

AU NATUREL

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Greetings and well wishes to all and sundry. I pray that the new year has greeted you with a peaceful heart, a warm countenance, a hopeful outlook and formidable health! Prayerfully, I am as such. I give thanks. Life within the salon is blessed and familial. Every day that I spend with clients/friends is a joy and a gift. I'm seeing the young clients grow into pre-teens in lightning speed! It's truly incredible. My most consistent young clients are twins who I have serviced since they were adopted from Haiti. Their parents are cut from some of God's favored cloth--the salt of the Earth. So much so, that one-time years back when a client decided that she wanted to rant about all of the White people going overseas to adopt Black kids, I decided to engage. I asked, "Do you know the struggles of these kids? Do you know how blessed they are to be adopted by people who will love and care for them?" The debate ensued, and by the time it came to what seemed to be a logical conclusion, she said, "I still

think they should adopt their own. Or at least adopt Black kids in America. There are plenty of kids here that need help." I followed with, "Well, girls who fit that bill are about to enter into this salon any minute, so..." I was basically saying "Please talk about something else." in the nicest way I could muster. Not even 10 minutes later, the girls came bouncing in with their Dad who promptly exclaimed (while starting to loosen the hair of one while I prepped the other), "Schatzi! The girls are finally on the growth chart! Their head size and their height are finally starting to catch up!" They were so far on the low end of the bell curve that the US charts don't even include these weights, heights and sizes for their age (at the time). I was equally ecstatic. And I could only conclude that God alone placed that woman in that room on that day to hear that conversation for just one reason: ignorance. I've never seen her since, though she was a regular of the then stylist. And frankly, I have not missed her at all. My girlfriend and client Lila said the other day, "Schatzi, I think I've been giving people the wrong number for your salon." After telling me the number, I said, "Yes, you have." She responded, "Oh well. I guess they weren't meant to come. They ain't ready, girl." We both laughed. She know 'bout!! Honestly, this place is a unique abode that attracts and repels. It's definitely an acquired taste that takes you to unusual conversations. And so the beat goes on...

"You yourself, as much as anyone in the entire universe, deserve your love and affection."

The Buddha

AFRO DREAMIN'

Divine Perfection

Out of all of the natural hairstyles that I've always wanted to wear, that I've never worn, a big, full afro is at the top of the list. Of course, I wore a really short afro when I was in elementary school and my mom didn't know what to do with my hair. She cut my hair and then got my ears pierced. (The order may be reversed.) That was that! She was freed up and so was I. I was really too young to care. And the childhood photos that I do remember from that era showed a smiling, beaming kid who was much more interested in digging up worms in the backyard to go fishing rather than styling hair. You might think that it'd be fairly easy for me to wear an afro now if I choose to. However, my hair on the top of my head is decidedly straighter than the hair in the back. My son's hair is exactly the same way. When I locked his hair, I had to perform natural gymnastics to coax his hair into locking on top. It's just a much straighter texture. You wouldn't know looking at his hair today as all of the locks look the same; but, when the hair is not bound, it tells a different story. So, my hair at the front droops rather than stands-up and that is the signature beauty of the afro—gravity defying, coily perfection!! The sister in the photos to the right came by the shop in January for a trim. After the trim, her hair was a natural 'fro all on it's own! When I offered to French braid her hair afterwards, she exercised her right to rock divine perfection and walked out of the salon "as is"... poetry in motion. ☺

Embrace the beauty of you.





On a more personal note, I've been enjoying a brief hiatus from travel. However, travels recommence in the month of March with visits to Mali, Guinea and Niger. To return home from Niger, I will have to travel through Ethiopia. Is that insane or what?! As always, I'm scheduling life around travel dates and remaining ever mindful of how blessed I am to be where I am. I'll enjoy the moment. Life switches up on a dime. Just yesterday, I took the bus home from UNC's campus as the sister I commuted to work with had to leave early as her baby developed a fever due to teething while in the daycare. I was in no hurry, so it was all good! After getting on the CRX bus at the bell tower, it occurred to me that it had been 5 ½ years since I rode that bus!! The bus was newer, the driver and the passengers were different. But, the vibe was the same. So much so, that it felt like only a few months had passed since my last ride, as opposed to years. I called my husband and told him to pick me up in the usual spot. But, the usual spot is now unusual as there's a totally modern bus station that serves as the terminus for this bus complete with clean bathrooms. I was impressed. Raleigh is growing so rapidly. I can

Musings

BUSINESS AND TRAVEL

hardly believe my eyes. I have mixed feelings. Why? I have been wanting to buy property in Downtown Raleigh for years. Now, it feels like a dream. But, I haven't stopped looking. When I was searching for properties for the salon back in 2005, I found a beautiful spot on Bloodworth St., right behind the U.S. Post Office. It was selling for the same price as our current location, without the condo owners association fees!! That was a definite plus!! But there were three concerns I had: 1) the asbestos siding; 2) dearth of parking; and 3) the fact that it was downtown. I didn't think clients would want to drive downtown and possibly stay late in the night to get their hair done. Worse yet if they had to park a little distance away from the entrance. So, I went with Millbrook. Every time I pass that building now, I'm faced with the truth that it can now sell for well over \$400k while the Millbrook location has increased in value only marginally. Hindsight is always 20/20. But, I have no regrets. North Hills is booming, and my salon feels like home. I am blessed. Likewise, the deal came through so effortlessly despite the fact that my husband thought the purchase was impossible, so I knew it had to be God's plan—not my own. If I could buy the downtown property right now, would I? You better believe it! But, it was meant for someone else. It's all good. The main secular lesson that I learned in all this was: It pays to own your space rather than to rent when it comes to business ownership, like home ownership. Over the years, clients have returned who had not been here in years.

"...a government of the people, by the people and for the people shall not perish from the Earth." A message from Lincoln delivered by me to Trump following his 2019 State of the Union Address in which he stated: "America will never be a socialist country." As noted by Chief Justice Ginsburg, freedom is not written in the Constitution. And as stated by me, capitalism is not synonymous with freedom. It's the system that enslaved Black people and sent us to war with Iraq.

ARTISTIC INTERLUDE

And Justice for All: Historical Dramas of Note

I don't know about you; but in the winter months, I become somewhat of a hermit. With the cold weather, I prefer to stay indoors, particularly at night. I used to stay in and read; but, I read so much for my job now that when I get home, the only screen I want to see belongs to the television. I might get in about 2 hours of viewing before the television is watching me. But on the weekends after salon hours, I dive deep and stay long. My husband and I have started using my son's Netflix account. What a blessing to have the benefit of something that we don't have to pay for! Most of the movies therein are not my thing. And I tend to avoid the "seasons" episodes as I don't like to commit. But, one thing that I've come to realize about myself: I love historical dramas, the more epic, the better. The Chinese make great epic dramas; but, the Netflix adventure that caught my eye recently was [Knightfall](#)—a production of the History Channel. I saw it advertised when it came out and planned to watch it. But, life happens. So when I saw it on Netflix, I was excited. It was excellent, if you like intrigue, swordplay and romance—all based on historical fact. But, please don't take these histories to the bank. You will be found to be carrying counterfeit knowledge. And the producers concede as much. But, that's what makes movies fun! They can go over the top.

I also just managed to see [Lincoln](#), though I've been meaning to see this film since it came out. I tagged it in my mind but, never got to the movie theater before it left the box office. It was quite interesting. Truth is always so much more complicated than what we think we know in our minds about history. After watching the film and listening to the political intrigue, I had even more respect for Lincoln than before. Some people were sent

by God to do His work. And then, He calls them home. They don't seem to stay long but they're ALWAYS driven and right on time. I concluded that about Lincoln. His story, like the Roosevelts documentary, brought tears to my eyes. Check it out if you haven't already. It's been out since 2012 so I'm sure most have seen it.

A more recent biographical film that I thoroughly enjoyed was [On the Basis of Sex](#). It's the story of Ruth Bader Ginsburg. I was rather indifferent when I saw it first advertised. But after about 20 minutes into the film, I said to my husband, "I *like* this woman!" She was a force for her time, though always impactful in a covert manner. Her life didn't have the pomp, intrigue and danger of [Marshall](#), but it has been a formidable life well lived. I cried. I'm really becoming a wuss when it comes to film-making. Sheesh!!

A final historical docu-drama worth note is [Vice](#). It was nominated for Best Film at this year's Oscars. My son told me to watch it when it was at the theater; but, I didn't prioritize a story about Dick Cheney. I mean, why would I?! But, we finally went to see it when the movie theaters hit "replay" due to its Oscar nomination. It's outwardly politically biased—that's the part of the film I liked the least. But otherwise, it provided more insight than I could ever have imagined to the inner workings of the White House and the Congress. After watching it, I'm convinced that the strategies employed by Cheney were employed by George H. Bush during the Reagan administration. And I'm convinced that Democrats are out of their depth when it comes to political strategizing. In this movie, Cheney proved himself to be a strategist bar none. And the crazy part is that he got away with all of it. Yes, we went to war with Iraq when they had no weapons of mass destruction. And so, we sheep follow the wolf to our own destruction.

"I am not bound to win, but I am bound to be true. I am not bound to succeed, but I am bound to live by the light that I have. I must stand with anybody that stands right, and stand with him while he is right, and part with him when he goes wrong."

Abraham Lincoln

They're often surprised to know that we're still here. But when you control your surroundings—to the extent possible, you dictate your own terms.

I have often given people advice over the years who have considered starting a business. Overhead is a nightmare. And when the financial weight of that “cost to do business” goes into someone else’s pocket, you quickly learn that “working for yourself is STILL working for someone else.” When I entered the entrepreneurial market, my Mom begged me to buy rather than to rent my space. I considered but had NO IDEA where the money would come from. Then, I eyed my 401k. Seeing as it had already devalued with the Worldcom and Enron fiasco, I thought to myself, “I think I will invest it in myself. At least if I lose everything, I’ll know where the money went.” So, I told my husband and pulled him on board with me. My financial planner thought I was an idiot and said as much, “That’s stupid!! What if the business goes under? You’ll be carrying this asset that you would rather be rid of. And you’re going to get a financial hit for early withdrawal.” All I heard was [Charlie Brown’s teacher talking](#). When God gives you something to do, people like financial planners don’t get to intervene based on logic or reason. I’ve been my own financial planner ever since that day. He was just too vested in me being vested with his company—an inherent conflict of interest. But, that’s another story.

Strangely enough, after preparing our taxes following Year 1 of business ownership, my older White male accountant promptly moved his office (which he was renting) to an office condo a stone’s throw from my

salon. He’s been there about as long as I’ve been in the salon. And he’s been my accountant the entire time. (Note: I started with a young African-American tax service provider. It was a bad scene. And seeing as I am not down with financial drama in my life, I took my business to someone with gray hair. He was recommended by an AA friend, so I went with the recommendation.) I believe in supporting Black business but have no regrets.

The purpose of this post is to say that we as Black people need to be more bullish on ourselves.

Africans who come to America know this message well. I just learned this week that an African sister who just started working in our office payroll department owns an African store on Trawick Dr. She’s been there for years!! She said, “I have to have somewhere to go if I don’t have a job.” I said, “Amen sister.” But, I also caution that to hedge your bets and limit risk, rely on others as little as possible. It is amazing how much your own people can be jealous of your accomplishments. And workers who will bend over backwards for the White power structure will look at you as if you are somehow getting rich off of the exploitation of their labor and will resent you for it. My mother told me years ago that owning a Black business would teach me more than I ever wanted to know about my people. In truth, White people have the same experience, as do Indians, Asians and Latinos. We just hear the stories that are closest to our own reality. Business is a vexing endeavor. It can chew you up and spit you out. It takes no prisoners. I’m still in it because I never stopped working my regular job, and because I had my mother’s insight to own rather than to rent. If I had taken any other pathway, you would not be reading this missive to day. So, I give thanks. Embrace the beauty of you.

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2019

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"You have all the reason in the world to achieve your grandest dreams. Imagination plus innovation equals realization." Denis Waitley

"A dream with courage is innovation. A dream without courage is a delusion." Unknown

"Innovation never happens as planned." Gifford Pinchot

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WWW.SCHATZISDAYSPA.COM

258 W. Millbrook Rd.
Raleigh, NC 27604
Ph 919.844.1933

Social Media & Web Posting