



Is Beauty Only Skin Deep

Nourbese Flint - Black Women for Wellness

AGENDA

- QUICK OVERVIEW OF BLACK WOMEN FOR WELLNESS
- WHY THIS WORK
- THE INTERSECTIONS OF BEAUTY AND TOXIC CHEMICALS
- BWW COMMUNITY FIELD RESEARCH





- Committed to the empowerment, health and well-being of Black Women and Girls.
- Based in Los Angeles
- Reproductive Justice Organization

BLACK WOMEN FOR WELLNESS

WHY THIS TOPIC

- Black stylist are a staple/economic backbone in many black communities
- Beauty Industry is only growing with Black women's leading the charge
- The impact of toxins in hair and beauty products on health

BEAUTY INDUSTRY

- Black Women spend an estimated 9 billion dollars in the beauty industry
- Black Women spend 80% more on beauty products than white women.
- Over 2/3rd of Black women feel that maintaining a youthful appearance is important
- In the Nielsen report about Black women about half of Black women surveyed has bought a skincare item, cosmetic or perfumes

According to the latest Nielsen report
Black women are:

- 17% more likely spend more on feminine hygiene products
- 61% more likely to spend more money on personal soaps
- 44% more likely on women's fragrance
- 106% more on ethnic health and beauty aids
- 4% more on hair care

per buyer compared to white women





**WHO GETS TO
BE BEAUTIFUL**

“

As Annalise, Ms. Davis, 49, is sexual and even sexy, in a slightly menacing way, but the actress doesn't look at all like the typical star of a network drama. Ignoring the narrow beauty standards some African-American women are held to, Ms. Rhimes chose a performer who is **older, darker-skinned and less classically beautiful than Ms. Washington**, or for that matter Halle Berry, who played an astronaut on the summer mini-series “Extant.”





- They very idea of **femininity is** steeped in **beauty**
- Current standards celebrate light/white skin, and facial features and body types seen throughout media
- Steeped in/reinforces structural racism

“

“Is capital is a resource drawn from the body that can be related to skin tone, facial features, hair and body shape that is attached to white bodies”

(Hunter 2011)

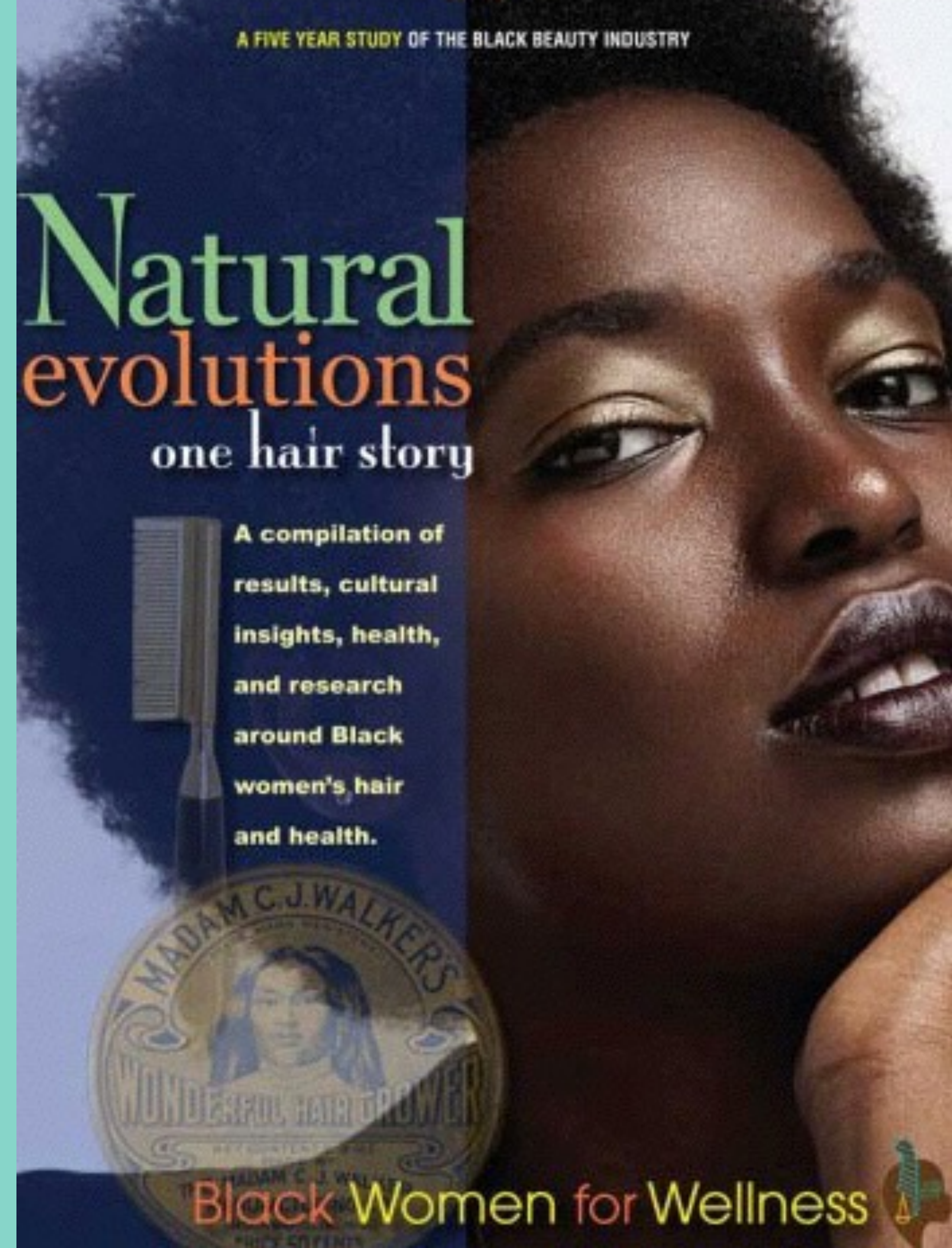
WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT WHEN DISCUSSING CHEMICAL EXPOSURE OF BEAUTY PRODUCTS?

- We need to understand why before we create solutions
- It informs the work and particularly what questions to ask



BWW FIELD RESEARCH

- literature reviews
- surveys
- focus groups
- interviews



CHEMICALS IN BEAUTY PRODUCT

Formaldehyde
(methylene glycol):
exposure can cause
irritation to the eyes,
nose, and throat/
increased cancer risk

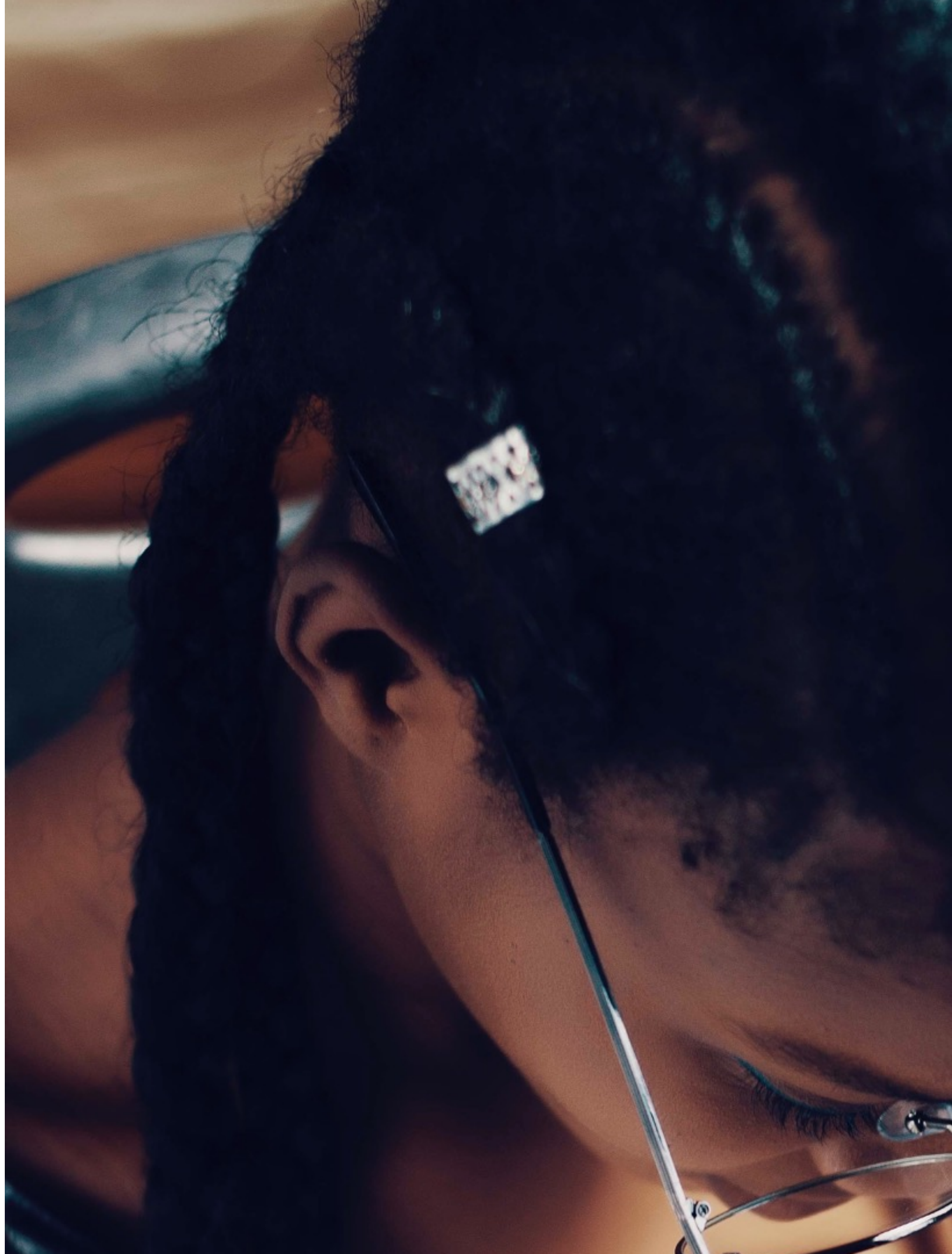
- Hair products
straightening
products, nail
polish, eye lash glue

Phthalates (dibutyl):
Endocrine disruptor
linked to reproductive
health outcomes

- Found in nail
polish, fragrance*,
facial moisturizers,
eye lash glue



CHEMICALS IN BEAUTY PRODUCT



DMDM Hydantoin and Diazolidinyl Urea: anti-microbial preservative that is a formaldehyde releaser

- Linked to cancer, immune system toxicity, skin irritation
- Found in hair products (**relaxers/detanglers**), facial/body wash, sunscreen, makeup...

Sodium/Calcium Hydroxide: Connected to skin irritation, skin burns, ulcers, dermatitis, baldness, eye damage.

- Found in **relaxers**, shampoo/conditioner, moisturizers, makeup, toothpaste...

MOST COMMON FORM OF TOXIC CHEMICALS

Most Common Forms of Toxic Chemicals in Products

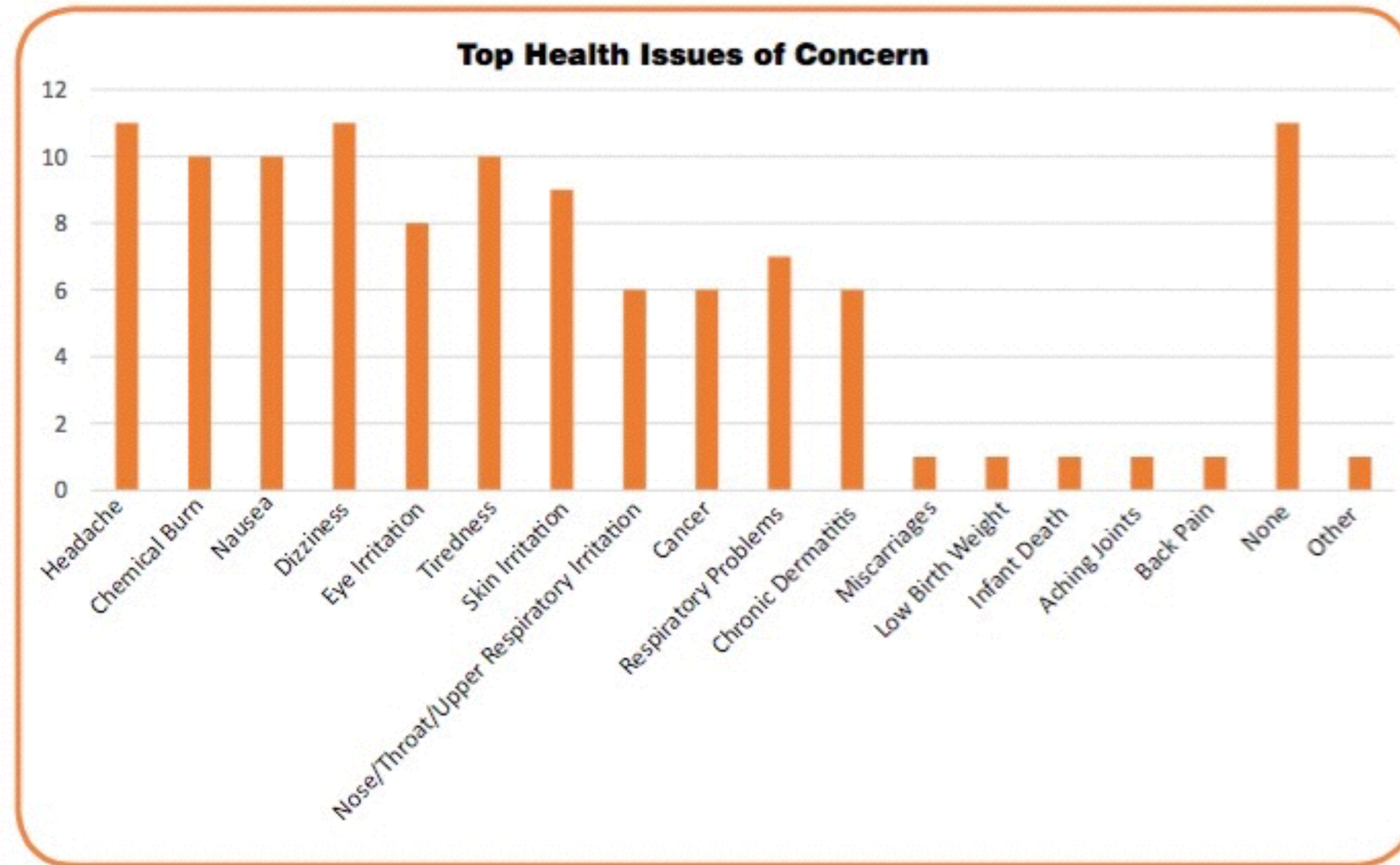
Products	Chemical Ingredients	Health Effects
Hormone containing conditioner	Various endocrine disruptors	Premature puberty, risk of breast cancer
Hair dyes	NH ₄ OH, H ₂ O ₂ Phenylenediamine Resorcinol	Skin burns & scarring, eye irritation
Relaxers	NAOH and CaOH	Skin burns and irritation, eye damage, permanent hair loss

“My friend [has] 20 years in the industry, my friends doesn't have fingerprints anymore... my friends can't go to the DMV and put their hand down.”

STYLIST

- Vast majority thought the products are safe
- Vast majority one to want to keep their clients safe and themselves
- Used products because they worked

TOP HEALTH ISSUES



FINAL THOUGHTS

- some of the toxic chemicals in products are what makes it work
- there is a new wave of embracing more “natural styles” that is driving products to be more green
- solutions need to be intersectional

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