

My hair, my crown! The following days

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Read the original scenario, [*My hair, my crown!* in the *Practice Guide on Diversity and Culture*](#) (pg. 34).

After a rattling experience in her practicum placement, Naomi spoke to some peers. She expressed her discomfort and reflected on her own experiences of feeling singled out as a result of her hair. These experiences occurred both as a child and continue to this day. She was frustrated and disappointed because she felt powerless in the moment to say anything. Because this was her new placement and she didn't want to upset her placement supervisor, she did not step in. After reflecting, Naomi knew she had to address this with the educator team and discuss this invasive and racist interaction, but she wasn't sure how to approach it.

Naomi is a proud Black woman and an emerging professional. She wanted to address the situation; she knew silence would send the message that this was acceptable, even though it wasn't. Naomi had a lengthy discussion with her post-secondary placement advisor, after which she felt more confident and prepared to speak with her placement supervisor about an activity idea with the children that would allow for open discussion about boundaries.

In the meeting with her placement supervisor, Naomi explained, "this is hard for me to say, but I felt Hope was made to feel as though she was on display a few days ago. I could see she felt uncomfortable and had begun to cry. Did you notice that?" Her placement supervisor said she had realized Hope was upset but didn't know why. Naomi said she'd like to engage the children in a story that would promote an understanding of boundaries and positive identity development for Black children. Her supervisor listened and agreed, and Naomi thanked her for seeing the importance of this conversation. "I feel the children are capable of talking about boundaries and race."

Later that day, the children gathered in front of her as Naomi unzipped her bag and pulled out a book titled *Hair Love*. She read to the class and could tell by their attention and expressions that a sense of understanding was beginning to blossom. Turning her gaze to the children she met Hope's eyes and smiled. After reading the book, she reached into her bag again and pulled out a number of items. "These are things I use to care for my own hair," she shared, and began to go through her own hair routine. "My hair is part of my identity as a Black woman," she said. "I'm proud of my hair. It's mine, in my personal space and should not be touched by others. Our hair, our faces, our bodies are ours and ours alone." Feeling passionate about the topic, she was moved by the children's positive and inquisitive responses.

Introducing the book and demonstrating her own hair routine highlighted the importance of respecting personal boundaries and brought awareness that hair has different textures, styles, lengths and colours. It also demonstrated that hair products have different textures and scents, and some people may use different decorative items such as ribbons, ties and bows in their hair. Naomi felt good about the children's conversation about hair similarities and differences. One child said, "just because I like someone's hair doesn't mean I can touch it, just like any other part of their body." Hope added that, "next time someone touches my hair I can say, stop, I don't like it when people touch my hair."

After this experience, Naomi felt encouraged to keep talking about boundaries, race and respecting Blackness with children, families and her colleagues.

- What feelings emerge for you as you read this scenario?
- What did you learn from Naomi's approach?
- What would make you comfortable or more comfortable addressing race and boundaries in your practice setting?
- Which Standards of Practice was Naomi demonstrating through her actions?

You can add your thoughts and reflections in the space below.