

Black Hair Big Law: Is Big Law the CROWN Act's Biggest Offender? Attorneys and Scholars Gather to Discuss Hair Discrimination in Big Law



Wendy Greene
CROWN Act Advisor & Professor



Leslie Thomas, KC
Law Professor Gresham College



Karis Stephen, 3L, JD Candidate
University of Pennsylvania



Binta P. Mamadou
Associate, Allen & Overy, LLP



Patricia Broussard
Law Professor, FAMU



Rachel Antoinette Boyce
Associate, Cooley, LLP

BLACK HAIR, BIG LAW SYMPOSIUM



Deborah Enix-Ross
President, ABA



The Honorable
Turkessa Bynum Rollins



Desiree H. Langley,
Associate, Jackson Lewis



Umar Kankiya
Solicitor & Law Professor



Shelly Page
Law Professor, SIU



Angela Mackie-Rutledge,
LLM Candidate, GMU, Scalia Law

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News Provided By

Angela Mackie-Rutledge, Black Law Students Association, George Mason University

<http://blackhairbiglaw.com>

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ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA, UNITED STATES, October 19, 2022 / Newswire / --

American Bar Association President, Deborah Enix-Ross and C.R.O.W.N. Act architect, advisor, expert and Wendy Greene headline at the **Black Hair, Big Law Symposium** on October 27, 2022. The event discusses the controversial question, *“Is natural black hair compatible with working in big law?”* at George Mason University, Antonin Scalia Law School. Enix-Ross is a senior adviser to the International Dispute Resolution Group of Debevoise & Plimpton in New York City and the President of the American Bar Association; the national voice of the legal profession, responsible for establishing academic standards for law schools and setting the code of ethics.

Law professor Wendy Greene, through her award-winning publications and activism, crafted a legal blueprint for historic civil rights legislation known as the C.R.O.W.N. Acts, which has also shaped the enforcement stance of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), federal courts, administrative law judges, and civil and human rights organizations in race discrimination cases involving the discrimination African

descendants endure when donning natural hairstyles. [Teen Vogue](#), [Now This News](#), and [BBC News](#) have celebrated Professor Greene for her pioneering role in increasing public awareness around as well as securing legal redress for what she has coined as “grooming codes discrimination.”

Another eminent notable appearing at the symposium is British law professor Leslie Thomas, KC, who recently authored his autobiography, “Do Right and Fear No One.” Thomas, a civil liberties expert, has voiced opposition to the English legal tradition of wearing a barrister’s wig in court. He will speak on the topic, “Why my barrister’s wig is culturally insensitive.”

Symposium attendees will also enjoy a conversation with law professors Patricia Broussard of FAMU and Shelly Page of Southern Illinois University on “Policing our bodies: The expectations and professionalism of Black hair in law.”

The symposium kicks off on Thursday October 27th at 11AM and includes:

- A distinguished panel of knowledgeable, relatable, and trailblazing speakers
- Compelling original quantitative graduate research black attorneys and their hair
- Poignant, thought-provoking videos about attorneys and judges wearing their hair natural
- Representation matters: *100 Black TV and Film Lawyers* from the controversial “Amos & Andy” to the new CBS legal drama, “All Rise.”

Lawyers, law students and hundreds of other clever clogs and legal eagles will learn from the top minds in law:

The Honorable Turkessa B. Rollins, General District Court, Prince William County, Virginia presents a guided Q&A session about black hair and the judiciary.

Umar Kankiya, Solicitor from the United Kingdom who speaks on the topic, “*Can you really be your authentic self at the law firm?*”

Desiree H. Langley, Associate Jackson Lewis, P.C.

The Black Law Student Association and Scalia Law School welcomes back Class of 2017 BLSA President Desiree H. Langley; as she shares her experience and decision points on how she wore her hair when entering the workforce.

Karis Stephen 3L, University of Pennsylvania, Carey Law School

Karis is an accomplished third-year J.D. candidate and Fullbright scholar who will start as an associate at the firm Latham & Watkins after graduation. She speaks on the topic, “*Why I Choose to Wear Braids to the Workplace Every Day Despite the Fear of Criticism?*”

Binta Mamadou, Associate, Allen and Overy, LLP and Founder of Visions Braid Bar shares her unique perspective on natural hair, working in law and black hair trends

Rachel Antoinette Boyce, Associate at Cooley, LLP, who was featured in the Law 360 documentary, “Wearing Natural Hair in Big Law,” speaks on her natural hair experience in big law.

And Angela Mackie-Rutledge, LLM Candidate at George Mason University, Antonia Scalia Law School, shares a summary of her Black Hair Legal Professionals quantitative research.

Attendees will complete the day's events by receiving the Black Hair Big Law Program Guide Anthology chronicling nearly 100 first-hand experiences from black attorneys, paralegals and law students. Many of these individuals had faced, or had anticipated facing, discrimination at work because of their hair. Read, relate and understand their experiences:

- *"I'm always nervous on how I should style my hair for an interview. I know that I will wear it natural while at work, but I also don't want to lose an opportunity because the interviewer does not like my hair."*
- *"Depending on the court, I use to change my hair. As a black woman in many jurisdictions, the court assumes I am either a party to the case or the court reporter. So I would style my hair differently and in fact, dress differently to set myself apart or rather to attempt to set myself apart."*
- *"I was told to change my hair when I entered law school. In law school, when in mock trial competitions my hair was judged and questioned by my coaches. Despite it all, I am who I am. My hair is a part of who I am. Thankful for my Howard University experience that helped solidify that being Black is not a badge of shame. Neither is my hair."*
- *"I never want my appearance to be a distraction, hair included. Practicing in courts in which mostly white men practice and preside, makes me think about how my appearance may affect the perceived effectiveness of my advocacy."*

About the Black Law Students Association at George Mason University.

The BLSA at George Mason University articulates and promotes the professional needs and goals of black law students; fosters and encourages professional competence; and instills in black attorneys and law students a greater awareness and commitment to the needs of the black community.

For more info on the Black Hair Big Law Symposium:

<http://blackhairbiglaw.com>

The Black Hair Big Law Symposium

"Is natural black hair compatible with working in big law?"

Thursday October 27, 2022

Sponsored by the Black Law Students Association

Antonin Scalia Law School, George Mason University, Arlington, Virginia

11:00 AM - 1:00 PM, Lunch and learn with food served from 12:00

For more information, contact, Angela Mackie-Rutledge, Programming Chair, BLSA.

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<http://blackhairbiglaw.com>