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Personal and Salon Updates

As I'm writing this missive, I confess that I'm still a bit miffed about events in and around the salon of late. For details about the *what*, please read [this blog post](#). If you are not inclined to read the details, a neighbor to the salon has been trolling my web presence and posting negative reviews because I complained about excessive litter in front of my salon as a direct result of her clients' actions. As our office park has a Property Manager, I wrote to them about the litter, and the process was managed by them and the Board. The Board decided that a covenant violation had occurred, so the landlord had 45 days to resolve it. He cancelled her lease to rectify the violation. Rather than to express her outrage with the landlord, she decides to troll me for "ratting her out." I've had some time to process the events of the past month, and I can honestly say that I would not change much that I did. The more I come to learn about the character and disposition of my neighbor (who is on her way out), the more I feel that "it is what it is!" There are five primary drivers that keep resounding in my head and undergird my annoyance about the entire situation. These points are grounded in the fact that the neighbor felt that as a Black business owner, I didn't have her back and that I should not have reported her to the Board. Well, I take offense to the suggestion that I should somehow overlook mediocrity and absolute filth for the sake of brotherhood. IF YOU PISS ON MY DOORSTEP, YOU'RE NOT MY BROTHER! PERIOD! I'll unpack these points to illustrate my outrage a bit more intentionally.

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Entitlement: My initial annoyance comes from her belief that since I reported her to the Board, I treated her "like White people" treat Black people. I should have just come to her "as a woman." She sent me several text messages to say just that before I blocked her. The problem is: I am not a woman in this capacity. I AM A BUSINESS!! And businesses have rules of engagement to lessen liability and protect rights. I have no obligation to her as a woman. In fact to protect my business and safeguard liability, I had NO CHOICE but to use the established guidelines per our office park covenants to seek redress. Anything less could have been interpreted as harassment and then I would be defending myself rather than protecting my right to a clean front entrance. Were she a PROFESSIONAL BUSINESS, she would understand this. But she's not. She's an Instagram page with followers. Sure, that qualifies as a business in most circles, but this issue makes the case for my second point.

Governance: I am governed by four layers of established laws, rules and procedures. Federally, I have a taxpayer ID number, and I file my taxes annually. I pay my accountant dearly to file my taxes to ensure that I can standup to anyone's audit, anywhere, anytime. There are no shortcuts in this regard for me. At the state level, I am a registered business with the NC Secretary of State, and I file my annual reports as required. Failure to do so means that your business DOES NOT EXIST in the eyes of the NC law and the state court system. (I learned THAT lesson the hard way in Jamaica about 30 years ago. You DO live and learn.) If you fail to file reports annually, your registered business will be dissolved. Unregistered or dissolved businesses are not lawfully able to

issue contracts or conduct business in the state of NC. You may be a business [but you ain't bona fide!](#) (Show yo' a\$\$ and you'll get just what the guy got in the clip.) Likewise, my salon is licensed and annually inspected per NC Cosmetic Art legislation guidelines. I, and all stylists working in my salon, have up-to-date hair care licenses issued by the NC Board of Cosmetic Art. Additionally, I have an up-to-date natural hair care teacher's license. At the local level, I pay taxes to Wake County, and I have other inspection obligations to the City of Raleigh which require that all salons have a backflow system installed to prevent the contamination of City drinking water. This system must be inspected annually to ensure that it is functioning properly. Finally at the community level, my behavior is governed by the covenants of our office park. I am bound by these covenants as a business operator within this community. So when some Gen-Z chic accuses me of being jealous of her business when she has not even jumped through the first hoop to be authorized to conduct business operations in the state of North Carolina, I'm compelled to snicker. I didn't know she was not an official business. I didn't care who or what she was doing next door UNTIL it affected me. Then, her business became my business. I reported excess trash. The rest revealed itself through time. And THAT is ultimately why her landlord cancelled her lease, which highlights the next point.

Professionalism: Because this woman has been operating primarily on a social media platform, she as my girlfriend stated, "is not ready from primetime." Doing hair at the house IS NOT the same as doing hair in a salon. There are many nuances that I won't bother to elaborate on. But suffice it to say, professional space warrants professional conduct. On a few occasions, I saw people enter her unit with bonnets on their heads. When you're going to the hair salon, no one is particularly surprised by that. But there is a wealth management group on the ground floor of her unit. She was renting space upstairs. The owner of the wealth management group drives a beautiful BMW that sits right at the entrance of the unit. I wonder if it EVER occurred to her that he probably doesn't want to see hair bonnets walking in the front door of his business. It's just not the image that most professional offices want to project. Ultimately, it was his problem and not mine...only noteworthy. My clients don't enter our salon with hair bonnets on their heads because they appreciate that they are being served in a professional office park, and they look the part on entry into our salon. We take care of the rest! So, I'm compelled to agree with [Monique's comments on hair bonnets](#) as also repeated on [Club Shay Shay](#) recently. It is what it is! The fact that her clients' litter could have such a detrimental impact on my business in such a short period of time is a testament to the fact that "working at the house" has ill-equipped her to engage in a professional environment. I kept wondering: If her clients were going to her house to get their hair done, would they dump their fast-food trash out of the window in her yard? If they would, what type of people are they? If they wouldn't, why do they feel they have the right to do so in an office park community? Her clients are clearly not accustomed to being served in a professional environment, so they did what they did, and it was what it was. This brings me to my fourth point.

Culture: Our salon's motto and culture are "Embrace the beauty of you." I did not get into this business because I have a passion for hair. I did not engage because I'm 'ALL ABOUT THAT MONEY!' I considered this path because I KNOW THAT BLACK WOMEN ARE IN PAIN AND THE SOURCE OF THE GREATEST PAIN FOR THEM, ABOVE EVEN SKIN TONE IS THEIR HAIR TEXTURE! It has been denigrated, ridiculed, criticized and cursed. I personally witnessed all of the above while a student in high school in the 80s. God led me down that path so that I could see the truth with my own eyes. I eventually got to the point that people cursing me out to my face meant nothing to me. I did not cringe, cry or even care what they said because ultimately, I knew THEY WEREN'T TALKING TO ME. They were talking to the image of themselves that they hated and didn't want to be reminded of. They were outraged that I dared to show the world the truth that they were trying to conceal. I didn't understand why that was my lived experience at the time. But 40 years later, I know exactly why. It is a service to the psyche of Black womanhood. My salon is beautiful because I believe I and my clients deserve the very best. And that standard extends into the parking lot. On the contrary, stylists doing wig installs are all about embracing someone else's beauty and making it their own. What is going on in the mind underneath all of those mounds of

hair? Things that make you go hmmm. So, I'm inclined to say that in some respects, this entire issue can be boiled down to a clash of culture. All Black culture is not the same. Some people obviously believe that litter is a part of life. But I do not; which brings me to my final point.

Civic Responsibility: At what point do you think about something other than the Benjamins? How do you miss what is right in front of your eyes? When I spoke to the woman on the phone, she said: "I don't even live here!! I live in NY! I just fly down to do hair and go back! I don't even SEE any trash!" Well clearly, she was much more focused on the money she was making than she was on the community that was supporting her. And as such, she turned a blind eye to the most egregious and disrespectful type of treatment by HER OWN CLIENTS. They weren't just littering my parking lot. They were littering hers as well. While she did not notice the affront, I was highly offended. This salon is my ministry. It is a sacred space for me. I clean it meticulously because that is how I want it to be for myself. Likewise, I ensure the space is respected. When I witnessed a drug deal on the property a few years back, I took steps that ultimately arrested the situation. It was more young people trying to MAKE THAT MONEY as quickly as possible. Money makes the world go 'round. I get it! But I intend to be here long after their "business" operations are asunder. And I will not watch others destroy what it's taken me 18 years to build. Why? Because:

- No one was there when I asked God to guide me about whether to place my family finances at risk and start a business in a field in which I was neither trained nor had a historical passion.
- No person was present when I stared at the ceiling in the middle of the night trying to figure out how to increase revenues to pay back my small business loan.
- No individual was party to my decision to release the massage therapy part of the business because I was getting way too many calls from East Asian men who clearly wanted massages with happy endings and too few calls from bona fide clients.
- No soul saw when I took money out of my monthly paycheck so that I could pay social security and unemployment benefits, while staff was directing clients right out of my consultation room to her house for services.
- Nobody saw when stylists that I built up and supported walked out of the door with an attitude and 1/3 of my revenue base because they simply didn't need me anymore, particularly as I could no longer afford to pay social security and unemployment benefits after having switched stylists to straight commission.
- No other person informed my decision to take on a considerable base of clientele myself so that I could predictably stay true to the path and honor the calling that God gave me.
- No party was present when I made the decision to re-open the salon after the COVID pandemic closures a few days shy of the state's authorization for personal service businesses to re-open because we needed the cash flow; and they certainly didn't witness me almost suffocating from the body armor that I wore to protect myself and my clients.
- No other soul is present when I write the monthly check to the Property Owner's Association to the tune of \$330/month for property maintenance and incidentals—money that can never be recouped and is simply the cost of doing business.

In the face of this history, a two-month tenant chastises me like I owe her something and swears that "God don't like ugly, and that's what you have shown... But 18 years can crumble in no time. I always come out on top." Well, I won't be going ANYWHERE by God's grace alone! Trust and believe. If someone's got to go, it won't be me! This entire matter made me ask myself: *Schatzi, why even try to protect a business that God built? If He truly built it, He will protect it, right? Maybe I should have just left it in the Lord's hands, humbly picked up the trash and waited for him to solve it.* But whenever that logic comes into play, I immediately follow-up with: "Momma didn't raise no fool. [If you reward evil with good, evil will never leave your house.](#)" I'm not saying that chic was evil. But cleanliness IS next to godliness. After one of my stylists said her partner saw the chic smoking a blunt in front of the shop this week, I can only say, [Romans 8:28](#). It's all good. And I'm sure that God has a beautiful space waiting for her elsewhere if she is committed to follow Him and DO BETTER. Embrace the beauty of you.

Natural Hair Facts: Did you know... Aunt Jemima was a naturalista under that head tie (reprint of an August 2015 article)

Context: In light of the discussion about hair bonnets in the previous article, I thought it a good time to reprint this piece.

One of the fun things for me about teaching natural hair care to my students is that I get to learn new and interesting facts that I myself was unfamiliar with. For instance, we often remember the image of Aunt Jemima and her characteristic head tie which covered her tresses and emphasized her social status of servitude. Well, did you know that the [tignon](#)—the head scarf that she wore, was established and enforced through sumptuary laws designed to restrain and restrict the natural beauty of Black women? First instituted in Louisiana, these laws targeted Black women as their tresses were often admired by Whites, particularly of the male gender. White women became jealous and angry concerning the natural desire that these men of power had for women of subordinate status. So, the head tie was created to cover up these beautiful natural tresses and thereby dampen the beauty of Black women. When you see the natural locks of sisters like [this](#), [this](#), [this](#), or [this](#)—leading natural hair care bloggers, you can surely understand the phenomenon. This hair fact called to mind an occasion in my own life while a college student.



In those days, I always wore my hair in wet-set twists so most people never noticed me much. Well, one day, two of my girlfriends and I decided to drive to Richmond to see "[School Daze](#)." It was rare to see a movie by a Black director in those days (as it is now) so we were dressed to the nines. Both of my girls were of lighter hue than me, so I had frankly grown quite accustomed to walking next to them and being invisible. One of them was "drop-dead gorgeous". Some Black guys at UVA used to say her name with obvious desire that upon reflection was quite comical to witness because they had NO SHAME!! With my darker hue, guys simply didn't even look at me when I walked next to light-skinned friends. I was not jealous or particularly concerned about it though. There were all hues in my household growing up. So tone was a moot point. Besides, I was way too shy to care. In fact when I did press my hair out, the "green eyes" of envy that I received from some women made me very uncomfortable. So, I was always happy to wash my natural curls back in, twist my hair up and disappear in plain sight. Well, on the day in question sometime around 1988, my girls and I decided to go to McDonald's to grab some food after the movie. I was wearing an off-white sweater and an off-white knit skirt. It was fall. My hair was press- and-curled that day and was cascading around my shoulders in ringlets. We walked into the McDonald's entrance and the entire place, which had a good number of people in it, grew silent. All eyes were on the door where we had just entered. I thought, "Wow, I guess we made an impression." But next to these ladies, my girl B- in particular, that was really nothing new. We walked up to the counter, ordered our food and then went to the restroom for a bathroom check while the food was being prepared. When we got in the bathroom, B- quickly accosted me by stating, "I'm so jealous!" I said, "Why?" She said, "Because when we walked into the McDonald's, everyone was staring at us—AND THEY WERE ALL LOOKING AT YOU!!" I said, "Girl, you're delusional. They're always looking at YOU!" She said, "Not this time! I'm jealous!!" Even today, I still think she was delusional. But on the said occasion, I developed an even greater love and respect for my friend as she had the humility, honesty and trust to express to me her friend, a sentiment that was neither becoming nor desirable. I love her even today because she's a real as they come. But that story just goes to show the grace and power of Black beauty. All three of us were confident Black women...and the world noticed.

Well with that said, it's nice to know that not all Black women feel compelled to blend into the maddening crowd, as the blogger naturalistas referenced earlier are revealing. When I reflect on the

history of Black women collectively, it's rather bittersweet to imagine God's probable anger in knowing how affectionately he kissed us, and how we have attempted to wipe that kiss away...or call it a curse. Thank God we are finally awakening. He knows we were sleep as he allowed the injustices. But, it's equally divine to know that sisters back in the day simply embraced the law and TURNED THE TIGNON OUT!! – meaning they turned it into a fashion statement in its own right. THAT'S HOW WE ROLL! Check out the full [Wikipedia link](#) if you don't believe me. It's pretty empowering. Embrace the beauty of you.

Spiritual Musings

Context: I recently completed a course on Fr. Richard Rohr's book "Falling Upward". I didn't intend to take the course because I felt this topic was not so compelling for me. I felt that I had already lived the falling upward experience. But, a friend expressed an interest in the course, so I decided to join her. I am sharing some of my personal notes on reflection questions. Naturally, there is no "correct" answer. There is food for thought to inspire your own faith, belief and journey. Contemplation is a critical aspect of center's vision. I share it in the spirit of giving. Please keep what makes sense, leave the rest.

Question: Contemplate the "path of descent" within the Monomyth framework and Fr. Richard's assertion that "The ones who get it are usually the ones who have suffered." In your observations, where have you witnessed the journey of descent leading to transformation, empathy, or love?

From a national perspective, I think the path of descent was essential to Germany's transformation. I believe they are a far more fair and just society today than they were 80 years ago. They were haughty and arrogant. It took descent, after being humbled by the world, for them to learn empathy and be better, stronger, more loving. I believe that America and Israel are both due for the "path of descent." Right-wing nationalism has taken a foothold in America, and despite the arms and weaponry amassed in homes across the country in the name of self-defense, I believe that we will perish in the long run from our fear-mongering, othering and intolerance. Perhaps the current war (Israel-Palestine) coupled with the possible victory of Donald Trump as the future president will be the medicine that transforms us to a more just and loving place. But, it will not occur without a significant amount of bloodshed and descent.

In my own story in 2014, I went through an experience that was a true descent. It was a spiritual experience in which my ego was destroyed. The voices that I heard said: "You prize yourself for your mind, that's why we're taking it." Without a clear mind upon which to rely, I was absolutely lost, bewildered, destroyed. I kept trying to think my way out of the predicament. But, it was much like a person trapped inside of an hour glass. You are struggling upward through the sand to get on top of the problem; just when you think you are about to make a breakthrough, a giant hand turns the hourglass and suddenly, you are back at the bottom all over again, struggling upward. Throughout my struggles, the voices that tormented me highlighted all of my greatest fears and threatened to put me in each of those situations. I kept seeing hallucinations with multiple scenarios of me undergoing these fears being played out in my mind. I could not shut them off. Because these fears were unique to me, I was overwhelmed and frankly suicidal. Thankfully, my husband watched and prevented. When I had no means to hurt myself, I had to accept that death is inevitable for all of us. We don't get to write our demise, so I decided to accept death however it may come and stop trying to control the situation. I chose to face the fears, embrace death and accept my fate knowing that only God could help me. Falling upward is a truly powerful metaphor to describe how descent serves you spiritually. The more I struggled and came up short, the more I had to recognize that my mind was not going to get me out of the situation. I had to surrender to God and ask for help. [Matthew 16:25](#) And He was faithful.

Question: Reflect on the following quotation from Fr. Richard on the topic of the ego: "The ego wants to be separate and superior. It's that part of us that likes to think, 'I'm special, I'm right, I'm better, I'm good. I'm on a plane above you'—and that can take intellectual form, spiritual form,

nationalistic form, patriotic form. It's that part of us that is afraid of change. It likes the status quo, it likes security. It likes things to remain the way they are." With which aspects of this description of the ego do you most resonate?

I agree with these ideas. The haughtiness of my ego was grounded in intellectual superiority more than anything else. I did not want that status quo to change or end. But, intellectual superiority is crushed by madness. It is a fall or descent that even when you have "recovered" through resurrection, you remain scarred. The evidence of your descent is written in your spiritual DNA.

Question: Fr. Richard declares that "The contemporary myth is basically, 'I possess, therefore I am. I succeed, I own, I produce, I consume; therefore I am.' We thought we couldn't go any lower than 'I think, therefore I am.' Consuming does not awaken the soul...otherwise we wouldn't need more and more of it." How does this "contemporary myth" resonate with your own experiences? In what ways have you been impacted by this myth?

Today while watering my plants, I walked through my living room and looked around at all of the artwork, furniture items & accessories we have acquired over the years. I know where we got each one. And as I meditated on the collective, I thought how one day, all of these pieces will be in varying places but no longer unified in our home. We will be dead and the items will be free to rest forever or to adorn someone else's home for a time, or sit in a consignment store seeking to impress a new eye. The thought of these things being so central to our lives but practically useless to anyone else made me reflect on the futility of ownership. We hold and possess to say "I am". As I reflect, I think that my will should be revised to ask that my sons take the pieces that they want to keep and burn the rest to release them from an artificial hold that our dead bodies may have over our past lives.

Embrace the beauty of you.