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“IT WAS MY HAIR BUT IT WAS A LOT MORE THAN I REALISE”

MY NATURAL HAIR JOURNEY. I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN NATURAL, TECHNICALLY. MEANING I HAVE NEVER USED CHEMICALS ON MY HAIR TO ALTER MY HAIR PERMANENTLY. THIS WAS BECAUSE I WAS NEVER GIVEN PERMISSION TO DO SO.

My childhood days were spent watching my mom have lovely straight hair. The majority of the women in my experience had chemically straightened hair and I always saw them as beautiful. When I had created my views of these women in such a positive light, I encapsulated all of who they were and their hair as their crown and glory. I wanted my crown and glory, but what I had been born with, I was described on many occasions as, brown, dry, short, unmanageable hair, among other things.

My relationship with my hair was a negative one from the start. I hated my hair. I hated the colour. I hated the dry texture. I hated the unmanageability. There were never positive adjectives to describe my crown and I spent my adolescence admiring my sister's hair and other girls that crossed my life's path. My identity got hidden within

this visual insecurity and without the appropriate guidance I experimented with a plethora of products which didn't enhance the quality of my hair. Growing up with this type of hair, as described, influenced many of my choices. I refused to swim, as I hated the washing ritual. This procedure would start and end in discomfort and pain. The hair washing process would take a whole day and on some occasions, all night, and as a result I have never learnt to swim. It had effects on my confidence.

I always felt inferior, always searching for that 'something' about me that would make me beautiful. I didn't find it at that time and learned how to braid and as my femininity didn't shine I adopted a more 'masculine femininity' and paraded as a Tom Boy. This phase influenced how I dressed and that wasn't a feminine choice either. My hair throughout this period was different



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MY IDENTITY GOT HIDDEN WITHIN THIS VISUAL INSECURITY

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Variations of the braids from front to back. It was simple, just what I needed at the time. During this time Alicia Keys came out revealing her braided styles and I found a safety in braids and a start finding my own femininity, because if Alicia could look beautiful and have braids then, maybe I could also. An aunt took my sister and I for a treatment at a salon and here I would be introduced to the 'Hot Comb'. I was in love and I looked pretty. Finally! It was me I would see in the mirror, and I got to work on achieving this look at home.

I got close to the salon finish, and close was close enough. Although during these years I sported braids, my main look was straight hair. I achieved this using hair dryers and straighteners. I straightened my hair through my college and university years and continued to do so when I embarked on employment and I was finally happy with the way I looked and I finally achieved my crown...in my eyes! I experimented with cuts, colours and different salons to achieve my many styles. Looking back, I realise it all looked the same, straight.

So what changed? I was natural, so what makes my journey, a journey at all? Well I gave birth to my daughter. She was born in 2009 and my hair journey was about to get interesting.

The time I used to do my hair was now compromised by new responsibly. It became difficult to keep up with the look I had created. I had mastered a straight style and it had to be perfect. With less time to spare, the standard dropped and I was unwilling to sport an underdone hair style so I decided I was going to hang up my beloved GHD straighteners. This wasn't easy although the phrase "fake it till you make it" became my persona.

I revealed none of my insecurities or my worries when interacting about my hair and I took all compliments with a smile. Along with positive came the negative and had people commenting on how nice my hair 'used to be'. I got the message that this hair choice was a little harder to digest for some but I had to stand by my decision and decided to be me. But I then had to ask myself, "who am I?". I realised I was just finding out. I had nothing to hide behind, I just had me and I was about to find out who liked it and who didn't. This became very emotional and very personal, it was my hair, but it was a lot more than I realised.

So I started experimenting and went through so many products. I tried what smelt good, what looked good, what was recommended, what a blogger posted, what a friend suggested and it got tiring. I was natural and I had really good days where my hair would look amazing and I couldn't believe

My hair could do that. On the days that it didn't look as polished I just wanted to cry, thinking "I cannot go out like this!". Manageability became my quest and I just wanted to manage my hair day to day. Three years ago I started my business journey with a wonderful company Forever Living and within their product range I would find the best shampoo and conditioner I'd ever used on my hair. After a few months of trialling the Aloe Jojoba shampoo and conditioner, I couldn't believe the results I was getting.

A clean hair, a hydrated scalp and I had manageable hair. The Aloe jojoba shampoo would help with my hairs manageability, it would bring massive improvements to my daughters dry scalp problem which was out of control. I was half way there and I was getting happier on my hair journey, as I began to see results. Still experimenting with leave in products I was able to sport a Afro and love it, along with the many people who admired and complemented.

I was beginning to get a real confidence with the evolving me. I was excited about the prospect of having my hair, the hair I once disliked. The real me was always there I had failed to execute it with excellence and I was about to get some priceless lessons that would change me once

again. The products that I now use on a daily basis, for myself and my daughters, are Kera Care Natural Textures Leave In Conditioner and butter following my later consultation with SG Hair. I responded to an advert for natural hair models in August 2013. I had given birth to my second daughter 4 months prior and was anxious to get my life moving again, as I was on the verge of a struggle with post natal depression.

After having my daughter, finding the balance with two children, a busy husband and an Afro hair style to keep up, it on top of me and I couldn't find myself in the shadows of all that my life was going through at that time. I was one of the chosen few, from a selection of very beautiful girls, to be a model for Samantha Golding, and I was excited. I had also turned 30 in the same month of August and I felt like I needed my own venture.

I was very willing to let Samantha in my hair, from talking to her and the staff at SG Hair, they knew what they were doing and I had a lot to learn. I was introduced to new people, products, and methods. All of these aspects advanced my hair journey and gave me knowledge I had never had before. My hair colour changed, and I absolutely loved it. I had always believed colour was bad for black hair but now I know better, my hair is in the best condition it has ever been.



**THE
REAL
ME
WAS
ALWAYS
THERE**