

# AU NATUREL

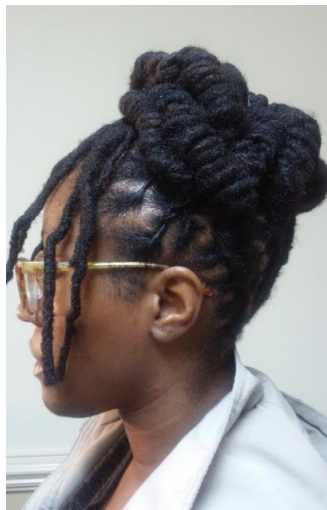
SCHATZI'S DESIGN GALLERY & DAY SPA, LLC

## PERSONAL AND SALON UPDATES

### March Madness

I'm getting to the point that I want to totally redesign the salon—new carpet, new walls, new furniture. The exterior was repainted a few years back. The parking lot was repainted at the end of last year. Now, I'm ready for the inside to match the outside. But, it's totally not the time to do so. I've been out of the salon a lot lately, so I can't justify the expenditure presently. It also doesn't help that the City of Raleigh added a new plumbing standard throughout the city that wound up costing me a pretty penny to install, as well as a rose bush. 😞 I was pretty torn up about THAT! The standard is designed to ensure that large quantities of chemicals do not wind up in the city's water supply. I get it! But, I tried to appeal on the grounds that we're a "natural" hair salon and thus do not dump large quantities of chemicals in the water at all. The chemicals used in our salon are more comparable with those used for household cleaning. They weren't having it. It also doesn't help that I have to pay annually for the bloomin' thing to be inspected

by a certified person. Try finding a black service provider under these conditions. The city's list isn't grouped by ethnicity or color, so you're on your own with figuring that one out. And the people I do know who do plumbing are NOT at the certification level required. And thus, the brethren miss out on more opportunities. This city ordinance was created almost solely to give plumbers a boost. When I first contacted the service provider I eventually used, they had a mediocre website. Now, they have upgraded to image. I guess funds are rolling in! They sure got my money! They did a good job; but,



### BANGIN' UPDO

One of the most challenging and creative aspects of styling is "the unknown." When a client come in only with a picture and says, "I want that." You are challenged to make it happen with the tools at your disposal. The style below is of a client who had not been in the salon for quite a while as she was self-styling. But as she had a function to attend, she decided to get a professional style. The style was of a client with long locks who had an updo with blunted bangs in front. But, the front of the hair was NOT cut into bangs. The client didn't want her hair cut at all. The hair was maneuvered in such a way that the bangs were created with the ends of the long hair which fell into the front of the client's face. We conferred, and my client was okay with the idea that her bangs would not be blunt as her hair was layered. Everything else about the style, she loved. So, the photo to the left was my creative rendition of this look. Happy Styling!

I'm compelled to ask "Where the brothers at?" We have to be more in-tune with urban developments as well as technically prepared. There appears to be a huge gap in the areas of plumbing and electrical work. At any rate as stated, now is not the optimal time for renovation; but, I'm starting early with speaking renovation into existence.

I know the renovation bug has bit me because we're currently transforming our home interior, starting with the kitchen. We're basically doing the kitchen cabinets and countertops. After 20 years, we were in dire need of a change. I have learned the hard way to avoid anything other than wood cabinets going forward. Our pressed-wood-chips-with-vinyl- covering cabinets were a disaster!! They're prone to warp with moisture which resides ALL OVER a kitchen. If I had known then what I know now, I would likely have chosen another house. But, it's what made sense at the time, and you can't learn the weaknesses of a house until you're fully in it. Now, we'll make it into what we need it to be. As

retirement is much closer than we would have imagined, now is the time to update as we have no intention of waiting and being unable to afford major upgrades to deteriorating materials in our platinum years. So, I just see it as making a MAJOR contribution to the economy.

I don't know how to explain what it's like to go for weeks without countertops; but, it's crazy. The kitchen is more than half of the home regarding frequency of use. I'm glad I was out of the country for a good portion of this time. I've kept my cool because we kept growing the project as it's progressed. Now, the downstairs bathroom is all in mix, the ceiling has been redone and light fixtures are being changed. We put in hard wood floors about 10 years ago but now they need sanding and resurfacing so that will have to come fairly soon too. Can I ask something: Whoever said that home ownership is a wise investment?! I definitely understand the urge to just buy a new house rather than to repair the old one!! I have several friends who have gone that route. One sister's house is drop

dead gorgeous!! LOVE IT!!! But, I'm definitely not going that route for myself. Lloyd has suggested it many times over the past; but instead, I've offered to move out of our house so that it can be painted, carpets replaced, light fixtures changes, etc, throughout as quickly as possible. Then, we can move back into a brand-new house! Same difference right? But that step is a little way out though. I'm definitely in the spirit though. Can't you tell? Wouldn't it be great if money could only grow on trees. 😊

Anyhoo, I'm pretty sure that my renovation binge has something to do with the arrival of spring. So within the salon, I'm absolutely delighted that the property developer had his personal office in the unit that we occupy as the salon. So, the quality is definitely there. I'm in no rush to renovate, as I'm not pressured to be. But I'm speaking it into existence so the funds to do so will find their way home. Speak into existence your own truth. Embrace the beauty of you.

## A WORD ON WEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Is there another way of looking at both?

I am just back from a 10-day whirlwind trip to West Africa. I visited Mali, Guinea and Niger. If you've seen my Facebook posts

over the past few weeks, you've seen my references to these locations.

Mali is the home of Mansu Musa—the wealthiest man who ever lived. It was after his travels to other parts of the world leaving

great gifts of gold in his wake that the interest in controlling West Africa became most prominent. Mali is also the home of the Dogon people. A brief review of the internet provides evidence of how these people told Europeans about Sirius—the Dog Star—long before Europeans were able to identify it with telescopes. The question that some have is “How could “seemingly” backwards, indigenous people have such accurate knowledge of the stars?” I say “some have” because it doesn't confuse me that indigenous people have profound knowledge of anything. Many of the chemicals used for modern day medicines are simply synthetic versions of chemical compounds found in plants and herbs that have been used for millennium to cure diseases. The world is very old, and humanity has been here for well over 300,000 years. There is a great arrogance in our modern-day society to believe that we have discovered everything and that we are more brilliant than previous generations. After visiting Egypt in 2017, I learned that those people were perhaps even more advanced than we are. Their architecture, their mummification process, their hieroglyphic writings and the scrolls left behind are a testament to their brilliance. When I think about how those great people were conquered by the Greeks and the Romans—whose

architectural and technological prowess is simply a re-appropriation of the advances of ancient Egypt, I was compelled to ask myself, “Why would people who were clearly so brilliant allow themselves to be conquered by anyone?” And then it occurred to me that perhaps they didn't. Perhaps they simply walked away and left the spoils to the greedy and desperate. That is how a sage would respond to madness. As you look at the architecture and the hieroglyphs of ancient Egypt, the images become less African as time advances through history. Some of the more recent discoveries are Greek and Roman reproductions of original African art. The psychology of this clear observation of history is quite compelling. When I think of artists like [Sister Rosetta Tharpe—the Godmother of Rock and Roll](#), I think of the re-appropriation of an art form created by people who looked very different from the people who today are credited with being the greatest Rock and Roll artists. There is book there somewhere. But, it's not for me to write. I simply say that in my estimation, many of the sages walked away from Egypt and left the feeding frenzy to the “hungry.” I would think it would be difficult to be led by your students, particularly when you realize they missed the essence of your message. That of course is a theory; but, it's not an

unrealistic conclusion to draw. Time will tell. At any rate, when I consider that [false wars are being created among the Dogon as we speak](#), I am compelled to ask myself “What's this really about?” My brother Dr. Moctar Diallo advised me that he is part Dogon and part Peul. He noted that these two groups have been living together for millennia. But apparently, there is this deep-seated need to kill today. God knows. Time will tell. Mali is also #182 of 189 countries on the human development index. Yet, it is a country rich in mineral resources. But in stealing millions of Africans away to the New World, the impact on the development of these nations respectively was no doubt significant.

Guinea, which is number 175 on the human development index, is a beautiful country hands down. It is a tropical country. Unlike Mali and Niger, much of its land area is not swallowed up by the Sahara Desert. So, it was disturbing to see vast tracks of land, trees and bushes all wearing the refuse of plastic bags. But, this is something that could be easily solved with leadership. I understand why some argue that [dictatorships are the most effective way to move a developing nation into an advanced state of development](#). I'm not sure I have a problem with this model. But then again, if people are down with living with

plastic bags, why judge them? They certainly didn't manufacture ANY of them. So who REALLY created the problem?

While attending meetings in Conakry, Guinea, we had plenty of time for lively discussions as the traffic bottlenecks created 2-hour commutes going and coming from Downtown. We were traveling as three Muslims and two Christians. The theme of the discussion was the extent to which Allah recognizes human weaknesses and is merciful. To be inclusive, Dr. Sy—a Muslim, then began to expand into the Bible to provide Christian examples of her argument as well. She spoke of David

and his weakness for a woman (who I identified as Bathsheba) to the point of sending her husband into the hell fire of war so that he would surely die. The discussion was extremely engaging and absolutely hilarious to me. But at the core was mutual respect and freedom of expression. I thoroughly enjoyed those commutes. On another occasion, Dr. Sy advised about how when she was a little girl growing up in the village, torrential downpours would often subside leaving unearthed gold in their wake that you could walk

and pick up like stones. This image took me deeper down a rabbit hole that I've been in since arriving in West Africa on March 20<sup>th</sup>--"What is this thing called wealth and human development?" Who defines these terms and why are they the only ways to perceive the world?" A Buddhist monk who grows his own vegetables and prays most of the day may be very advanced in his humanity,



his consciousness and his spiritual development, but yet because he is poor and humble, he is judged as "less" developed. And yet a rich man who has all the wealth and power that goes with this human albatross can be so morally bankrupt as to brag about squeezing the life out of an entire nation for the sake of "power and influence." Who is the more developed human?

Niger is number 189 out of the 189 countries on the human development index. I was expecting much worse than what I say. I saw lots of red dirt and

sand. I saw few trees. I saw people living in and on the dirt—alive and hopeful for their respective futures. The photo to the \_\_\_\_\_ is the image that was outside of my hotel room. It shows commercial store fronts below. Each night while in Niamey, I watched young men take out their sleeping gear, spread it out on the sidewalk and go to sleep. In the morning, they took up their gear, prayed and

went about their day. My soul smiled somehow at seeing their truth. It almost never rains in Niger and it's always hot. When the night falls, the air that was previously over 100 degrees Fahrenheit gradually cools

down to a delicious 80 degrees. This is perfect weather conditions for living on the side of the road. I became sensitized to this humble reality for many Senegalese people while there. But this was the first time I had to observe a group of individuals for more than a few minutes. I don't think these men would want anyone to feel sorry for them. They have absolutely no debt and are free to live without false arrest, harassment and humiliation. It compelled me to ask: "While the US is ranked at number 13 on the human development index, what

is the human development index for African American males within America?

Shortly before leaving Niger, colleagues and I did a site visit at a high school in Niamey. The purpose of my visit was to attend a monitoring visit by our program funder—The Netherlands Government. Through advocacy and development of Niger's civil society, the country is prioritizing and strengthening reproductive health knowledge through primary and secondary education. In Niger, the **average** fertility rate is 7 children/mother. Yes, I said 7. If contraceptive prevalence rates don't increase, [the population is expected to triple by the year 2050](#). Honestly, Niger doesn't have an over-crowding problem. Eighty percent of the country is the Sahara Desert. So, there's plenty of land space. But, the primary concern is that there are very few jobs for the young people who make up over half of the population. So when the young have few prospects for employment, the medium-long term effect is increased poverty. I think it is the Muslim faith that keeps crime rates very low in Niger. At any rate during our site visit, we walked into a classroom of over 50 students, 14-15 year old girls. They wore the school uniform which was an ankle length burgundy skirt and a white top. If they were Muslim, their hair was covered with a white wrap.

If they were Christian, their hair was uncovered OR was not fully covered. Yet, I saw henna tattoos, jewelry and braided hairstyles (even underneath head wraps) which were indicative of creativity and self-expression. We stayed in the room to hear the male teacher (who taught Physics and Chemistry) discuss reproductive health. Reproductive health is incorporated into three core subjects, one of which is science. The discipline of the students was truly an inspiration. As our team entered, they all rose. When the teacher asked a question, they raised their hand. When identified, they stood up to respond. It was rather beautiful to witness. He then gave them group exercises which they plunged into. The lesson discussed natural and modern contraceptive methods. They were given the schedule of the menstrual cycle which showed safe days, days of ovulation and safe days thereafter. They were also shown images of modern contraceptives. The Niger curriculum is Muslim-based, so it highlighted the fact that family planning is used to plan and space births. It also spoke of the importance of spacing births to reduce infant and maternal mortality--rates in Niger are rather high. After a rather engaging lecture with girls eager to show their mastery of the subject, my colleague Dr. Diallo took charge

of a classroom. As a medical doctor and a former med school professor, he was naturally in his element. After introducing the team, explaining why we are observing and reiterating the importance of the information from his own personal experience, he then asked, "I heard one contraceptive method that was not mentioned today. Does anyone know what it is?" One girl in the middle of the room quickly raised her hand. He called on her and she stood up. Her response was "Abstinence, sir." And with his exuberant affirmation of her response, the entire room burst into resounding applause. It was the most beautiful and spontaneous thing I've seen in a while. We the observers, all of the class and the teachers exploded into applause without being prompted or coached, as if a maestro had signaled the orchestra. The girl was so shocked and surprised, she beamed with a huge smile and sat down. Dr. Diallo closed off and then turned the class over to one of his proteges, a youth ambassador for family planning and a medical school student. She spoke of the importance of building the country and challenged the girls to make good decisions so that they can complete their education, help their families and help the nation. I watched as young heads nodded, and I thought how

beautiful is youth. Promise and opportunity await them all. I wish them all the very best. I am grateful to be on this page in history with them. It was beautiful to witness.

In closing, I confess that I don't see Mali, Guinea and Niger as 175, 182 and 189 respectively on the human development index. I see nations of people with a strong faith in God and enviable reserves of mineral resources. (Niger is one of the few countries in the world with uranium.) I see wealthy nations of the world with great untapped natural and human resources. Because those reserves have not been tapped, does that mean they are "less" than other nations. Absolutely not. These people are no different than you and me. They are born into their conditions and

make the best of their lives to the extent possible. Isn't that what we're all doing? Does having a high debt to income ratio make a people more developed? If we think so, I think we've taken the blue pill. But since I don't take drugs, I see two worlds residing on opposite sides of the same coin. Both worlds have their advantages and disadvantages. In the West, we leverage our futures to live comfortably today and grow the nation now. In these West African countries, they live humbly today leaving wealth and reserves in store for tomorrow. Who will go bankrupt in the future, who is bankrupt now and where does wealth truly reside? When I view the two sides of the responses to these questions, it only provides

compelling evidence that there will be wars and rumors of wars for many years to come.

Mali, Guinea and Niger are wealthy nations of the world where people are born into their conditions and make the best of their lives to the extent possible. Isn't that what we're all doing? I had absolutely nothing to do with being born into the US. And I'm make the best of it as I know you are. So, I pray that the people of these nations learn from the mistakes of early industrial development to grow and advance in sustainable ways that respect the environment and consider the needs of future generations. Prayerfully, they are recognizing the significant role that women have to play in that development! Godspeed. Inch'Allah.

Embrace the beauty of you.