

August 2024

# Disentagled Workshops

Impact report

**CORK  
MIGRANT  
CENTRE**  
at Nano Nagle Place



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# Introduction



Cork Migrant Centre & Cork College of FET present: An Event for UN's Decade for People of African Descent. **Focus:** Hair Care Challenges for Irish Citizens of African Heritage. Inspired by '*Don't Touch My Hair*' by Emma Dabiri. Workshops to educate parents. Info & practical sessions.

The event took place in collaboration with Cork College of FET, who have a thriving hairdressing school and a state of the art hair studio where the workshops were held, and their technology was used for demonstrative purposes.

Two workshops were held in April, the first one as an informative session on where to find accessible and appropriate hair care products and salons in Ireland, and the second one was a practical one where said products were used along with the college's technology.

# Event Goals

01

Breaking the silence about Afro Hair, leading to a better understanding of cultural heritage, and its functional role in nurturing a sense of identity/sense of self.

02

Creating a shared learning space, directed towards changing the narrative from viewing managing African hair as tiresome, time-consuming to a positive one that entails knowledge and skills of managing African/mixed race natural hair.

03

Increasing the ability to manage Afro Hair and raise awareness about the need for an inclusive hairdressing training curriculum.

04

Creating a forum or 'Safe Space' for continued learning and creating a pilot program that can be fine-tuned and replicated across the country.



# RATIONALE

In our work, we often find that hair is often at the intersection of identity, beauty/self-image, personal/political, feminism or masculinity but also the centre point of racist remarks/micro-aggressions. Emma Dabiri in her book 'Don't Touch My Hair' is on point by saying the personal becomes political when it comes to black people's hair in a predominantly white society.

Our service users who are predominantly black or mixed-race talk about lived experiences of racialization of their black hair with the result that their hair becomes a constant source of deep shame. A lot of microaggressions are experienced by the young people, particularly in schools related to their hair.

Culturally, hair particularly for girls and women is a key marker of gender identity, sense of beauty, nurturing a positive image of the self.

# Rationale ctd

In the African tradition, different cultural celebrations such as weddings, funerals etc are associated with specific hair styles. African boys who experience lived experiences of racism and other forms of social exclusion often turn to global hip-hop culture of successful rappers with braided cornrows and other markers to draw on empowering positive black identity.

This creates a huge challenge for these children and their families to exercise their right to enjoy their culture (Article 30, of UNCRC).

There is a paucity of information about management of black hair including that of mixed race individuals. Children born in Ireland or those who have relocated here have not had the opportunity to have an enabling environment where this knowledge is passed on as part of day to day routines and activities.



# Rationale ctd

Even in the hairdressing training institutions, this knowledge and skills are not incorporated. The hair salons therefore are often segregated with African salons catering for African hair with occasional non-African clients and Irish Salons mainly cater to Irish clients.

An Irish mum can't bond with her mixed-race daughter in the salon while their hair is being done. There is also scarcity of black hair products in the Irish beauty products market.

This creates a challenge for this population to access information & material from a diversity of sources, especially those aimed at the promotion of their social, spiritual and moral well-being (Article 17 of UNCRC).





# Cork Migrant Centre

All the work at the Cork Migrant Centre is strength-based, and framed within a transformative justice and a human rights perspective.

We run events called '*I am remarkable*', where we showcase and highlight positive narratives of successful black individuals in the community. These could range from sports and STEM, to academia and politics.

We have been running the '*Douglas Week Event*' since 2020, in collaboration with the Douglas team for the last three years all revolving around translating Fredrick Douglass' work into the 21st century focused on positive black/brown people narratives.

We have also just completed 3 months of creative workshops showcasing young black and brown people creative skills that culminated in the first ever youth led anti-racist summit in Ireland.



# Demographic Data

30

Participants at each workshop

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20

People of African Descent or mixed race

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10

Participants that are not of African Descent (a few of those were parents of mixed race children)

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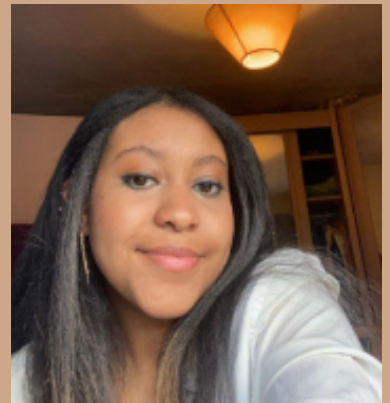
10

Volunteers

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8

Volunteers of African Descent



# Impact Narrative

Many young black girls are not really aware of how to maintain their hair, what products work for them and what products don't. This is especially prominent in Ireland where Afro products are not widely available. Mixed race is the fastest growing demographic in Ireland (CSO, 2021) and non-African parents in these marriages, as well as Irish foster parents fostering African children are often at a loss when it comes to hair management.



The workshops created a great space to have this conversation and explore the history of hair. It was great to see the differences and similarities of the styles and how migration and the interaction between cultures have had an impact on what they are today. I loved the conversations that happened at the break and the nods and smiles that followed when someone shared a personal experience, suggestion or challenge. There was a shared understanding and solidarity. More of these spaces need to be created!

**- Fionnuala, Workshop Facilitator**



It was impactful in many ways to have the community come together to develop the workshops and connect with professional young women in cork that wouldn't have met otherwise. It widened the community) and personal understanding made specific to cork context and on how to take care of my kid's hair. Services to people with Afro Hair are important important in sense of agency and identity that gives to people in celebrating their hair.

**- Michaela, Workshop Facilitator**

I received so many wonderful feedbacks from participants. People were so enlightened and awareness was spread among them. They came to me to tell me they would love more events like this because they gained a lot and took home valuable information and knowledge about the care of natural hair. For me I really felt empowered and delighted to share my knowledge, experiences and skills with people about natural hair care. It was a great time I had doing the workshops as that was my first time ever doing public speaking especially about natural hair which I am passionate about. I think it's really important to have them because the goal is to keep creating awareness about challenges and ways to help people struggling with length retention, common issues among the natural hair care community of finding and deciding the right products, creating a hair care routine, and ways to keep and take care of our hair.

**- Toluwani, Workshop Facilitator**



# Funding Plan

Overall  
grant

5000€

Grant allocation	Value
Transport	€469.90
Catering	€577.25
Hair products	€72.62
Videographer	€450
Photographer	€200
Facilitators	€2550
Vouchers	€250
<b>Total</b>	<b>€4569.77</b>



# PARTNERS



Cork Migrant Centre is also the diversity partner of Dell Technologies and Apple in Cork and their diversity sub-groups will participate in the workshop. We also work closely with the Children and Young People Service Committee (Cork), which is run by TUSLA and the umbrella body of grassroots organisations working with children and families in Cork. They will aid in reaching targeted groups who may benefit from this event, including Irish foster partners that are fostering black and brown children, families of mixed heritage, families resource centres and schools.



**Cork College of FET**  
Cork's Further Education & Training Service

# Educational resources

01

video

02

Presentation



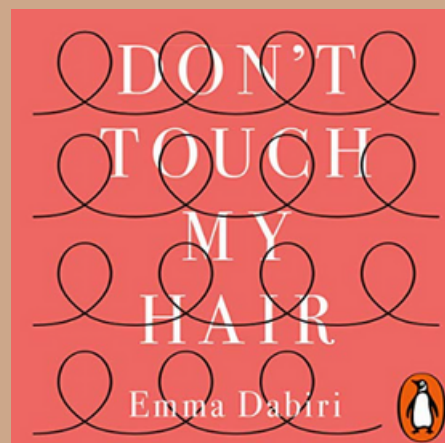
03

Practical workshop



04

Emma Dabiri's book



# Achieved goals and what's next



As the workshops were specifically designed for the purposes outlined at the beginning, all of the goals have been achieved outstandingly. The participants agree that safe spaces such as these workshops are of high importance when it comes to the creation of a network for a marginalised community who is underrepresented in Ireland, such as people with Afro Hair. In addition, Irish parents of mixed race children or foster parents often struggle to find available and affordable resources and hair products to treat their children's hair. With initiatives such as this one not only can we empower people of African descent but also strengthen the bond between mixed race families.

It is important to continue this work, not only educating other Afro Hair users but ultimately normalising such type of hair in order to achieve equality and ensure everyone has access to appropriate hair care products as it is not only a matter of hair but a deep interlink with culture, heritage and freedom.