

Embrace the beauty of you.

AU NATUREL

Personal and Salon Updates

Greetings and well wishes to all! I had intended to write our next newsletter issue a lot sooner, but life has been a bit topsy turvy for me personally. We installed hardwood floors in our upstairs (downstairs was done years ago), and the entire ordeal has been much like packing up 20 years' worth of stuff and moving out of our house. I had no idea it would be so disruptive, but it was overdue. The dust from the carpets has given me allergies so I don't intend to live in a carpeted home ever again. We stayed at a hotel on two separate occasions: once for the floors to be installed and a second time for sanding and staining. We will be disrupted a third time in June for them to sand and re-stain our downstairs. (These days, you are at the mercy of the workers because skilled labor is in HIGH DEMAND.) We've thrown away A TON of stuff and intend to throw away more. We've decided that we like the minimalist view of life. So, there's a long apology for the newsletter silence.

Within the salon, we are ramping back up to normal operation; but, we are maintaining mask wearing and temperature checks. Most of my clients are already vaccinated so some would argue that it's not necessary. But not all of them intend to vaccinate, and I don't know the status of the other stylists' clients. So, I prefer to remain on the safe side. We are in our 15th year of operation! It's a wonderful milestone, and the celebration all lies in the fact that we are still here. When I reflect on the years that have passed, it doesn't seem like 15 years at all. I reflect on the people, the events, the challenges, the victories. Through it all, this newsletter has been a recurring record of our existence. I had anticipated going through my archives and pulling up stories to reflect on where we have been in celebration of this 15-year milestone. But somehow, I can't bring myself to do it. I don't want to look back. I want to move ever forward and remain hopeful that the future will be as bright and as fulfilling as the past. We are here...by the grace of God. Amen.



LOOK OUT FOR PLANT-BASED HAIR EXTENSIONS

Natural hair aficionados who read our newsletter do not always see our Facebook posts. So, I'm re-posting [this article](#) about a sister entrepreneur named Ciara Imani May who has innovated plant-based hair extensions to address allergies to synthetics. She came up with the idea after suffering with her own synthetic hair allergy issues. Necessity is INDEED the mother of invention! It seems that her product is in the early stages of production. I tried to purchase the product for a new client that we have but, everything was "out of stock". So, I imagine they were over-whelmed by the demand and are working out some production challenges. I know the demand is there, so I wish the team VERY WELL!! I pray they work the kinks out soon. The product has received a lot of press (i.e. demand) and it doesn't take the Chinese long to catch onto a trend and dominate the market. Look for the rebundle brand name [here](#).

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Telephone 919.844.1933
258 W Millbrook Rd. Raleigh, NC 27609
WWW.SCHATZISDAYSPA.COM

"I've failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed."

Michael Jordan

HAVANA TWISTS

SUMMER PROTECTIVE STYLES VOLUME ONE

It's summertime and this year, I intend to swim a lot more than I have in previous years. What to do with my natural hair while swimming is always the question because I need to be able to transition seamlessly between the office environment and poolside. Ordinarily, I time my swimming around when I want to loosen my hair because swimming with twists creates locks. This summer, I decided to wear extensions for much of the summer, which is strange for me because I haven't worn them since I was a summer pre-freshman counselor at UVA in 1985! I don't typically wear extensions for two reasons: 1) my hair is already past my shoulders so I don't feel the need to add length; and 2) I have been a walking billboard for our salon motto "Embrace the beauty of you." I live my hair acceptance truth like divine dogma because I know that people learn to accept what they see as the norm. Natural hair is my norm. Women are accepting their own natural hair in droves, and I'm grateful. So, my current extension decision is all about convenience and ease of maintenance.

Well, the picture below is of my foray with Havana twists which could easily be called large Senegalese twists. I used a yarn braid hair that comes on a skein and which can be cut to your desired size and separated to your desired thickness. That was important to me because I wanted to have hair that fell a few inches below mine (to be sure that my hair is protected). Standard long hair sizes meant that I would be buying, cutting off and throwing away a lot of hair. I also chose this product because it has a matted finish (like yarn) which gives it a more natural look while being extremely lightweight, unlike yarn which holds water and takes forever to dry. For this style, I used the standard braid size for the product which is 8 strands of hair for each braid/twist. I also did large part sizes because I had no intention of this process taking all day. It took about 4-5 hours. Voila!! It turned out okay! I like the look, but the hair was a bit bulky for me. In the next issue, I'll share a photo of my modified twist style which is a more natural look that mimics my regular style. Happy twisting!



Twisting Secrets

Did you know that twisting the hair in a clockwise direction is the technique to use when locking the hair while twisting the hair counterclockwise is best for creating a rope effect? This hair truth is one that I have learned over the years by doing and which I taught to Wake Tech students. Now you know.

HAIR & SELF-CARE TIP

COMBATting LACKLUSTER PERFORMANCE AT THE ROOT

Hair seems to be at its peak performance in our youth. Then as we age, it requires more time and attention to get the same results as before. If we are prone to balding then the challenge may be impossible to remedy naturally. But one strategy to help maintain optimal beauty that's worth a try is an inverted scalp massage. What you do is lay across your bed with your head hanging over the edge. This position encourages blood flow and oxygen to your head and scalp. Then, you massage your scalp all over for about 5-10 minutes. You can massage your scalp with or without oil. Try this technique right before you go to bed at night or when you wake up in the morning at least three times a week. However, [research shows that the most positive results come from daily practice](#). Another positive effect of this self-care practice is [stress reduction](#). We could all use that! If the task feels too tedious or mundane, get your partner involved. Take turns caring for each other from the outside in. I know you'll feel the effects. Happy massaging!

My husband and I recently received a letter from Keller Williams in our mailbox offering to pay cash for our home, no questions asked. (We get them all the time so that was no big deal.) They stated that they represent a cash buyer who bought another home in our community, and they quoted a figure which is double the price that we paid for our home 22 years ago. Our home is not fancy. It is our starter home which is morphing into our forever home. I would never have thought we would settle into it indefinitely when we purchased but life is never understood by the young. At any rate, I had no grandiose idea that the buyer was somehow infatuated with our home in particular. In fact, I knew that if we got this letter, much of the neighborhood did as well. So my question was: *Whose got the type of capital to offer so many people a set price on their home no questions asked and be in a position to back the purchases should even 2% of the homeowners agree?* I began to research all of the relevant websites to find the answer to my question. The answer was a Japanese based firm has already purchased 106 homes in Raleigh, Fuquay Varina, Apex, Garner, Knightdale, Cary and Wake Forest (the Raleigh Metropolitan Area) since incorporating in September 2018. We just got our offer letter, so they are obviously NOT "slowing their roll." I then listened to a [podcast on Japan's shrinking population](#) that I had passed over a few days earlier but now was very interested in. Japan anticipates a real shortage of a workers to support their aging population in the coming years. So, the investment in US growth areas is visionary. Japan is not the only large investor with the foresight to invest in the area. In this somewhat small community, I have also observed that many of the small multifamily properties (2-8 units) are owned by individuals or firms holding 50-100+ rental units. These units will not return to the marketplace unless someone dies AND their children have no interest in maintaining their legacy. So, I ask: Is the housing inventory crisis in America really a matter of insufficient homes, is it a factor of hoarding or both? The effect of the housing shortage is that the next generation of young people may be priced out of home ownership before they can establish themselves due to the demand crunch. In an effort to minimize risk (and in my opinion to abate hoarding), [Fannie Mae has tightened guidelines on second homes and investment properties](#). But a high percentage of homes being purchased in hot real estate markets across the country are paid for with cash. So, these restrictions will only impact middle class families trying to "get ahead." I share this information because as African Americans, we are consistently reacting to trends rather than capitalizing on them. As long as the vast majority of investment property (i.e. high rises) are owned by non-Black people, we will always be singing the George Floyd blues. Use this information as you will or not. Happy investing!



MASTER TEACHER MEETUP

Innovating Hair Accessories for Alopecia Challenges
A meeting of the minds

The photos above are of a client that I've had for years. I started her locks a while back to address some of her hair thinning issues. Her hair was performing wonderfully!! Then, COVID hit. After almost 4 months out of the salon, she came back in only to have lost a good portion of her hair at the top of her head. It was thinning before COVID. But it became overly dry during the lock down and the client was skeptical to return too soon when reopening began. So, the net effect was that she lost a lot of locks at the top and front of her hair. It hurt my heart to see what a few months could do. I have been working with her hair to strengthen it and to innovate solutions that camouflage the problem while working with the beautiful mane of hair that she has in the back. Most of our styles are very attractive. But, the recurring theme is bringing the hair to the front to style it. That leaves us with one dimensional style options. As I've researched other possibilities, I've seen a lot of stylists using alopecia solutions that incorporate glue. Well, I'm not and don't ever intend to put glue on a client's scalp. So, I've looked at other possibilities. Because I am a master at crochet, I used my techniques to create lock pieces to attach to a hair net, much like a wig. But I just couldn't figure out how to connect the hair piece at the front without using glue. And I would NOT be doing that as the client has hair follicles in that area that are still trying to grow. Well, my client has a dear friend who has been a stylist based in Downtown Raleigh since the 80s! She has a lot of clients with alopecia challenges, so my client asked if I would mind conferring with her.

"It's not how much money you make, but how much money you keep, how hard it works for you, and how many generations you keep it for." Robert Kiyosaki

"Financial peace isn't the acquisition of stuff. It's learning to live on less than you make, so you can give money back and have money to invest. You can't win until you do this." — Dave Ramsey

"Wide diversification is only required when investors do not understand what they are doing." — Warren Buffett

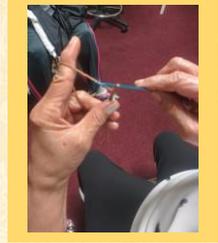


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MASTER TEACHER MEETUP

A MEETING OF THE MINDS CONT'D



I was delighted to knock heads with a master teacher. It was inspiring to meet her and serendipitous to learn that two of her brothers do repair/renovation work for us in one capacity or another. The world is small. Well after considering the challenge, she shared with me a technique to connect the hair piece to the front of the client's hair using only bobby pins. (See photo to the left.) (The crochet locks are not a dead ringer match to the client's locks, but that is impossible to do when the hair is not black.) But it worked like a charm. I was frankly surprised that it would hold. But the client says that it lasted the full complement of time from this service to her next. I thanked Sister Wanda, master teacher, for guiding me through this technique as it now expands the range of styles in our arsenal going forward. She likewise thanked me for making the hair lock pieces and then asked me to teach her how to crochet so that she can make them. Because I keep yarn in the salon, I advised that she first learn how to hold the yarn and needle and get accustomed to crocheting. After mastering the basics with yarn, the technique for hair would be intuitive. (See photo to the right.) She then generously thanked me for the tutorial. As we all know: Sometimes two heads are better than one. And sometimes collaboration gets us much further than competition. Happy styling!

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