

# BAD HAIR

ROUNDTABLE – ROUNDTABLE – ROUNDTABLE – ROUNDTABLE –  
ROUNDTABLE

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FILM SCREENING – FILM SCREENING – FILM SCREENING –  
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**R** | RUTGERS–NEW BRUNSWICK  
Institute for Women's Leadership

THE LEGAL HISTORY AND EXPERIENCES  
OF HAIR DISCRIMINATION IN THE  
HISPANIC CARIBBEAN

BY LEADERSHIP  
SCHOLAR ALLY  
GARCIA

IN POLICY TRACKS  
LAW & ADVOCACY AND  
ARTS & LITERATURE

DECEMBER 10, 2025





The Leadership Scholars Certificate Program is a two-year selective, interdisciplinary certificate program that prepares Rutgers undergraduate women to be informed, innovative, and socially responsible leaders.

Leadership Scholars design and implement social action projects to expand their understanding of issues and problems and to develop leadership skills.

This project gives Scholars the opportunity to apply the theoretical knowledge they have gained about leadership, advocacy, and social change with the practical and experiential knowledge they have developed about a particular policy issue or problem through the field site placement. It also further develops leadership skills by giving undergraduates the opportunity to *practice* leadership *through* action.

To find out more please visit the Institute for Women's Leadership's website at <http://iwl.rutgers.edu>.

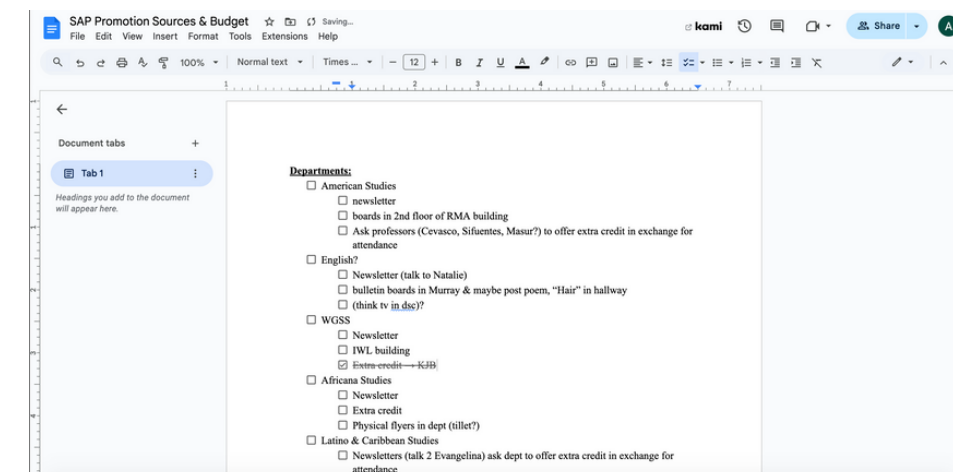
# BACKGROUND INFO

- Hair discrimination's roots are in the colonial era, during which Caribbeans felt pressured to emulate their colonizers' long, straight hair and thus straightened their naturally curly hair (Maynard and Jules, 5).
- It's an ongoing problem that has affected both men and women, though predominantly Black women, in their personal and professional lives (Summers et al).
- Hair discrimination not only exists in the Hispanic Caribbean, but also in the US - hence the creation of the CROWN Act which stands for Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair Act (The CROWN Act).

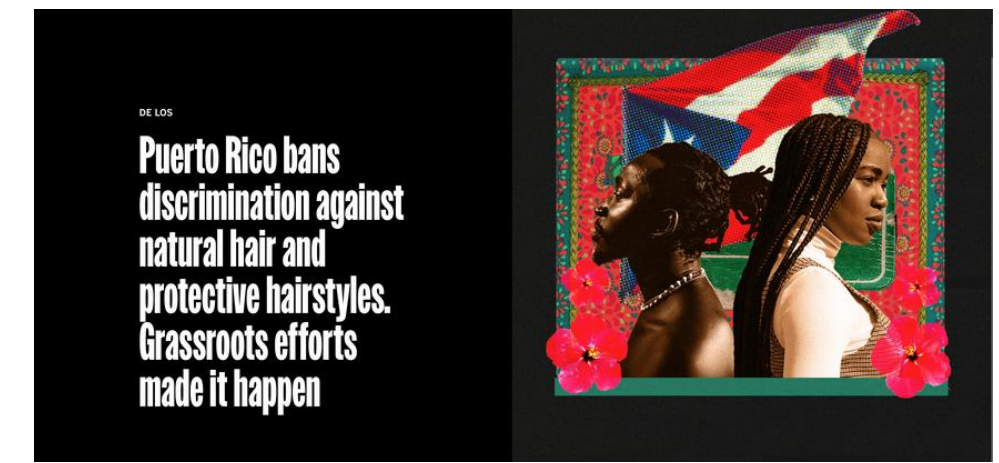


# SAP DESCRIPTION & PURPOSE

- My SAP consists of two parts: a recorded roundtable discussion and upcoming film screening.
- Its purpose is to highlight Hispanic Caribbean women's personal and professional experiences with hair discrimination and the legal action they took to combat it. It also serves to inspire natural hair pride.
- The roundtable was an informative, intergenerational conversation that featured women in politics, law, and higher education.
- By reflecting on their personal and professional experiences, the speakers demonstrated how hair discrimination is a persistent problem that exists in different areas of the world: the US and Hispanic Caribbean.



# SAP SCOPE



## SPRING AND SUMMER

- Found advisor for my SAP.
- Finalized project's goals, format, & required scholarly sources.
- Received and accepted invitation from SC&I to collaborate and record my roundtable.
- Created roundtable discussion guide
- Contacted relevant individuals (women in law and politics) to invite them to speak about their personal and professional experiences and legal project: Puerto Rico's Law Against Discrimination Based on Hairstyles.
- Reserved space for roundtable.
- Contacted Latina-owned curly hair care brands to collaborate.

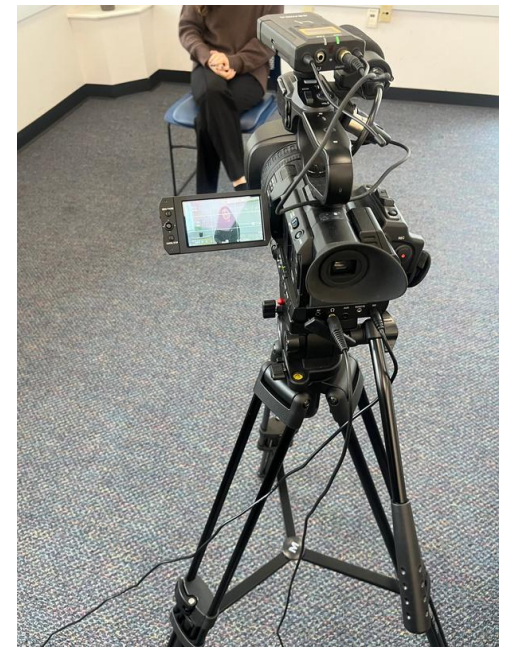
## FALL

- Contacted various student organizations to identify potential undergraduate speakers.
- Strategized ways to incentivize students to collaborate.
- Attempted to start and complete an IRB application; ultimately chose not to pursue this.
- Attempted to secure interpreter support; ultimately compensated one speaker for her interpretation.
- Purchased poster of relevant artwork to enhance the background of my roundtable.
- Obtained expanded budget.
- Secured film screening venue.
- Contacted graphic designer to create SAP promo material.
- Hosted roundtable discussion.

# SAP'S INCORPORATION OF FEMINIST LEADERSHIP

- **Feminist leadership values & practices:**
  - intersectionality
  - community over hierarchy
  - empathy
  - highlighting women's issues rather than only women in leadership
- **How my SAP embodied feminist leadership values & practices:**
  - I invited women with diverse backgrounds (Hispanic American, Afro-Hispanic/Afro-descendant, and queer women) to discuss how their backgrounds shaped their experiences with hair discrimination.
  - I organized a roundtable discussion to create a small community of similar women that each shared their knowledge and experiences. I didn't favor some of my speakers due to their prestigious positions (like the senator and former legislative assistant). Instead, I created an intimate, communal environment that amplified every speaker's voice.
  - I used my empathy to support my speakers prior to the roundtable by asking them how I could lessen their nervousness. I was also empathetic during the roundtable, saying I'm sorry they experienced hair discrimination though I'm glad this led to their advocacy for natural hair pride.
  - I also specifically invited women leaders to discuss an issue that affects mostly women, rather than only discuss their leadership.

# LESSONS LEARNED



- **Communication**
  - Persistence and directness are key.
  - Make requests in separate emails.
  - If one form of communication doesn't work, find another.
- **Event Planning**
  - Start as early as possible.
  - Identify and invite potential collaborators to join you as early as possible.
  - Create dates to hold yourself accountable.
  - If technology is involved in your event, do a tech-check.
  - If filming is involved in your private event, have a "filming in progress" poster outside.
- **Engagement**
  - Loop in other individuals in your network if one individual isn't offering as much support as you need.
  - Strategize how you can secure necessary collaborations. Sell yourself and your vision.
  - Think about what might motivate people to commit to collaborating with you (compensation).
- **Miscellaneous**
  - Prepare your necessary materials as early as possible (i.e. schedule emails to send).
  - Relax and take breaks.
  - Do as much as you can and let the universe do the rest. You're only one person.
  - Root your SAP in your passion(s). This will make the conceptualization and execution phases more fun.

# IMPACT

- **Immediate Impact**
  - After my roundtable concluded, one of my collaborators (a graduate student that filmed my discussion) said that it was a “smart conversation” that he could envision being “shared in a seminar.”
  - His colleague added that it was one of the best conversations she has filmed.
- **Impact on Speakers**
  - I’m currently awaiting responses from my speakers to gage how they feel after the discussion, if they would have done anything differently, if they have knowledge/insights they didn’t previously have, and if and how the conversation affected their relationship with their hair.
- **Impact on Viewers**
  - I will send a form to viewers after my film screening to ask if they related to the topic discussed, which parts resonated with them the most, and if there was anything discussed that piqued their curiosity or invoked emotion in them. Finally, I’ll ask if they would have done anything different to make the discussion more informative or engaging that future scholars can review to create improved SAPs.

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