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**Get That Colonization Off Your Crown, Michelle  
From the Fringe**

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From the time Barack Obama became a fixture on the national stage, I have eyed Michelle Obama with an uneven mix of appreciation and disappointment.

It's not about her fashion sense, though she's been ridiculed for accentuating her hips and baring her toned arms by folks with twisted aesthetic sensibilities and outright hate.

It's not about her countenance, though she's been attacked for not smiling enough, scowling at inopportune times and having a toothy grin.

It's not about her skin tone, though some mainstream magazines lightened her up a few shades when they placed her on their covers.

It's about her hair.

Here we have a sister in one of the most visible, transformative positions on the planet, and she's wearing colonization on her crown.

I don't care if she has a relaxer or is "really natural" and "just" presses or flat irons her hair. My issue is that she apparently feels the need or inclination to rock a straight 'do; that she just may have a standard that posits straightened hair as an ideal, when she could forever change the way black men and women – and non-black persons nationally and globally – perceive and react to our natural curls, kinks, coils and zigzags.

I'm not the only one who feels this way. I informally surveyed some black women just to make sure I wasn't off target.

"I think the standard that some black women choose to exemplify in terms of their appearance would be different because she's in a role to be a trendsetter," said a

20-something sister.

“If she did that it would be a huge statement,” said another 30-something who presses her hair and wears hair pieces on occasion. “I would identify with that gesture as I did with the two Olympians who held their fist in the air at the Olympics. We have been brainwashed to believe that we are not ‘pretty’ unless we go blonde, add tracks or process our hair straight. The funny thing about all of it is that now white women are spending LOTS of money trying to be like the one image they have tried to change for so many years – the image of a black woman.”

Okay, so I’m not crazy. Nor am I alone in my opinion that if Mrs. Obama sported some twists, a fro, or, dare I suggest, locks, she could change the world. She could make black girls see the beauty in their natural-born selves and do away with the age-old towel-hair dress-up game. Her image could transform the hair care industry and stimulate the black economy. We’d have less trepidation about wearing natural hairstyles in the workplace or on a job interview. Sisters could go swimming and not care about being seen out in public with their organized fuzz in full view. Brothers would realize, en masse, that there is something cosmic and convenient about being with a woman who doesn’t need an arsenal of thermal tools or chemical treatments to keep up her appearance.

Clearly, Michelle Obama cannot be completely averse to natural hair. Her older daughter, Malia, is frequently photographed with cornrows, twists and braids. We as mothers have a responsibility to our daughters that transcends providing for their basic needs. We have an obligation to project an image that reflects the self-esteem we want them to radiate. For a long time, I have believed that [black mothers should wear their hair naturally](#).

This discussion isn’t about options, manageability or convenience – the rationales that black women who straighten their hair often rely on for their opening arguments. We have an agenda that is bigger than that.


Liking – and loving – ourselves, as Yahweh made us.

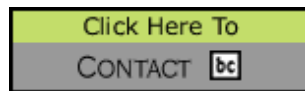
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