

Au Naturel

Spring 2022

Volume 17, Number 2

Personal and Salon Updates

Spring is here! The visual display is absolutely amazing. I'm always captivated by the thought of exactly how much potential energy is stored up inside of a tree to all spill forward at the appointed hour with sufficient kinetic energy to cloth her entirely within a one-week span of time! Spring is a miracle all its own, and we so take it for granted. But that it is!

I feel doubly connected to spring because my grandmother's birthday is the first full day of spring, March 21st. We always have a grand celebration. This year was a little different though because she was in the hospital. I won't go into the details of how she got there because it's one of the strangest stories you'd EVER want to hear. I only mention it now because I have been in need of some degree of self-care. Most people that hear the full back story are worn out after the telling because it drains every fiber of your problem-solving skills and leaves you bewildered and defeated. It's the stuff that movies are made of. It's a conundrum and a mystery. It's my family story. It caused my mother a mini-stroke in late March, it caused my cousin to go on a new blood pressure medicine and when I checked my blood pressure on Good Friday after a disturbing voice message and a decision to travel back to Greensboro to talk with my aunt, my own pressure had gone from 117/59 (a few days before) to 148/96. The entire affair has drained me rather dry. I find myself not caring much about ANYTHING!! As I am not a person prone to depression, I know that's not a good sign. But I know it won't last forever. It is what it is.

At times like this, I am reminded that we enter this world alone, and we will leave it alone. I have imagined with all sincerity that I had a spiritual counselor who could provide knowledge, perspective and a listening ear. My girlfriends have definitely stepped up to the plate and listened to my story but, when you ask yourself, what would Jesus do and all that anyone can come up with is "Leave it the hands of the Lord," you know that we've all reached our limit. It is through God's divine providence that I am taking 3 weekends off from the salon. I even got a manicure this past Tuesday to do something for myself!! This weekend, I'm traveling with my Mom and another aunt to Wilmington. Next weekend, I'm meeting my Uncle Ted and cousin Fred in Virginia to visit my Dad's grave. And the weekend after that, I'm attending the Family Health Ministries board retreat that has not occurred in two years. It will be at a home on the lake. I would ordinarily feel concerned about being out of the salon for three weekends in a row. But in light of the past 4 months, I don't feel any way at all. In fact, I'm using the time to get some minor renovations done. That is ALWAYS an exciting development. And I have also been refusing new clients. I usually try to accommodate people that specifically ask for me but, honestly, I'm in survival mode. It is what it is. I recall in 2014 when I had a major life crisis, I heard a voice say "You are always taking care of others. Time to focus on yourself." But in truth, when we care for ourselves, we are caring for others who depend on us. Self-service is communal service if you look at it with the right lens.

So with that said, suffice it to say that Mikea and Hadiyah will hold things down within the salon. I have every confidence in them, and it's not because I trained them. It's because I trust them completely. They are beautiful beings who are good at and love the doing. I will return to business as usual, by God's grace, the weekend of May 21st. I'm already fully booked so I'll still be relying on my support system to thrive. But in the interim, I pray that your world is full of light and love. As for me, I will be well. God would have me no other way, so I acknowledge my destiny and will line my life up accordingly. Embrace the beauty of you.

Contents

01. Personal and Salon Updates

02. Lock- ingenuity: New, Natural Looks...

03. The Natural Blow-out

"Don't sleep on the benefits of proper nutrition, regardless of your health, diet and lifestyle."

Embrace the beauty of you.



Lock-ingenuity: New, Natural Looks Don't Require Cutting

This beautiful lady has been a regular client in our salon since we opened in 2006! She is a faithful client and a wonderful friend. I would love her even if she didn't come to our salon. She has worn long, luxurious locks for as long as I have known her. She likes simple, professional styles. Well of late, she has been in a mood for a change. She considered cutting her locks to have a different look but was not sure if it was the right decision. I'm happy to do whatever clients need for me to do. But, I have talked to many ladies over the years who cut their locks before trying a different look and wound up re-growing their locks. So, I suggested a shorter style for the interim. I noted that a shorter look could be achieved with scissors or with the styling technique. My preference is to style without cutting when it makes sense to do so. If there is another way to do something, I am down to figure it out because long hair has a versatility that simply cannot be realized by hair that is cut short. So, I like for clients to have as many style options as possible. This client loves the freedom and versatility of pulling her long locks into a high elegant bun that looks absolutely fabulous on her. So, I was reticent to do anything that would limit her options and possibly frustrate her lifestyle (seated photo to the left). She was intrigued at the thought of a short look without scissors, so I just started figuring it out while styling her hair.



The first time, I created a shorter style for her, it was shoulder length, similar to the second photo to the left. (Note: In this photo, she lengthened the shorter locks by loosening them partway from the base to achieve this look which is unique in its own right.) But she now prefers a short and sweet bob look, like in the top photo. Both looks are achieved without cutting the clients hair at all. It is simply wrapped and rolled to make her long locks appear like short thick locks. Her loosened style is the third photo to the left. She says that her work colleagues and associates are often confused and try to figure out which hairstyle is her real hair. She happily announces "BOTH!" I'm sure they must think that it's just more wonderful Black girl magic, but I call it love. I love my clients, and I want them to feel beautiful while looking beautiful. So, I'm willing to try to figure out the hair needs that will serve their personality and lifestyle best. Lock-ingenuity is one part creativity to four parts love. Happy styling!



Healthy Life Tip

Proper nutrition is the key to all aspects of good health and life. If you want to live a healthy life, it's important to take note of what you ingest. Case in point: About five years ago, I noticed that my blood pressure was slowing creeping up. I walk regularly and have maintained the same weight that I had in college primarily because the health screener at UVA told me my lifetime weight goal was 144-148 lbs. They measured my BMI and my muscle mass and came to this figure. At the time, I was 160 lbs and was enrolled in an aerobics class. I lost the excess weight that semester and have maintained it ever since (except when I was pregnant of course). So, I couldn't understand why my blood pressure should be elevated. I spoke to my client above who recommended her naturopath—Dr. Loan Huynh. She ran my blood work, looked at the numbers and said, 'You're generally healthy but your vegetarianism is stressing your body out. There are key nutrients and amino acids that the body receives from meat that you are not getting in sufficient supply to keep key health indicators in check for you.' So, she prescribed a battery of vitamins on the spot. By my next visit, my blood pressure was normal. I've been taking them ever since. So, the take home message is: Don't sleep on the benefits of proper nutrition, regardless of your health, diet and lifestyle. If you are interested in Dr. Huynh's services, she can be reached [here](#). If you need an acupuncturist, I highly recommend Dr. Qi who can be reached [here](#). I attribute much of my good mobility to him. Happy healthing!

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The Natural Blow-out

These days, when women speak of getting a "blow-out", it primarily means a hair straightening service like the Brazilian blow-out or a flat-iron service. Well, those who know me well know that I haven't straightened Prince's 1999 party, decided it was a to do with tired of conforming 1999, I went to a job get the job and envelope off of the Smart Start with my apparent, my natural Eurocentric look for it since. Of course, I



my hair since 1999. I guess I went to sweated out my press and curl and wrap! (Just kidding! :-)) It had nothing partying. It was more about me getting and refusing to do so any longer. In interview with a press and curl, failed to decided to push the cultural conformity table. I went to my next interview at natural hair, and suddenly it was hair does not have to be morphed into a to be accepted. I haven't looked back don't have a problem with straightened

hair. It's quite attractive. But, the last time I straightened my hair, I felt like an imposter. HONESTLY!! I felt like I was looking at a stranger because I'd been wearing my natural hair for about 13 years prior to that moment. It's why I often counsel clients who are transitioning to choose styles that will mimic the look and feel of their natural hair once it is fully natural (e.g. Nubian and Kinky Twist styles). So when I want my 4C hair to look longer, I counter shrinkage by simply pulling out my trusted blow dryer (with a comb attachment) and comb style my hair.

To achieve this look. I started with shampooed and conditioned hair that has been combed through and divided into four sections. As I worked on each section, I towel dried it to remove excess water, and I separated each of the four sections into between 2-4 smaller sections so that the hair is manageable. I used Cantu Leave-in Conditioner and a small amount of castor oil to protect my hair from the heat. I then turned the blow-dryer on the highest setting and blow-dried from the ends working up to the roots of my hair. A lower heat setting will provide a fluffier, fuller look. *(Note: Some Youtubers speak against using the highest heat setting for natural hair but it's a kazillion times better than a flat iron or hot curler. I have been styling my hair like this for years and have experienced no damage. That is primarily because I style my hair about once per month and use heat protectors like conditioner and oil. Since heat will not be placed on my hair again for at least 4 weeks and often longer because I don't blow-dry it every time I style, the result is not damaging. But, I encourage you to follow your gut.)* Voila! The effect is immediate and the outcome is rather transformative. Embrace the beauty of you. (Check out my January "[4C and Me](#)" article for more information about kinky/curly hair.)