

# AU NATUREL

March 29, 2023

Volume 18, Issue 1

**Au Naturel newsletter is a publication of Schatzi's Design Gallery & Day Spa, LLC, located in Raleigh, NC. Embrace the beauty of you.**

## TOPICS

**01.** Personal and Salon Updates

**02.** Reflections on the Immortal Diamond

**03.** Alopecia Series: Creative Styling

***"We had a wonderful evening soiree at the salon on Dec. 17<sup>th</sup>. It was a customer appreciation event for our trusted clients who have kept us in business despite the pandemic disruptions as well as appreciation for stylists Mikea Spencer and Hadiyah Lancaster.***

## PERSONAL AND SALON UPDATES

Well, it looks like I'm coming out of hibernation. I do have a tendency to get lost in my covers in the winter months. I coaxed and cajoled myself into writing a winter issue but it just never happened. Such is life. So, how was the winter? It was joyous and memorable! We had a wonderful evening soiree at the salon on Dec. 17<sup>th</sup>. It was a customer appreciation event for our trusted clients who have kept us in business despite the pandemic disruptions as well as appreciation for stylists Mikea Spencer and Hadiyah Lancaster. I had an agenda all planned out trying to ensure that everyone mingled but I so overthought things. When you get women in a room together with a common perspective on anything, you are going to have FIRE!! I threw my agenda out the window and just allowed the flow. Most stayed right up until the end. We gave out gift baskets and cut a ginormous carrot cake that I special ordered from [Burney's Sweets and More](#). It was crazy big! I just ordered the biggest round cake they had. I HAD NO IDEA!! Everyone received jumbo slices because Lloyd and I were going to be taking a plane in a few days so I simply could NOT take the cake home. But, it was ABSOLUTELY DELISH!! I really love their lemon squares. That's what I get most often.

It was also a reunion of old friends and associates. I haven't hosted a party in the salon for a minute, so I didn't want any glitches. I decided to return to tried and tested sources to make sure it happened as expected. Because the evening was going to be a major investment, I decided to take the opportunity to record testimonials from clients that were of the mind to give them. Varick Taylor from [One12images.com](#) drove in from Elizabeth City to be our videographer. He was the photographer of all of our past hair show photo shoots. Andrea Millington, a former co-worker and owner of [Cool Runnings Jamaican Cuisine](#) was our caterer. Cool Runnings, once a restaurant in Cary, is now a permanent fixture at the NC State Fair. You have to check them out if you go to the fair. There line is always LONG!! This past October when I tried to find the tail end of the line at the corner of the food truck only to learn that it took a right angle and extended much further back, I exclaimed, "Wow!!" A Mexican sister said, "It's worth the wait! Really!" I smiled and said, "I know." Then, I went to the truck's back door and asked Andrea for her card. I didn't want to stand in line to get it. Old associations have their advantages. 😊 I knew I wouldn't have time to conduct the interviews for the client testimonials and host the soiree, so I asked my friend Missy Owen who I worked with daily between 2013-2017 to be my interviewer. She rose to the occasion like a champ! I couldn't have paid anyone to do a better job, and she did it strictly as a friend helping a friend. She was amazing!! It was great to see Mikea and Hadiyah in a relaxed posture with no pressure to work. These ladies are the glue that holds things together. I appreciate them more than words can say. To view the videos, just check out the [testimonials and gallery](#) tab of our website.

After the soiree, we were off to Mexico City for a much-anticipated vacation. I won't go into many details about the trip except to say that Mexico was a

pleasant experience. We did so much walking that I actually started to lose weight the first week. That was because I don't speak Spanish and had some difficulty getting my wishes granted when ordering vegetarian entrees. I had the same problem in Senegal WHILE SPEAKING FRENCH, so I appreciate that vegetarianism is just NOT a vibe that every culture is down with. But, I identified a market where I could buy fruits and nuts on Day 1 so I always had my protein stash in my handbag. The walking was not punishment. It was my program. My husband just had to keep up. He did famously. We did walking tours of sites in the city (a Spanish castle, the anthropology museum), the pyramids of Teotihuacan (a day-long excursion), neighborhood museums (Frida Kahlo and Leon Trotsky), towns outside of Mexico City known for rich culture and history (Puebla, Cholula and Tonantzintla) and we did a bike tour of the city. It was pretty cool to see a park with a statue of Dr. Martin Luther King who seemed to be in dialogue with Abraham Lincoln poised across the walkway from him. Through the experience, I learned that the Spanish culture has dominated Mexican culture linguistically, but the native American culture is still alive and well. That was refreshing knowledge for me personally. In one of the towns we visited, the people still speak their native language. How could you know this without visiting the country? American imagery of Mexico is rarely complimentary, but I had always suspected that it was a grave under-representation. My suspicions were happily confirmed. After all, the Mayans and Aztecs were no light-weights in history! If I go back to Mexico, it will have to be to see the [Olmec statues](#). Anthony Browder told us that at least one of them has cornrows in the back of their head. YOU KNOW as a naturalista, I'm down to see the handiwork of my ancestors carved in stone. 😊 But, that would be some ways out. Until then, we'll be serving and following the path as God leads. Embrace the beauty of you.

### **Reflections on the Immortal Diamond**

I'm currently taking a course with the Center for Action and Contemplation called "Immortal Diamond" by Fr. Richard Rohr. The coursework is built off of a book of the same title and is a reference to finding our True Self that is hidden within and which is eternally one with our Creator. The imagery is synonymous with the hidden treasure or pearl of great value ([Matthew 13:44-46](#)) that is one of several parables about the kingdom of heaven. It is hard to imagine that a part of ourselves is ancient and immortal, unperturbed by the machinations of life, connected, esoteric and transcendent. We spend so much of our lives completely unaware of its existence. It makes one wonder: why?

I am taking the course to more fully engage with the work of Fr. Richard Rohr. He is a theologian, a Bible scholar, a historian of Christianity and a profound intellectual. He has devoted the entirety of his life to studying Christianity, God and the church. As such, he is one of the most insightful scholars that I have encountered and also one of the most vociferous critics of religious practice. He is a priest in good standing in the Catholic church, but I have often wondered how he has not been ex-communicated as a result of his writings and beliefs. But it is BECAUSE he can back every word ever stated with Bible scripture, historical truth and references from church leaders of the past that his reasoning is unimpeachable. I have learned a lot though discovering him AFTER gaining awareness of my own immortal diamond. His writings have helped me to fully accept the truth of that experience as unprescribed, unconventional and unintelligible as it was. In this section, I am sharing some of my reflections from the coursework of the Immortal Diamond. Keep what makes sense, leave the rest. Embrace the beauty of you.

**Question:** How has my retreat into the "personal ego self" been absolutely right? Through my retreat into my personal ego self (PES), I have learned discipline, excellence and the quest for the greater good. While I learned of this PES through self-indulgence in academia, it has translated into my work and personal life. I pursue all things with a desire to complete the task to the best of

my ability, knowing that if my name is on it, it must speak for me in my absence. Because I am committed to public/community service, I believe that this pursuit of excellence has been good, as I have committed my life to service that is done well.

**Question:** How has my retreat into the "personal ego self" been terribly wrong? I believe that my retreat into the PES has been horribly self-indulgent in the ways in which I have sought to acquire titles, accolades or positions that ultimately celebrate my quest for excellence but which in and of themselves do little or nothing to serve humanity. They function primarily as a barometer of social ranking.

**Question:** [In reference to Matthew 13:44], Are you willing to risk everything to "buy" that field? I am not sure that I would. I am firmly affixed to and attached to this world. There is an order to my existence within it. If I had to release everything, my False Self would not know how to do that. I believe that I have been tested in the past, confronted death and accepted salvation, but had I been outside of the crucible in which God casted me, I am not sure I would have known how to make that choice in real time. It was an outer worldly experience; but I am fully planted in the world. I honestly am not sure.

**Question:** Where have I seen glimpses of my True Self? I believe that my work with the salon is where my True Self emerges. I was called to open a natural hair salon in my home city. I prayed about whether it was something I should do (as I did not train in cosmetology), and the words "Embrace the beauty of you" popped into my head. It is our salon motto. We have been in operation since 2006. This business is not my bread and butter. I also work at a university. Instead, the salon is my ministry. In doing this work, I am acting from a place of selflessness primarily and it is a long-term commitment of service to the community. It is a gift of service for which I was "fearfully and wonderfully made."

**Question:** What has taken away from your search for discovery of your True Self? I once read the book "After the Ecstasy, the Laundry: How the Heart Grows Wise on the Spiritual Path" by Jack Cornfield. As a seeker, I was curious to know and understand what inner knowing would look and feel like if it should ever happen to me. And I was even more curious to understand what happens afterwards. Are you expected to go off to a monastery and live a hermit's life of prayer and meditation or do you stay in communion with nature, rejecting all materialism? And if you do not separate from this material plane and continue to function in society, how would that even be possible? In some ways, I believe the hum-drum of survivalist monotony has distracted from my search for discovery (e.g. working, paying bills, striving to get one step ahead in a hamster wheel that only speeds up when you do). It's the double-edged sword that is exhausting and exhilarating, purposeful and futile. And yet, I believe that my life has been so patterned that it is in these repetitive places and spaces that active meditation has become a means of being present in the humility of life. I am a past student of martial arts. I recall talking with one of my Korean teachers who was a good 15 years my junior and learning that his email address was "again" with continuation dots. I recall thinking: "How can he be so wise at such a young age that he would even consider choosing that word as a reflection of himself?" It was an eye-opening moment for me. Because it has helped me to see that monotony and repetition have their place and space in life. Digging, chipping away at the druff and polishing are all essential repetitive movements necessary to reveal our hidden immortal diamond.

*"With this style, I created a basketweave type style at the top, using the length of her locks to camouflage the thinning crown. She wanted the rear rolled into a bun. This style lasts for the full duration of time between salon visits."*

## Alopecia Series: Creative Styling

Back in the summer of last year, I [began an alopecia series](#) to provide tips and tricks to style thinning hair. I had no idea that I would remain with this series so long, so this is likely the final episode of this series. I decided to give this topic some pointed attention because of the prevalence of thinning hair among Black women. Whether the cause be aging, medication, damage from chemicals or health issues, [alopecia is alive and well within our community](#). It's part of the reason why I was [unempathetic to Chris Rock when he got popped last year](#). But it's also why I remain perplexed at the extent to which our young Black women are ready, willing and preferring to cover their own hair with wigs rather than to wear their natural hair. We used to want a seamless weave that would make it impossible to detect the tracks. Now, we don't care for a seamless transition. It can look like a wig as long as it's cute! I have deduced that this trend emerges from [our learned desire to be flawless every time we walk out of the house](#). Whatever the reason, it is a reality of Black life, and for young women, it is concerning. Why? Because in our youth, we as Black women are putting a mask on our hair when it is at its zenith of vitality and beauty. And while one can have beautiful, vibrant, healthy hair in your mature years, the stone does not roll up the hill! You can only enjoy what you have worked to nurture and protect. So, while natural hair languishes uninterrupted under mounds of faux locks, I find it hard to believe that it is realizing optimum care and vitality. This series has served to show that there are alternatives.

The client in the photos to the left has been coming to our salon for some years. When she started, her hair had only just begun to start thinning. I recommended locking it after some time in an attempt to preserve every strand of her hair possible to put it work for her advantage. The photos show that she has a receding hairline and is thinning at the crown. With this style, I created a basketweave type style at the top, using the length of her locks to camouflage the thinning crown. She wanted the rear rolled into a bun. This style lasts for the full duration of time between salon visits. While the look may not be as picture perfect as a wig, it is classy, suitable for the client's age and stage in life and becoming. She likewise has become quite adept at devising her own creative styles to carry her between hair loosening and her revisit. She gets compliments on her hair and appreciates that she is still working with what God gave her. I am no magician. I cannot fix a receding hairline. But sometimes, we have pulled her hair into an updo with bangs in the front for a change of pace. She always has interesting ideas about what style she wants to wear, and I'm only too happy to figure out how to make it happen. [We have even called in reinforcements](#). 😊 Hopefully, the articles in this series have provided some fresh ideas for others who may be facing the omni-present and imminent reality of styling hair with alopecia. It's the most daunting and challenging work that we do as natural stylists. Fight the good fight! Happy styling! 😊

