial occurrences this way. This happens because, in our dissection of post-colonial theory, we tend to see colonization as universal. Which Hall suspects, "was always deeply inscribed within us" (Hall, 1995:246).

This dissertation recognizes the above complexities that come with the concept of post-colonial theory. However, it argues that we should attend to the legacies of this pain. By studying the history of colonial black hair pains, we learn how we inherited this pain in the past. Understanding where and how we have inherited this pain allows us to confront "the very question of what it would mean to have a world where the [colonial politics of Black hair] are no longer necessary" (Ahmed, 2004:183). How do we make sense of the assertion that modern-day Black women inherited the colonial Black hair pains of the past? According to Sean Field (2006), whose definition of trauma closely resembles this dissertation's definition of pain, the emotional experience of pain is "created by an event(s) or context(s)…. and refers to the rupturing of an individual's sense of internal and external worlds which leaves post-traumatic legacies such as dissociation, depression, and hypersensitivity" (Field, 2006:31). If events or contexts largely cause the experience of pain to persist, it's crucial for us to interrogate how centuries of Black hair pain affect Black women today. Sarah Ahmed (2004) tells us that emotions are relational (Ahmed, 2004:8). In her explanation of the term 'affective economies,' Ahmed reveals that the type of pain that " impresses upon us may depend on histories that remain alive insofar as they have already left their impressions (Ahmed, 2004:8). She breaks down what she means by affective economies in the following example "

> Emotions are relational: they involve (re)actions or relations of 'towardness' or 'awayness' in relation to such objects. The bear becomes the object in both senses: we have a contact with an object, and an orientation towards that object. To be more specific, the 'aboutness' of fear involves a reading of contact: the child reads the contact as dangerous, which involves apprehending the bear as fearsome. We can note also that the 'reading' then identifies the bear as the cause of the feeling. The child becomes fearful, and the bear becomes fearsome: the attribution of feeling to an object (I feel afraid because you are fearsome) is an effect of the encounter, which moves the subject away from the object. Emotions involve such affective forms of reorientation" (Ahmed, 2004:8)

In the above Sarah talks about the attribution of feeling to an object. The encounter with the object created a feeling of fear for the boy. The encounter with this object then makes the fear of bears' stick. This fear then has lasting effects on the boy's life. The above example illustrates how

emotions operate. The strong feelings of fear, pain, and shame that we encounter in our childhood tend to have lasting effects throughout our lives. The lasting effect of such emotions then ends up being transferred onto other things [or people] who we are in close proximity with (Ahmed, 2004:91) and (Ahmed, 2004:11). Furthermore, emotions such as the fear that the boy felt comprise the emotional process of reorientation. Whereby this reorientation involves the feeling of fear to move through transference (Ahmed, 2004:44).When we critically think about the endless cycle of the experience of colonial Black hair pains by Black women, Sarah Ahmed's text helps us understand that Black women inherited Black hair pains through generational transference and the affective economy of emotions. This happens through the lasting effect of how emotions and associations operate. They leave a lasting impact throughout generations and are further bounded up by the 'absent presence' of historicity" (Ahmed, 2004; 45). This makes the effect of the experience of pain [or Black hair pain] last throughout time.

In dissecting how black hair pains were generationally transferred the looming question that remains is: What force influenced African textured hair to be interpreted as painful? This dissertation argues that the emotional experience of what should be painful was largely influenced by western-centric desires and interpretations. Black hair pain is part of this experience. Western interpretations of pain and Black hair pains often dictate how Othered groups should read pain. This is particularly evident in colonial history, where dominant hegemony commands what should be hurtful and what should not. As a result, this foisting of what Black hair event or experience should cause emotional agony in the lives of Black women implied that Black women (and Black people to a great extent) were devoid of agency. It also implies they lack the ability to give voice to how they experience their African textured hair outside Western impositions. The other aspect of the concept of pain/Black hair pains speaks to how African American women's experiences of pain in relation to their hair have been accepted as a dominant viewpoint. This viewpoint has been subsequently applied to the experiences of Black women in the diaspora. As Hannah Arendt stated, "Men are conditioned beings because everything they come in contact with turns immediately into a condition of their existence" (Arendt, 1998:9). The conditions of African American women's existence during the early days of slavery America saw their perceptions of their hair and the experience of pain, changed by their surroundings in the new country. However, the crucial factor that is frequently not accounted for in Black women's discourses is that the experiences of African

American women with regards to their hair is not the same as the Black women who belong elsewhere. Privileging one dominant view of a group only further thwarts out other differences of perceptions and experience. This dissertation is of the view that the above formulations of the above concepts neglect the truism that other different truths can appear. Difference, as Eleni Marino (2019) states, can be understood "…to be what something or someone is or is not" (Marino, 2019). Kimberle Crenshaw (1991) tells us that "…many of the experiences Black women face are not subsumed within the traditional boundaries of race or gender discrimination as these boundaries are currently understood, and that the intersection of racism and sexism factors into Black women's lives in ways that cannot be captured wholly by looking at the race or gender dimensions of those experiences separate" (Crenshaw, 1991:1244). By using intersectionality as a lens this dissertation intends to explore the many ways in which race and gender intersect in shaping "the structural, political and representational aspects of violence against women of colour" (Crenshaw, 1991:1244). Furthermore, this dissertation takes the standpoint that the difference of experience, difference in identity, and even different ways of knowing, are crucial factors to explore. Patricia Hill Collins' (1986) Black Feminist Theory emerges as a part of postcolonial thought that also highlights the concept of 'difference'. One of the key principles of this theory as Collins outlines, is "first, the definition suggests that it is impossible to separate the structure and thematic content of thought from the historical and material conditions shaping the lives of its producers…therefore, while Black Feminist thought may be recorded by others, it is produced by Black women" (Collins, 1986:177). Whilst this dissertation recognizes that historical conditions in Black women's lives have had an influence in Black women's marginal "'outsider within' status" (Howard-Hamilton, 2003:21), it contends that the historical conditions in America have dominated the viewpoints of Black women in Black women's hair discourses. Which has often made other Black women belonging elsewhere feel as outsiders due to having different views about their African textured hair. This has in turn made Black women's discourses to be one-dimensional and Euro-American in nature. As such, this dissertation employs Collin's third stance on Black Feminist Thought, which speaks to the viewpoints of the Black women in the diaspora. As Collins states, "…while living life as Black women may produce certain commonalities of outlook, the diversity of class, region, age, and sexual orientation shaping individual Black women's lives has resulted in different expressions of these common themes" (Collins, 1986:177). Therefore, this dissertation explores the different uses of 'difference' within Black Feminist

thought, to show Black Feminists' important contribution to creating new ontologies" (Marino, 2019). According to Marino, "…. forms of black feminist thought have appeared over a variety of geographical spaces and historical time periods" (Marino, 2019). By using different geographical case studies as an attempt to get the "full contextual analysis of events…and their interrelations" (Kothari, 2004), the use of Collin's third stance on 'difference' in Black Feminist Thought will aid this thesis to effectively answer its research question. Since Black Feminist Thought centralizes the voices of women belonging to different geographical spaces and historical time periods, the other framework that will assist this thesis in answering the dissertation's research question, is transnational feminism theory. The term transnational feminism, first developed as an umbrella concept as "a way to name the dramatically increasing flows of people, things, images, and ideas across the borders of nation-states in an era of 'globalization'" (Conway, 2019:43). According to Enns et al, (2021), "Transnational feminist perspectives focus on the diverse experiences of women who live within, between, and at the margins or boundaries of nation-states around the globe; they transcend nation state boundaries and speak to a wide range of interacting forces that have an impact on gendered relationships and experiences in a geopolitical context" (Enns et al, 2021:11). The dissertation takes on the theme of transnational transmission, through Maria Lugones' viewpoint, which states the following, "the phrase, 'world traveling' to convey[s] how frameshifting, flexibility, and appreciation for alternative cultural views can be facilitated. The first step involves developing awareness of the cultural practices that shape "us," which involves exploring oppressions and privileges that affect our lives, and considering how these oppressions differ from or may parallel the experiences of women in transnational contexts" (Lugones, 1987:18) and (Enns et al, 2021:14). Lugones, under this framework, also further explores the concept of 'difference'. The author, recognizing colonial 'Difference' as well as the coloniality of gender, further highlights the transnational feminism effort to "see women in transnational contexts as they see themselves and to acknowledge and accept their expertise about themselves" (Lugones, 1987:18) and (Enns et al, 2021:14). In addition, what transnational feminism theory also includes as one of its theory principles, is that, it also holds the view that "implementing a transnational solidarity approach" does not presume that the similar experiences of women from different regions are the same (Enns et al, 2021:16). What this framework, aids the dissertation to do is that it helps it to prioritize the "developing awareness of cultural practices that shape [women], which involves exploring oppressions and privileges that affect [women], and

considering how these oppressions differ from or may parallel the experiences of women in transnational contexts" (Enns et al, 2021:14).

1.3. Methodology

Using Post-colonial feminist methodology as its main research technique, this dissertation studies Black women's othered perspectives on Black women's hair discourses by drawing on qualitative research contemporary materials and using discourse analysis. Post- colonial feminist methodology is a research technique that looks at "the voice[s] of those who have suffered the sentence of history, which includes domination and subjugation…in an attempt to challenge dominant discourses that shape the manner in which society is structured" (Anderson & McCann, 2002:9). This method is instrumental in establishing and identifying which groups of people this dissertation will be looking at. For example, at a post-colonial level, the method aids the dissertation in identifying Black people as a previously and historically subjugated group. At a gendered level, the research technique aids the dissertation in determining Black women as a group that has been previously overlooked and marginalized in history.

The hair that is researched in this dissertation is the hair of the people that this research technique identifies as racially othered and female. As such, this dissertation's data selection process looked at the views of Black women on the topic of their African textured hair, from mainly contemporary material, such as newspaper articles, academic journals, books as well as YouTube material. Contemporary material, in accordance to how Qualitative research defines it, is material that is taken from "individuals, events and contexts" (Gerring, 2017:18), where the compilation of these materials is crucial especially when "…not much is known about a subject" (Gerring, 2017:20). In addition, the selection of this contemporary material was chosen through the technique of purposive sampling. According to Gaganpreet Sharma (2017) "Purposive sampling, also known as judgmental sampling, selective or subjective sampling, reflects a group of sampling techniques that rely on the judgement of the researcher when it comes to selecting the units (e.g., people, cases/ organizations, events, pieces of data) that are to be studied" (Sharma, 2017:751). Furthermore, "these purposive sampling techniques include maximum variation sampling [such as]…typical case sampling [and] extreme (deviant) case sampling" (Sharma, 2017:751). Much of the contemporary material selected, ranged from typical cases in Black women's hair discourses,

to deviant hidden ones. “The term ‘typical’ does not imply that the individuals were selected at random when the sample size was calculated. Instead, the word ‘typical’ relates to a researcher’s comparing the findings of a study utilizing usual example sampling to that of related research” (Thomas, 2022:4). The typical cases that were selected under this discourse, were the ones that have been previously used and written about to perpetuate the historically colonial idea that African hair is connected with pain. This thesis looked at newspaper articles, YouTube material and academic texts that have been regularly circulated to reinforce the negative and concealed implication that Black hair is undignified, undesirable and should be seen and associated with pain. Other typical materials that were selected, also looked at how Black women’s hair choices and practices, which did not center on African hair, were a sign of Black women’s self-hatred. Deviant data material refers to unusual cases that are not typically given attention or are considered rare in the research field that is studied (Sharma, 2017:751). The deviant data material chosen, looked to other Black women’s viewpoints on how their hair practices-which were not inclusive of wearing African hair- are not necessarily indicative of self-hatred. Moreover, the deviant material data that this thesis chose complicated Black women’s hair discourses. In that, they brought forth how Black women’s hair choices, regardless of what hairstyles are worn, indicate the society’s need to keep Black women in a Sisyphean cycle of seeing, wearing, and understanding their historically stigmatized natural hair with pain. Furthermore, this thesis uses the research technique of discourse analysis in the collected contemporary material, to uncover and shed light on the unseen factors in this dissertation’s research topic. Discourse analysis can simply be defined as “a research technique that allows [researchers] to systematically analyze the hidden and visible content in communication messages” (McDougal, 2014: 265). This thesis chose this method, based on the fact that this method allows for an in-depth-analysis on the veiled messages and communication tactics, employed by the dominant hegemony’s influence on Black women’s hair discourses. Furthermore, discourse analysis is more concerned with societal relations, their meanings and how they construct the world (Madlela, 2018:22). By analyzing how Black women’s discourses are written about in academic journals, texts, newspaper articles and YouTube material, and what is frequently promoted and posed as truth, the thesis aims to provide a critical analytical account of the covert ways in which the dominant hegemony still controls and subjugates Black women through their hair. This thesis analyzed full academic texts, journals, newspaper articles and YouTube material in juxtaposition to, what post-colonial (feminist) theorists say about race,

gender, and geographical location, as well as, how these factors inform social relations and perceptions on Black women's hair. This dissertation chose to use mixed sources in its research to gain a more comprehensive understanding of its research question. John Mingers (2011) accounts for why the approach of using multiple sources is useful. He writes "it was found in practice, particularly with complex, "wicked" problems, that many aspects of the situations, especially those concerning peoples' viewpoints and values, could not be represented [or studied] with only using one source" (Mingers, 2011:3). He further adds that "rather than using just a single method or source, theory and practice have demonstrated that most complex problems are better tackled using a combination of these" (Mingers, 2011:3). As such this dissertation chose to use multiple sources for this reason. The analytical strengths of using multiple sources are that the researcher is able to draw out varied information on a particular research topic. Moreover, since people express their views on their chosen social media platforms, the researcher is thus able to see the similarities and differences that are expressed on a topic such as Black women's hair/ the politics of Black hair (Mingers, 2011:3).

1.4. Limitations

The limitation that this study encounters is firstly, that this study does not conduct interviews. As such, the subsequent constraint that this study faces, is that majority of the data, that was selected, was digitally extracted. Much of this data, came from a group of Black women, who have digital access to smartphones, in which, this access, has enabled them to partake in social media platforms such as YouTube. From a South African standpoint, in which the majority of its Black population, particularly Black women, is unemployed and as such cannot afford smartphones nor partake in social media discussions and trends (Modise, 2022), the dissertation faces a limitation in how Black people from this region currently think about Black women's hair discourses. In addition, the majority of the data that is used is not current. Much of the data used in Chapter 2 looks at old historical material, with a few exceptions of scholars who have written on the subject in the past two years. Moreover, Chapter 3 also looks at old social media material from YouTube, and as such faces the difficulty of elucidating whether the Black women studied have since changed their views on the topic of their hair. This thesis also recognizes that most newspaper platforms inform their readers on a subject, with a certain aim in mind and as a result, some of the information that is portrayed in the discussion of Black women's hair may be biased (Kim, 2008). The bias also

extends to the large mass information of African American women and their hair experiences versus the experiences of African women elsewhere. This disproportionately unbalanced the dissertation's direction and discussion on the politics of Black hair. In addition, newspaper platforms are at times funded by the very dominant Western hegemony that this dissertation critiques and as such a full scope on the issue of Black women's hair may be omitted based on the risk of driving out an undesired message.

Chapter 2: The Travelling Pain of Black Women's Hair through Racial and Gendered 'Difference'

2.1. Introduction

Actress Jada Pinkett Smith's hair style choice at the 2022 Oscars (See *Figure 1*) exposed an uncomfortable Black hair issue that the global Black community has "always hovered on as a historical possibility" (Mamdani, 2002:6). The uncomfortable Black hair issue in question is that the global Black community has adopted the colonial modus operandi of controlling Black women's hair choices. Whilst some hairstyle choices such as straight and long lace frontal wigs, weaves, as well as 3c hair textures are encouraged on Black women; hairlessness, 4c textured hair, dredlocks and sisterlocks are often harshly frowned upon. For Black women this uncomfortable hair issue has often come with the experience of pain. It is a known historical fact that the pain that Black people have with their hair is predominantly caused by slavery (Magubane, 2007). However, what is gradually becoming apparent is that the Black community has also played a major part in the perpetuating and imposing colonial Black hair pains on themselves.

Figure 1:Photograph by Mike Coppola/Getty Images on Dawn Chen's online newspaper article on *Harper's Bazaar* (Coppola, 2022) shows the hairless/bald Jada Pinkett Smith at the 2022 Oscars.

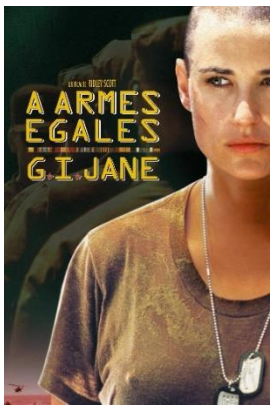

Figure 2:The official poster of the *G.I Jane* film (1997) features a picture of actress Demi Moore hairless.

At the 2022 Oscars, the event's host Chris Rock, made the following joke, "*Jada, I love ya. G.I. Jane 2. Can't wait to see it*" (Rose, 2022). The "G.I. Jane" joke was a reference to a 1997 American film (See *Figure 2*). The film's story centers on a female lieutenant who had to completely hide her femininity to solidify her position as a Navy Seal, by shaving her hair (Shennan, 2022). Moments after Chris Rock made this joke, Will Smith shouted, "Keep my wife's name out of your f*cken mouth" (Benson, 2022). Will then walked up to the stage where Rock was standing. He slapped Chris Rock on the face, returned to his seat, and continued to slur insults at Rock. Throughout this Rock did not physically react, but instead, attempted to move on from what had transpired. Much of what was dominant in the discussions surrounding this incident, which was later referred to as, "the slap that launched a thousand takes" was, the issue of violence between the two Black men (Rose, 2022). Some people applauded Rock for not reacting, while others saw both men as neither wrong nor right (Rose, 2022).

What was interesting to observe was that Jada Pinkett Smith, who was the third person involved in this story, appeared to be completely left out. Unlike many Black women who decide their hairstyles out of preference, *The Inquirer* online newspaper article reported that Jada's hairstyle choice was informed by an autoimmune health condition formally known as alopecia areata (Shennan, 2022)[5]. According to the newspaper," Pinkett Smith revealed in 2018 [that] she suffers [from] alopecia, an autoimmune disease that has caused her to lose her hair, which has been emotionally painful" (Wellington, 2022). However, even after this fact resurfaced, Jada's alopecia condition was met with reactions similar to that of Australian comedian, Jim Jeffrey, who stated "Do you really think that Chris Rock knew that Jada Pinkett Smith had a condition? There's been other things on the news. Ukraine's been happening; I haven't been keeping up on Jada's hair. She's had that haircut before. It's not unprecedented for her to have that hair" (YouTube: *This Happened*, 2022). In *All about Love: New Visions* (2000), bell hooks explained how when we

[5] Alopecia is the medical term for hair loss (Shennan, 2022). According to the National World People writer, Shennan, "There are a number of different forms of the condition. Usually when someone is talking about alopecia, they are referring to alopecia areata, which is believed to be an autoimmune condition that causes hair to fall out… in round or oval patches on the scalp or other areas of the body where hair grows, like the beard, eyebrows, or lashes" (Shennan, 2022). Furthermore, Shennan explains that according to the British Association of Dermatologists (BAD), "…'the hair is lost because it is affected by inflammation' and while the cause of this inflammation is unknown, 'it is thought that the immune system, the natural defense which normally protects the body from infections and other diseases, may attack the growing hair…Why this occurs is not yet understood" (Shennan, 2022).

mock the wounds of someone's pain we are in actuality shaming them (hooks, 2000:232). She further added that through our shaming we often end up silencing wounded victims (hooks, 2000:231). In *Venus in Two Acts* (2008), Saidiya Hartman tells us that the constant silencing and shaming of women has turned Black women into"…commodities [that are] tossed with insults and crass jokes" (Hartman, 2008:2).

A *Platform News* writer who also noticed this in Jada's story stated that "Rock's implication that he can't wait to see her [Jada Pinkett Smith] in *G.I. Jane 2* was insensitive. It attempted to continue a long- standing tradition where Black women are often the ones on the receiving end of quips about their appearance and are still expected to roll with the punches and laugh it off" (Baker, 2022). The issue found with the absence of hair on Jada's head highlighted a historical colonial imposition. Historically, hairlessness in public was seen as a form of punishment and disgrace (Montier, 2015:2). Moreover, the nonchalant reactions she received after the news of her alopecia condition resurfaced; causing her as a result to opt for a hairless hairstyle choice, revealed how Western colonial doctrines on hairlessness have had generational cascading effects on Black people's complex relationship with their hair. Furthermore, Jada, the host, her husband, and the joke made about her choice of hairstyle, also subsequently exposed how both Black men and Black women partake in the continuation of this pain. In addition to the above, the incident at the 2022 Oscars further revealed that much of the bodies that experience these pains tied to Black hair have overtime become Black women.

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What I want to explore in this chapter is the various ways in which "…race and gender interact to shape the multiple dimensions of Black women's" hair experiences (Crenshaw, 1991:1244). I want to explore how this pain has emerged along with the historical influences of difference that allowed it to thrive. In addition, I want to also explore the role that these differences have played in normalizing Black women's experience of pain with having African textured hair. I will problematize and complicate the concept of difference in three parts to explore this. Starting firstly with cultural difference, then racial difference and finally, gender difference. This chapter will begin by tracing the early formations of the experience of pain for individuals who had the African texture hair type, in both the colonial histories of America and countries in Africa. Next, this chapter will look at how this pain began to develop as it passed through key historical moments.

Lastly, this chapter will then look into how the pain of having African textured hair transitioned from being an African person's problem to be seen as solely an African woman's problem.

2.2. What is the Pain found in having African Textured Hair

In the *Staging the Politics of 'Difference': Homi Bhabha's Critical Literacy* 1998 interview, Homi Bhabha, suggests that the hegemonic social ideas that have had a great impact in society, are the ones that have always been previously negotiated and constructed before their existence. He states, "…the real power of the political is the power of understanding how the political object, aim, or constituency was actually a result of the ethical and practical labor of construction and negotiation" (Bhabha, 1998:385). In an attempt to try to uncover the manner in which the African textured hair type of Black people was negotiated and constructed to be understood as inferior and to cause pain, this chapter turns to the American history of slavery as its beginning point.

Figure 3:The Coloured lithograph of John (Doyle, 1832) shows Lord Goderich shaving, and Lord Howick shoeing, a group of slaves.

American academics such as Kenneth Stampp (1956) and Gaines Foster (1990) argued that when slavery occurred, it caused a particular kind of pain. Whereby this pain was inflicted on African people on a physical, mental, and psychological level. According to W.M. Brewer, Stampp's book *The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South* showed "…that slavery violated every fundamental of the dignity of man" (Brewer, 1957:143). Whilst Foster, exploring the presence of the guilt experienced by the white enslavers in America stated; "Trapped by their interest in slavery, white southerners tried to convince themselves that [slavery] was right "by making the black man 'different,' setting him outside God's law, reducing him to less than human" (Foster, 1990:669). Scholars who held a similar view to that of Stampp and Foster, often pinpointed the beginnings of the violation of African people's human dignity as slaves to have started on the slave cotton plantations (Thompson, 2008:1). However, for the scholars who chiefly focused on the history of African people's hair (see Byrd and Tharps, 2001; Jacobs-Huey, 2006; Patton, 2006; Rooks, 1996; Henderson, 2011; and Thompson, 2008), their contention was that the experience of pain began around the moment where the hair of African slaves was shaved off. African American hair historian Amber Henderson (2011) defended her support of this school of thought by presenting the following argument; "during the transatlantic slave trade, enslavers collected approximately 300 Africans at a time, and before they set sail, every slave on board would get their hair cut off for sanitary reasons" (Henderson, 2011:9) (See John Doyle's lithograph illustration in *Figure 3*). Henderson furthered her argument by stating that the act of cutting the hair of African slaves was the first infliction of pain. She argued that this was due to the fact that this meant that African slaves were forced to enter America "…without their signature hairstyles, [where] Mandingos, Fulanis, Ibos, and Ashantis, [would enter] the New World, just as the Europeans intended, like anonymous chattel" (Byrd &Tharps, 2001:10-11). Andrew Powe (2009) strengthened Byrd & Tharps and Henderson's argument by stating that,

> "with this maneuver, an important marker of cultural identity was neutered. Apart from not having combs, as they were accustomed in Africa, and in addition to working long hours and even seven days a week on the plantations, the Africans had neither the time nor the inclination to care much about their appearance, including their hair. The work the slaves performed decided how they wore their hair: in the

fields, the women wore head rags, and the men took to shaving their heads, wearing straw hats, or using animal shears to cut their hair short" (Powe, 2009).

For these scholars the most dominant conclusion that was reached was that the shaving of the African slaves' hair along with having to remove their different hairstyles, were the denudations that first caused the experience of pain for African slaves. Whilst the above conclusion is plausible, it presents a few problems. For this to make sense, we need to be critical of the four following facets; who are the writers? For whom are they writing? Which location are they from? And in what lens? From a Black feminist level, the vast majority of the above scholars writing about the Black hair histories of Black people in America, are Black women. In "…challenging [the] political-knowledge validation process that has resulted in externally defined, stereotypical images of Afro-American womanhood" (Collins, 1986:177), the above African American scholars wrote from a female African American world sense.

However, the conclusions that these scholars give become problematic from a geographical level. What the above majority of the above scholars are doing, is pouring their own White American influences as well as their African American positionalities and own knowledge framework, about what would have caused pain for the African slaves. In the White American knowledge framework, the concept of understanding, the act of shaving hair to mean pain, is closely linked to White religious perceptions which, were further cemented into the Eurocentric political position of the West. In this Western religious politically informed position, the shaving of hair is viewed as the highest form of punishment, done, with the end goal of causing pain to the person on the receiving end (Montier, 2015:1). When this Western framework of seeing, trickled down to African American generations, it led the new generation of African American scholars, to interpret the Black historical occurrence of shaven hair, with pain. When African American historians are left to explain emotions of how the slaves coming from Africa would have felt, they fall into the tendency of reimagining their enslaved African ancestors having felt pain. They find themselves left with the option of, as Bhabha states, "…pour[ing] the cement of their own theoretical position[s] into the fissure [and incomplete information about African perceptions] and cover it up" (Bhabha, 1998: 368). What is this pain that is found in relation to having African textured hair? Based on the above, the answer to this question can be summed up in the following way. The

pain found in having African textured hair can be described as, a Western dogma of agony. It previously gained its meaning from White religious connotations with shaven hair. These formulations informed the generations of previously shorn enslaved Black people to view the absence of hair on their head as "a symbol of [Black] ignominy" (Montier, 2015:2).

African American scholars imposed their Western understanding of pain into the historical experiences of different African ethnic groups arriving in America. They critiqued White hegemony. But they missed the chance to explore fissures in African American slavery history. They also failed to challenge stereotypical perceptions. This means they played a part in inflicting Black hair pain. While this dissertation recognizes that erasing the choice to represent your body in a certain way is a violent act particularly during the American slavery era. It argues that African American scholars wrongly assumed that pain was interpreted the same during the colonial and American slavery era. What I mean by the above statement is that their understanding of the concept of pain is very similar to that of Western values. Audre Lorde (1984) in *The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle The Master's House*, asked: "What does it mean when the tools of a racist patriarchy are used to examine the fruits of that same patriarchy?" It means that only the most narrow parameters of change are possible and allowable" (Lorde, 1984:110). As such their critique of Western hegemony only highlighted certain issues of race in relation to Blackness. The choice to use Western perceptions of pain as a part of their critique limited the complexities of the full pre-colonial African person and experience. In the same vein, what this chapter seeks to highlight is that the pain of having African textured hair is a socially constructed Western ideology. This pain is further complicated by African American academic texts on Black hair histories. These texts use the same tools and definitions used to historically oppress Black people as their main framework for seeing. As such the African textured or shaven hair pain discourse on the contemporary moment, is informed by this framework of seeing. Thus, perpetuating colonial Black hair pains in an epistemic, cultural, and political manner.

2.3. African Cultural Difference as Socially Undesirable

Western historical definitions of pain and the Western framework of seeing are not the only reasons why the African textured hair type came to be associated with pain over the years. Both African and African American scholars emulate this American framework of seeing. They face a challenge,

especially when they are looking into the history of African people's hair practices before they arrived as slaves in America. The first is that they look at African people's history of hair in such a way that what they write about highlights African people's cultural difference in belief. However, they naturalize African people's idea of pain to be the same as the West. This supports the American framework. It also makes Western perceptions of humanity universal. For instance, as will be shown below, when African and African American scholars write about historical African hair practices. They often overemphasize these practices to have come to mean spiritual and integral to African society. This is a fact. However, the unattested implication here is that the shaving of African people's hair would spread "the death of God" like an infection throughout their prevailing understandings of truth, the self, rationality, and morality (Connolly, 1985:367). As such, the zoned-in focus on African people greatly pedestals hair as central to their culture. There's no mention of short hair in the described hairstyles of the Mandingos, Wolof people, and so on. This is the main takeaway for American scholars. It twists the history of African people. It distorts them as people fearful of removing hair. When this curated-distorted fear meets the American form of punishment to be the removal of hair, it universalizes the American framework of seeing. To unpack this, let's start with the manner in which researchers write about African hair practices.

Lebogang Matshego (2020), states that "as early as the 15th century, different [African] tribes used hair to show one's social hierarchy. Members of royalty wore elaborate hairstyles as a symbol of their stature" (Matshego, 2020). Furthermore, children, young adults and married people in ancient African communities wore different hairstyles, to differentiate African people through different stages of their lives (Matshego, 2020). Matshego's account implies that hair was a central force driving many African customs. This is evident in countries such as South Africa. For example, Zulu people, a Nguni ethnic group found in South Africa, use beads, different hairstyles, and various types of head dress to differentiate between a young girl (See *Figure 4*), young woman (See *Figure 5*), and a married woman (See *Figure 6*) (Mayr, 1907:640).

Figure 6: The black and white photograph provided by Fr. Mayr (Mayr, 1907) shows a picture of a young married Zulu woman. Mayr tells that "by the hair-dress one can see at once that it is the picture of a young married Zulu woman. The typical top knot is formed with the hairs of the centre of the head, which are sewn together with the fibre string and then greased with sour-milk-grease mixed with red ochre. This topknot is undone from time to time to train the hair into a higher and higher cone-shaped mass. Sometimes one meets a woman whose top-knot is fully 18 inches in height. The rest of the head is shaved with the exception of a few strings of hair left in front hanging down over the eyes and ornamented with beads and brass rings. The strings of hair hanging over the forehead is called *isicelankobe*. By the circlet of bead work (*umnquazi*) worn round her head we see that she lives with her father-in-law or brothers-in-law" (Mayr, 1907:640)

Figure 4: - The black and white photograph provided by Fr. Mayr (Mayr, 1907) shows a picture of a young Zulu girl. "This girl has no other clothing or ornament except the *isigege* i.e. square of beadwork with bead-string round her body. The girl's head is shaved in Zulu style, {isiguqa), reminding one of a poodle dog. Shaving is done either with a knife or a piece of a broken bottle without soap" (Mayr, 1907:639).

Figure 5: The black and white photograph provided by Fr. Mayr (Mayr, 1907) shows a picture of a young Zulu woman. "This girl of about 18 years of age has beads sewn into her hair and round the neck a string of beads of different size, mixed with scent balls. This kind of necklet would be called *amaxube* or mixture and the head ornament *izinwele ezifakiwe ubuhlalu* or hair with beads" (Mayr, 1907:640).

Matshego's data brought forth, the information that African people held hair at a higher regard. Johnson and Bankhead (2014) further validate Matshego's account. They state, "hair has maintained a spiritual, social, cultural, and aesthetic significance in the lives of African people… this role is amplified due to the unique nature and texture of Black hair" (Johnson & Bankhead, 2014:87). Therefore, as the above authors collectively stated, Black people's experience of hair pain can be understood to have begun in America. White enslavers cut enslaved African people's hair, separating them from African cultural and spiritual practices. Hair held a major connection in African culture and spirituality. However, the reasons given for why African slaves' hair removal caused them pain and cut them off from their spiritual culture have one major loophole. Taking Albert Camus' contention that, "What I believe to be true I must therefore preserve" (Camus, 1991:18), is the question: what prevented enslaved Black people from preserving these beliefs? The belief that African slaves didn't shave their hair because they believed it would mean giving up their spiritual connection and thus causing pain, is flawed. This is because this belief is based on the incomplete knowledge about African people and the multi-dimensional relationship they have with their hair. To understand how White enslavers imposed the notion of difference on enslaved Black people, we need to unpack what the term "difference" means. Difference can be defined as distinguishing someone, or a thing, based on what sets it apart from the rest. However, the manner in which difference was used in history of the shaving of the enslaved Africans, was unusual. In its original post-colonial and feminist definitions, the term "difference" denotes an empowering lens in which varied truths and nuances are made visible (Marino, 2019). However, the type of difference discussed here refers to the early conceptions of how being different was recognized as a characteristic that necessitated White colonial violence. This can also be defined as cultural difference. Cultural difference is when "various beliefs, behaviors, languages, practices and expressions" (Mighty Recruiter, 2023) are considered unique to members of a specific race or national group. These differences typically become a target of White discrimination (Mighty Recruiter, 2023).

One major issue not given enough attention by the above scholars is White colonial reactions to cultural difference. White coloniality displays power through violently defining those it finds different as subjects. In their book, "*Culture, class, and cognition: Evidence from Italy*," authors Nicole Knight and Richard Nisbett (2007) said that Western social practices have historically

encouraged independence by expressing differences (Knight & Nisbett, 2007:283). Further advancing the authors' statement, Na, et al (2010), illustrate in their studies that cognitive perceptions in countries, such as the United States, are characterized by a Western social orientation valuing independence. This emphasizes uniqueness, has low sensitivity to social cues, and encourages behaviors that affirm autonomy (Na et al, 2010:6192). Unlike the African societies mentioned earlier, Western hegemony hardly functions on interconnectedness. At its core, it operates on difference. .However, through its colonial conquest practices, Western colonialism thwarted cultural difference through violence. The concept of cultural difference is integral to Black people's association with pain, especially with regards to their hair. This is because it unearths the major conditioning practices of Western hegemony. The first dimension of this practice is the use of violence to display power. Difference, as a concept, was often used as "a signifier. It is brought into being as a system of language through the meanings it creates" (Marino, 2019).

In *Foucault on Freedom and Truth* (1984), Charles Taylor illustrates the negative uses of difference to highlight a subject. He explains, "the notion of power or domination requires some notion of constraint imposed on someone by a process in some way related to human agency" (Taylor, 1984:172). White enslavers, by shaving enslaved Black people's hair, believed Black people connected their hair to religious practices, so they violently enforced hair limitations on enslaved Black people. It can be seen from the above, that it was through the negative use of difference, and the use of Western doctrines into "…contemporary culture [which] impos[ed] itself, as a strongly conditioning model for some, and forced deculturation for others" that caused hair pains for African people (Sachs, 1971:22) This is also what led African people in America to pinpoint this historical occurrence as their first encounter of experiencing agony. This was enforced through being told that they were different in such a way that they were beneath the White enslavers. Which saw them being denied the freedom to carry their hair customs with them. This process then thus saw African slaves being violently overpowered by Western culture. William Connolly (1985) complicates cultural difference. He answers why Black people did not preserve the Western hair practices imposed on them. In his paper, the author argues that "the most [violent and] expressive articulations are not simply the creations of subjects (Connolly, 1985:367), instead the author states that White enslavers, would "…rather have the power to move us because they

manifest our expressive power itself and its relation to our world" (Connolly, 1985:367). As a result, African slaves did not preserve their beliefs. They were, "...in this kind of expression...responding to the way [American] things [were]" not how they were (Connolly, 1985:367). Put differently, African slaves responded to the external slavery conditions of their existence. They did not base their response on their own beliefs about their hair, but on the imposed ideas of their hair and pain (Arendt, 1998:9). .

This ties in with the other issue that arises with the way American historians write about shaving the hair of African slaves. As previously discussed, the shaving of hair is talked about in such a way that it leaves the reader with the underlying message that shaving hair is an alien practice to African people. American scholars such as Joi Carr (2013) attempted to expand the imposed definition of Black hair pains. They argued that the slave conditions in America were not the only factor that prevented African slaves from tending to their hair. They also claimed that the lack of access to African hair tools caused them to "suffer… scalp disease, physical pain and shame" (Carr, 2013:66). However, predominant American history texts do not discuss that scalp diseases, the wearing of headscarves by enslaved African women, and African men choosing to keep their hair short or bald were reconditioning tactics. These hairstyle choices came to represent lack of dignity, invasion, and public humiliation. Short hair and bald hairstyles were reconditioned as negative "social and cultural ideas…through [African] bodies" (Magubane, 2007).

This century-long reconditioning has managed to find its place in the present. The visibility of short hair and bald hairstyles on African women's bodies is negatively imposed as undesirable. This was witnessed in the recent case of Jada Pinkett Smith at the 2022 Oscars. Her choice of a bald hairstyle turned her into a public spectacle. Contrary to the above reconditioning and distorted understandings of African people's hair, African people were not unfamiliar to the act of shaving hair. For instance, in the South African tradition, different ethnic groups often link the act of shaving hair to mourning a close family member's death. Baloyi and Rabothata (2014) and Makgahlela et al. (2021) stated in an online article that, "according to the traditional African worldview, death is a transition into an eternal spiritual existence as an ancestor or 'the living dead'" (Baloyi and Makobe Rabothata, 2014). To make this transition run smoothly, there are a couple of strict protocols and rituals to follow. "Bereavement rituals in black South African

cultures before and after the burial include...ingesting specially prepared herbs, shaving the head, wearing mourning clothes, and undergoing ritual cleansing after the traditional mourning period elapses" (Makgahlela et al., 2021). In addition, the above African traditional way of mourning is one that is considered important in ensuring that the spirit of the said deceased person is at peace. In the African American hair history, the information given about black slaves having their hair shaved is limited. What was known about Black hair pains was "extrapolated from an analysis of the ledger or borrowed from the world of captors and masters" (Hartman, 2008:2). When we consider a different outlook that accounts for Othered ways of knowing, we are left to wonder: how were these Othered ways of knowing interpreted in the midst of the dominant narrative that claims the shaving of African people's hair was both painful and alien?

Taking from Saidiya Hartman's question, "is it possible to construct a [hi]story from 'the locus of impossible speech' (Hartman, 2008:3)," I wonder how an African slave in America, taken from the Southern regions of Africa, may have interpreted this act of having their hair shaven. Could they have silently thought, 'What is being mourned?', especially considering that this question, is mostly informed by their different world-sense and reference point? In essence, by unpacking the differences in how the act of shaving hair is viewed, I am contending that the American understanding of shaving hair as painful was a negotiated and constructed idea, as previously mentioned in my use of Homi Bhabha's quote. America's history of slavery by African American female scholars stipulates that the African slave viewed the shaving of their hair as painful. In South Africa, findings about the practice of shaving hair suggest a striking difference in how the act of shaving hair is interpreted in both regions. This leads us to reinterpret the mainstream historical data about African slaves and their hair differently. The way the West viewed what was painful and what was not, was an imposition bestowed upon African slaves in the US. Ergo, through unpacking how cultural difference operated we witness that pain was imposed. This imposition administered the act of shaving African people's hair. It was seen as a moment of the experience of 'hair pain' for African slaves. Moreover, this further reveals that there is evidence of nuanced and differing experiences on the subject of Black people's hair. The globally accepted White framework of seeing leaves these unattended.

However, these differences of interpretations and experiences of events cannot only be realized solely by comparing one country to another. People who simultaneously experience the same event

in the same region may have differing interpretations and experiences. This is highly probable. In his 1998 book, *Globalization: The Human Consequences*, Zygmunt Bauman stated that "not every person sees the world from the same place, so not all views are equally valuable" (Bauman, 1998:57). Therefore, "just as people and places were colonized, so were "ways of looking." This includes how Black people look at themselves" (Powe, 2009). According to Johnson and Bankhead (2014), during the Medieval African period (12th -/13th century), a young Wolof girl would partially shave her head (See *Figure* 7) to show that she was not of marrying age (Johnson & Bankhead, 2014:87). One would likely see, if they reimagined this Wolof girl's experience in the context of American slave history, that she would view the act of having her hair shaven from a different perspective. This perspective would be influenced by her previous cultural conditioning. Here, we witness another way in which difference takes form. In the above, difference is "complicated [as a] nuance of what is 'true' or 'factual' [which] can help further our pursuit for material and lived social justice" (Marino, 2019).

Figure 7: The black and white photograph provided by Général Fortier (Fortier, 1900-1912) shows a picture of a young West African Wolof girl. In the picture her hair is partially shaven at the back and sides. She has bit of hair in the front center of her head (Met Museum, 2024)

Neglecting the non-dominant views of individuals who didn't see having their hair shaved as painful, suppresses counter stories that challenge dominant views (Howard-Hamilton, 2003:23). Moreover, most slaves came from different parts of the continent and spoke different languages. As an already marginalized group, it becomes difficult to imagine how Black slaves would have come together to form such a unified stance about the act of having their hair shaven as painful.

2.4. From Racial 'Difference' to Hair 'Difference'

According to Khulekani Madlela (2018) "Western difference is often explained in biological terms" (Madlela, 2018:26). The first difference noticed by White enslavers was their skin color. They distinguished themselves from Black people based on this. "The term 'race' can be defined as a distinct biological group of people who share inherited physical and cultural traits that are different from the shared traits in other races" (Encyclopedia.com, 2021). However, the terms, "Race and racial differences do not really exist. Rather, they have a social reality-they exist within, [in both] the context of culture and the environment" (Encyclopedia, 2021). The American slavery period brought into existence the social reality of race and racial difference. At a race level, racial relations during the American slavery period, were based on what Hortense Spillers referred to as the "hieroglyphics of the flesh" (Marino, 2019). According to Hortense Spillers as cited by Eleni Marino (2019), "These hieroglyphics can be thought of as etchings from the past left on the skin. They defy temporal restrictions and are read and reproduced in the same or similar manner in the present. These etchings gain their meaning and significance through (Black) skin" (Marino, 2019). At a stretch, these etchings can be attributed to originating from the dominant Western beliefs of the time. Which was mainly Christianity. This religious belief tied the principles of what blackness meant in accordance with what was said about blackness in the Christian Bible. According to an excerpt in this biblical book of faith,

> "Ham, saw his father naked, and told his two brothers [that he saw their father naked]. Unlike Ham, these brothers covered Noah's nakedness, and avoided looking at his naked body" (Brodie, 2023). It is stated in the Christian Bible that, "upon hearing this, Noah cursed Ham [and also] his son Canaan" (Brodie, 2023). "Cursed be [Ham and] Canaan! The lowest of slaves will he be to his brothers" (Brodie, 2023).

The etchings of the past, from the Bible, explained what blackness means. In the early days of slavery, people reproduced these etchings to justify enslaving Africans. These etchings of the past denigrating black people come from the early days of the Enlightenment era, between 1750 and 1807. The Enlightenment era argument had two parts. On one end, it argued that liberty was a natural human right (Monticello, 2023). On the other hand, "Enlightenment reason…[also] provided a rationale for slavery, based on a hierarchy of races" (Monticello, 2023). During this era, enlightened scientists and anatomists studied the physical structure of the black body, including skulls and human evolution, to justify the enslavement of African people. Differences found with African bodies were used as reasons to place the race of African people at the lowest tier within the human race hierarchy. Andrew Curran (2011) states that "…blackness changed from a mere descriptor in earlier periods into a thing to be measured, dissected, handled, and often brutalized" (Curran, 2011). This is also witnessed in Zine Magubane's statement about the story of Saartjie Baartman as well as her statement on the use of the term nappy hair – a portmanteau combining the possibly derogatory word "nappy" (meaning natural untreated African hair) and "natural" hair (Mokoena, 2017:113).

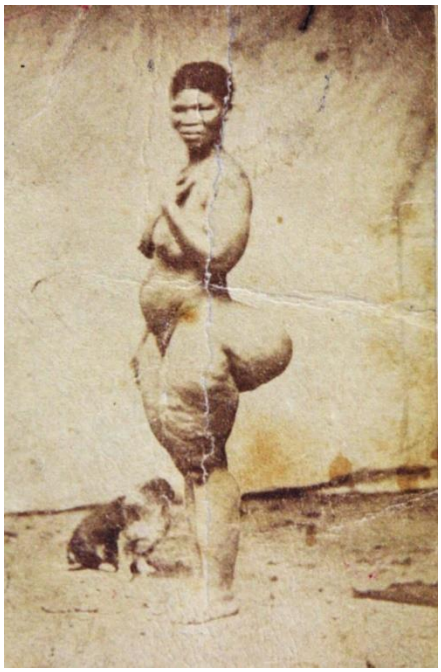

Figure 8: The photograph provided by Paul Ray Odhiambo Obino (Obino, 2022) shows a picture of a naked Sarah/Saartjie Baartman taken in the 1800's. In the photograph her hair is short.

Magubane explains that, “Saartjie Baartman, a South African ‘bush[wo]man’, was exhibited like a circus freak in the shows of London between 1810 and 1815. George Cuvier, the leading French anatomist of the day, speculated that Baartman might be the ‘missing link’ between humans and animals because of her ‘peculiar features’. They included her ‘enormous buttocks’ and ‘short curling hair’ (Magubane, 2007).Magubane adds that, the biological differences found on Baartman’s body were later was used by White enslavers, such as Thomas Jefferson, to argue that African people had no place in the American and human society (Magubane, 2007).

“In ‘Notes on the State of Virginia,’ Thomas Jefferson reflected on why it would be impossible to incorporate blacks into the body politic after emancipation. He concluded, it was because of the ‘difference’s ‘both physical and moral’. Chief among them, was the absence of long, flowing hair” (Magubane, 2007). Marino (2019) emphasizes that “in this way blackness as difference [was] constructed in an immoral way in order to dehumanize and control Black subjects. This construction of Blackness is historically specific. It transcends time and space” (Marino, 2019). However, the above arguments that saw the pigmentation and race of African people as the pinnacle characteristic and reason to enslave them were not sufficient.

“The planters [did] not want to be told, that their Negroes are human creatures” (Nabugodi, 2022:3). So wrote Mathelinda Nabugodi in her 2022 article titled Afro hair in the time of slavery. The author explains that the West then turned to other aspects and features of African people to further make their stance stronger. They did this by using hair. Edward Long (1774) stepped in at the time when debates over the legitimacy of African slave kidnappings were at an all-time high. In his text, History of Jamaica (1774), Long “illustrate[d] the political significance of describing Afro-textured hair as wool” (Nabugodi, 2022:3). According to Nabugodi, Edward Long’s text “serve[d] to defend and naturalize the kidnapping and enslavement of Africans to work on Jamaican plantations” (Nabugodi, 2022:3). It is further stated that “Long observe[d] [on] his own account of Africans [that]…the first characteristic he single[d] out is skin color, the second [was the way in which he described African people’s hair as] “a covering of wool, like the bestial fleece, instead of hair.” (Nabugodi, 2022:3). Nabugodi contends that “the wording [was] significant—African hair is not curly like wool it is wool instead of hair” (Nabugodi, 2022:3). It seemed from Long’s description of African people’s hair that, what was implied, was that the wooly texture of

African people was similar to that of other livestock such as sheep. Ergo, as Nabugodi concluded, "the unstated implication of [this was] that if Africans belong to a woolly sheep-like species, it is morally justifiable to use them like cattle" (Nabugodi, 2022:82). The shaming of African people through their type of hair texture, also shows up here. Tying back to the 'hieroglyphics of the flesh' taken from past ideas and theories about the lower status of African people through religion and science, the decision to "call an African man's hair 'wool' because it has a tight coiled hair texture [was] to implicitly (or perhaps not just implicitly) insert the African into the order of animal nature, alongside other objects of study such as goats and ibexes" (Nabugodi, 2022:3). This argument rebutted the debates of those who questioned what the other side of the Enlightenment era stood for. They asserted that freedom was a human right (Monticello, 2023). It also further solidified that African people weren't human and that by employing them to slavery there was no human harm done. From this, hair type became the single valuable factor for Europeans to carry out slavery. Moreover, Andrew Long's organization of the frame of thought of African hair being similar to that of livestock, macro-aggressively shamed African people during this colonial period. Why, we may ask, was it the responsibility of African people to carry this shame, through their hair? And subsequently a shame that turned out to be heavily internalized by African women years later? Akwugo Emejulu and Francesca Sobande (2019), Eleni Marino (2019) and Angela Davis (1981) answer the above questions. Emejulu and Sobande in their text To Exist is to Resist: Black Feminism in Europe, state that "The 'Europe' of secular liberalism is not possible without the subjugation of colonized people" (Emejulu & Sobande, 2019:5). Marino puts it differently; "In order to know to what Man and human is, we need to have its opposite, [White praise, in this regard] can only exist with each marker's corresponding opposite" (Marino, 2019). It is not far-fetched then, to apply what Marino, Emejulu and Sobande presents, to the event of what happened to African people's hair, when it transitioned from humans in limbo, to bestial cattle-like suppositions. The takeaway then is the following; for White hair to be praised as beautiful, there must exist the shaming of Black hair. This difference found through African textured hair, described as wool, became one of the driving reasons that were integral to why Black women associated their hair with pain. The following section expands on this.

2.5. Are Colonial Black Hair Pains a Black Woman's Problem?

Another reason why African American women linked their hair to their experiences of pain were the ways in which gender was defined during the American slavery era. The definitions of gender during the slavery era excluded African female slaves from the White constructs of gender, thus making them feel inferior. In her 1981 book, Angela Davis explores the deeper meanings of this statement. As previously discussed, the shaming of Black women existed in proximity to the praising of White women. Thus, making White femininity "…a [dominant]side to black [women's]beauty" (Carr, 2013:58). By problematizing the painful process of the ungendering of Black women during the slavery era, Davies's book unveils the nature of how shame works. Sarah Ahmed (2004) states that, "…despite its recognition of past wrongdoings…[shame]can still conceal how such wrongdoings shape [the] lives in the present" (Ahmed, 2004:102). Ahmed states that ultimately "…the work of shame troubles and is troubling [in a sense that it] exposes some wounds, at the same time as it conceals others" (Ahmed, 2004:102). In this section we will witness how the shaming of the hair of Black women during the era of slavery was rooted in the decision to not recognize African American women slaves as women. Davies's contextual explanation on this lack of recognition adds an interesting layer, especially in our dissection of the development of African women's pain with their hair through the act of shaming. Ultimately, Davies's book helps us understand how and why the colonial Black hair pains of the past solely became a Black woman's problem.

The author begins by unpacking the slave system for us. She writes, "the slave system defined Black people as chattel" (Davies, 1981:11). And "since women, no less than men, were viewed as profitable labour-units, they might as well have been genderless as far as the slaveholders were concerned. In the words of one scholar, "the slave woman was first a full-time worker for her owner, and only incidentally a wife, mother and homemaker…Black women were practically anomalies" (Davies, 1981:11). During this era, Black women "…were not women in a gendered sense because of the way gender was constructed at the time" (Marino, 2019). The way in which gender was constructed at this time was that white women were seen as the mothers, and housewives. Ergo, "slave women could not be the 'weaker sex' or the 'housewife', which were two central meanings attached to the definition of a gendered woman" (Marino, 2019). Marino

adds that this was due to the fact that "the gendered 'ideal' woman was white, but most importantly a mother. Therefore, slave women where denied this gendered signifier because they could not be mothers, as they were only considered breeders i.e., birthing children for pure economic exploration" (Marino, 2019). Davies emphasizes this point in her text when she states the following, "In fact in the eyes of the slaveholders, slave women were not mothers at all; they were simply instruments guaranteeing the growth of the slave labour force. They were "breeders"-animals, whose monetary value could be precisely calculated in terms of their ability to multiply their numbers" (Davies, 1981:13). What this categorization and positionality of Black women during American slavery communicated, was that Black women couldn't be feminine or seen to fall in the category of women since they were not human. What separated African female slaves from being seen as women, were the differences found between their non-gendered status and White women's gendered status. Among many differences found between African female slaves and White women during this era, the most stark one was their hair. Black women's gender difference was enunciated through their lack of ability to have long flowing hair, a common biological trait that was found in the gendered status of White women. Viewed by their state of inferiority through their hair texture, African American women slaves began to gradually look to other physical characteristics from white women in which they could imitate from, but long hair always held the most weight. And this persisted throughout generations. Womanhood, had to feature straight and long flowing hair to be deemed as such. Black women had neither.

Tracing this in *Hair: Untangling a Social History* (2004), Penny Howell Jolly made the following observation: "Two ideals concerning women's hair have had remarkable longevity in western society: it should be long and its colour should be blonde" (Jolly, 2004:47). The ideal that Penny is talking about here, that hair had to be long had a particularly huge impact in the lives of Black women. It meant everything. This even meant risking one's health to achieve it. The practices of turning African textured hair straight weren't always healthy and were often harmful (Byrd & Tharps, 2001: 196-197). During this era, stretching African textured hair involved the use of hot stones and metal irons. These kinds of hair practices were not always safe. However, these practices lessened the shame felt with not having long straight hair. As well as the shame felt with not being gendered as women. "This is why shame has been seen as crucial to moral development; the fear of shame prevents the subject from betraying 'ideals', while the lived experience of shame

reminds the subject of the reasons for those ideals in the first place" (Ahmed, 2004:106). The lived experience of the shame of being regarded as a non-feminine ungendered anomaly, not only reminded African women of the White female gender ideal, but also played a part in coercing the hair choices of African women during the slavery era in America.

The slavery era's shaming of the ungendered African woman with short hair has since left an interesting legacy. The story of Jada Pinkett Smith at the 2022 Oscars exemplified how Black women of today are forced to " …enter the contract of the social bond, by seeking to approximate a social ideal" (Ahmed, 2004:107). The social expectation in the case of Black women is to have and wear long hair. This is why when Jada showed up hairless at the 2022 Oscars event she was humiliated. And the main reason behind this was due to the fact that she had broken the contract of the social bond to wear long hair. Sarah Ahmed described this as suffering shame due to the "…affective cost of not following the scripts of normative existence" (Ahmed, 2004:107). Ultimately, what Davies's book helps us find, is the links between the pain and shame felt by Black women through their ungendered status. As well as how this status negatively influenced their choice to alter the appearance of their hair. The book, however, doesn't help us answer the question of how the Black people play a part in imposing colonial Black hair pains on themselves. And especially on women. If shaming individuals shows us how past injustices live in the present (Ahmed, 2004:102), what can the positionality of the one doing the shaming tell us? Intersectionality offers itself as a lens to dissect the above question effectively. In the case of the African women slaves, it was easy to see that the pain and shame inflicted on them was predominantly racially charged. This was due to the fact that the individuals who were doing the shaming were White[6]. However, what we witnessed at the 2022 Oscars was how a heterosexual Black man[7] shamed a heterosexual Black woman. My objective in simplifying both Jada and

[6] Being shamed by a White individual whilst belonging to a different non-White race is a topic that is being still written about today given its influence on race relations and power imbalances. For Sarah Ahmed (2004), what this meant was that "We live in a [world] that is historically Aryan'.2 This alignment of family, history and race is powerful, and works to transform whiteness into a familial tie, into a form of racial kindred that recognizes all non-white others as strangers, as 'bodies out of place' (Ahmed 2004).

[7] I am in no way saying that Black men are the reason for why Black women's hair politics are asymmetrically gendered. That would be an unfair assertion to make. Colonial Black hair pains affected and still affect not only the lives of Black women, but of Black men as well. However, it is crucial for the reader to recognize that the experiences of Black women cannot be "…subsumed within the traditional boundaries of race and gender discrimination as these boundaries are currently understood" (Crenshaw, 1991:1244). In 1989 and 1991 Kimberle Crenshaw taught us that "…the intersection of race and racism factors into Black women's lives in ways that cannot be captured wholly by looking at the race or gender dimensions of those experiences separately" (Crenshaw, 1991:1244). To explore dimensions of race and gender together means to recognize the multiple and historical forms of discriminations imposed on Black women and their hair. As previously discussed the discriminations that

Rock's societal positionalities is to illustrate that even though Black men do share the same racial (Crenshaw, 1991:1266) and colonial hair pain experiences with Black women (Ricciardelli, 2011:189), it is important for us to note that Black women were the only group of people who felt the pain and shame of being labelled as ungendered anomalies. As a result, making the compounded experience of being ungendered anomalies solely theirs. As such, the pursuits and efforts that Black women took to reverse this labelling, through adopting straightening hair practices, intensified their experience of Black hair pains. Both Black men and Black women experienced the Black hair pain of their hair being described as wooly and the cattle like. However, Black women had to bear an additional brunt to this Black hair pain by being expected to alter their hair in order to be validated as women. The erasure of agency to present their hair in certain ways is what also contributed to their doubled experience of Black hair pains. Thus, making their experience of Black hair pains different to that of Black men. The dominant conceptualization of attributing long hair as quintessentially feminine and womanly has left Black women and their hair subject to violence. For example, Black men can wear long hair and short hair without as much as being criticized from deviating from "the scripts of normative existence" (Ahmed, 2004:107). The *Thirsty Roots* website stated that Black male singers such Omarion, Rapper Bow Wow as well as Lloyd have often received praise for how they wore their hair (*Thirsty Roots*, 2023). However, as witnessed in Jada's case, Black women are shamed and met with violence when they deviate from the social expectations of adorning long hair. By recognizing that Black men did also experience colonial Black hair pains, this dissertation is by no means stating that they did not play a role in imposing these pains on Black women. In fact, this dissertation argues that to a certain extent they did.

Black men played a role in imposing colonial Black hair pains on Black women. They did this through the following ways; joking about the hair of Black women (in public or private settings), their choice of partners by mentioning that they preferred Black women with long hair, and through financially enabling the hair straightening practices of Black women. Lastly, Black men played a

made Black hair pains a Black woman's problem were mainly; not being recognized as women in a system that had clear gender categorizations , leaving Black women with no category of their own. Which in turn, coerced Black women to prove their womanhood through dangerous and harmful means in order to achieve the long hair ideal. The above discriminations and subsequent consequences of them thereafter is what eventually made the pain of having Black hair a Black woman's problem. As this problem endured throughought centuries on end, Black women found themselves splitting their energies between being Black and trying to prove their womanhood, since the intersection of both their race and ungendered slave status was understood as an anomaly. This double disadvantage limited and controlled their hair choices.

role in imposing colonial Black hair pains through their indifference. Enzo Angileri, a designer who styled the buzz cut on the actress who played G.I Jane in the action movie, told *The Insider Newspaper* (2022) "…he didn't know that Pinkett Smith had alopecia…[and that though]…even once he learnt the background, it still didn't make sense to him that Pinkett Smith rolled her eyes at Rock's joke." (*The Insider Newspaper*, 2022). However, reactions that are similar to that of Enzo Angileri risk driving out the assertion that men are not aware of the relationship that women have their hair. In Chris Rock's case, the commitment by his defenders to view his joke about Jada as 'cute' and 'benevolent' (*The Insider Newspaper*, 2022) blinds us from the truth that men, especially Black men, are aware of the relationship that Black women have with their hair (Byrd & Tharps, 2001:208) and (*Good Hair*, 2009). The history that Chris Rock has with the topic of Black women's hair- in which he co-produced the documentary *Good Hair* and his recent joke- attests to the fact that Black men are aware of Black women's struggles with their hair. And in this awareness they play a part in binding Black women to the social expectation of wearing long hair. In *Colourism and the politics of beauty* (2014), Aisha Phoenix tells us that what Black men consider attractive in Black women influences the beauty and hair practices of Black women. She writes, "heterosexual men of colour often perpetuate colourism [and the hair choices of Black women] by demonstrating it in their choice of partners, or in their descriptions of what they consider attractive in women" (Phoenix, 2014:98). When it comes to their hair preference on Black women, Byrd and Tharps inform us that in actuality "…[men] admit that the one trait that still reigns supreme [is] length. Long hair is associated with femininity, and a lot of men feel it is a part of their idea of what a woman should look like" (Byrd &Tharps, 2001:208). This social preference for Black women with long hair is also further encouraged and enabled by Black men, usually through money. Byrd & Tharps further tell us that, in Chris Rock's 2009 *Good Hair* documentary, there were "…multiple scenes where men claim[ed] they pay for their girlfriend's or wife's weave even though it is hard on their working-class pockets" (Byrd & Tharps, 2001:201-202).

Maria Lugones (1987) in her paper titled *Playfulness "world"-travelling and loving perception*, looked at societal systematic factors that have often kept women imprisoned in frameworks of seeing. She posed the following question "what it is to be ourselves in their eyes" (Lugones, 1987:18). Among other systematic and oppressive factors such as colonialism, male privilege, is also a form of power that influences frameworks of seeing about who Black women are and should

be (Enns et al, 2020:14). As stipulated earlier in this chapter, the experience of Black hair pains has had negative cascading effects in the lives of people who identify as Black. However, even with a shared colonial and communal experience of Black hair pains, Black men have played a significant role in the violent reconditioning of Black hair pains to be solely a Black woman's problem. In addition, Black men have become indifferent to the gendered transition of Black hair pains; which was first an experience they shared with Black women. Maria Lugones (2008), in her discussion of The Coloniality of Gender, attests to this. According to the author, there is an "intersection of race, class, gender and sexuality [that exposes] the indifference of men" (Lugones, 2008:13). Lugones further argues that these men do not form a part of the common white laymen but rather that, they too are "men who have been racialized as inferior" (Lugones, 2008:13). Black men also form part of this group. What is at the core of Lugones' argument is that there is a tendency of indifference exercised by Black men in which they are indifferent and unsympathetic to the "systematic violences inflicted upon women of colour" (Lugones, 2008:13). The above reactions by Black men to impose Black hair pains on Black women are by themselves a form of shaming. In Chris Rock's case, the decision to not take Jada's suffering seriously and to "to make light of it or even laugh [at her hair choice]" (hooks, 2000:232) is an example of shaming. Ultimately this way of shaming reminds Jada of her failure to approximate an ideal (Ahmed, 2004:106). Moreover, Enzo Angileri and Jim Jeffrey's remarks about why the issue of Jada's hair not a big deal is also a form of shaming. In *All about Love: New Visions* (2000), hooks best described it as the following " The belittling of anyone's attempt to name a context within which they were wounded, were made a victim, is a form of shaming" (hooks, 2000:232).

Amidst the above strong defenses of why Colonial Black hair pains are a Black women's problem. There is one issue that we have yet to resolve. And that issue is the issue of how the African framework understood gender, beauty, and hair. Oyěwùmí's 1997 and 2011 texts aid us in making sense of this. Firstly, the issue of Western biological determinism, which, as Davies illustrated, saw the construction of gender being solely based on "privileging the visual over other senses" (Manicom & Oyěwùmí, 2001:134). Oyěwùmí's (1997) The invention of Women: Making an African sense of western gender discourses, demonstrates how, contrary to the West, African societies such as the Yoruba society did not construct nor see gender in the same way. Desiree Manicom and Oyěwùmí (2001), state that "In pre-colonial Yoruba society the human body was

not constituted as gendered, and not used as a basis of social ranking. According to Oyěwùmí the ranking of individuals was dependent on seniority, which was defined by relative age. Furthermore, social positions were relational and situational, constantly shifting rather than essentialised" (Manicom & Oyěwùmí, 2001:134). Furthermore, "the underlying differences between western and Yor[uba] society lies in their construction of social reality. Yor[uba] society privileges the visual as well as the auditory; the knowledge system is both visual and oral, based on the physical and the metaphysical (Manicom & Oyěwùmí, 2001:135). In her 1997 text, Oyěwùmí explains that based on Western definitions of what was termed as woman, when it comes to the Yoruba society this did not exist. She writes "In light of the foregoing…the concentration of feminist scholars on the status of women-an emphasis that presupposes the existence of 'woman' as a social category always understood to be powerless, disadvantaged, and controlled and defined by men- can lead to serious misconceptions when applied to the Oyo-Yoruba society. In fact, my central argument is that there were no women –defined in strictly gendered terms– in that society" (Oyěwùmí, 1997:5). On point of language and auditory uses found in the Yoruba language, Oyěwùmí argued that unlike western languages, the Yoruban language did not have gendered pronouns and further makes the argument that many terms, for social relations in the Yoruba society were non-gender specific (Manicom & Oyěwùmí, 2001:135). Oyěwùmí, when it comes to her investigation of the constructions of gender in an African society such as the Yoruba society, brings forth to us, the different ways in which gender was viewed in these societies. Her exploration of how gender was viewed in the Yoruba society, through the use of non-gender specific refences, illuminates us to the fact that, other African societies also have these similarities, such as the Xhosa people found in South Africa. Pamela Maseko (2017), in her seminar of women identities in Xhosa societies, stated that "Amongst amaXhosa, gender is not used to explain social relations. Instead, social relations are organized around age, rank, social eminence gained by ability or achievement and kinship, not around the body type" (Maseko, 2017).

When conflating Oyěwùmí's argument, to that of Davies, what shows up is that, African society, were not concerned with heavily focusing on the physical body, as this was not a priority in their way of life. And when we look at physical markers of traits such as hair, we witness that hair was used for other spiritually related customs in these societies. Unlike the American context where beauty is looked at from the outside looking in, focusing on appearance and White mimitecism,

Oyěwùmí in her 2011 text, accounts for a different perspective and way of seeing beauty in the African context. She writes "("If someone [a woman getting married] is going to the husband's house in the olden days, they would say, 'Go with character (ì wà) and not beauty (wwà).' We used to sing a song: 'There are deceptive plantains [fruit that looks good on the outside but proves to be rotten on the inside]. A beautiful woman without a good [moral] character (ì wà) is of no real value.' If she has beauty (wwà) of the face and has no character (ì wà)—it [her beauty] is of no real value"(Oyěwùmí, 2011:55). This stance brings a different way in which beauty was seen and perceived in some regions in Africa, making us realize that Western images of Africa has often taken Africans and African women as ugly, as they did not have and look like European white women who performed a different kind of beauty. The concept of beauty for African women has, over the centuries that followed, transitioned from prioritizing character and other African values, to being about the physical performance of outside beauty. Black men in Africa, particularly in the early days of being introduced to the Euro-American notions of beauty, had seemed to embrace the transitioning White beauty preferences of Black women. However, over time, as Mougoué states in her text titled *African Women Do Not Look Good in Wigs: Gender, Beauty Rituals and Cultural Identity in Anglophone Cameroon,* [from] *1961-1972,* there seemed to be a "… historical moral panic over women's changing modes of appearance in the former West Cameroon" (Mougoué, 2016:2). The author details that while the contemporary age had "…new technologies such as wigs and cosmetics conferred social success and visibility, they also attracted disapprobation from some quarters. Just how much women were to beautify themselves, the fine line at which one crossed from supposedly respectable, modest, and modern femininity to excess and shame, was also in contention" (Mougoué, 2016:3). When Homi Bhabha made the following observation; "Time passed and time future, what might have been and what has been, point to one end, which is always present" *Homi Bhabha* (YouTube, 2008), as such, it can be seen from the above, that the following historical developments; Violent White reactions to African cultural difference, racial difference and gendered difference, are the historical influences that led and influenced Black women's hair in past, have found a way to catch up to the Black women in the present. For African American women such as, Jada Pinkett Smith, and other Black women in the African diaspora, there seems to be no exit door, for which to escape the pain caused by old colonial constructions in their present. Their systematic abuse, due to having African hair texture it seems, will forever be "a never-ending process" (Madlela, 2020:27-28).

Chapter 3: The Continuation of The Colonial Hair Pains of the Past: The Things We Have Never Seen Before

Figure 9: The photograph provided by Anita Bonsi (Bonsi, 2016) on her 2016 *She Leads Africa* article, shows a group of young Black girls at the Pretoria High School for Girls protest in 2016. As pictured above, the young girls are wearing different hairstyles. Two of the girls visible in the picture are wearing the naturally manipulated hairstyle commonly referred to as the Afro. The third girl whose face is not visible is also wearing an Afro. The fourth girl at the back (visible in the picture) has her hair in cornrows (Bonsi, 2016).

3.1. Introduction

In 2016, South Africa witnessed the Black women in the country experiencing a colonial issue connected to their African textured hair. “On 29 August 2016, a protest broke out, because black schoolgirls' hair was against the school’s policy concerning the dress code” (Matjila, 2020:16). The young girls at the Pretoria High School for Girls, were told at their school, that as “…black learners [they should] straighten their hair in order for it to be considered neat according to the

school's code of conduct" (Alubafi et al, 2018:1-2). *In The Shifting Image of black women's hair in Tshwane (Pretoria),* South Africa, Mathias Fuba Alubafi, together with Molemo Ramphalile as well as Agnes Sejabaledi Rankoana (2018), argued that the incident at the Pretoria High School for Girls brought forth the resurgence of past 'hair debate[s]' (Mokoena, 2017:122), that saw the South African population in former decades being categorized into four different racial groups through "the farcical 1950 Population Registration Act" (Oyedemi, 2016:3). Alubafi et al, concluded that "…as a result, black South African women's hair has remained constantly in motion, searching for recognition and acceptance" (Alubafi et al, 2018:1). The authors concluded that "the public's reaction to the incident was mixed but it pointed in one direction—to the country's past racist policies." (Alubafi et al, 2018:1-2). What became clear from this incident, was that, the country's "past overt discrimination, oppression," (Henderson 2011: 6-7) and other values of colonial racism (Erasmus, 1997:12) are very much still operating in the present. The experience and the continuation of how having African textured hair is associated with the experience of pain, like in the American context, is also evident here. The similar pains of African textured hair in both countries highlight the fact it is connected to coloniality. But that this colonial perception of associating African textured hair with pain, is constantly travelling, and transforming. And can often be missed in contemporary society as it always emerges rebranded. This chapter focuses on American resistance movements like the Natural Hair Movement (NHM). In contemporary times, the rebranding of the same colonial message about African textured hair stands out. The tactic is to aid Black women in embracing their natural hair, while also oppressing them by making them wear their hair a certain way. This chapter seeks to understand how past colonial Black hair pains persist in today's society.

The reemergence of the early 2000s Natural Hair Movement (NHM), is not given much attention in the impact of hair on African American women's collective identity formation, hooks' (1991), explanation of cultural resistances, causes us to rethink the NHM's previously premised stance, of being seen as a non-threatening and socially progressive movement. In Ashley Garrin and Sara Marcketti's 2017 paper, hooks is quoted as stating the following, "culture holds a duality, in that it can help to promote oppressive values, but can also be a source of resistance and liberation" (Garrin & Marcketti, 2017:5). Taking the ways in which movements operate in societal culture, can we accuse the NHM for simultaneously driving these dualities into our contemporary society?

In being careful of not taking hooks above stance as the final word on this matter, I want to explore in this chapter, Bhabha's notion of the "unbearability of endlessness" *Homi Bhabha* (YouTube, 2008), in terms of how this state of endlessness, in the pain of African women's hair discourses and the invisibilization of the 4c hair texture hair type, has remained sustained. In this, I want to test and question, whether the NHM has had a role to play in the continuation and rebirth of African women's colonial hair pains of the past. Or whether, was it African women's collective reference points of systematic abuses, and their actions and interpretations of the movement, that drove the continuum of colonial constructs about their hair and hair type, within African women's hair hierarchy diasporic communities? Or was it, as Joi Carr (2013) stated, the power of colonization in the mass media, that has "...mediated [its constructs] through technology and the media" (Carr, 2013:64)? When it comes to the discourse of the continual rebirthing of colonial hair pains of the past by the White hegemony, can we really say that this endlessness of inflicting pain in the most vulnerable part of African women's "inner lives" (Rowe, 2019:23) which is their hair, is an ideology implemented to never reach a culmination? I want to find out where this hegemony's goal is headed; is it, to sustain its colonial doctrines in matters of hair, or, is the main goal towards the necropolitical (Mbembe & Meintjes, 2003:11) death of the African women's 4c hair texture hair type along with other African hairstyles that allow this 4c hair texture hair type to live? Keeping the boundaries of this interrogation within America and South Africa, I want to look at the early conceptions of the movement in America, the key pioneers of the movement in the regions and investigate what pans out from the movement's rise. Simultaneously, I want to explore the same in the South African context. What happened in both contexts as the movement evolved? Furthermore, I want to explore the matter of transnationalism in both regions and how the 3c[8] hair texture hair type came to be seen as African American women's and African women in the diaspora's desired collective identity hair type. I will be looking at American and South African YouTubers around the early days of the movement, as well as how this impacted and led to the

[8] Simply put, the term 3c, or 3c textured, is often described as the type of hair that has looser curls, and its most commonly seen in individuals who have a biracial background or mixed parentage or descent (Oyedemi, 2016:15). This type of hair texture is not only evident in people who have parents who belong to different racial groups, but also who have a generational mixed background. South African celebrity, Pearl Thusi, serves an example of this. Thusi, who has both Black parents, has had to constantly explain to the South African public that, though she has biracial physical characteristics- mixed race hair and is light skinned- (Robbins, 2002:105), she is in fact Black and only looks biracial because of her racially mixed family history (*TshisaLIVE*, 2017).

rise of inter global accessibility and transmission, which thus worsened the maintenance of old colonial hair pains of the past.

3.2. Black Hair Resistance Movements: What is the Natural Hair Movement

To understand the NHM in depth, we must first understand what is meant by the term movement. Christopher Rootes, in his 2007 paper, titled, *Social Movements and politics*, explains that, "social movements are instances of collective action which vary in degrees of formal organization, scale of mobilization and forms of action. Even if focused on a single issue they often embody a philosophical alternative to [an] established society and they are political because they make demands upon the state" (Rootes, 2007:67). Just like the early 2000s NHM, much of what makes the NHM, a movement, is in its core focus on a single issue, such as the mobilization of encouraging African women to embrace and accept their hair in its natural state. However, in the beginning, much of what the movement positioned itself as, was as an alternative to the continual damaging effects that the hegemonic idolization of straight hair had on African women's state of hair. The Temple News site tells us that, the NHM, "...began in the early 2000s as a celebration of the unique texture of Black hair, [where it] serve[d] as an escape from societal pressures that idolize straight hair" (The Temple News, 2018). Ayana D. Byrd and Lori Tharps (2001), elucidate that, the major reasons that led the movement in the direction of calling all African American women to embrace their natural hair, was informed by people wanting to live naturally, due to the late 1990s and early 2000s, which saw the scare of the effects of climate change, and the mass consumption and use of chemicals that had come to have a dire effect in the earth's rapidly worsening climate transition. She writes, "It may have started when recycling went from being a radical concept to a legal requirement in neighborhoods across America. Or it may have been the increased media coverage on water scarcity, pollution, and the destruction of the ozone layer, followed by Al Gore's sobering 2006 documentary on climate change, An Inconvenient Truth. People wanted to alter the course of Mother Nature's impending path toward destruction. They were eager to change their ways, and the "change" people grabbed hold of was "going green" or "living naturally." By the middle of the first decade of the twenty-first century, the American public was hooked on this new natural lifestyle" (Byrd &Tharps, 2001:195). On African American

women's transition from the idolized, White hegemonic preferred straight hairstyle, to embracing and wearing their natural hair more often, Byrd and Tharps, described this shift, as being influenced, by the growing demand of living green.

> "For many Black women, going green initially meant buying shampoos and conditioners that didn't contain harmful ingredients like sodium lauryl sulfate and parabens. But soon her lifestyle was also being overhauled beyond shopping choices. Yoga, herbal teas, and a diet that no longer included fast food or red meat became common. So, of course it came to pass that these same women began to question their hair-care practices, particularly those who straightened their hair with chemical relaxers. "I felt this overwhelming urge to come clean and get back to myself," says Texas native Jesaline Berry about her decision to go natural. "I was coming to terms with the fact that I had been subjecting myself to all of those toxic chemicals for all of those years" (Byrd & Tharps, 2001: 196-197).

A word of caution to this account: In the early days of the NHM, the movement was positioned in the political arena as a necessary dogmatic act. It aimed to follow America's stance on climate health. Where do we see it become a cause that chooses to use embracing natural hair as a politically motivated act? We now turn to analyzing NHM's rise from one transition to another. We will determine when and where the movement became politically motivated. We'll also explore accusations that the movement is reviving colonial-era hair pains. Keeping in line with Rootes' definition of a movement, being one that makes political demands upon the state, we witness these demands being made, around the time where conversations about 'Good hair' and 'Bad hair' arise. Let us unpack the first transition of the NHM under the discussions of 'Good hair' and 'Bad hair'. Around the early 2000s, we had, the discussions of 'Good hair' and 'Bad hair' being centered around the White hegemonic European and American perspective. And what I mean by this, is, the creations of these hair distinctions, privileged American perspectives of what was the virtuous quality of hair versus what was not. This perspective only saw African people's hair as only existing as an afro, which was tightly coiled. The NHM, being an American created movement as well, focused much of its core goal on Black women who wore afro-textured hair. This resembled the values seen with the American perspective, which ran on the view that African people's hair

couldn't grow long, alas, we aren't surprised when Andrew Long presented the observation, about African people's hair resembling sheep, in which this observation was based on the Afro, as the one hair texture and hair style, for the representation of African people. So, of course, when the *Perception Institute*, tells us that "In the United States, 'Good Hair' is considered to be hair that is wavy or straight in texture, soft to the touch, has the ability to grow long, and requires minimal intervention by the way of treatment or products to be considered beautiful" (*Perception Institute*, 2023). And then inversely, when scholars tell us that 'Bad hair', on the other hand, meant the opposite of this, in which, 'Bad hair' was seen, through the "…stereotypical white constructs of blackness: [which saw Black people as] dark skin[ned], [with] no [or little] hair, and semi clad" (Carr, 2013:60), or as nappy, in which, "Nappy, [was] a historically derogatory term used to describe hair that is short and tightly coiled" (Magubane, 2007), we are left with questioning the movement's stance on its American centric perceptions of hair distinctions.

The above data on 'Good hair' and 'Bad hair' attitudes reveal to us, that firstly, the NHM despite being health conscious around this time, represented only the Afro wearing African American woman. Since European and American history, judged this type of hair as a representation of African people, much of what then transpired was that the movement continued the rebirth of old colonial hair pains of the past, by not looking at nuances and different hair identities that existed within the African diaspora. How it did this, was that, as Hlonipha Mokoena stated, the NHM "…assumed that the Afro is a quintessential black hairstyle, and therefore black people must have worn it for centuries" (Mokoena, 2017:116-117). Although to be fair, as Mokoena argues, the "Afro is an African hairstyle" (Mokoena, 2017:116-117). However, the NHM through its stance on the type of woman it represented, portrayed the hair identity of Black women in a one-dimensional picture of African people; as people who were naturally born with the Afro as their natural state of hair. This reinforced the limited European and American perspectives about African people and knowledge about their hair. Unbeknownst to the European and American perspective, and subsequently, the NHM, the Afro hairstyle, like many other African hairstyles, undergoes comb manipulation to achieve its texture and shape. Tabora Johnson and x Bankhead attests to the natural state of African people's hair, when she mentions that African "…hairtypes ranged from peppercorn, tufted, matted to wooly" (Johnson & Bankhead, 2014:88).

Figure 10: **Peppercorn Hair**
The photograph provided by the *Angola Rising* Blog (2011) shows a picture of a Khoisan woman wearing short hair. The short hair as visible in the picture has uneven spaces. This is because Peppercorn hair tends to "tightly roll itself up in balls or knots…which resemble peppercorns attached to the scalp (*Human Phenotypes*, 2023)

Figure 11: **Tufted Hair**
The photograph provided by Vanessa Calys-Tagoe (Tagoe, 2022) in her Face2Face Africa article shows the back of two Kenyan women in their traditional hairstyle (Tagoe, 2022). The traditional hairstyle in the picture features a shaved head with hair left in the middle. The hair in the middle is described as a tuft of hair. Tufted hair/ a tuft of hair is "a number of short pieces of hair…that grow closely together or are held together near" (Cambridge Dictionary, 2023).

Figure 12: **Matted Hair**
The drawing provided by Dr Ebtisam Elghblawi on the *DermNet* website (Elghblawi, 2017) shows a person wearing their hair in a matted hairstyle. Matted hair is described as hair that is "severely entangled, forming a stiff tightly packed mass of keratin over the head" (Elghblawi, 2017).

Figure 13: **Wooly Hair**
The photograph provided by de Burgh II (Burgh II, 2017) shows a man with wooly hair. The *Tech Interactive* website describes wooly hair as "tightly coiled hair" (*Tech Interactive*, 2005). This type of hair has often been compared to sheep. As previously stated "To call an African man's hair 'wool' because it has a tight coiled hair texture [was] to implicitly (or perhaps not just implicitly) insert the African into the order of animal nature, alongside other objects of study such as goats and ibexes" (Nabugodi, 2022:3).

Alas, the NHM, should have probably been called the Naturally manipulated and un-chemicalized hair movement at best, especially in the event, where we are to be fastidious in the conversations around the term natural, in African people's natural hair. As Byrd and Tharps asked, "Is natural… what grows out of your head or [is it] a manipulated natural?" (Byrd &Tharps, 2001:210). This American perspective of the view of African American women's hair revealed that the American climate was not familiar and wasn't an accomplice of African hair knowledges (Connolly, 1985:366). Moreover, much of the 1960s historical political climate in America, viewed the Afro hairstyle, as a symbolic collective hair identity of African people, which was rooted in Black Pride (Mokoena, 2017:116).

> In the late 1960s, after the FBI declared Angela Davis one of the country's 10 most wanted criminals, thousands of other law-abiding, Afro wearing African American women became targets of state repression– accosted, harassed, and arrested by police, the FBI, and immigration agents. The 'wanted' posters that featured Davis, her huge Afro framing her face like a halo, appeared in post offices and government buildings all over America, not to mention on television and Life magazine. Her 'nappy hair' served not only to structure popular opinions about her as a dangerous criminal, but also made it possible to deny the rights of due process and habeas corpus to any young black woman, simply on the basis of her hairstyle (Magubane, 2007).

Keeping up with the theme of this chapter's title, the things we have not seen before, are that, where the NHM is concerned, the movement, excluded other hairstyles such as dredlocks and the wearing of bald hair by African American women. It becomes difficult to imagine how other African American women who wore hairstyles that differed from the Afro, such as sisterlocks, dredlocks, and bald, could be part of the movement. The use of the terms 'Good hair' and 'Bad hair', to describe the beauty related hierarchies in America, did not reflect the rest of the world's understanding of beautiful hair. Moreover, the NHM's choice to use the Afro African hairstyle as the basis of what drives much of the movement, echoing the 1960s representations of the Afro as

a tool of resistance, also did not reflect the rest of the African diaspora and its use of hairstyles in movements. African centered resistance movements in other parts of the world, used different forms of African hairstyles to resist hegemonic control. For instance, in the Kenyan 1952 Mau Mau movement, political activist, Muthoni wa Kirima, along with many other movement freedom fighters of her time, grew her dredlock hairstyle as a way to resist the then White hegemonic control. In her 2014 Economist interview with Nyeri, the 83-year-old Mau Mau freedom fighter stated that she "…typifies her long dredlocked hair as the 'history of Kenya'" (Nyeri, 2013). What we didn't see before within the NHM, was that, despite being a health and non-chemical driven movement at first, it also played a role in continuing the colonial hair pains of the past, by maintaining White colonial perspectives on African hair through the usage of the Afro, as a one-dimensional face of what Black women looked like at a collective level. From this, it can be seen that, the question of whether the movement rebirthed the colonial hair pains of the past, is a valid one, especially given the fact that much of its formulations relied heavily on old colonial American perspectives of Black hair. Moreover, what we are seeing with the NHM in America, is that the colonial hair constructions of African people and women's hair, have managed to travel to the present. However, they are not easily noticed due to the fact that they have become covert, through neocolonial rebranding. This rebranding of colonial residuals, rides on liberatory and progressive movements, such as the NHM, whilst simultaneously, perpetuating forms of oppression, as hooks once detailed, through the exclusion of other African hairstyles found to be undesirable.

Returning back to South Africa, Cheri Matjila tells us that, "For years there has been a distinction between what was regarded as 'Good' hair and 'Bad' hair. Straight, silky smooth European hair was 'good' and 'kroes', nappy, tightly coiled, dry hair was 'bad'" (Matjila, 2020:73). Although Matjila, doesn't indicate where and when these interpretations of hair began to form in South Africa, she does give an indication that much of these ideas stemmed from the late 1980s to the early 2000s (Matjila, 2020:72-73). In the NHM's early days, South African women were still not that much involved in the movement. Much of the hairstyles that where typically seen ranged from relaxed hair, the wearing of weaves and wigs, short hair, bald, as well as dredlocks. In much of the South African hair and beauty markets, the majority of natural hair products that were sold, were especially catered to the dredlock wearing community. It was only later that we witness hair discourses in the country transitioning to weaves. In the later years of the country, we saw hair

discourses being about the explicit promotion "…of corporate and mass media worlds where there [was] a great deal of money to be made on weave extensions and hair manipulation" (Majali et al, 2017:161). It was only in the late 2000s, 10 years after the NHM fact, that South African women began to participate in the movement. This was also around the time where the NHM in America began to transform into a politically motivated movement. Between 2010-2012, The United States began seeing the rise of African American women's interpretations of the NHM, in which, this interpretation, was predominantly informed by Black Feminist thought. Defined as, "subjugated knowledge…[that] emanated from both the African worldview and the gender/race/class oppression of black women in the United States" (Rollins, 1991:898), the theme of Black Feminist Thought was used by African American women, "to challenge the controlling images of the White regime (Henderson, 2011:5). It was Black Feminist Thought, that offered African American women, the lens and voice to speak and notice the many discriminations that centered around their hair. In addition, the simultaneous rise of social media and ICTs platforms such as YouTube, saw African American women benefitting from the knowledges on their hair that was inaccessible before. On one part, YouTube platforms, saw "Black women in conversations with each other" (Byrd & Tharps, 2001: 194) and provided Black women with "education, agency and power" (Byrd & Tharps, 2001:194). As Henderson states, "They no longer depend[ed] on the White beauty industry to teach them how to care for and style their hair. Instead, they are producing this knowledge within their own natural hair community" (Henderson, 2011:53). On the other part, increased media, and social media coverage, saw Black women in America, bearing witness to the White informed messages of what was the epitome of beauty and what was 'Good hair'. According to Patricia Hill Collins, as cited by Henderson (2011), her analysis of how Black women in America envisioned themselves, "…theorized how past overt discrimination, oppression, and racism have contributed to the negative controlling images and perceptions that they have internalized" (Henderson, 2011:5). Western culture, it seemed, played an interesting game where social media and mainstream media was concerned. As Henderson states, the privileging of color hierarchy, saw bi-racial women as the dominant faces used in the media and advertisements (Henderson, 2011:5). And where hair was concerned, the controlling images in the media, saw hair that was closest to White hair as beautiful hair" (Henderson, 2011:6). In addition, under these mass media marketing platforms, "it was uncommon for a Black woman with afros, braids, or dredlocks to be shown on television, in movies or advertisements" (Henderson, 2011:5).

3.3. Early NHM YouTube Videos of Black Women in the United States

Let us take a look at what shows up in YouTube channels of African women in both the United States. When YouTube entered the ICTs scene in 2005, Danielle Kwateng-Clark, tells us that, the video sharing platform began to see "…small channels popping up where women of colour documented their hair process. They also commented, asked questions, and related to one another about their hair journeys-creating a sacred community, united under the desire to wear their hair as it naturally grows" (Kwateng-Clark, 2017). In addition, the movement's second tradition saw African American women come forward to share and exchange ways in which they could take care of their hair and ways to maintain it. Byrd and Tharps, stated that from the early 2000s onwards, "A substantial 70 percent of Black women were online, with a sizable number watching instructional videos on YouTube [especially around the time, where the platform site first emerged], buying hair products, reading blogs with product reviews, and posting photos on Instagram of other women with amazing hair" (Byrd & Tharps, 2001:194)

One of the many key pioneers of the movement in America, was an African American woman called Taren Guy. Kwateng Clark, describes Taren Guy as a "Brooklynite…who has been a part of the natural hair movement since 2010, when she created her YouTube channel documenting her transition from chemically processed hair to natural curls. Her hair grew and so did her following to a whooping 750,000 on her combined social media platforms" (Kwateng-Clark, 2017). The type of content that Taren Guy mostly focused on was on how to take care of African hair. In the 2017 video of her, posted by the YouTube channel and hair brand, *For.ti.fy'd Naturals*, Taren Guy is seen giving a tutorial on how to use the natural hair brand's products for both the "Hydrated and Defined Wash and Go [look as well as for the] Blow Out" *For.ti.fy'd Naturals* (YouTube, 2017). Also common among the early YouTubers of her time, Taren Guy began her Youtube channel with firstly sharing her hair journey, before documenting her 'big chop', which is another name for "…cutting all your processed hair off" (Kwateng-Clark, 2017. Majority of the natural hair YouTube channels that were created at the time focused much of their content on both the beginning of their natural hair journey, as well as on the use of foods ingredients "…such as honey, coconut oil, avocados, most of which can be found at your typical grocery market" (Henderson, 2011:54), as things that naturalistas can add to help their hair growth. Another natural hair movement pioneer was the natural hair enthusiast known as *Naptural85* on YouTube. *Naptural85,*

whose legal name is Whitney White, focused her natural hair content on a myriad of things about African American women's hair. Her YouTube channel, dating back from 2009, has focused on tutorials of "How to Kinky Twists" *Naptural85* (YouTube, 2010), to "Do it Yourself: Hot Oil Treatment" *Naptural85*, (YouTube, 2010).

Though similar in their shared love for natural hair, these women, reveal to us, interesting experiences they had encountered with the NHM through their different stories, and as such, I would like to focus on them separately. Taren Guy has what, many naturalistas of her time, would define as the 3c hair texture hair type, which is they type of hair "…that more closely resembled a multi-racial curl pattern of long length" (Henderson, 2011: 54-55). Even more so, she is light skinned.

Figure 14: The photograph provided by the Unruly website (2014) shows Taren Guy wearing her 3c textured hair.

Figure 15: The black and white photograph by Essence Magazine (2020) shows Taren Guy with Hairlocks. Some of her locks have been decorated with cowrie shells.

These descriptions, important to the White colonialist mind, make her an epitome of the White gaze and the African woman's "…representations of whiteness in the black imagination" (Madlela, 2018:28). Around her time, many YouTubers, and the platform's subscribers, were much more interested in how she got her hair to grow rapidly. She tells Essence Magazine the following. "For seven years I've been journalling the ups and downs of my natural hair journey on my YouTube channel- from chasing the perfect curls, damaging my hair, cutting it all off and starting over again"

(Essence Magazine, 2020). One of the reasons why I couldn't find any of her past YouTube content on her hair, was based on what she told Essence Magazine next, mainly about the many problematic things she realized about the movement, particularly on how she felt about feeling coerced to perform NHM's key hairstyle, which is the Afro, as well as on the problems she had experienced with "obsessing over length" (Essence Magazine, 2020). Although much of what shows up from both of the natural hair movement pioneers, is the use of natural hair products that have little to no chemicals as well as the use of natural foods to take care of their hair. What Taren Guy reveals to us through her YouTube channel experience, is that many subscribers of her channel and movement liked to see her hair in public and on her channel; big, growing and long.

She states the following "I noticed that my Afro eventually became a beauty crutch for me. I noticed that anytime I needed to show up to an event or function, I had to 'show up' with my Afro in order to feel present…I would never wear my hair in an updo or wrapped up…this was something that needed to be addressed. Quickly" (Essence Magazine, 2020). What the above data reveals about the African American women's hair experience within the NHM, is that, there is evidence of the pressure to perform a certain hairstyle, in order to be accepted in the NHM society. This ties into the earlier arguments made, on the NHM's portrayal of the one-dimensional hair identity of Black women. Moreover, what Guy tells us, not only reveals to us the NHM's role in the rebirthing of the colonial hair pains of the past, through it carrying settler observations of viewing African people's state of hair as one staple, she also, through her explanation about her frustrations with her experience with the movement, highlights to us the issue of performance. Homi Bhabha once shared his concerns for the way the enunciatory subject moves throughout time. In his interview with Olson and Worsham, the author described the enunciatory subject as "…a subject in performance and process, [where] the notion of what is to be authorized, what is to be deauthorized, what 'Difference' will be signified, what similarity or similitude will be articulated" (Bhabha, 1998:374). Similarly, when we are thinking through the ways in which decolonial movements operate as continuums, they too take the form of the enunciatory subject in both performance and process. The Natural Hair Movement is not exempted from this. Through Guy's experience, we witness the movement's behavior in how it approaches decoloniality through hair, takes the form of performing revolutionary ideas whilst being oppressive to individuals and doctrines which aren't desirable to the White colonialist mind. As Bhabha echoed "…these things

are continually happening in the very process of discourse-making or meaning-making." (Bhabha, 1998:374).

African hairstyles that do not form part of the White colonialist's mind, list of undesirable hairstyles, are hairstyles on black women, such as short hair and dredlocks. Later in the year, Guy tells us that she decided to announce on her Instagram account that she would be going on a free from loc journey, which was the process of allowing her hair to lock naturally. However, what transpired further reinforced the argument that everything that is allowed within the White system, already goes on to serve the interest of the same White system. Guy's Afro and biracial identity served the system's values well. However, her transition from the Afro hairstyle to the loc, did not, and saw her being cancelled and experiencing backlash from subscribers. She gives us a list of the reactions she had received from people online, after she had announced that she would be locking her hair. She states, " Here's a list of other reactions I received " …'why would you loc that beautiful hair' ,'You're getting weird, I'm unsubscribing' , 'Oh no, you messed up your hair' " (Essence Magazine, 2020). She goes on to say "As you can see, the common theme was that my hair was 'too pretty to loc' or that the spiritual connection I felt with my hair wasn't real" (Essence Magazine, 2020). To reiterate, what the above reactions reveal is that hairstyles such as dredlocks are either deemed to be informed by a religious shift, and that even more so, any othered attempt of looking into finding multiplicities and nuances in African hairstyles is quickly thwarted. This is true for African hairstyle, such as dredlocks and short hair, which often particularly weaken the White hegemony's visualization of power in African people's hair. The White hegemony finds its power weakening in African women's lives when they choose hairstyles that can grow long but aren't straight, such as dredlocks, and hairstyles that don't value length such as short hair.

Solange's 2009 example of cutting her hair short exemplified this for us. Byrd and Tharps shared the following about Solange "Beyoncé's younger sister, Knowles, cut her hair in July 2009 and became the number-three trending topic on Twitter, placing her ahead of the presidential elections in Iran and President Obama's new healthcare plan. Solange was accused of being "insane" and "doing a Britney," recalling the time when pop star Spears shaved off her hair during a period of extreme mental stress. Few of the critics seemed to care that Solange had been spending what she estimated to be $40,000–$50,000 per year on weaves. Nor did it seem to register when she said on Oprah that she didn't feel as pretty without a weave, and that pre-cut she was in hair "bondage."

To the naysayers, this amount of money and those negative feelings didn't matter—what mattered was that she no longer had straight, long hair." (Byrd & Tharps, 2001:206-207). Interestingly, perhaps the hair bondage that Solange is talking about, alludes to the very fact that, having a certain hairstyle, in this case the Afro, like the weave as well, keeps an African woman in ancient bondages that serve the white construct.

Whitney White or Naptural85, on the other hand, has a different experience with the movement altogether. She is a dark-skinned woman, who has the 4b-4c hair texture hair type. Much of what makes her popular is her long natural hair. Which tells us that, what the majority of African American women like and value, even in their new normal of embracing their natural hair is length. An interesting thing to note in both of the YouTubers, as Kwateng-Clark highlighted, is the fact that, as their natural hair grew, so did their followers. Naptural85 started her natural hair journey in 2008, but only got on the YouTube platform site in 2009. Much of the content that she has is on hair care and DIY hair regimens. Unlike Guy who has since deleted her natural hair content, Naptural85 still has content on her channel, dating back to 2009 and currently has a following of 1.1m YouTube subscribers. I am interested in her early videos, as this is in theme to early rise and second transition of the NHM discussion. Taking a look at her video titled "Do it Yourself: Hot Oil Treatment" *Naptural85*, (YouTube, 2010), *Naptural85* expresses excitement about the growth of her hair *Naptural85* (YouTube, 2010). And in most parts of her short video, speaks about how her DIY Hot Oil treatment guarantees hair growth. Her reaction, along with her subscriber's engagement with her, demonstrates African women's shift from hair health to privileging hair length. Furthermore, her identity, as dark-skinned woman with long further thwarts out the suppositions that women like her couldn't grow or have long hair. Even though recently, African women have come to enjoy the many things she can do with her hair length, there is still much suspicion that if she had to take a dramatic shift like guy, she might being risked being cancelled (Essence Magazine, 2020). The two key themes that show up in both the NHM African American YouTuber pioneers and subsequently, for the many African women who had subscribed to their channels are; firstly, in order to be accepted into the movement, the African woman has to keep her hair as the Afro. Secondly, she must prioritize length and the growth of her hair. These two key themes found to be important to the early naturalistas resembled the values of White doctrines. The other shift is that the NHM was no longer about health but about these White hegemonic values.

Moreover, these priorities, reveal that, the African women's interpretation of the NHM, have turned the movement to consequently reflect and maintain the rebirth of the colonial hair pains of the past. It bear repeating that the dominant regime is fine with the NHM, so long as it exist as a continuum of its doctrines, in this case, the continuum of the idealized white femininity standard. Politically, what we get from the above in the second transition of the reemergence and growth of the NHM, is that, the United States, got to see a large number of African American women, banding together, under the movement, to 'talk back' (hooks, 1989:2) to the dominant regime's controlling images of society and the media The number one thing that most African American women were riding on, no longer participating in Western hair care practices of hair straightening, through tools such as the straightener or the crème relaxer. As hooks (1992) stated in her text titled *Oppositional Gaze*, "…all attempts to repress our black people's right to gaze had produced in us an overwhelming longing to look, a rebellious desire, an oppositional gaze" (hooks, 1992:116). Connecting this to the Black Feminist strategies of fighting the hegemony through the NHM, African American women were in fact saying to the regime "Not only will I stare, I want my look to change reality" (hooks, 1992:116). We can mark this instance, as the point in which, the NHM through African American women's interpretation and refashioning of it, got to make the transition from being an alternative green way of living, to being a movement that began making African and gendered centered demands on the state. In other words, this was the point where the NHM, as a refashioned Black Feminist tool, became political. Interestingly, the above data stipulates to us that the second transition of the NHM was adopted and modified by Black Feminist African American women to mean and be a political movement. It was the Black and gendered societal needs expressed by African American women, that changed the course of NHM's direction. As Henderson states, the NHM got rebranded "through the process of self-discovery in the Natural Hair Movement, [by] Black women [who were] able to re-create their self-definitions" (Henderson, 2011: 22). We can mark the second transition of the NHM as a point, in which, the movement, became a political movement that began to make demands on the American state and its treatment of African women's hair. As a political movement, the NHM fostered the complete disregard of crème relaxer chemicals, weaves, and wigs. Much of the NHM's major transnational transmission around this time, was predominantly based on this view.

Still lagging a bit behind in being a part of the movement, the South African hair politics climate, saw a slow beginning to the movement's rise in the country. The country's first encounter with the movement, was that hair matters where to be looked at, through the White versus Black lens, which bore resemblance to the then current American, African gendered hair climate. What was transmitted from the American rebranded movement, by African American women, via mass media and social media, was the view that "hair can serve to define a person, and [that] the juxtaposition of African hair and African beauty against Western hair and Western beauty indicate[d] not only beauty standards: it also point[ed] to an internalization of racism via those beauty standards (Nyamnjoh and Fuh 2014:59). This is where we began to see African American women's reference points, on how their interpretation of systematic abuses, informed and transmitted, to South African women, their view that being natural, meant that, one had to reject the use of crème relaxers, weaves, and wigs completely and utterly, to avoid participating in the White beauty and hair industry that fostered black-self-hate. The arguments that became dominant in South Africa's introduction to the NHM, as Majali et al (2017) states, was that the wearing of "…fake hair such as weaves [was] an emulation of Western beauty standards and therefore, to a certain extent, a denial of one's African identity" (Majali, 2017:162). In addition, South Africa's culture of having high reverence for views of the elderly, saw the South African Jazz musician, Hugh Masekela, receive a standing ovation when he expressed "…his disdain for the dwindling sense of heritage among young South Africans" (Majali et al, 2017:166). He expressed these views, as a response to his public stir, of refusing "…to have his picture taken at Rhodes University, with female students donning weaves or hair extensions" (Majali, 2017:166).

What makes the relations between America and South Africa, complex, is the manner in which, part of the global understanding of the discourse of history, is that this discourse, sees a large number of othered nations "…scrambling to keep up with the latest writing on European history… [while there is no evident] … parallel or equal scramble [from Europe] to the other side" (Chakrabarty, 2008:87). The example of South Africa's introduction to the NHM, as well as Hugh Masekela's refusal to take a picture with university students who were wearing weaves, attest to this one-sided scrambling of, African countries and their tendency to import northern histories and then try fit them into African societies. Why else would Hugh Masekela express his disdain for the weave or wig wearing South African woman, especially around the time, where these ideas where already popular in the northern parts? The simple answer to this; is the West's new age

strategy of the indoctrination of the Other. Homi Bhabha (1984), described it as Mimicry, which he defined as "..the sign of double articulation; a complex strategy of reform…which "appropriates" the Other as it visualizes power" (Bhabha, 1984:126). Majali et al's present their participant's response to the Jazz musician's actions and disdain for the loss of African heritage, as he reasons, is reflected in the hair choices of Black South African women. The authors state that the majority of the participants in the focus group interview, held the view that, "…Africanism and African identity are more about a sense of humanity than having natural hair" (Majali et al, 2017:166). These participants despite their varied hairstyle choices, presented a much more better understanding of their African heritage than what Masekela contends. The reason why Masekela's behavior and comments, shocked South Africa, wasn't because of his hair views, although the mimicked historicist way of writing will commonly lean on this, the things that we aren't seeing, is that, what shocked much of the Black South African women community, was the fact that, Masekela, attempted to group all South African Black women as a single collective, that has one single hair identity; as the weave wearing and self-hating woman, mimicking the USA's and NHM's similar stance of taking the Afro as the main collective identity of African American women. This becomes confusing to the majority of Black South African women, because, their lived realities, reflected that, much of the South African women's hair climate is comfortable with frequent changes of hair styles(where, on some days, a typical Black South African woman's hair, can be long, and the next short, or the weave wearing woman may have natural hair underneath), and is frequented by "…trends of hybridity… [where] , it is increasingly becoming difficult to use hair as an obvious indicator of blackness and visual tool that defines the boundaries of racial identity" (Madlela, 2020:17).

Like Amina Mama's discussion on identities, in her *Challenging Subjects: Gender and Power in African Contexts* (2001) in her plenary speech turned text, states that, unlike the American paradigm, which seeks to find a universal representation of a certain collective identity, and hair identity of African people and women, Mama, in fact contended that the African experience is different, in that it embraces multiplicities, fluidity and relationality, which bears a closer resemblance to the notion of humanity, very much similar to the views expressed by Majali et al's participants. Azille Coetzee (2018), quotes Mama, as saying, "…that not only is there no all-encompassing concept for identity in big parts of Africa, but the kind of singularity that the term

seemed to require is not attainable in African contexts where personhood constituted within communities" (Coetzee, 2018:5). At the core of her argument, Mama states that, "identity…is at best a gross simplification of self-hood, a denial and negation of the complexity and multiplicity at the roots of most African communities" (Mama, 2001:65).

3.4. Euro-American Transnational Transmission into South Africa

When considering why was the NHM introduced to South Africa? Especially when South Africa did not have the same experiences and histories as America. Why in other words was it important to the American experience, to coerce similar understandings of the African women's hair experiences, and poise these American centered understandings of Black hair experiences, as an imperative transmissible knowledge for the Othered nations to know, reimagine and re-enact, as a secondhanded experience? Let us flesh out the argument on transnational transmission a little bit further. The current climate of transnationality and transmission operates in favor of western and northern views. The example of the South African context, secondhandedly re-enacting America's racial categorization, through its attempt to apply and interpret the NHM, in the South African hair community, attests to this. The definition of what constitutes as African American, in the US, was based on the American historic understanding of grouping all "…ethnicities of Blackness to a single racial category [through] the one drop rule" (Powe, 2009). Andrew Powe (2009) explains that the 'one drop rule' has been in existence since "…chattel slavery in the United States" (Powe, 2009), where the one drop rule relied on the following premise, "One drop of Black blood makes one Black" (Powe, 2009). This US historical understanding of how racial grouping was structured, informed the ways in which African American women interpreted the Natural Hair Movement. To them, this movement represented all Black people who fell under the single racial category of Blackness. To the majority of African American women, the movement represented the recognition of, and fighting against, the hair 'Difference's used to denigrate Black women's hair against the desired criteria of White women's hair. But what it did not focus on, was the sub 'Difference's of hair texture within the African community. This was because hair 'Difference' was only discussed in terms of Black and White. Thus, when hair discrimination discourses were confronted in America, they were often viewed through this lens. An example that attests to this was the enactment of the 2019 CROWN Act. This law, in the United States prohibited the

discrimination of hair texture and hairstyles of African Americans who wear traditionally black hairstyles in both the workplace and schools (*Anti-Defamation League*, 2022), especially, in the event where African Americans did not wear straight hairstyles, that were typically encouraged in such White dominated spaces.

What makes the American second handed experience a difficult experience to neatly fit in, especially in the South African understanding, is the 'Difference' of experience in racial categorization between America and South Africa, which as a result, complicates the Natural Hair Movement situation for the Southern country. Unlike the American firsthand experience, where the Natural Hair Movement represents all ethnicities of Blackness, the South African Natural Hair Movement experience, finds itself confused with the question of who does it really represent? South African Coloured women or South African Black women? Especially, since the language and definition of Blackness refers to a specific individual in the South African region. However, the 'Difference' of racial experience doesn't end there. As a country saturated with hybrid hair experiences and different forms of hairstyling and hairstyles, South Africa also found itself in a similar context like the US of having to neglect, different African hair styles such as dredlocks.

This decision became more prominent around the time, where the NHM, entered the South African scene. Hlonipha Mokoena, unpacks for us, what transpired. She writes "Many black women (and men) who wear weaves and relax their hair explain their [choices] by either saying that their natural hair is "unmanageable" or that natural hair is "dirty". This is one of the most enduring stereotypes about black hair; people even cite the anecdotal evidence that Bob Marley's dreads had 47 different types of lice in them when he died. These are urban legends of the worst kind because they perpetuate the stereotype that only black hair attracts lice and other vermin, which is scientifically untrue. When a black person decides to "dread" or "lock" their hair, they do not need to keep "dirt" in it to make it lock. Black hair – as does all hair – locks naturally when it is left uncombed or unbrushed. The association of locks with dirt partly comes from the Caribbean where Rastafarianism[9] emerged as a subculture. However, even here, the misconception is that

[9] Catherine Beyer, on the online *Learn Religions* site stated that Rastafari/Rastafarianism "…is an Abrahamic new religious movement that Haile Selassie I, the Ethiopian emperor from 1930 to 1974 as God incarnate and the Messiah who will deliver believers to the Promised Land, identified by Rastas as Ethiopia. It has its roots in Black-empowerment and back-to-Africa movements. It originated in Jamaica, and its followers continue to be concentrated there, although smaller populations of Rastas can be found in many countries today" (Beyer, 2019). Furthermore, Beyer stated that this religion also accepts "…the Old Testament injunction [that forbids] the cutting of one's hair which leads to the dreadlocks commonly associated with the movement) (Beyer, 2019) and (*History*, 2017).

dreadlocks equal Rastafarianism. The Rastas got their locks from Africa. To be exact, matted African hair was transported to the Caribbean by images of Ethiopian soldiers who were fighting the Italian invasion that began in 1935. Using the example of Samson in the bible, they vowed they would not cut their hair until their country and emperor were liberated and the latter returned from exile" (Mokoena, 2017:121). The annihilation of dredlocks in the white constructed society and many false theories of the hairstyle being unhygienic and dirty, draws us to the suspicion that there is something hidden in what dredlocks represented to the White hegemony. The American interpretation and experience of this African hairstyle, saw prominence due to the growing fame of musician Bob Marley. American archives on the African hairstyle, saw dredlocks as a hairstyle that "…derived from the days of slave trade" (Byrd & Tharps, 2001:16). Byrd and Tharps unpack that, "Whites would declare the matted hair that had grown out of kinky unattended locks to dreadful" (Byrd & Tharps, 2001:16). "Because such a history is linked to o the name "dreadlocks," many wearing that style today choose to drop the 'a' in dreadlock to remove any negative connotations" (Byrd & Tharps, 2001:16)

I want to revisit, the American perspective that based Black women's gender difference on not only White women's hair texture, but also on the fact that they can't grow long. As revealed in the previous chapter, the formulations of hair classifications held the state of beauty of hair to how close it was to the White hair texture hair type, which was commonly described as straight. In the height of hair conversations and the early reappearance of the NHM, Andre Walker (1998), "… wrote the book Andre Talks Hair, in which he designated four types of hair, based on texture. Working from his designations, the Web site, Naturallycurly.com went deeper and set up classifications for varying degrees of non-straight hair—from barely waved to seriously coiled. The numerical system goes from one through four with A, B, and C variations. The straighter the hair, the lower the letter and number" (Byrd & Tharps, 2001:209). The American understanding of Blackness situates "Black women [to] fall somewhere between 3B and 4C" (Byrd & Tharps, 2001:209). Initially, the straightness of hair was held at a high regard. What followed then later, was that, hair had to not only be straight but had to be long. The accepted standard of hair beauty made it imperative that, for hair to be both these things, it had to be combed through. I would like to pose the argument that, the constant eradication of dredlocks from African women's standard of beauty, stemmed from the fear that the myths attached to African hair about its inability to grow will be realized.

Cheikh Anta Diop in his text, The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality, made the following statement, “If Black girls had long hair, the whole aspect of the world would be changed” (Diop, 1955:39). The author’s comment presents us with a few issues about continental dependence. As a black male whose reference point of the world is influenced by being “birthed [from] both the African anti-colonial struggle and Francophone Negritude movement (Mokoena, 2017:115), what the Senegalese intellectual’s comment, reflects to us, is the thinking that saw African people being both convinced by the myth that their hair couldn’t grow, and that also, the assumed notion that the African woman’s dream to have long hair would be the thing that would put her at an equal standing with White femininity. However, what Diop’s view basically tells us is that much of African women’s hair analysis has relied heavily on European dependence. What we do not realize, is that, the African woman could always grow her hair long. The dredlock African hairstyle, is one of the many ways she could do this. Muthoni wa Kirima’s story of growing her dredlocks past her knees, bears witness to this (Nyeri, 2013). Chief among the natural products that were used to grow the African woman’s hair in pre-colonial Africa, was the “Chadian chebe powder” (Mulumba ,2020). According to Mulumba, “the chebe powder [was] used by women of a Chadian ethnic group, giving them exceptional quality and length of hair” (Mulumba, 2020). However, by having to explain that African women can actually grow their hair, is to admit that European standards of hair are important to the African. To show and tell places and moments where African hair grows, is to wrestle with a test of European standards of humanity. This not only shows the gravity of continental ‘Difference’ but also reiterates what Chakrabarty argued, about ideas travelling from the north to the south, where the south, is left to scramble with the latest writing on European history (Chakrabarty, 2008:87).

Western human experiences that do not fit in the African human experience. By employing Oyěwùmí (1997)’s stance about the manner in which “Western experiences define the human” (Oyěwùmí, 1997:16), we begin to see that continental dependence on White thinking, had Diop assuming that having long hair was an African women’s dream. However, since much of this dream is imposed by European transmissions of hair, what scholars often fail to see, is that, Diop’s comment speaks to Africa’s continental dependence on the Eurocentric worldview. This is one of the chief major reasons why Oyěwùmí argued that her 1997 text on gender, was not only about gender and Yorùbá ‘Difference’, but also, was on the importance of bringing back the African

human experience. In Coetzee's text, she is paraphrased as arguing for the following point, "[Oyěwùmí]'s insistence on Yorùbá 'Difference' is therefore not simply a repetition of the colonial othering of Africa, but a resistant response to the idea central to modernity and coloniality that there is only one world with one logic. Oyěwùmí is asserting through her feminist theory the existence, validity and significance of other societies operating on their own logic, existing, [as] exterior/anterior to the West, societies that are erased through colonialism and coloniality. She is resisting the pernicious assumption that "Western experiences define the human" (Oyěwùmí, 1997:16). Ultimately, transnationality, especially for "ruling national elite[s]" (Bhabha, 1998: 384), such as America, allows the dominant country to drive the direction of where the world is headed. Thus, when it comes to African women's natural hair in the diaspora, the power forces of America, often give the country the advantage to translate and filter notions that should stay about hair, this then simultaneously works to benefit the country and transforms the world into the American image. As a result, Western countries and they ways in which hair knowledges have travelled has done so much work in driving out "…the epistemic erasure of African realities" (Coetzee, 2018:9).

Dipesh Chakrabarty (2000), in his *book Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical 'Difference*', the author, sums up for us, what has transpired throughout the NHM movement, as he writes about how many ideas, especially histories, follow the time and location structure, of first beginning in Europe (or the northern parts of the world) and then take place elsewhere, he argues in his book that, "Europe' remains the sovereign, theoretical subject of all histories" (Chakrabarty, 2000:8) and all histories tend to become variations on the master narrative that could be called "the history of Europe" (Chakrabarty, 2000:7). Much of what we have witnessed in this chapter, can be summarized in the lens of how, it wasn't only the transnational transmissibility that played the role in the continuation of the rebirth of the colonial hair pains of the past, nor was it the NHM or African women's interpretations of the movement (although these factors all played a role in part), it was, as much of the chapter's content stipulates, the very forced and negotiated applicability of the secondhanded historical reenactment of European histories by the African continent and human experience. Chakrabarty (2010) and Neil Tyson De Grasse (De Grasse, 2017:5) both state; the African universe is under no obligation to make sense, but much of what transpired was that, the African continent was forced to make sense within the Western White construct. What this chapter sought to argue, was the fact that, because of this, the ultimate driving

force that sees the continual rebirths of the colonial hair pains of the past, is very much due to this applicability and forced seconded reenactments and reliving of histories that were unAfrican.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

4.1. Euro-American Impositions on the Constructions of Pain and Black women's African hair

This dissertation challenged conventional ideas about current Black women's hair discourses associating African textured hair with pain. Chapter 2 and 3 served to contextualize the research question, by bringing together the habitually missed mechanisms that drive much of Black women's dominant Black hair pain discussions, evident in today's society. Firstly, Chapter 2 challenged the conventional ideas, about how colonial history is the main reason behind dominant society's tendency to associate African textured hair with pain. What this chapter argued, is that, indeed, the pain associated with Black hair was Euro-colonially driven. But, the transmission of this association was further intrenched into the Black people in America, in which the American slavery system saw African slaves as subhuman, which had damaging cascading intersectional effects for the African female slaves. Through complicating the notion of difference, three things appeared; one, African American Black female writers, post-slavery, and centuries after, became victims to their own historical conditions of existence, in which the slavery phenomena external to them, conditioned them to view the historical act of their African ancestor's hair being shorn, as a signifier of pain for having African textured hair. As Chapter 2 stipulated, this was due to the Western imposition of what constituted pain. America as a global power, transnationally transmitted the perception of shorn hair, on the African female body, to be seen as a universal sign of shame, and a reminder of the colonial hair pains of the past. This transmission was based on the incomplete information, of how different African people, belonging to different geographical spaces, practiced the act of shaving hair, which, as elucidated, was not perceived as a negative cultural practice, but rather had different nuanced meanings for the different ethnic groups of people in Africa. The second factor is that, what influenced this American transmission nationally, were the historical ideologies that led African textured hair to be used as the main symbol for

slavery, where, much of these formulations, were based on the White enslavers' need to justify slavery. African slaves' hair difference, in relation to White enslaver's hair, has endured to be a difference that keeps Black people inferior to White people today. The third, was the convergence of the above colonial formulated notions of hair difference and slavery, which saw African female slaves as ungendered, thus pushing them to emulate White characteristics such as long flowy hair. The above, as the main mechanisms that drive how Black women view their African textured hair, influenced Black women to view their hair in a Western imposed notion of these ideologies, and affected the way they see themselves. This has led Black women in America, and much of the American Black community to inflict these historical ideologies on themselves. The example of Jada Pinkett Smith's joke, on her choice of hairstyle, spoke to how, much of the Black community, also plays a major part in inflicting colonial Black hair pains on itself.

Chapter 3, mainly focused on the Euro-American, transnationally transmitted, hidden forces that perpetuate the African textured hair type to be associated with pain. The first hidden transnational transmission of perceiving African textured hair with pain, came from how, the contemporary globe is structured today. This structure has micro-aggressively demanded that all histories from different geographical spaces ought to mimic the historical master narrative of Europe. The use of the Pretoria High School for Girls protest example in South Africa, elucidated the pressure that, countries in the Global South are under; mostly which is to reenact the colonial master narrative of Euro-American histories of Black hair pain. What this pressure does to Black women in countries, such as South Africa, is that, it coerces them to begin to mimic historical hair pains that are unfamiliar to them. Chapter 3 further argued that in contemporary society, America, through its created movements, such as the Natural Hair Movement (NHM), expect similar movements to occur in other geographical spaces. This demand not only introduces the notion of associating African textured hair with pain, but also further intrenches this notion to Black women's everyday lives. The second way in which hidden Euro-American transnational transmissions operate, is through the American (NHM). By problematizing the NHM, Chapter 3 argued that the movement's hegemonic neocolonial standpoint, dually situated the African textured hair type as a politically motivated symbol of Black pride, whilst also privileging the 3c hair texture hair type, as the movement's preferred natural hair. What this privileging further does, is that, it makes the 4c hair texture hair type, hypervisible whilst implying that the 3c hair texture, which often closely

resembles Caucasian hair -through being able to grow long and its ability to be flowy- is better. This movement's tactic not only reinforces the African textured hair type, as undesirable, but also communicates that this form of hair texture hair type constantly needs manipulation to be deemed as beautiful. The constant pressure to have beautiful 'good' hair is a pressure that is relegated to individuals who have the African textured hair type. This as a result, leads to the emotional experience of pain, and as such perpetuates the notion that the African hair texture hair type is troubled with pain. Complicating the notion of the Afro, this chapter also argued that, the Afro was previously perceived in European and American history, as the type of hair that was the main representation of African people. This perception has led former NHM YouTube content creators such as, Taren Guy, to perform and live up to, Euro-American perceptions of the Afro and Black people. When the former YouTube content creator refused to succumb to perform the wearing of her Afro in public spaces centered on Black women's natural hair, she faced backlash, from not only, the people outside the Black community, but also from the Black community itself. What the chapter further elucidated, was that the NHM and the dominant hegemonic Western perceptions through demanding Black women to perform a specific hairstyle relegated to their race constantly brought to the surface, that this particular hairstyle was historically, what stood between being seen as a human or being seen as a subhuman. What this dissertation sought to do, in both Chapters 2 and 3, was to reveal that the current foundations of which Black women's hair discourses are built, and have been erected from, where on Euro-American foundations. Of which these foundations, were constructed to preserve, the increasingly widespread notion that African textured hair goes hand in hand with the experience of pain.

4.2.Research Contributions to the Politics of Black Women's Hair

Since the current political reality is that Black women's African textured hair is still viewed in a negative and colonially influenced lens, this study sought to add a renewed perspective on the existing body of knowledge on Black women's hair discourses. My research, through fleshing out and dissecting the gaps in the Euro-American history of Black women's hair discourses, aimed to bring new insight to the way Black women's hair is perceived; which is, away from the Western imposed concept of pain and away from the American western framework of seeing. The research

findings from my study, sought to enrich the field of Black women's hair discourses, by bringing in the hidden mechanisms that have had remained unaccounted for, for decades. The use of the postcolonial (feminist) lens in Black women's hair discourses, sought to unravel the Euro-American master narrative on Black women's hair as a global body, and the ways in which this discourse, as a global body, relies heavily on the Euro-American framework. By employing a Black Feminist lens, this study revealed the many unaccounted ways in which Black women are not in control of the hair discourses centered on them. This study has value in Black women's hair discourses, as it analyzed the ways in which Black women are contorted out of the topic of political, societal, and personal realities about their hair. In seeking to conduct a study that involves Black women from different geographical spaces and historical time periods, this study has brought a ground-breaking perspective in this discourse, as it has raised numerous critical issues relating to the formulations of the perception of Black women's hair. Future studies can use this study, as a gateway to look into the ways in which Black women and Black women's discourses can break the continuity of the Euro-American influence. It would be interesting to see the new emerging and suggested ways in which Black women and the discourse on their hair, can achieve this.

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