

# AU NATUREL

## PERSONAL AND SALON UPDATES

### Reflections

*Note: This issue of Au Naturel has taken the ENTIRE summer to write. I wrote the reflections in June, the hair care article in July after vacation, and the follow-up article in August. I got myself in gear for the finale when I went for a morning stroll and saw autumn leaves in my neighbor's driveway. That is a sure sign that it's taken far too long to get this out. So with that said, I hope this edifying and soulful information for all and sundry.*

Summer is in full swing, and the heat is surely telling a story. You may want to deny that it's global warming. Call it whatever you will. But carbon emissions aside, should we be surprised that when we cut down trees across the world and replace them with asphalt, concrete and grasslands, the world would be inclined to heat up? I walk daily. And I am often amazed at how the same wind that is blowing can feel like a sauna in the open sunlight and a cool breeze under a tree. The wind has not changed. It's the same current and flow of air. So, it is NOT the air that is hot, it's the conditions under which one finds oneself that determines what is felt.

In a way, life is a current much like air and water. The flow is constant but how we respond to the conditions under which we find ourselves determines whether we heat up and wilt or withstand the torrent and "do not faint." We are God's saplings just waiting for a shower

of rain. But when the drought comes, and come it will, do we have the metal to muster the strength to not only survive but thrive? This is the thought that is flooding my thoughts this early morning as I write this missive.

The thoughts are co-mingled with some reflections in my head arising from a few places....one of which is a recent conversation that I had with a friend regarding comparisons which can be the "thief of joy." My friend went to UVA with me back in the 80s. She is now a medical doctor and professor at UNC. We have lunch periodically when we can find the time to do so. At our last tete-a-tete, she shared with me some personal reflections that she has had about my life. She is a beautiful spirit who was born inquisitive and is honest to a fault. She said to me: "Schatzi, you gave up your full potential for your children. I know this. I knew you at UVA. I know who you are. You're supposed to have your PhD and be the CEO of a Fortune 500 company. But you gave all of that up for your kids. I have some colleagues and their sons are NOT doing well. Your sons are thriving. I know that's because of your sacrifice. You can be doing SO MUCH MORE!"

## REFFERAL

For those readers who are struggling with undiagnosed hair loss challenges, I highly recommend visiting [Dr. Jeffrey Scales](#) of the [North Carolina Center for Dermatology](#) in Durham, NC. It is always important to speak with a board certified, licensed physician when trying to understand hair, skin and nail challenges. Dr. Scales is African American, very friendly, listens well and is rather humble in countenance. His hair and skin treatment packages are very affordable. I know a few clients who received his platelet-rich protein injections to stimulate growth and were pleased with the results. So, if you are a candid for his services, treat yourself. You're worth it!

Well firstly, I am thankful that my sons are doing well TODAY, and I pray for God's continued grace. We take nothing for granted. Secondly, I AM doing a lot in different arenas. But knowing me so well, she KNOWS my full potential is untapped. While her testimony is a compliment, to me it was bittersweet. Why? Because a part of me laments the full creative potential that I know was programmed into my spirit that may never fully be achieved. It's why I have changed jobs so many times over the years. I don't like being put in a box. When you start to limit me and define where you think I should be, I get bored and expand into a totally different area. And I ABSOLUTELY WON'T be disrespected. I've done a little bit of everything, and I've mastered all of it. Yes, I could have moved across the country chasing a bigger salary and a bigger title, but when I moved from Jamaica and saw the impact it had on my children, I knew that I wanted to settle into a community that made sense for our lives. At the time, my husband's job had him moving constantly. IT DID NOT MAKE SENSE TO MOVE EVERYTIME HE NEEDED TO. So when my first job offer in the US came in the city of my birth and in the state in which the maternal side of my family has very deep roots (Brunswick and Duplin counties; I'm related to EVERYONE in Deep Bottom. If I need to explain to you where that is, you ain't from there.<sup>1</sup>), I endeavored to stabilize family life. I don't regret that decision. It was obvious to me. All the same, her statement has made me pause more than once since our lunch date. Most people who have met me over the years think that I'm doing great things. But she, like I, know the full depth and breadth of the untapped potential which still resides within. If she had never made the statement, I would likely not be thinking about it at 3am in the morning. But, I know it in my soul.

When I was in Jamaica, I was managing a national program at age 29, my husband and I ran a consulting business, and we had designed and gotten approved two 40-acre housing developments. We never got PAID for those developments, but that's one of the perils and

pitfalls of life in Jamaica—no guarantees. It's why so many in Jamaica take the law in their own hands.

Jamaica's economic reality is one that forces you to rise or die. There is no in-between. In that Black country, I was at-home. I had no intention of coming back to the US. It is where the entrepreneurial fire was first kindled in me. I was stretched to my fullest and it only inspired me to discover where else the conditions of life and my soul would carry me. But, God had other plans for my life. That is a fact. When I left Jamaica, I knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that He was moving me. I did not know why, but knew I did. To this day, I wonder why? Why didn't he want me to live and thrive in Jamaica? My godsons and most male children that I know in Jamaica are all thriving. One godson is a Jamaican diplomat in Switzerland soon to be relocated to London. Why did He want me to bring my sons back to this place which has such jaded eyes towards young Black men? THAT is a question to which I will never have an answer. But all I could do was flow with the current of life. So, when I adjusted my life into my "new normal", I felt my potential shrinking. I was conscious of the impact the change was making on my life, but I decided to adapt for the sake of my sons. Yes, "comparison is the thief of joy"... sometimes. And sometimes it's a reminder of where we've been, who we love and what we've given up to live a life that suppresses the ego and puts the well-being of others at the center.

God's tests require mental, physical, emotional and spiritual agility. If I'm honest, the tests that I encountered in Jamaica were primarily physical and emotional. That is where I learned to endure financial hardships, accept defeat when it comes and brush myself off to start the fight all over again. When I returned to the US, the physical and emotional challenges expanded exponentially, and the spiritual/mental crisis materialized. God gives us only as much as we need to self-actualize and NO MORE. So while I have not steered at the helm of a Fortune 500 company, I HAVE navigated the depths of my own ego. And that is a far more wieldy endeavor

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<sup>1</sup> Incidentally, I was in Virginia with my cousin and uncle some weeks back and a brother in a vegan Caribbean restaurant asked me where I'm from. He said, "You look like my people." I

asked where are your people from? He said, "Eastern North Carolina." I said, "Well since I'm related to half of Eastern North Carolina, so you're probably right!"

than navigating a corporate boardroom. Self-mastery is the greatest challenge of life, and a paradox that I am daily called to consider that I am but a child in this regard. Why long for what I have not had or achieved when I have simply flowed with the current on which God has placed me, struggling to keep my head above water along with those in whose lives He has entrusted my care? And He has rewarded me...for the time being. Tomorrow, He may decide to start the test all over again and push me back a thousand paces. And with His help, still I will rise. That's the code He gave me by His grace. He has immense confidence in me. And I have immense confidence in myself. (There's that ego again. Tsk, tsk.) But if I'm honest, self-confidence is my super-power and my kryptonite. By God's grace, all things are possible.

Within the salon, we are rolling merrily along. We continue to maintain COVID protocols, but we are not isolating each client to a separate room as before. We do ask that all clients and stylists continue to wear a mask while in the salon.

As I consider newsletter topics for the coming editions, a hot natural hair topic that I rarely see addressed on the numerous natural hair feeds that appear on my phone is alopecia. And when it does appear, it's primarily videos showing how a stylist glues, weaves or wigs her client's entire head into style-bliss. Well, there are many women in the world for whom this method of styling is needed

and imperative. Some women have androgenic alopecia that transforms their hair growth pattern in the same way as many men experiencing male pattern baldness. When the hair loss is frontal and advanced, the effect can be devastating as many women experience a drop in self-esteem. Thank God there are stylists who can create a look that helps these women feel more comfortable with their reality. I applaud them.

I personally have never been very comfortable with anything that's too far from the truth. It's why I've worn natural hair for all of my adult life. And it's why I applaud Jada Smith's and many other women's decision to wear a bald look to conquer the alopecia challenges that they are facing. I have at least two former clients who have done the same, and they are as drop-dead gorgeous as they were when they had a head full of hair. YES, I SAID 'AS'. I pray that should the day come that I have androgenic alopecia, I have the confidence to stay true to myself. For this reason, I have been challenged at *Schätzl's* to help women find the "alternative." For me, the alternative is working with what you have for as long as desirable and possible. So by God's grace, I will share a few alopecia styling tips that have served our clients well over the years.

Praying that you and your family remain safe and healthy. Embrace the beauty of you.

## ALOPECIA SERIES

### Rod Set Textured Curls to Camouflage

The most common alopecia challenge that I see among women presenting in the salon is thinning at the top or crown of the head, which is androgenic alopecia. The causes of this pattern of baldness are numerous but are primarily grounded in genetics and the aging process. It is more common in women over 40 years of age and women who have experienced menopause. But it can also be caused by a change in medication and/or one's hair care regimen. So, it's important to start any service to a new alopecia client with a consultation which asks questions about:

- the client's age
- the duration of the condition

- whether baldness is a family trait, particularly among men on the mother's side of the family
- whether the client can associate a change in medication to the occurrence of the condition
- how personal habits may be contributing to or exacerbating the condition. For example, when I encounter clients who have thinning hair around the front edges of their hair, I ask about:
  - ✓ styling with braids (which can place excess tension along the hairline);
  - ✓ styling with lace-front or regular wigs (which can stress or compromise the hairline for the sake of a seamless look); and
  - ✓ use of night caps (which may be made of cotton, nylon or other materials that can dry out or tear the

hair over time with constant friction along the hairline).

What's most important is that you exercise logic and good judgment when posing these questions and consider all options that make sense. I recall speaking



with a client year's ago who could not understand why the hair on one side of her head was so much longer than the other side. We all know that the body is not perfectly symmetric so aside from that obvious reality, I didn't know what else could possibly be going on to account for the variance. I asked about styling and whether she worked with one side of her hair more than the other, etc. Finally, I said, "Do you sleep on one side more than the other?" She said, "Yes, I ALWAYS sleep on my X side. In fact, I can sleep the entire night on that side without budging." Well, X side was the one that had shorter hair. It might have been a long shot, but she was armed with a bit more information about how her personal habits may be affecting her hair growth challenges.

For the client pictured in the photos, she was seeking a solution to her hair thinning challenges which she was advised by her dermatologist were likely caused by a combination of aging and chemical damage. Since arresting the use of chemical relaxers, she was in need of

a natural stylist who could provide good long-term care. After listening to her hair-story, I recommended a natural rod set with small rods for her hair. The look would be natural but would provide a bit more definition than the afro style that she was wearing. She agreed so I paired her up with Mikea. After a shampoo and deep condition, Mikea sectioned her hair, applied mousse and rodded her hair throughout. The client then went under the dryer. When the rods were removed, Mikea separated the curls while applying an anti-frizz serum which give the rod curls more definition and sheen. She wears the style for about two weeks and returns for service.

She noted that she got so many compliments from the style that people didn't even notice the thinning that was so pronounced before. Paraphrasing her words, "My husband loves it!" I responded, "It always makes a difference when your husband loves your hair."

The client is elated because she is wearing her hair as is. It's not "perfect hair" but it's hers. And she is maximizing her beauty while wearing it just as it is. We're truly delighted to have helped her find a solution that works for her. Sometimes, the solution is elusive and takes time to attain. Other times, the client is impatient with the outcome and prefers a "quick-fix." Whatever the case, it's all good. You can often determine a client's need and patience with the process to find a solution during the consultation. So, taking the extra time here can often save you hours of salon time in the long run.

The science of natural hair care is not exact; humans are complex and multi-faceted. The answers may only come through time and commitment. But if you have a heart to serve, the rewards will far outweigh the effort applied.

## BEST IN RALEIGH NOMINATION

We'll take it!!

On August 9<sup>th</sup>, I received a Messenger notification through the salon Facebook account that *Schatzi's Design Gallery & Day Spa* was nominated "Best in Raleigh" under the "Hair Salon" category. When I first read the message, I thought it was a scam and promptly ignored it. Then, the Inquisitor in me thought, "Maybe I better check it out." I went to my computer and found the website that the person who shared this information referenced and did a bit of research. It seems it was a legitimate communication. My next thought was, "Nominated by whom and why?" The Skeptic in me

had resurfaced and was convinced that a more elaborate plan to extricate money from me was afoot, and I was determined to emerge from this entire matter unscathed. After responding to the initial contact and sharing general information, which is public, I then waited for round two of “the dance.” She sent me follow-up communication describing the rules of the contest and that was that. I was not asked to click on any more links, sign my name in blood or fork over my bank account information. So, I accepted that this contest must be legit. Then, I remembered that I’ve seen restaurants over the years with signs posted saying “Nominated” or “Voted Best in Raleigh 20XX.” So, I thought: “Okay, this is that.” And again, I thought, “Why and by whom?” Yeah, I know. It sounds like “looking a gift horse in the mouth.” But the nomination just didn’t make sense to me. When we opened in 2006, we were ballin’!!!! We had uniformed stylists (four), two massage therapists, an aesthetician and a receptionist. I was determined to revolutionize Black hair care in Raleigh with a standard of quality that was ‘bar none.’ I was even considering franchising. Why weren’t we nominated then? We are simply a smaller operation now, and there are a kazillion more competitors in the playing field today than back then. Why the change?

Over the years, I learned that personal care services are a special breed in the business world. No matter how much you cultivate clients, their loyalty is ALWAYS to the person touching them, not the entity nurturing the service provider. So when people build their client base and move on, the establishment is left with a revenue gap to be filled and the challenges of overhead costs which do not diminish despite the “new reality.” So, my model has changed tremendously. We operate by appointment only and service providers are only people that I love and trust. There is no pressure here whatsoever. We don’t operate with the traditional “booth rental” system. If a stylist or massage therapist wants to leave the state (or the country) for a few weeks, why should they have to pay for space they aren’t using? Likewise, when clients call on the same day that they want to come in, we cannot always meet the need because we all fill varying roles to meet the needs of our families. When we say, “by appointment only,” that’s real. But when you have an appointment and we connect, we bring our whole selves to the experience. Hadiyah is a lock style goddess; Mikea is an updo diva; and I am a twist aficionado and an overall cultivator of hair growth and beauty. I am happy to provide phone consultations and have been known to go beyond the half-hour mark with a prospective client just to understand her needs and concerns. Sometimes, I never meet them in person. Other times, I transfer them to Hadiyah or Mikea. But, they always seems grateful for the time taken in listening to their story. In truth, that is the hallmark of *Schatzi’s*. We listen keenly. I would rather we take time to listen to a client and possibly send them elsewhere based on their need rather than to jockey to attain their money and ultimately wind up with them leaving unhappy with the final product. We endeavor always to do our best. We don’t have high volume sales; but we have high quality service. And ultimately, that’s what matters most to us. If you are able to engage with one of us, we will treat you right. We are our clients friends, cheer leaders and life coaches. For me, it is an honor to commune with Black women in a way that nurtures and cares for their soul. Societally, we are carrying an enormous burden!! Sometimes, it suppresses our full potential, other times it robs us of our self-esteem. No one knows this better than the stylist. I could write a book. But I won’t. Confidentiality is a hallmark of our professionalism. All the same, I couldn’t help but feel overjoyed recently when a client trusted me enough to act based on my advice. I spent much of her hair service giving her personal life experiences to show her that fear was limiting her potential. The entire discussion was focused on building her up because sometimes we just don’t see ourselves the way the world sees us. When she returned the next month to say that she now has a 100+% increase in her salary and was so grateful God sent her here, I could only feel grateful that: 1) she trusted my judgment enough to follow through; and 2) our salon is still here. To God be the glory. So, to whomever nominated us for “Best in Raleigh”, we say “thank you” and will endeavor to maintain the standard of quality that made you venture to throw our hat in the ring with giants. We humbly appreciate the accolade, and we embrace the beauty of you. P.S. If you would like to [vote](#) for us, you have until August 19<sup>th</sup> to do so. Please check out the [link](#), select the “Health and Beauty” tab, then the “Hair Salon” tab and you will find our name on the list. Thank you.