



# Au Naturel

Schatzi's Design Gallery & Day Spa, LLC  
September – November 2018

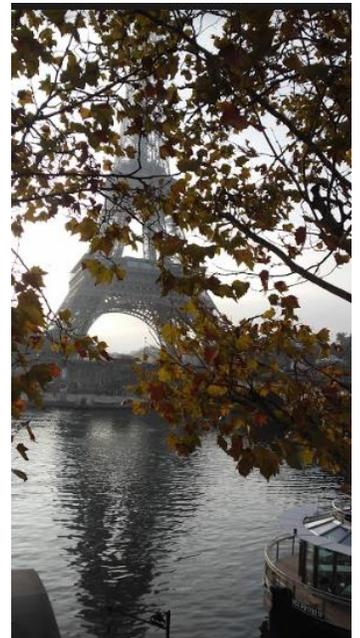
Greetings and well wishes to all! Again, I find myself on the tardy side of the month and in want of more hours in the day to reflect and create and be. The past few months have been a whirlwind. And December is no exception. I'm currently in Senegal. I will be away from the salon for the longest stint yet—4 weeks. I know I'm losing business; but, sometimes life takes you in a different direction. I'm much too inspired by my current course to dare to turn back. I know it is God-ordained, so I accept the challenge of the moment. I love the salon and my clients as always. And when I return to the salon after a trip, it always feels like coming home. My friends are always eager to hear what news I have to share. So, it's a win-win. My aim is to focus on the needs of my regular clients and direct newcomers to other stylists. It's very different because I'm usually present (or in close proximity) to monitor what is happening in the salon at all times. I have learned that business requires this depth of surveillance. Now, I rely on trust. It's a strange bedfellow; but, one that I'm learning to embrace nightly.



Thanksgiving came and went very quickly for me as I was traveling extensively since my birthday—October 29<sup>th</sup>. I was in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso and had “Happy Birthday” sung to me for the first time in Chinese. Okay, it was African-Chinese and not at all politically correct, but I howled with laughter all the same. Very sweet!



While returning home, I was stranded in Paris. Poor me, right? It was rather interesting because I studied France my entire young adult life. I took 5 years of French in high school and 4 years in college. My current depth of knowledge is solely based on those early years, as I left the language for almost 30 years before returning to it with any real depth. I was always aware that I was learning to appreciate French culture while I secretly had no great desire to go there. The reason was that I learned the language exclusively to communicate with the peoples of former French colonies. So, I have never planned to visit France in any serious way. Well, I guess God was ready for me to take a peek because the trip was all expenses paid. My flight was canceled, and we were put up in a hotel with meal



vouchers. I had an entire day to navigate and met the perfect escort with which to do so—a Marine named Matt. He was the most patient man I’ve met in a long time. Most of the pictures in this issue were taken courtesy of his urban navigation prowess and his considerable patience. (I took A LOT of pictures!) And he never once looked at his watch or showed any sign of impatience. It was a perfect day!! At that moment I knew, I could have totally married a White guy. If I ever doubted, I didn’t anymore. But then, it was just one day and we’re both married. So, we were simply brought together to accompany each other for a moment in time. And the moment was beautiful.

When I returned home, I was there for about a week before heading to Kigali, Rwanda for a conference. That experience was powerful. Check out my Facebook posts for that period for some truly insightful thoughts. I don’t want to recount them here, as I’m simply not in that place right now. So, to recount the experiences would feel inauthentic. But, I left Rwanda inspired with the knowledge that God can renew ALL THINGS!!!! If you don’t believe me, read about [the trees and wildlife thriving in Chernobyl](#). I am grateful for life and renewal, and even more grateful for the beautiful reminders of joyous bounty in the midst of despair. Sometimes, you have to leave your backyard in order to fully appreciate the gift that it is. So indeed, I give thanks. Kigali is the cleanest country I’ve been to in a while, and it’s the only African diaspora country I’ve ever been to where EVERYONE wears a helmet when riding a moto! Insane!...in a good way.



After returning home from Kigali, I was only home for a week—long enough to shop for Thanksgiving dinner, service my regular clients and spend a bit of time with family before trekking out to Senegal. We’ve been having some challenges with one of the projects I support, so I’m serving as the interim project director until the new hire comes on board in January. I’ll

definitely be glad when she’s fully installed. She’s well-respected and clearly knows her stuff. It will definitely mean less travel for me. But, I’m not complaining. I will still be traveling with my other projects, just not as much as with this one.

So as stated, I’m here in Senegal. One of my projects had a major Gates Foundation deadline that we hit today. I was the last person in the office as staff here leave around noon on Fridays to pray. I was there until 6pm (1 pm EST); but, we got ‘er done. I then came to the hotel, ate and slept. Then, the music outside my window woke me up, and I remembered what I had started but had not finished. It’s now 1:17am on Saturday, December 1<sup>st</sup>. Btu, I’m going to post this newsletter as it is 8:17pm on Friday, November 30<sup>th</sup> at *Schatzi’s* where the weather looks more like this. I intentionally sought to post in November to try to force myself to post a December issue. We’ll see if I’m successfully in my endeavors. As I have a lot of alone time in Senegal, I will seek to reflect and record as much as possible. My deepest apologies if this issue lacks some of the finesse and attention to details as past issues. But, you feel my spirit. Peace and love to you all.



## Films Worth Watching

The holiday season is in full swing and if you’re anything like me, you’re a holiday movie buff. I’ve been particularly solicitous as I’ve been away so much over the past month: four countries in the month of November. *Lord, please don’t let my husband divorce me*. As I’m writing this missive, I’m in the Paris airport on the way to Senegal. (The monument at the top of the next page is Senegal’s masterpiece.) I’m getting to know this airport more than I would ever have imagined. I wouldn’t mind it so much if these people knew what “heat” is. It’s always cold in this airport. But, I can’t bring heavy clothes



because by the time I get to Senegal, it's hot! So the warmest clothes I have are the ones I'm wearing. It's teaching me some degree of discipline re: cold tolerance. Hopefully that's a good thing. At any rate, we made our presence known at the Alamo Drafthouse over the Thanksgiving week-end. My favorite film of the three that I saw: [The Green Book](#). Who knew that Octavia Spencer is the executive director of this film! That was a pleasant surprise at the end of a beautiful story. Funny enough when I saw the previews, I decided to skip this film. It felt too much like "[Driving Miss Daisy](#)" in reverse. So, I felt it would lack originality and would frankly be too slow. So, I opted for [Robin Hood](#) instead. What can I say: Action is my addiction. And I love the Robin Hood story! Always have. Something about "robbing from the rich and giving to the poor" just peaks my excitement barometer. I'm honestly not sure if I like this film better than the [Kevin Costner and Morgan Freeman version](#) done a few decades ago. But, I must admit that they took the storyline to a "hol nother level!" That was refreshing. And the fight scenes (or should I say the "arrow play" sequences) were to die for. Quite literally! I love action films and in my view, this film delivered. Jamie Foxx was a worthy follow-on to the Moorish character played by Morgan Freeman. In some respects, he was more convincing. So, why do I still love the old version: Nostalgia. Must be. But, it truly is NOT a better film. The fights scenes of today are simply to kickass for words. At any rate, I would recommend it if you haven't seen it already.

My second pick prior to viewing the film was [Widows](#). I was looking forward to seeing Viola Davis and Liam Neeson on the big screen together. Liam Neeson replaced Bruce Willis AND Harrison Ford for me regarding mainstream action heroes, and that's saying a lot! Some of his historical dramas are little known masterpieces. When I saw him in [Michael Collins](#), I was a fan forever. And Viola Davis has just become a *force de nature*. In fact, I wanted to see this film but as it was sold out, we "settled" on [The Green Book](#). I'm so glad it was sold out. [Widows](#) is a nice "take the money and run" film with an interesting twist. And I was super-excited to see another Black Director showing his artistic prowess. But, the storyline lacked the depth that actors like Viola Davis and Liam Neeson command. So, I was disappointed as I would have liked to see them stretch a lot farther than they did. But, it was entertaining.

The *piece de resistance* hands down was "The Green Book." It had action, depth and a compelling storyline which forces you to consider the importance of an individual life, as well as the capacity of human love to transcend the depths of ignorance and bring forth light. I loved it! Now after observing social media, I understand that [Bohemian Rhapsody](#) and [Creed II](#) are *tours de force* in their own right that could topple the Green Book from its current perch on the favored list. But frankly, I don't think so. Will I see them? Creed II, yes. Bohemian Rhapsody, to be determined. But, if you check it out, let me know what you think.

### **My twisted journey—a story with a twist**

As some of you may be aware, I've been wearing two strand twists since 1981. It was the summer before high school and I was all excited to be getting extension braids for the summer. I couldn't wait to suddenly have long cascading hair. My mother took me to the shop to discuss the service and learn of options. But the stylist just happened to have a picture of a model wearing two strand twists on the door of the salon. Have I told this story already? Anyhoo before we entered, my mother paused and studied the picture. Then, she said, "I like that. Let's go." I was crest-fallen to say the least. The model on the picture did not have cascading locks and looked nothing like how I hoped to look at the end of my salon service. I thought it was a most unfortunate twist of fate that this picture was on the door of the salon as we presented. But when I consider the journey I've taken in life, I know that the stylist who placed that picture on the door of her salon didn't even fully understand why she chose that picture. The salon was even called the "Cornrow Gallery" or

something to that effect. She was highlighting braids, as twists were practically unheard of at the time. So, why she chose that photo for that time is a mystery. But, God knows why. That photo, more than any other in my life, changed my life, and God knew I was coming there with my mother to see it. I am grateful.

I won't bother to recount the details of my twisted journey through all of these years, as they can be found in my book [A Natural Attitude](#). Rather, I will focus on the Africa leg of my journey as I feel in some respects that it has brought me full circle. The first time I traveled to Africa was in 1988. I had just started grad school and was traveling on scholarship money. My mother never admitted it; but she thought I was going there to elope with my South African boyfriend. My parents were newly divorced at the time, and my father was training military troops in Saudi Arabia. But within 24 hours of landing at a destination to which I was not even aware, my father found me. I was staying with elder relatives of a South African girlfriend. They were Sis Thembi and Bro Thos Ngilima. At the time, I didn't even know their last name or have a street address. All the same when I came into the house on Day 2 after an outing with neighbors, Sis Thembi announced that my father had called. When I reflect on that part of my life with modern eyes, I realize that my Dad was the embodiment of Liam Neeson's [Taken](#) character. When I learned that he had called, I was puzzled as I had left no address or name for where I was staying. I frankly didn't have the information. I was praying all the way to South Africa that my friend's family member would be at the airport. And if she wasn't, I had already decided to go to the US Embassy, through myself of the mercy of the consulate, acknowledge that I'm young and stupid and beg to be sent back home. I'm not kidding. That was my plan.



The trip felt doomed from the beginning. I was supposed to see a boyfriend, he would be out of the country for work, and I had a non-refundable ticket. So, I stayed with my friend's family instead. For the week up to that trip, I

dreamt of plane crashes exactly three times. So, I told my girlfriend I was going to throw away my ticket. That was the first time I had ever dreamt of anything like that, and I wasn't about to learn the hard way that dreams can be prophetic. She talked me out of it against my best judgment as it was my one chance to see Africa. "YOU HAVE TO GO!" She was even in the airport with me convincing me to go. I was just waiting for one word of discouragement and that trip would have been a wrap. She had none to give. So, I went with my grandmother's Bible verse and my uncle's gift--Chinua Achebe's "Things Fall Apart." For the life of me, I don't know how I left that book on the plane with the Bible verse, but I did. When I realized my error while waiting in the Heathrow airport for my flight to South Africa, I knew I was a goner. I desperately went to a phone booth to call my grandmother and ask again for the Bible verse. She said, "Well, where are you?" I said "London." There was a pause, followed by "Does your Momma know?" I said, "I think so." She had forbid me to take the trip and I took it anyway. So she generally knew. But, I didn't give her the details about my trip as I didn't want to hear her complain. I'm sure that's why my Dad was soon calling South Africa. God works in mysterious ways. At any rate, Grandma made me memorize the verse on the spot. *Acts 2:25 - For David said concerning him, I beheld the Lord always before me; for he is by my right hand that I shall not be moved.* I felt much better because I simply did NOT disobey my mother...EVER! And the plane crash dreams were just a reminder that there is a reward for those who dishonor their mother and father—your days are limited! Period. So, after arriving on Dec. 21<sup>st</sup> and taking a brief nap as a result of extreme jet lag, you can only imagine my shock and awe to learn of the Lockerbie Scotland plane crash after it left the Heathrow airport on the nightly news. I still wonder about those dreams. The flight was one of the earliest modern-day terror incidents and I had just been in the same airport. Perhaps the terrorists didn't know which flight they would target. Perhaps they would simply enter where there was an opening. I will never know, but I can only imagine my mother's stress. As a mother, I can only empathize today. At the time, I was too ignorant to understand. But, I digress.

What I learned during my then journey to Africa was that twisted hair was as much an anomaly there as it was in the US. I recall wearing it in very exotic ways as I felt that I was finally in Africa and could be myself. I recall two girls walking past me laughing. It was America all over again. And so, I refrained from the exoticism and just kept it real. The thought that was foremost in my mind was:

*'This is apartheid South Africa, Schatzi. What else would you expect from white-washed minds? The same as you receive in America.'* Fast forward thirty years, deposit me in another part of Africa, and I see extension hair everywhere. Again, my hair is an anomaly. With my gray edges and my simple, unassuming look, I am as much an exception as I have always been. The primary reason I believe is because my hair is natural. I see people with twists, braids, cornrows, etc. But, weaves are most common. And natural styles are mostly extended. While walking on Goree Island back in July, an older man with the spirit of a Rasta started to follow me a short way and began praising my hair.



“Natural sister. You are strong. You resist. I see you.” The brother read my soul. What could I do but make eye contact and nod my head in acknowledgement: I see you too. Last night, another young man latched onto me coming out of the hotel to find food and toiletries. He acknowledged that he was drawn to me by hair and

told me several times that it was very nice. I was not so friendly with him as I knew he was looking for money. But when I turned the corner and saw how dark the street was for the short distance I had to walk to the supermarket, I was grateful for him. I knew he was safe. And I knew he was skinny enough that I might be able to whup his ass if he tried anything untoward. He was that non-threatening. So, I allowed him to walk with me to the supermarket and then asked him to point me to the Italian restaurant that I knew was nearby. He’s got a pretty good hustle going. He got what he wanted. And I had a personal escort for my brief journey. Not a bad trade off.

But as I reflect on my recent travels to Africa and the rise of the hair weave, I celebrate the awakening consciousness of African-American women all the more. We are the movers and shakers of fashion on the global arena. What we do, all of the Black world copies WITH PASSION! I celebrate that so many of us are freeing our tresses. In time, others will follow suit. But the process is very slow. When I mentally calculate exactly how much money Asians are making from selling us a Euro-Asian look, my soul cries. They have even perfected Black hair patterns and are selling us ourselves. FREAKY!! But

entrepreneurship is all about giving people what they want. We remain behind the 8-ball in doing that for ourselves.

So despite my strong temptation over the years to change my hair in some fundamental way, I have not. As I am aging and my gray becomes more pronounced, I study my tresses in the mirror and say, “If I dye, I’ll erase 15 years. I’ll do it. Besides, who wants to be called ‘Ma’am?’” Younger guys look away driving by in their cars when they realize they’re staring in the direction of someone who could be their mother! It’s a bit unsettling. I’m not sure if it’s unsettling because they’re young or because they’re looking away. *Things that make you go hmm.* Now I understand why my 102-year-old grandmother says, “Schatzi, my hair is completely white! Can you believe it?!” My initial thought was: What other color would it be? But, now I know that her soul has not aged from when she was a teenager. It’s only her body that has aged. And THAT is unnerving. And sometimes, gray hair just looks dirty and lackluster. A friend here in Senegal is about 40 and is fully gray. Her hair is to die for. Very beautiful. But, it’s the contrast of her youth juxtaposed against the total gray look that creates the poetry. That’s powerful! And that is NOT how my gray is coming in. But the mantra, “Embrace the beauty of you” returns to me again and again. So, I rest.

As of today, I am embracing the gray highlights in my twisted hair. In fact while in Kigali, a colleague captured a rear photo of me (see below). We were in a television studio for a filmed segment of the conference and colleagues who were interviewed were celebrating the success of the segment. With the lighting in the studio, my hair looked fully gray! At that moment, I said, “No, I have to wait it out. It’s going to be breath-taking.” But then, I must acknowledge: No, it IS breath-taking. Full stop. So, we learn to embrace every leg of the journey and



say,  
 “God is good all the time, and all the time God is good.” Amen.