



# **Environmental Health & Ethnic Hair Care**

**Nail Salon Research Convening  
April 27, 2009  
Oakland, California**



**Jessica Counts-Arnold, Pollution Prevention Coordinator  
U.S. EPA Region 9**

# Madam C. J. Walker

- She was born in 1867 in a poor neighborhood in St. Louis, Missouri.
- She was the first African American woman to become a millionaire.
- She founded the Central Postal Directory, the first African American-owned business to be listed on the New York Stock Exchange.
- She was a prominent social activist and philanthropist.
- She was a member of the National Association of Colored Women and the National Black Leadership Initiative Project.
- She was a pioneer in the development of hair care products for African American women.



**Madam C. J. Walker**

*Inventor, Entrepreneur, Philanthropist,  
Social Activist*



# Background

- Ethnic Hair Care industry is a **BILLION** **\$\$\$\$\$\$ industry**
- African Americans spend approximately **\$9 Billion** yearly **on personal care products**
- Average African-American Woman spends **\$150 or more** monthly on hair and nails
- Major manufacturers are targeting and **marketing new products** to Ethnic Americans
- Trend-**multi-cultural** focus on hair texture vs. ethnicity



# Salon Workers

- Typically between the ages of **17-70**
- Earn **\$1,500-\$6,000** monthly
- Stylist, hairdresser, beauty operator, braider, colorist, loctician, hair expert, style guru
- Shampoo & set, relaxers, flat iron, weaves/wigs, twist, locs, braids, color, hair prosthesis
- **Do not** have adequate health insurance
- Do more than heads! Some are **health educators** too!

# Concerns

- According to FDA **hair relaxers and dyes** receive the most complaints
- Studies associate **hormone-containing products** with **“early puberty”** in African American girls
- Products that promote hair growth may contain **estrogen/or other hormones**
- Darker hair dyes present a greater risk of cancer especially for hair stylists

# Concerns cont.

- Additional Products:
  - Glues used for weaving & eyelash extensions
- Permanent hair loss
- Respiratory/Asthma
- Allergic Reactions (swelling)
- Skin rashes (eczema & psoriasis)
- Cancer (bladder)





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# 2007 African American Hair Salon Roundtable

**Over 50 organizations and individuals attended:**

- Practice of Beauty
- Science of Beauty
- Regulation of Beauty
- Business of Beauty
- Brainstorming



• Little data and research available w??

• Several reports of hair loss (relaxers, weaves, braids)

• No mandatory continuing education requirements for licensed cosmetologist

■ Some salons are educating clients about health issues (breast cancer, diabetes, domestic violence)

■ Professional product labeling not required “trade secrets”-you can obtain Material Safety Data Sheets

# Next Steps

- Identify committed stakeholders
- Identify research & education efforts
- **Healthy Hair Guide Spring/Summer 2009**
- Develop partnership and engage others groups i.e., Latino Issue Forum, Teens for Safe Cosmetics etc.
- Develop “**Green**” standards for salons

# **Contacts**

**Jessica Counts-Arnold**

**Pollution Prevention Coordinator**

**US EPA Region IX**

**415-972-3288**

**counts-arnold.jessica@epa.gov**

**Vicki Vasquez**

**Program Administrator**

**Environmental Finance Center Region IX**

**510-583-0107**

**vickivasquez@comcast.net**