

**Section A**

Dear Assessment Committee,

During my first year at Spelman, I have personally experienced tremendous growth as a writer. I owe this development to my African Diaspora and the World classes, as well as my First-Year Composition class. In both of these classes, I was challenged to step outside of my comfort zone with my writing and expand on the basic skills that I had possessed. Some writing skills that I have acquired from my freshman year is the ability to conduct effective research and create a strong thesis and argument. I will take all of these skills with me in future classes because they have taken my writing to the next level. When I first entered Spelman I thought that I already refined these writing skills, but I quickly realized I had not. I would go to my professor's office hours before the assignment was due and they would offer me the constructive criticism that was needed to elevate my writing skills. Each skill did not come at was but throughout the entire year. After each assignment, my writing was better than it was before.

Due to the fact that my writing advanced after each assignment, I choose the final two assignments that were due for my African Diaspora and the World (ADW) and my First-Year Composition classes. I felt that the critical essay assigned for my ADW class highlighted my ability to critically analyze a piece of writing and focus in on one topic that it is trying to argue. It also displays how I am cable of effectively utilizing primary and secondary sources to work in harmony with each other to produce one issue. The ten-page issue brief that was assigned for my First-Year Composition class, demonstrates my ability to develop my own argument and find other sources to support it. Both of the assignments showcase my versatility as a writer. Two completely different assignments that I did equally as well on. My writing style in both are very

similar, but it is adjusted for the assignment at hand. Something I have also learned over the course of the year is that a good argument is one that is able to be debated and in both of my papers I have provided strong arguments that are still open for dispute.

I can confidently say that my issue brief paper (section B) challenged me the most as a writer. I had never written a paper that long. How my teacher assigned it is that she essentially broke the paper up into four different sections throughout the semester. This was good because I did not feel overwhelmed at the fact that I did not have to sit down and write an entire ten-page paper at once but had the same time I found it difficult to write different papers/sections and then combining it to make it one cohesive paper. In fact, halfway through the semester, I realized that the original topic that I had was not working. I could not find enough sources to defend my argument and the paper as a whole was not coming together. I then proceeded to get permission from my teacher to switch topics and I had to completely redo all the previous assignments. Although this was stressful, it was essential for me to do in order to create the best quality paper. This not only challenged me as a writer but also showed me that I put the quality of my writing first.

My first year at Spelman showed me how much work my writing needed and still needs. Spelman is a school that stands for excellence and will not accept mediocrity. In high school, I was able to get by, by being a mediocre writer. One of the biggest things that I still struggle with is my organizational skills in writing. If I had a better and organized outline I would have realized that the original topic that I chose for my issue brief was not the best and I would have saved myself a lot of struggle. I plan on fixing my organizational skills by going to the professor before the outline is due as well. I never considered doing this because I believed that the outline

was not that important, but I've realized that an organized well thought out outline produces a better paper. This is the biggest writing skill that I need to work on and once I have mastered it I know my writing as a whole will be taken to the next level.

I am an International Studies major with a minor in Spanish, so critical writing and thinking will be something that I have to do for the next three years and continue throughout my professional career as well. In the future, I know that I will be prepared because although I do not have perfect critical writing and thinking skills yet, during my time at Spelman, I will be morphed into an exemplary critical writer and thinker.

Sincerely,

Jillian N. Brown

## **Section B**

### **Prompt**

Your task in writing an issue brief is to **make a sophisticated, substantiated case for implementing, changing, or enforcing a specific policy or strategy in relation to a social or political issue.** *You are welcome to choose any issue that interests you.*

### **Bigger Than a Movement**

“A woman is 80% more likely to change her natural hair to meet social norms or expectations at work. women are 50% more likely to be sent home or know of a Black woman sent home from the workplace because of her hair. (Dove)” In seventh grade at the young age of eleven, I decided to get a relaxer in my hair. Although reluctant at first, my mother eventually gave in and allowed me to do it. I loved wearing my hair straight and not having to worry about taking care of it or whether or not it looked nice today; it was straight so I knew it was fine. As my eighth-grade year came around I noticed that my hair was not as healthy as it was before and it also lost its length. I immediately stopped perming my hair and began my natural hair journey.

I entered high school and began the process of transitioning; I wore braids or my hair in a high puff. By the time my sophomore year came around, I had grown my hair long enough where I was able to cut off the damaged ends of my hair. This is the point in my life where I really began to educate myself on natural hair and its beauty. In order to educate myself, I began doing research on many different platforms. This includes YouTube, different social media outlets, and a plethora of online blogs. I began to love the naturally kinky and coarse hair that I was blessed with. Although I loved it, I was faced with people who demeaned it and referred to it as a mess. I remember one time I styled my hair out for a choir concert and I was told by

someone that my hair was not appropriate for the occasion and I should change it. I did not realize that my natural hair could be inappropriate. This was the first time I recognized that my natural hair carries more weight than just being hair.

This experience placed a harsh reality in my life, and I quickly realized how as a Black woman, many aspects of my life are considered inferior to a non-person of color. Due to this my natural hair research shifted from educating my self on how to keep my hair healthy but educating myself on the blatant discrimination against Black natural hair. I had never in my life heard of a white person's natural hair being described as inappropriate. It did not take much research to find an abundance of instances where a Black person was disrespected and discriminated against because of their hair. Some things include the bullying of women wearing wigs, the demonization of 4c hair, and the bullying of young Black children in school because of their hair. As I was researching and educating myself, I realized how many of my friends and family have gone through the same issues. Straightening their hair for work because our type of hair is "professional", not being allowed to wear their hair a certain style to school because it was distracting, getting relaxers at young ages so they can feel "pretty". This hate had always been around me, but I always ignored it; as many others do too. This sickened me and I was ashamed that this was still the reality I was living in. There was something that needed to be done about the issue at hand. men and women could not continue to live in a society where they are judged by their hair.

Throughout the years I have come to love my hair and appreciate it in its natural form and that is something that I desire for everyone. The discrimination against Black natural hair needs to stop. Many other people recognize the issue as well and want to do something about it.

There are many blogs, YouTube videos, news articles, and social media influencers that address this issue. This is important because the more people discuss the topic the faster a change will come. hair should be accepted in school, workplaces, and everyday life in general. Our hair should not be able to hold us back in life.

The natural hair movement, which was developed in the 2000s, is a global movement that empowers Black people, mainly women, in the United States to love and proudly wear their hair. For people in different areas, the natural hair movement is expressed differently. “In places with histories of European settler colonialism, the natural hair movement has much in common with what we see in the United States, but in places like Ghana and Nigeria, however, the natural hair movement is more about expressing a cosmopolitan sense of style. (Byrd)” Although the movement is not the same for all, it still was very necessary because of the discrimination against natural hair that was occurring. The natural hair movement has extended into today, part of the reason is that there is still a strong disgust for natural Black hair.

Discrimination against Black people in the United States has taken place since 1619 when the first slaves were brought; its legacy continues to live on today. The term discrimination can be regarded as “consisting of actions, practices, or policies that are—in some appropriate sense—based on the (perceived) social group to which those discriminated against belong. (Altman)” There are various categories of identity that can face discrimination. Reasons people are discriminated against can include age, sex, sexual orientation, religion, and race. It is hard not to recognize the differences between natural Black hair and the natural hair of the rest of society, but due to the fact that it does not fit into the “mythical norm” that is applied in the United States, it is used as a form of oppression.

The mythical norm that is held in the United States includes: young, white, male, Christian, and heterosexual. Poet and the woman who developed the concept of a mythical norm, Audre Lorde, argues that “it is with this mythical norm that the trappings of power reside within this society. (Lorde)” With this power over society, it allows for discrimination against the natural hair of Black people. Due to the fact that our hair does not fit into the mythical norm, the discrimination of our hair has become another form of oppression. In a similar manner, ethnocentrism aids the oppression against Black people and their culture. Ethnocentrism is “the tendency to view one’s own culture as best (or “normal”) and to judge the behavior and beliefs of culturally different people by one’s own standard. (ADW Class Note)” This judgment allows for white people to remain socially above Black people because they use ethnocentrism to discriminate and oppress. The discrimination and judgment against Black hair originally began for the sole reason of oppression and throughout the years it morphed into oppression and ethnocentrism.

Hair is a part of Black culture. It’s used to express oneself, and many styles have historical significance. “Before the captured boarded the slave ships, traffickers shaved the heads of the women in a brutal attempt to strip them of their humanity and culture. (Dirshe)” This displays how Black hair has been used as a form of oppression for centuries. “In early African civilizations, hairstyles could indicate a person's family background, tribe, and social status. (Jahangir)” By colonizers cutting off the hair of Black people, it stripped them of their identity. The New Negro Movement, also known as the Harlem Renaissance was a time in the 1920s through the early 1930s where Black people were “integrating the Negro into the mainstream institutions of the society from which he has been traditionally excluded.

(Carmicheal and Hamilton)” With this, Blacks inherently were forced to give up their heritage and culture. This was done because at the time integration did not mean the equality of Blacks and whites, rather the assimilation of Blacks into white culture. Assimilation included, wigs, straight hair, and permed hair. Carmicheal and Hamilton also write, “The fact is that what must be abolished is not the Black community, but the dependent Colonial status that has been inflicted upon it.” It is blind ethnocentrism that people were pushing as “professionalism”; this still occurs today. People of color were losing jobs, being disqualified from sporting events, reprimanded in school, all because of their hair; it was deemed unprofessional and distracting. This led to the increase of Black women wearing weaves and wigs, which we often get bullied for as well. This cultural assimilation that occurred was vital to the progression of Black women within society.

The idea of stripping Black people from their culture is a form of oppression that has lived into today. For example, “a Black high school wrestler in New Jersey was forced to cut his dreadlocks to participate in a match. (Padilla)” A year later the Governor of New Jersey “signed a law making it illegal to discriminate against people based on hairstyles associated with race.” When this law was signed New Jersey became the third state to issue a bill in this manner. This demonstrates how malevolently Black people were being treated. A Black Alabama woman was denied a job because she refused to cut her locs off. “During an interview, Jones wore her hair in short, natural locs and was dressed in a business suit and pumps. An HR manager later told Jones that dreadlocks violated the company’s grooming policy because they “tend to get messy.” (Campbell)” This event highlights how Black natural hair is more than just hair; it is a burden for many and used as a form of oppression. Both of these discriminatory events display how natural



hair can halt the advancement in a Black person's life, therefore upholding the myth that white people are inferior. There needs to be an acceptance of the "loc" style of hair within the professional arena. There is an abundance of discrimination and animosity against the natural hairstyle of locs. There are rules in certain business arenas explicitly stating that this style is not allowed because "they are unprofessional". Locs are a part of the culture for Black people, so to make laws against them emphasizes the push for cultural assimilation; it denies our culture the relevance and importance it deserves.

It is important to know that the degrading of Black hair does not only come from outside of the Black race but within it as well. As a consequence, it creates an even deeper hatred for Black hair because people with the same thing deem it as nappy and unprofessional. This type of bullying of natural Black hair can be seen through the Olympic all-around gold medalist, Gabby Douglas. After being very successful in her events, Gabby was terribly ridiculed online about her hair. This horrific backlash was coming from both Black and non-Black peoples. In response, Gabby states, "Did I choose my hair texture? No. I'm grateful for having this hair on my head. (Douglas)" She and many other Black people are the reason the natural hair movement is important. "With her hair pulled back into a ponytail, revealing new unprocessed growth, Gabby doesn't fit into the narrative of respectability politics, which dictates that women must never have a broken nail, wrinkled clothing, or a damn hair out of place. (Martin)" Her hair was used in order to hold her back and keep her from being as great as she can be. Gabby Douglas emphasizes how being great is not good enough for a Black woman, every aspect of her life must be perfect in order to receive full praise and recognition. This is also seen "In 2012, actress Viola Davis decided to attend the Oscars with her natural hair, only to be attacked by talk show host

Wendy Williams, who claimed no one wanted to see the “‘Room 222’ look on the red carpet,” heavily implying that Davis’s natural hair made her look like a man. (Martin)” Instead of uplifting, Williams tore down Davis spewing, even more, hate targeted towards Black women. This is why the natural hair movement is important. It reinforces that Black hair is beautiful and teaches people that Black hair should not be the thing that holds a Black person back in life.

The natural hair movement has helped with the acceptance of natural hair, but in some states, the discrimination against natural hair has become so dire, they have mandated laws prohibiting discrimination against natural hair; this can be seen in the story of the boy had to cut his locs to compete in a wrestling competition. There are many different solutions in addition to laws being enforced that can help aid the oppression of Black people through hair. This includes a push of natural hair seen in social media, supporting different companies that try to aid the situation, and help amplify the voices of the people who are discriminated against, through social media or in everyday life.

In the media, throughout the years there has been a push for Black women wearing their natural hair. Although there has been a slight increase, it's rare to see on a screen Black women with 4c hair (very thick and coarse), or hair that is short and does not drape past their shoulders. The common type of natural hair that is displayed is within the 3 categories of hair (a looser curl pattern). The Oscar-winning short film “Hair Love”, directed by Matthew A. Cherry, displays an African American father attempting to manage the thick and unruly hair (4 category hair) of his daughter. It highlights the beauty of Black and how much work it truly takes to maintain and style our hair. “The story was born out of seeing a lack of representation in mainstream animated projects, and also wanting to promote hair love amongst young men and women of color.

(Cherry)” This film received the amount of praise it did, because of the lack of representation of Black hair. There needs to be more films displaying thicker hair in order to normalize it. In order for this to happen, more people need to support the small amounts of films that already exist. This will display how viewing natural hair is something that wants to be seen in more films.

Women have driven the natural hair movement for years, and much progress has been made. There is still a lot of work that needs to be done, and it has to happen with the support of allies. Allies are the people who fight for the cause, although this discrimination might not apply to them. Allies are important because it gets the message further and shows its importance. The multinational company, Dove, is a big ally for the natural hair movement. Dove partnered with the National Urban League and developed the CROWN Coalition (**C**reating a **R**espectful and **O**pen **W**orld for Natural Hair). The CROWN Coalition developed laws that prohibited discrimination against hair based upon racial identity. These laws that the CROWN Coalition have developed have been put in place in California (the first state), New York, and were introduced in New Jersey. This was created because “The societal norms and corporate grooming policies that unfairly impact women create distractions that impact our whole society. (Dove)” The actions of Dove in the development of the CROWN Coalition display the impact of what being an ally can do. It is important to support and sign the petition that Dove has created. This petition “Let’s your vote and your voice count in bringing anti-hair discrimination legislation to your state. Help us drive change today by signing the petition to pass The CROWN Act. (Dove)” By doing this highlights the issue and displays how this is an important subject for many people.

Through social media, many social issues have been brought to light. Social media is a powerful outlet and can be used to emphasize many important issues. This can be seen with the

Ahmaud Arbery shooting. Arbery was wrongfully murder in February of 2020. Not until the video of his killing surfaced in the first week of May in 2020 were the murders arrested. This situation highlights how it is not important unless we make it important. By the video being spread across social media it shined a light on the issue and action was done. This is why it is important to retweet and share when someone posts about an act of discrimination against them because of their natural hair. We must press the issue in order for a change to come.

There is still much progress that needs to be done with discrimination against Black hair. Hair has been used as a form of oppression for centuries. Africans who were enslaved, their hair was cut off in order to strip them from their identity. This form of oppression shifted into ethnocentrism. This is seen during the New Negro Movement where Black people were integrating into society. Integration did not encompass Black culture, therefore forcing Black to deny their heritage and culture and begin to wear wigs and flatten their hair; cultural assimilation. This tradition has carried on, as seen in many different cases where people have been denied a job or not allowed to compete in a competition because of their hair. There is no set way to combat this issue, but different courses of action can be taken in order to help with the progression. This includes more natural hair seen within media, specifically hair within the 4 categories. There has always been a strong bias towards locs, so if that style were to be deemed professional and not looked down upon, I strongly believe that there will be an acceptance for all hairstyles. There need to be more large-scale companies such as Dove that endorse the natural hair movement. Until that happens, it is important to support the Crown Coalition Act and sign this petition in order to get this issue more coverage. Social media is vital to the progression of natural hair movement. Document everything, and support everything that displays

discrimination against natural hair. It is essential to keep fighting and pushing for a change, otherwise, nothing will happen. Ultimately, the solution for the discrimination against natural hair needs to come from the natural hair movement shifting from being just a movement, but a reality.

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## Section C

### **Prompt**

For your critical essay, you are asked to approach the novel *I, Tituba* as a window into enslavement and freedom in Barbados and the northeastern United States in the 1600s. A critical essay requires you to construct an original argument (thesis statement) and back up that argument with evidence. Within the body of your essay, as you provide evidence to support your thesis statement, actively engage relevant ADW concepts and texts (readings and/or films).

### Forms of Ethnocentrism

When learning about the history of Africans and their enslavement it is important to remember the diversity that already existed among them. In the novel, *I, Tituba: Black Witch of Salem*, the main character, Tituba, is faced with discrimination, not just by her oppressors, but by other Africans as well. Ethnocentrism is “the tendency to view one’s own culture as best (or “normal”) and to judge the behavior and beliefs of culturally different people by one’s own standard. (ADW Note)” Tituba practiced an art, communicating with the invisible, that was foreign to many other people, including Africans. People feared her and the unknown powers that she obtained. She was often referred to as a witch. Tituba was constantly persuaded to practice the religion of Christianity and for the love of her life, John Indian, she did; alongside her art. After being removed from her homeland and taken to Boston, Tituba continued to participate in communicating with the invisible. This is what gets Tituba imprisoned and tried for witchcraft. **In Maryse Condé’s *I, Tituba: Black Witch of Salem*, Condé displays the complexities of ethnocentrism, in terms of it not strictly relating to white and black, revealed through Tituba’s personal relationships with different characters.**



Throughout the novel *I, Tituba: Black Witch of Salem*, there are many basic (relating to black and white) forms of ethnocentrism. With knowledge of the definition of ethnocentrism, different forms of it can be seen early on in the book. An instance of ethnocentrism being exhibited was when Susanna Endicott, one of Tituba's enslavers, forced Tituba to practice Christianity; a faith Tituba never even knew. "Susanna Endicott herself undertook to have Tituba recite her catechism lessons and to explain the words of her holy bible. (Condé, 26)" Tituba's faith was being judged by Susanna, a white woman, because it was foreign to her and she herself did not understand, therefore assuming the worst. In Omi and Winant's *Racial Formation: In the United States*, they explain that "everyone learns some version of the rules of racial classification, and of their own racial identity, often without obvious teaching. (Omi and Winant)" Tituba not practicing Christianity can be considered another "rule" that Omi and Winant were referring too. Although Tituba did not harm anyone with her powers, she was different, therefore considered to be a danger. This is amplified once Tituba is brought to Salem and the Puritan community greets her with isolation and eventually imprisons her. Ethnocentrism is being shown in its most basic form of white people judging the actions and beliefs of a group they believed to be superior to; black people.

Ethnocentrism stems deeper than just whites against blacks, as displayed in the judgment that white people showed to each other. In *I, Tituba: Black Witch of Salem*, Condé writes about a Jewish man, Benjamin Cohen d'Azevedo, that relates to Tituba because he feels as if he is an outcast from his surrounding Puritan community. Tituba mentions that "the only visitors who crept into Benjamin Cohen d'Azevedo's home were half a dozen other Jews who came to celebrate the Saturday ritual. (Condé, 123)" Benjamin and his nine children were never accepted

by the Puritans. In Omi and Winant's *Racial Formation: In the United States*, they state that "race overflows the boundaries of skin color. (Omi and Winant)" Benjamin's isolation from society highlights this statement because even though he was not black he was presented with judgment by the Puritan community because he practiced a different faith. This form of ethnocentrism is still common today, proving how ethnocentrism is not solely rooted in race.

In addition to ethnocentrism being highlighted in its basic form and how white people display it towards each other, *I, Tituba* show how black people fall subject to it against each other. Condé uses the character Mama Yaya to showcase this. Tituba stated, "the minute they saw me everybody jumped,..., I realized that they were mainly thinking about the connection I had with Mama Yaya, whom they had feared. But hadn't Mama Yaya used her powers to do good? (Condé, 12)" Although Tituba and Mama Yaya were both black women, they were feared by their surrounding black fellows because they were different. Mama Yaya was unconventional, therefore became a subject of ethnocentrism because she was not considered to be "normal". In Beverly Daniel Tatum's, *The Complexity of Identity: 'Who Am I?'*, Tatum addresses that "the parts of our identity that do capture of attention are those that other people notice and reflect back to us. (Tatum)" Alongside ethnocentrism, Mama Yaya's identity as a person was morphed into something that was not true because her powers set her apart from her community. Mama Yaya's powers are what "captured the attention of others." By Mama Yaya falling victim to ethnocentrism it displays how one's identity can be challenged in the process.

Despite ethnocentrism, Tituba was determined to stay connected to her roots and identity. Tituba's identity was constantly challenged through ethnocentrism. Although feared, Tituba was asked to do tasks such as "to find the person who has done me wrong and punish him. Let his

firstborn child, if there is one, perish. (Condé, 86)” It was a request like this that Tituba often received, but never accepted because she would not hurt someone else; that was not apart of who she was. The Complexity of Identity: ‘Who Am I?, Tatum mentions that “the process of integrating the component parts of our self-definition is indeed a lifelong journey. (Tatum)” Even though Tituba pretended to practice another faith and at times had to stop practicing her spirituality, she always remained connected to her identity as a spiritual black woman. This is important because an enslaved person’s identity was one of the hardest things to maintain.

Ethnocentrism was another way of keeping the enslaved oppressed. Tituba was thrown in jail due to the fact that she was a black woman that practiced a different spirituality. Tituba stated “like four great birds of prey the men surged into my room...two seized my arms, while a third tied my legs so tight that I cried out in pain. (Condé, 90)” Tituba was identified as a black woman alongside practicing a spirituality considered to be witchcraft. Her oppression not only stemmed from racism but ethnocentrism as well. In Patterson and Kelley “*Unfinished Migrations: Reflections on the African Diaspora and the Making of the Modern World*” Patterson and Kelley states that “Europe exorcized blackness in order to create its own invented traditions, empires, and fictions of superiority and racial purity.” (Patterson and Kelley) It is instances such as Tituba’s that display the oppression that black women went through. *I, Tituba* displays how ethnocentrism is not just judgment, but action.

In Maryse Condé’s *I, Tituba: Black Witch of Salem*, Condé uses Tituba and her personal relationships to display the complexities dealing with ethnocentrism. Tituba fell victim to ethnocentrism her entire life because of her spirituality. *I, Tituba* displays how the boundaries of ethnocentrism are not bound to just black and white. Condé highlights how ethnocentrism can be

present in the black community and in the white community, displayed against each other.

Ethnocentrism is not just the judgement of one group towards another that feels superior, but with ethnocentrism comes an action to act on those thoughts. This is one way how black people were oppressed. In Maryse Condé's *I, Tituba: Black Witch of Salem*, Tituba emphasizes how ethnocentrism is a vital part of slavery.

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