



BEAUTY  
JUSTICE

# News Letter

WELCOME TO THE  
BLACK WOMEN  
FOR WELLNESS  
BEAUTY JUSTICE  
NEWSLETTER!

IN THIS EDITION, WE SHARE HIGHLIGHTS FROM OUR SUMMER EVENTS, INCLUDING CONVERSATIONS WITH A CHEMIST, OUR FIRST SALON SESSION, AND THE 26TH ANNUAL REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE CONFERENCE. PLUS, MEET THE LATEST ADDITIONS TO OUR TEAM, GET SEASONAL BEAUTY AND WELLNESS INSIGHTS, AND LEARN HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF FROM TOXIC BEAUTY PRODUCTS.

THANK YOU FOR BEING A VITAL PART OF THIS IMPORTANT DISCUSSION!



LEARN MORE ON OUR WEBSITE:

**CLICK HERE**

[WWW.BWWLA.ORG](http://WWW.BWWLA.ORG)

# Remembering the Straightening Comb In the Kitchen

When I think about beauty and justice, I often find myself pondering heavy topics, laws, protections, and policies. The CROWN Act, for example, is still making its way state by state, reminding us that Black women's hair needs legal protection from discrimination. Advocates like Dr. Wendy Greene, the legal architect of the CROWN Act, have worked tirelessly to ensure that our braids, locs, and natural textures are not treated as "unprofessional." And yet, I sometimes pause and wonder: Why do Black women always have to fight for protection? Why can't we just enjoy the beauty of who we are without a law to validate it?

But beauty is not only about politics and legislation; it is also about memory, joy, and ritual. And for many of us, one of those memories is the sound and smell of the straightening comb heating up on the stove in the kitchen.

The kitchen was not just where we ate. It was a salon, a sacred space, and sometimes a battleground. You could hear the sizzle of grease as the hot comb met a freshly washed head of hair. You felt the tug of your mama's or auntie's hand as she smoothed every strand, warning you not to flinch. There was the smell of half-pressed oil, half anticipation, and the unspoken promise that you'd walk out of that kitchen ready for Sunday service, picture day, or just feeling grown.

Remembering those moments is a reminder that Black beauty is rooted in community and tradition. Even as we advocate for protections in schools and workplaces, we also honor the history and creativity in our homes. Beauty justice is not just about fighting against discrimination; it is about remembering and reclaiming joy in the ways we care for ourselves and each other.

So yes, we still need laws like the CROWN Act. But we also need space to laugh, remember, and celebrate. Because sometimes justice looks like a policy win, and sometimes it looks like the shine of your hair after a Saturday night in the kitchen with the hot comb and hair rollers.



Love, Peace, and Hair Grease,  
*Arnedra Jordan*

**Black Women for Wellness  
Director of Programs**



# This Season of Black Beauty Justice

*At Black Women for Wellness, our Beauty Justice work is a year round endeavor. Join us on reflecting on and closing out the Season and preparing for the work that falls ahead.*

*This season of Beauty Justice is about taking time to reflect and detox from beauty standards that don't serve us, celebrate all we have achieved, and gather the strength for the work to come.*

*Sincerely,*

*The Beauty Justice Team  
at Black Women for Wellness*





# Toxic Products & Toxic Politics

## ***The Costs of Cutting the EPA, and How California & Black Women for Wellness are Stepping In***

Written by Madison Beckett

Since the Trump administration came into office, they have wasted no time dismantling essential federal institutions. One of those essential institutions is the *Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)*. The EPA is responsible for setting and enforcing regulations that keep communities safe from toxic substances in the air, water, and land. But increasingly, their ability to carry out that mission is being hindered. By the end of 2025, 1 in 3 EPA staff is expected to be terminated ([Conversation, 2025](#)). The administration has also shutdown the EPA's Office of Environmental Justice, and DEI initiatives within the agency ([EPA,2025](#)). These swift and drastic cuts have been framed as "cost-saving," however these rollbacks will actually cost US citizens far more: their health.

As with most environmental rollbacks, the harms will not be evenly distributed. The effects will be felt most strongly in communities of color and low income neighborhoods, who already bear the disproportionate burden of exposure to environmental toxins.



In response to the budget cuts, former EPA Deputy Administrator Janet McCabe states, "You cannot cut EPA's budget this drastically without significantly reducing the quality of the country's air, water, and land" ([Environmental Protection Network,2025](#)).

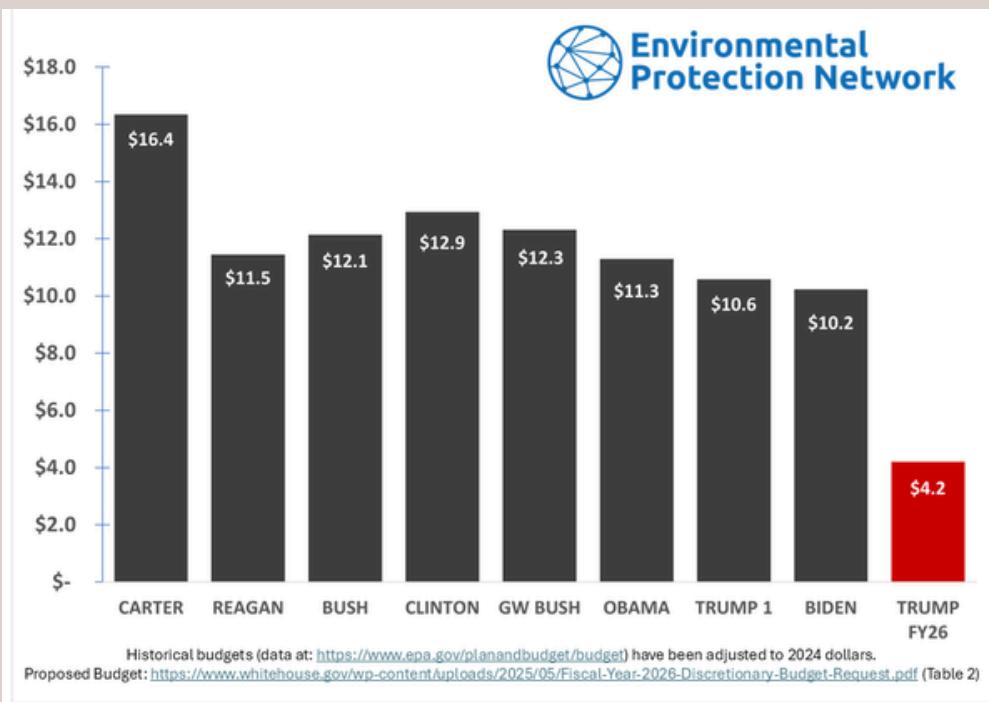
## Trump's 2026 Proposed Budget

Looking ahead, the 2026 proposed budget reveals even more cuts to the EPA. Compared to past years, the 2026 EPA budget cut stands out as the most drastic and alarming reduction yet.

## California's Role

As concerning as these historic budget cuts are, there is reason for hope. States such as California are not standing by, but instead are stepping up to fill the gaps in the EPA left by the Trump administration. One key CA agency is the **Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA)**, which conducts its own research on toxic exposures, chemical labeling, and the overall impacts on vulnerable populations. California's commitment to environmental protection illustrates how state-level institutions can step in challenging times to protect communities when federal protections lessen.

*While the Trump administration continues to set back racial justice efforts by eliminating the Environmental Justice programs and rolling back DEI initiatives, you can be assured that Black Women for Wellness's commitment to empowering Black women and girls remains stronger than ever.*



(Environmental Protection Network, 2025)

## Black Women for Wellness and the EPA

Black Women for Wellness continue to lead the fight for environmental and beauty justice. We have partnered with the EPA and UCLA to carry out our grant project: *"Promoting Environmental Justice in Nail and Hair Salons in California through Safer and More Sustainable Products."* You can learn more and participate in our EPA partnered efforts by attending our next community Salon Session [here](#).

# Are Our Protective Styles Protecting Us?

Written by Rovanni Castillo

So the colors of the leaves transition for a new season, so our hair follows suit. The cooler weather leads to dryness, shedding, and scalp sensitivity, making this the perfect time to lean into protective styles. Braids, twists, sew-ins and wigs trend for Fall months, but they're much bigger than that. Protective styles are woven in history. They serve as shields against harmful practices, and stand as symbols of resilience and freedom.

On a practical level, protective styles help hair retain moisture and reduce the friction caused by scarves, sweaters, and dry air. They give natural hair a break from daily manipulation. But here's the real tea, the best protection requires preparation and maintenance. Before sitting in your stylist's chair, deep condition or use a hair mask. While wearing your protective style, if possible; lightly oil the scalp with nourishing oils like jojoba or castor, avoiding too-tight tension along the hairline. Although we all want to get a bang for our buck in this economy, don't leave styles in too long to reduce tension- 6-8 weeks if possible. For sweater-weather protection, choose products without parabens, phthalates, or that shady 'fragrance' label hiding mystery chemicals. Many adhesives, glues, and gels marketed to Black women contain toxic ingredients linked to respiratory or reproductive health concerns.

As [Consumer Reports \(2024\)](#) revealed, many popular braiding-hair products contain dangerous chemicals confirming what so many of us have long suspected that, kanekalon, can be cancerous. Synthetic hair often comes pre-treated with coatings and preservatives expose us to toxins.

So it's worth asking: how protective can braids really be if the very hair we're adding is chemical-ridden? On a more hopeful note, there are ways to cut down on exposure. Rinse synthetic hair before use: soak it in apple cider vinegar and water, rinse thoroughly, and let it dry overnight to strip away much of the coating. Another option is to seek out braiding hair that limits chemical treatments.

Ultimately, protecting ourselves means asking stylists about the products they use, supporting those who prioritize client safety, and passing this knowledge onto our sisters, daughters, and friends. This fall, as the season shifts, let's treat protective styling as more than maintenance. It's an act of radical care.





# Beauty Products Containing Heavy Metals

Written by Myia Williams

Metals aren't always as visible in beauty products as they are in technology and heavy machinery. Sometimes they could only be seen under a magnifying glass or tested in a lab to be detected. A few common heavy metals in beauty products include "...lead, cadmium, mercury, and arsenic..." (Althobaiti, 2024). These metals are known to cause severe health issues. Some issues could result in damage to vital organs like "...lungs and liver-promoting various diseases, gastrointestinal and kidney dysfunction, nervous system disorders, birth defects, skin lesions, vascular damage, immune system dysfunction and cancer..." (Althobaiti, 2024).

Due to the various physiological effects, heavy metals could also deplete cognitive function and cause behavioral impairments such as Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, multiple sclerosis, and ADHD (Althobaiti, 2024). This exposure could ultimately result in memory loss, [premature] motor dysfunction, muscle weakness, and speech difficulties (Althobaiti, 2024). The metallic contaminants seep into the protective layer of your skin and attack your blood stream.

Before you begin throwing away all of your beauty products, check to see if any list heavy metals, which may be listed as:

- Lead acetate.
- Chromium.
- Thimerosal.
- Hydrogenated cotton seed oil.
- Sodium hexametaphosphate.

(Campaign for Safe Cosmetics, 2025)



There are many more on the list but you could easily prevent excessive usage of heavy metals by navigating Clearya, Yuka, or similar apps to scan your products and check their ingredients. These apps should also alert you if there are heavy metals in your product. You could also use Campaign for Safe Cosmetics website and search for non-toxic beauty products. If these options aren't available to you, you could quickly do research on ingredients you're curious about by reviewing our newsletter list, specifically our articles about formaldehyde, or use a search engine like Google, Chrome, or Safari.

For a greater impact, be sure to contribute to policy making decisions by voting and signing petitions related to health within the beauty industry. This could support the ban of heavy metals and other fatal ingredients as well. Use your voice to save the lives of many!



# Recent Events



*What has the Beauty Justice Department been up to this season?*



## Projects

- Monthly Salon Sessions
- Conversations with a Chemist
- Skin Lightening Workshops
- Curls and Conversations
- Keep in Touch: Breast Health Program

## October Events

- **Oct 13<sup>th</sup>**: October Salon Session
- **Oct 19<sup>th</sup>**: Boobs and Bling: Bra Party
- **Oct 25<sup>th</sup>**: Mammograms and Manicures

## Events Calender

Access a complete list of beauty justice events:

[Here](#)



# Conversations with A Chemist:

## *The Trauma and Curly/Coily Hair*

*“Hair is more than just personal expression; it’s political, cultural, and historical”*

On June 16<sup>th</sup>, BWW Beauty Justice hosted an engaging and healing conversation about The Trauma of Curly and Coily Hair. Moderated by Beauty entrepreneur and CEO Janice Williams Oliver, we welcomed Dr. Erika M. Dawkins and Dr. Tim Barksdale. Together, we had an interactive discussion on how historical and ongoing trauma, toxic chemicals, and social pressures have impacted Black women's hair experiences.



Founder/CEO MisTee  
Wants To Know, Inc.  
[misteeapro.com](http://misteeapro.com)



Erika Dawkins  
PsyD, MEd



Tim Barksdale  
Psy.D, LMSW, NADD-CC

*Conversations with a Chemist* is a monthly webinar series where we get the chance to hear from Black chemists, scientists, toxicologists, and science professionals about various beauty justice topics specific to Black women and girls.



# Conversations with a Chemist:

## *Sunscreen for Melanin-Rich Skin*

On August 4, 2025, Black Women for Wellness LA hosted an insightful Conversations with a Chemist webinar featuring Mahogany Smith Christopher, environmental scientist with California's Department of Toxic Substances Control. Moderated by Dr. Tamanika Ferguson, the discussion explored the importance of SPF for melanin-rich skin, how to identify harmful ingredients, and strategies for finding safer, more effective products.



**Mahogany Smith Christopher,**  
*Environmental Scientist with the  
Department of Toxic Substances  
Control*



**Dr. Tamanika Ferguson,**  
Black feminist-womanist scholar,  
educator, and strategist

Mahogany shared her unique expertise at the intersection of environmental science, public health, and beauty, drawing on her background in both cosmetic formulation and sustainability education. Attendees left with practical tips for protecting skin health and a deeper understanding of how beauty justice connects to environmental justice.

We are grateful to Mahogany and Dr. Ferguson for leading such a powerful conversation and to our community for showing up ready to learn, ask questions, and take action for safer beauty practices.



# Toxic Truths: A Chemist and Toxicologist Break Down What's in Our Beauty Products

On August 7<sup>th</sup>, Black Women for Wellness hosted our 26<sup>th</sup> annual **Reproductive Justice Conference!**

We had a great turnout at our *Beauty Justice Track*. Our Session broke down toxic beauty products and the hidden health risks in braiding hair, as revealed in the latest Consumer Reports study. We would like to thank and highlight our incredible speakers:



## Our Panelists:



**Dr. Elissia Franklin,**  
PhD

Dr. Elissia Franklin is a research scientist at Silent Spring Institute, studying toxic chemicals in beauty products that disproportionately affect Black women



**Dr. Veneese J.B. Evans,**  
PhD



Dr. Veneese J.B. Evans is a toxicologist focused on reducing harmful chemicals in consumer products. She holds a Ph.D. from UC Davis and has a background in environmental and inhalation toxicology.

## Moderated By:



**Jonisha Garcia,**  
Founder and CEO of Hair,  
Love, Therapy LLC

Jonisha Garcia is an entrepreneur and mental health advocate. She founded Hair, Love, Therapy and co-founded Eco Salon Pro to promote wellness and eco-conscious beauty. She also researches beauty product impacts on women of color at Occidental College.

# Salon Sessions

## Monthly Beauty Mixers

On July 14<sup>th</sup>, we hosted our very first Salon Session. Salon Sessions are a monthly gathering specifically for Black hair stylists, braiders, beauticians, beauty entrepreneurs, and beauty justice advocates to come together in community. During these sessions, we network with one another, and share safer beauty practices.





BEAUTY  
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BLACK WOMEN FOR WELLNESS BEAUTY JUSTICE NEWSLETTER

YEAR IN  
REVIEW

# SAVE THE ~~day~~



JOIN US FOR OUR 2ND ANNUAL  
BEAUTY JUSTICE CONFERENCE

Beyond the Beauty Aisle: From  
Consumer Choices to Community  
Change—Justice Begins With Us

**APRIL 20<sup>TH</sup>, 2026**

THE CALIFORNIA ENDOWMENT

Registration will open  
December 1<sup>st</sup>



**ALL ARE WELCOME**

**JOIN THE BLACK WOMEN  
FOR WELLNESS**

# **BEAUTY JUSTICE COALITION**

Black Women for Wellness' Beauty Justice Coalition is a collective of individuals, organizations, and activists united in the fight for the health and well-being of Black Women and Girls. Our mission is to address systemic inequities in the beauty industry focusing on harmful chemicals and toxic exposures that disproportionately affect our communities.

The coalition meets quarterly, virtually.

Anyone is welcome to join!

For more info, contact Madison Beckett at

[Madison@bwwla.com](mailto:Madison@bwwla.com)

**NEXT MEETING IS  
December 8th 2025  
at the BWW Office**



**LEARN MORE &  
REGISTER HERE**





# Breast Health

## Keep in Touch

### About BWW's Keep in Touch Initiative

The Keep In Touch Program is dedicated to inspiring Black women to embrace and prioritize the health of their breasts. For two decades, this program has fostered open discussions and meaningful conversations centered on breast health, education, early detection, and empowerment by creating a legacy of awareness and community support for Black Women.



### Join Our Next Keep in Touch Virtual Meeting

- 3rd Wednesday of the month
- 9:30am-10:30am
- <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82164593022>

For questions, reach out to Arnedra at [Arnedra@bwwla.com](mailto:Arnedra@bwwla.com)

*This initiative is dedicated to empowering and educating Black women and their allies about breast health and its critical impact on our community.*



# Keep in Touch Recap

## **September Keep In Touch Meeting with Dr. Michelle Clark**

Our September Keep In Touch Meeting featured Dr. Michelle Clark, a breast cancer survivor who not only shared her story but also gave us tools and practices to heal, rest, and restore our bodies.



**Dr. Michelle Clark, LMSW**  
*CEO of LIFT After Breast Cancer*

### **In the words of Dr. Clark:**

*“What you go through grows you so you can be a blessing to others — so learn from it.”*

That spirit of resilience continues at our 3rd Annual Keep in Touch Bra Party on Sunday, October 19, 2025, at Skylinks Golf Course in Long Beach. Join us as we honor Black women's strength in the face of breast cancer, domestic violence, and toxic exposures. Bring your creativity, your voice, and a bra to decorate as we gather in sisterhood, wellness, and celebration. Find the official flier on the next page.



BEHIND THE CHAIR: A TRIBUTE TO BLACK HAIRSTYLISTS

# BEHIND THE CHAIR

*In celebration of National Hairstylist Day, Black Women for Wellness is proud to announce our 5th annual "Behind the Chair" Campaign, a tribute to the incredible talent, creativity, and community impact of Black hair stylists.*

***Hairstylists do more than style hair; they nurture confidence, create safe spaces, and uphold traditions of beauty and self-expression within our community. Through "Behind the Chair," we honor the artists who shape our culture and stand at the forefront of our Beauty Justice movement, advocating for safer products, healthier beauty practices, and environments free from harmful chemicals.***

#BEHINDTHECHAIR  
#NATIONALHAIRSTYLISTDAY  
#BEAUTYJUSTICE  
#BWWLA



# JONISHA GARCIA

*Jonisha Garcia is the founder and CEO of Hair, Love, Therapy LLC, a salon integrating mental health awareness with premium hair extension services. She also serves as co-founder and CEO of Eco Salon Pro LLC, an online platform guiding salon owners in reducing toxic chemical use and adopting eco-friendly practices. As a researcher at Occidental College, she contributes to Taking Stock, a study supporting Black women transitioning to natural hair and examining chemical exposure in Black and Latina communities.*

# Beauty Justice Department



**Arnedra Jordan**  
Director of Programs



**Madison Beckett**  
Beauty Justice  
Coordinator



**Valerie Monroe**  
Beauty and Food  
Justice Outreach  
Worker



**Adia James**  
Reproductive Justice  
Conference Outreach  
Worker

## Welcome to our Newest Beauty Justice Staff



**Tiffany Holmes**  
Beauty Justice Outreach Worker

**Dr. Taminika**  
Curriculum Specialist



**Ifeoma Ajufo**  
Fall 2025 Intern

Tiffany Holmes is a Beauty Justice Outreach Worker at Black Women for Wellness where she advocates for safe and empowering beauty practices for Black women. Her passion for environmental justice and community care led her to volunteering with BWW, later growing into a leadership role as a beauty justice advocate. A graduate from the University of San Francisco, Tiffany studied Sociology, African American Studies, and Environmental Studies, exploring the intersections of these three fields. In her free time, Tiffany enjoys riding public transportation around Los Angeles, being outdoors, and bartending on the weekends.



**Rovanni Castillo**  
Beauty Justice Fellow

Rovanni Castillo is the 2025-2026 Beauty Justice Fellow at Black Women for Wellness. A graduate of UCLA's Fielding School of Public Health, she studied Community Health Sciences with a focus on maternal, child, and adolescent health. Rovanni is originally from Belize and enjoys returning home to spend time with family.

# Our 2025 Interns

*Meet our Beauty Justice Summer Interns and Student Worker*



## Sofia Sabra

Sofia Sabra is currently pursuing a Master of Public Health in Community Health Sciences at UCLA. With an interest in occupational health, she has joined the Beauty Justice Team as an OHIP intern to deepen her understanding of how to improve the safety of Black workers, particularly hair stylists, serving the community. She is also passionate about environmental issues, health education, and research. In her spare time, Sofia enjoys reading, watching reality TV shows, and trying new restaurants.



## Myia Williams

Myia is a Psychology (Media & Technology) and Environmental Science student at the University of Phoenix and West Los Angeles College. Currently, she serves as an Environmental and Beauty Justice intern with Black Women For Wellness, a researcher with Affordable Living for the Aging, Marketing Manager for a family-owned daycare, fellowship recipient, and freelance grant writer. With years of volunteer work at TreePeople and Keep America Beautiful, Myia is deeply committed to environmentalism and climate justice. In their free time, they enjoy drawing and blogging, and they are excited to merge their passions for beauty and climate change through her work with Black Women For Wellness.



## Sheridan Lyles

Sheridan Lyles is a senior at Spelman College studying psychology and public health who has spent her summer here in Los Angeles as a CDC John R. Lewis Undergraduate Public Health Scholar. She has spent eight weeks with the UCLA Fielding School of Public Health gaining public health training and working with Black Women for Wellness on the evaluation, facilitation, and marketing of our Rites of Passage Program and assisting Sisters@Eight.



# Thank you to Our Grant Partners

